

United States Country Team Paper

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**Theme 2- Strategic Leadership Theme, United States**

Employers in the United States find it increasingly difficult to hire qualified workers at competitive rates. There is a growing "labor shortage" driven by a low birth rate among U.S. citizens and the aging workforce. Concurrently, the U.S. workforce is becoming increasingly foreign born and racially diverse. Job requirements are rising, but the academic achievement of the American labor force is declining. In many professional and technical occupations, U.S. wage rates are no longer competitive with those of equally skilled foreign workers. To meet competition, U.S. companies are turning to outsourcing, immigration, and the automating of production, even as the number of unemployed native-born American workers increases.

In 2005, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that approximately 69% of the total U.S. labor force was non-Hispanic white and Blacks and Hispanics together accounted for 25% of the labor force. The BLS also reported that Asians, American Indians, and other groups accounted for less than 5 % each of the U.S. labor force. The science and engineering labor force, however, has a very different racial and ethnic mix. Non-Hispanics whites were the largest group in the science and engineering labor force, but the proportion of Asians (12.6%) was higher than the share of African Americans and Latinos combined (11.7%). The concentration of Asians in high-tech jobs reflects the high proportion of Asian Americans with college degrees and the recruitment of highly skilled Asian students and workers from other countries. The BLS projects that the share of white non-Hispanics in the U.S. labor force will continue to decrease. Reducing racial and ethnic gaps in school enrollment, performance, and achievement will help the United

States meet the demands of an increasingly science and technology-oriented global work force.

To address these issues, we think that there are several core goals that must be achieved. First, there must be universal support for the proposition that all education is career preparation. Secondly, there is the need to systematically help secondary school students relate their secondary school academic development to a general career direction or occupational goal. Third, high school course work and graduation requirements must be consistent with both employment standards and postsecondary enrollment standards. Finally, there must be a concerted effort to provide more encouragement for members of minority groups to take math and science courses and to systematically provide mentors who, ideally, are also minority group members.

#### Statutory Support

There are significant challenges that exist relative to achieving these goals. The public education system in the U.S. is the primary system for delivery of career development and career preparation services. The primary responsibility for education in the U.S. lies with the States, which, in turn, delegate policy and operational responsibility to local school districts and boards. For example, there are 501 separate school districts in Pennsylvania. Each school district maintains responsibility for policy and curriculum decisions. Because career development is authorized and funded exclusively through federal vocational education legislation. The vocational education statute does not make career development a mandatory requirement. Academic and vocational education programs are currently administered separately at both federal and state levels. Thus, for structure and legislative reasons, there is substantial variability regarding the degree to

which students are exposed to career development interventions throughout their schooling.

Individual states, however, are not waiting for the federal system to respond. For example, there is a newly created course called “Freshman Transition” that includes career awareness and career exploration and is being required in several states. Other states are creating career development standards that reach across all grade levels (e.g., Pennsylvania). Although the latter initiative creates a message that addressing student career development is important, there is little accountability for this aspect of student development, especially when compared to academic areas such as math and science.

To further strengthen the provision of career development services to all students and to increase the probability of the above-mentioned goals being achieved, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Include authorization and funding of career development programs in all federal legislation related to elementary, secondary and postsecondary education, vocational rehabilitation, persons with disabilities, and the workforce.
2. Make career development courses mandatory for all elementary and secondary students and add career development credits to high school graduation requirements.
3. Integrate career development theory and practice into course content for all required courses.
4. Require all secondary school students to take at least a one-semester career development course.

5. Incorporate career development standards and training into annual performance plans for all secondary teachers, counselors and administrators.
6. Adopt for counselor education programs the recommendations made by the Joint Commission on Preparing Counselors for Career Development, especially the following: that career courses will be taught by experienced counselor educators familiar with the latest career theory, research and practice.

### Business

Businesses need assurance that what is being taught in the schools is preparing students for the world of work. Too often businesses find their interests poorly received, the difference in language leading to miscommunication, and their involvement superficial. The concept of lifelong learning and professional development falls short for much of the workforce.

To provide such assurance, we recommend that schools be required to use the career cluster framework as a means of aligning educational response with occupational need. There must also be the recognition that many students at the secondary and postsecondary levels are also (sometimes primarily) employees. Thus, a positive initiative to enhance employability for companies that employ (or hope to employ) students is for those companies to become adjunct educational facilities by sponsoring internship and training programs, and other resources. providing classrooms and study halls, encouraging postsecondary teachers and counselors to offer services on site, and

supplying mentors to the students. Staff development and competency based training programs must be incorporated as employees engage in lifelong learning.

### Strategy

The analysis set forth above argues for an educational leadership approach that integrates academic and vocational learning into a comprehensive program of "career preparation;" It also calls for aligning secondary and postsecondary programs of study so closely that they cannot operate independently and it integrates business operations and educational interests in such a way that businesses become adjunct educational facilities and educational institutions become a technical support arm of business operations. Finally, the analysis highlights the need for improving counselor education to include the most current, up-to-date material in the preparation of school counselors to assist their students in the career development process.

Implementation of the recommendations we offer requires a comprehensive educational and lobbying strategy that depends on support from elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educators, state and national education interest groups, employment and training organizations, parent and student groups, economic development institutions, and labor and business organizations. Action must be directed to federal, state, and local leaders and to both federal, state, and local policy and legislative bodies. It must be conducted in what amounts to a national political campaign. The National Career Development Association cannot carry it out alone.

Such a strategy will require extensive thought and preparation, a division of labor and collaboration among many groups, and extensive development of educational materials. It will be expensive. Financial support will need to be generated beyond that

which membership groups alone can provide. Fundraising will be necessary.

Nonetheless, the goal is worth it.

### Questions

What will it take for the federal government to support systematic career development interventions in the schools?

Which groups will cooperate to lobby for federal and state support for career development?

What it will take for these groups to unify?

Who will develop the educational materials required?

Who will fund these initiatives?

How will it be possible to impact local school districts in such a way that they provide systematic career development assistance to all students?

### **Theme 3- Harnessing Diversity, United States**

Business, education, and government in the US are in agreement that they have to be at the forefront in ensuring that their organizations are culturally diverse because diversity is a fact of life in the US and it also just makes good economic and political sense. Further, the career development needs and issues of these culturally diverse

Americans are growing in importance as their numbers in the workforce continue to grow and as they find their social, political, and economic voices.

Diversity in the US context includes race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and other aspects of our culture. The number of Americans who belong to ethnic and racial minority groups in the United States has grown tremendously during the last decade, and these individuals currently account for 31% of the United States' population. According to the 2000 US census, there are approximately 36.4 million African Americans (12.9% of the population), 35.3 million Hispanics (12.5%), and 11.9 million Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (4.2%). The National Organization on Disability found that almost 54 million Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities - two-thirds are unemployed – and this number will continue to increase as the US population ages. The number of older Americans is increasing as the baby boom generation matures. Although the number of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Americans in the workforce are not thought to be increasing, such issues as employment discrimination, same-sex partner benefits, and other similar issues are increasingly being addressed by businesses, governments, and in educational institutions as they search for special expertise and as this cultural group finds its voice (Cahill & Kim-Butler, 2006). There is no question that cultural diversity is having a great impact on the US.

In 1987 and again in 1997, the Hudson Institute published *Workforce 2000* (Johnson & Packer, 1987; Judy & D'Amico, 1997). In those reports it was predicted that minorities would constitute a much larger percentage of the new workers in the US workforce by the year 2000. It also noted that the workforce participation of women



would continue to rise and that the median age of workers would increase due to the aging baby boom generation.

The US Department of Labor, in its 1999 report, *Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century*, found:

By 2050, the U.S. population is expected to increase by 50% and minority groups will make up nearly half of the population. Immigration will account for almost two-thirds of the nation's population growth. The population of older Americans is expected to more than double. One-quarter of all Americans will be of Hispanic origin. Almost one in ten Americans will be of Asian or Pacific Islander descent.

And more women and people with disabilities will be on the job.

The key challenges to the US in managing cultural differences in developing policies and strategies for career development include an aging workforce, inequities in immigration policy, inconsistent quality of basic education, incomplete and unenforced job discrimination laws, inadequate economic resources devoted to education (especially in rural and lower-socioeconomic urban areas), labor shortages in specific occupational skill areas, inadequate health care (including both physical and mental healthcare), and growing populations of retired workers and disabled persons that are stretching the resources of the social security and medical care systems

The most important career development issues for diverse groups in US society are the various barriers that such groups regularly encounter, such as discrimination (in jobs, housing, employee benefits, etc.); inequitable access to resources (such as high quality basic education including early and consistent career counseling); language, religious, and cultural differences, including conflicts between the values of their culture

of origin and the dominant US culture (for example, cultural values that do not support appropriate individual/familial responsibility or cultural differences in the value and definition of work or career).

The career development of a diverse workforce is a critical component of social progress in the US. The US government has attempted to attend to many of these issues with varying degrees of success (Office of Personnel Management, 2000), but these are complex societal issues that have overlapping causes. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act was a comprehensive law that was designed to address many of the problems that disabled persons were confronting in US society. Further, all US government agencies are required to develop a diversity plan that also directly addresses career development (Simon, 2005).

### Questions

What will need to occur in order for federal and state governments to become actively engaged in enforcing (and in some cases creating) workplace anti-discrimination policies?

How can equitable access to career development resources be realized?

How can career development interventions be created and delivered to encourage diverse group members to enter occupations in which they are underrepresented?

How can the barriers to more inclusive immigration policies be eliminated?

What stops various professional associations and citizen groups committed to career development and justice from working collaboratively to support funding and increased resources for career development?

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#### **Theme 5, Role of the Citizen, United States**

Terkel's (1965) accounts of individual searches for dignity and meaning in life and work amplify this Symposium theme title's literal focus on the individual citizen. In a technology-driven transnational global economy increasingly mindless of national

boundaries and social conditions, individual workers must fend for themselves, from literal survival in subsistence and emerging economies to self-determination in postmodern societies. Individual human dignity, worth, uniqueness and potential are at risk in many aspects of contemporary economic engines and workplace practices.

Human capacity, dedication, inspiration, and generosity manifest in heroic acts of character show the best of humanity, with daily altruistic examples of individuals moving beyond themselves for the welfare and good of others. Major paradigm shifts in the philanthropy of Bill and Melinda Gates and Bono, to cite 3 individual citizens of the world, exemplify contemporary altruism at its best. At the same time, moral and civic decay manifest in contemporary terrorism, genocide, human slavery and other human exploitation and corruption evidence a need for individual human capacity aimed at all levels of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, from survival to prosperity and self fulfillment. In light of these human and inhumane extremes, any effort to attend to citizen involvement in the United States must attend to individuals as well as groups.

#### Essential Worker and Workforce Competencies

With the Industrial Revolution's move from individuality in work products to production of perfect copies came a reversion to worker anonymity and expendability similar to earlier equations of function and identity reflected in Dickens' *Hard Times* and Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (McCortney & Engels, 2004).

Current changes in how work is done and what work needs doing suggest a need for subsidiarity, giving to the lowest form of government, the individual, responsibility for good stewardship of personal capacity and development in work and other life roles.

In a knowledge society, individuals need knowledge and skill that afford currency and sustainability in work and career development. In the essential skills and knowledge noted in the U.S. Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills documents (DOL, 1991), come eight general worker competency profiles that parallel competencies previously cited in National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (1985) and America's Career Resource Network (2006) versions of the National Career Development Guidelines, namely, competence in Basic Academics, Thinking, Virtues, Information Resources, Interpersonal Resources, Time and Capital Resources, Systems and Technology. Of all these fundamental capacities, competence in Thinking Skills, most notably skills for continuous-life-long learning, constitute the most vital means of individuals remaining current, productive, and employable and responsible for life-long personal and career development in established economies.

#### Policy Implications

In postmodern, technological knowledge societies, education and continuing education constitute the most universal means of self-determination and upward economic and social mobility for individuals and groups. Hence, a crucial policy implication is dedicating resources to academic retention and success for all. It seems prudent to reconsider if the same pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 formulated curriculum is optimal for worker and workforce readiness, employability and sustainability. The U.S. long term focus on preparing most students for the 20% of jobs requiring college degrees risks major threats to citizens and all social groups, to workers and the workforce. Society may be better served with some combination of career education and vocational education, aimed at infusing workforce readiness throughout

formal PK-16 education. Increasing numbers of school dropouts, who are relegated to a second tier economy of dead-end jobs and temptations to crime, may be the crucial social and economic variable and catalyst for mandating substantial changes in worker and workforce policy that encourages and supports individual's active involvement.

### What Works?

Just as the complexities of U.S. state and national policy making necessitate organized group efforts in policy articulation and advocacy, the preponderance and abundance of “products and services that work” require means of recognizing what is best, vs. what is most popular or best advertised. In contemporary U.S. education, some of the finest models and tools for educational advancement, e.g. the NCDG, are underutilized for want of maximal awareness. The U.S. focus on macroeconomics drives workforce policy, focused on employment, perhaps to the detriment of sustainable worker employability, productivity and growth. As workers face frequent job changes, it seems timely to reevaluate current workforce assumptions and policy emphases on first/next jobs. Citizen groups should articulate and advocate policy for worker employability and sustainability as the base for workforce employability and sustainability. Specifically, it is time for policies, which empower every citizen to accept and model responsibility for life-long career development that contributes to the overall society.

### Questions

What stops citizen groups from working collaboratively to articulate and advocate policies for worker employability and sustainability as the base for workforce employability and sustainability?

What specific policies need to be developed to empower every citizen to accept and model responsibility for life-long career development that contributes to the overall society?

What practical changes in the educational system need to take place to address the employment issues and social costs related to school dropouts?

What effective strategies are in place in other countries to address the issues and questions we identified?

**United States Rating**

*Theme 1: Blending economic and social goals*

Adequacy- 5

Future Progress- 4

*Theme 2: Strategic leadership*

Adequacy- 7

Future Progress- 8

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*Theme 3: Harnessing diversity*

Adequacy- 5

Future Progress- 7

*Theme 4: Impact evidence*

Adequacy- 7

Future Progress- 6

*Theme 5: Role of the citizen*

Adequacy- 5

Future Progress- 5



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