

Work Skills

White Paper

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Purpose

The purpose of this white paper is to compare work skill models/systems of the last two decades of the twentieth century with those of the twenty-first century.

Overview

Work skills were a hot topic in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Three initiatives were designed to develop and measure important work skills. Those three initiatives were the Secretary's (Labor) Commission of Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) of the early 1990's, School-to-Work initiatives, and Technical Preparation or Tech-Prep.

SCANS

SCANS examined the demands of the workplace to consider whether young people were capable of meeting the demands required by business and industry:

- Defining skills needed for employment
- Proposing acceptable levels of proficiency
- Suggesting effective ways to evaluate proficiency
- Develop a dissemination strategy for the nation's schools, businesses, and homes (Mountain View, 1995)

School-to-Work

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, was an attempt to establish a national framework for the development of School-to-Work Opportunities systems in all States, and for other purposes. Three major goals of the act were to:

- Enable the students to earn portable credentials
- Prepare the students for first jobs in high-skill, high-wage careers; and
- Increase their opportunities for further education, including education in a 4-year college or university (<http://www.fessler.com/SBE/act.htm>)

Tech-Prep

And finally, the Tech-Prep is a federally funded (Carl D. Perkins Vocational–Technical Education Act Amendments of 1998 (Public Law 105–332)) program of study which begins in high school, continues at a postsecondary institution, and culminates in an associate of applied science degree, two-year certificate, or two-year apprenticeship in one of the Career Interest Areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Arts and Communications, Business and Administrative Services, Health Care, Human and Family Services, and Industrial and Engineering Technology. A Tech Prep program leads to related meaningful employment and is developed by all partners (secondary, postsecondary and private sector). It may also articulate from a community college to a four-year college/university, or four-year apprenticeship.

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/techprep/define.htm>

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/CTE/legis.html>

Why is Vocational-Technical Education Significant?

- The United States competes in a global economy. The purpose of the Perkins Act is to prepare a workforce with the academic and vocational skills needed to compete successfully in a world market.
- Vocational-technical education allows students to explore career options and develop the skills they will need both in school and in the workplace.
- Vocational-technical education's combination of classroom instruction, hands-on-laboratory work, and on-the-job training meets students' different learning styles so that all may learn.
- Vocational-technical education prepares participants for both postsecondary education and employment.

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The twenty-first century, at the time of this writing, is only 4 years old. School-to-Work and Tech-Prep are still very influential in terms of practice. As the twenty-first century progresses, new work skills initiatives will develop.

Comments

The twentieth century started in the industrial revolution, ushered in the technical – scientific revolution, and ended in the knowledge revolution. Work skills were and are different for each era. There will be more and bigger changes in work skills in the twenty - first century. Although the three programs mentioned were government-sponsored initiatives, there are and were public and private efforts to identify and develop work skills.

References

SCANS: A practical guide for identifying and using SCANS competencies in technical/occupational programs. Mountain View College: Dallas, TX. September 1995.

<http://www.fessler.com/SBE/act.htm>

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/techprep/define.htm>

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