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## Main content

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CLIFFORD ADELMAN, U.S. Department of Education

Norton Grubb, a prolific student of occupational education in the United States, provided us with two overlapping volumes in 1996. *Learning to Work* is an important and good read for both social scientists and those responsible for policy in postsecondary education principally because (1) its history of job training programs is concise and clear, (2) its review of the evaluations of those programs demonstrates how much we in higher education have to learn about rigor in evaluation design, and (3) its recommendations on project-based teaching and learning are fine guides for more generalized student-centered approaches.

In the current environment of systemic reform in education, school-to-work (STW) is very much part of the equation, but it is not well understood by those in the traditional higher education sector. STW has to be set against a background of three decades of experimentation with job training programs such as those under the Economic Opportunity Act, MDTA (Manpower Development and Training Act), WIN (Work Incentive program), CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act), JOBS (Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training), and others. Grubb sorts out this wilderness of acronyms using a wise strategy of focusing on program evaluation. In addition to learning just how minimally effective these programs were, we are reminded (if we ever knew them) of critical principles of evaluation design, such as selection effects, maturation effects, and regression to the mean (less a statistical notion than a behavioral one). Grubb points us toward the use of qualitative studies to sort out the effects of local variations...

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should read this boo... Start by marking "Working in the Middle: Strengthening Education and Training for the Mid-Skilled Labor Force" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving... Want to Read. Working in the Middle: Strengthening Education and Training for the Mid-Skilled Labor Force. Grubb, W. Norton. Based on statistical research and interviews with students, educators, and employers, this book offers a comprehensive overview of the education and training of the mid-skilled labor force comprised of individuals having at least a high school diploma but less than a baccalaureate degree. Chapter 2 discusses the educational pathways into the mid-skilled labor market, focusing on the role of two-year colleges in preparing this group, while chapter 3 presents data on the economic effects of sub-baccalaureate education, suggesting that individuals completing credentials can benefit substantially. But what kinds of skills, education, and training are most appropriate, in light of changes in the U.S. economy? Is the "information economy" resulting in rising demands only for workers with college and post-graduate education? Various economists have argued that future demands for workers will be strong in highly-educated professional jobs and low-paid service jobs, while much more modest at skill levels in between these sectors. o Substantial demand remains for individuals to fill skilled jobs in the middle of the labor market, with many of these jobs paying quite high wages. This is particularly true for jobs that require an associate's degree or some particular vocational training and certification. If those missing workers were in the labor force looking for work, the unemployment rate would be 9.4 percent instead of 7.4 percent. In other words, more than five-and-a-half years since the start of the Great Recession, the labor market remains extremely weak by historical standards. More education and training to help workers make job transitions could help some individuals, but it's not going to generate demand, so it will not solve the unemployment crisis. Instead, Washington policymakers must to focus on policies that will stimulate demand. Evidence from recent cycles in the US labor market," Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Working Paper No. 2013-09. Lazear, Edward P. and James R. Spletzer (2012), "The United States labor market: Status quo or a new normal?" Skills Coalition, middle-skill jobs accounted for 53 percent of all jobs in the U.S. in 2015, yet only 43 percent of workers were trained to the "middle-. skill level" (National Skills Coalition, 2017). Proponents contend that this. resulting "skills gap" can be remedied mostly by expanding specific vocational. education and training programs, rather than focusing on a general expansion. middle-skill occupation requires a level of education above a high school diploma and below a bachelor's degree; or. a high school diploma and one of the following: apprenticeship, long-term on-the-job training, moderate term on-. the-job training, and work experience. Middle-skill occupations are then estimated at the most aggregated level of. major occupations.