

## WHY HAS THE US FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF APPRENTICESHIPS TO ITS ECONOMY AND SOCIETY?

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### ABSTRACT

*Over the past several decades, there have been some common trends in apprenticeships particularly in developed countries: an increasing participation of employers and employees (including women and minorities), expanded range of occupations, and greater alignment with national and international qualification standards. However, despite these commonalities, the US has clearly lagged behind many advanced countries, like Germany and Switzerland in number, quality, and variety of apprenticeships. The scope of the paper is to understand the reasons, as well as the consequences of this shortcoming on the economy and society, and to provide recommendations to improve the challenges facing 21<sup>st</sup> century America.*

**Keywords:** *apprenticeships, economy, society*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the US, there has been a significant mismatch between the knowledge and skills of labor demand and labor supply. This gap has produced paradoxical results: in December 2018 US companies had 5.9 million openings, but the 6.5 million of American unemployed did not have the required qualifications to get those jobs. An important reason for this paradox can be seen in the reluctance in the US - contrary to other advanced countries like Germany or Switzerland - to expand the scope and function of the apprenticeship program (An apprenticeship is an employment program that train people to do a specific job. It usually includes a mix of classroom-based learning and job training. This program can last from one to several years depending on the specific field and at the end of the apprenticeship program the trainees receive a formal qualification).

In this paper we will try to understand the reasons, as well as the consequences, of the current state of the apprenticeships in the USA and provide recommendations to increase the integration between education, training, and jobs. The objectives are to increase to supply of skilled workers, to create viable careers, and provide America with a competitive advantage in the global economy.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2, discusses the current state of US apprenticeships and compares it to other advanced countries, Section 3, presents the major factors leading to the decline of US vocational training, Section 4, presents the consequences of the current state of apprenticeship on the US economy and society, Section 5, provides policy recommendations and, sections 6, summarizes the main results.

### 2. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE US APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM VIS-À-VIS THE GERMAN AND SWISS MODELS

Over the last decade both Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump drastically increased the number of apprenticeships. They recognized apprenticeship as a powerful path to present and future employment. Significant changes in the US apprentice model began with the 2011 implementation of the apprenticeships