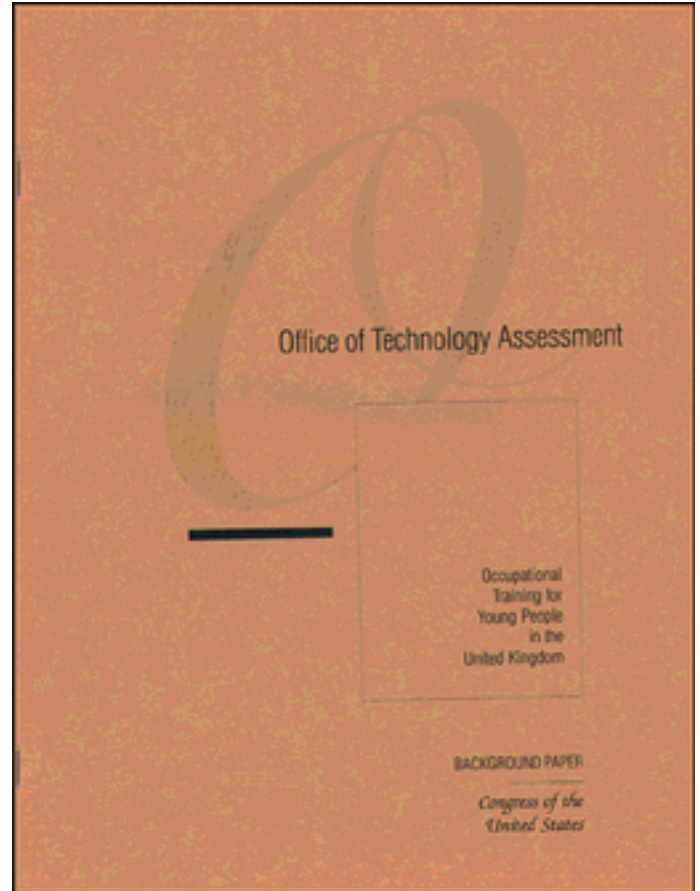


*Occupational Training for Young People in
the United Kingdom*

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Foreword

The problems of high unemployment among young people ages 16 through 19, and widespread impressions by employers of inadequate work-related skills among young jobseekers, are not unique to the United States. On the premise that nations can often learn from each other by studying each other's efforts to resolve similar problems, this background paper examines the youth training experiences of the United Kingdom over the last 30 years.

Both Britain and the United States have faced similar issues when it comes to youth job training: rapid changes in governments, policies, and programs, all of which helps to produce "initiative fatigue"; program overlap and competition between education and labor bureaucracies; reluctance among employers to participate in youth training initiatives; concerns among guidance counselors, parents, and teachers about programs' potential to track students into low-earning careers; and lack of good program evaluations. Both countries are investing heavily in public-private endeavors to develop skills standards. Future information on the effectiveness of current British initiatives could be informative to U.S. policymakers. These efforts involve the government's provision of training vouchers to students, a selection mechanism that guides goals students of differing of greater and lesser academic achievement into different training paths, and the use of a national system for certifying occupational readiness.

The background paper was prepared for the assessment, *Learning to Work: Making the Transition from School to Work*, which was requested by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (Senator Edward M. Kennedy, then-Chairman of the Committee, now Ranking Minority Member), and endorsed by the House Committee on Education and Labor (now the House Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities).

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