Proprietary and career schools have long provided postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) as private, for-profit institutions. In recent years, they have been joined at the secondary level by charter schools providing CTE. These issues affect proprietary, career, and charter schools as providers of secondary or postsecondary CTE: the quality of programs and services; training students for oversupplied occupations; provision and effectiveness of student support services; state postsecondary oversight and licensing; and student success on state proficiency tests. Prominent approaches to ensuring quality are accreditation for proprietary and career schools and close charter school/employer partnerships, with employer-linked charter schools a growing phenomenon. One question at the postsecondary level is whether proprietary and career schools are becoming more like public community and technical colleges, particularly in student characteristics and breadth of training and education. At the secondary level, the similarity between CTE charter schools and school-to-work concepts is often pointed out. (An annotated listing of 27 resources is followed by a list of 3 Web resources.) (YLB)
Proprietary, Career, and Charter Schools and CTE
Trends and Issues Alert No. 36

Michael E. Wonacott

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090
Proprietary and career schools have long provided postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) as private, for-profit institutions. In recent years, they have been joined at the secondary level by charter schools providing CTE. This Alert addresses important trends and issues affecting proprietary, career, and charter schools as providers of secondary or postsecondary CTE, as well as the implications of those trends for the more traditional, public institutions providing CTE.

The quality of programs and services, a long-standing issue for proprietary and career schools (Burk 1998), is also under scrutiny for charter schools. Issues include training students for oversupplied occupations (General Accounting Office 1997a), provision and effectiveness of student support services (Washington State 1998), state postsecondary oversight and licensing (California Postsecondary Education Commission 1995), and student success on state proficiency tests (Drew 2002). Prominent approaches to ensuring quality are accreditation for proprietary and career schools (Lewis 1999) and close charter school/employer partnerships (The Inside View 2001), with employer-linked charter schools growing a phenomenon (Goodman 1998).

One question at the postsecondary level—perhaps a trend, perhaps not—is whether proprietary and career schools are becoming more like public community and technical colleges (e.g., Clowes and Hawthorn 1995), particularly in student characteristics (Farmer and O’Lawrence 2000) and breadth of training and education (Moore 1995). At the secondary level, the similarity between CTE charter schools and school-to-work concepts is often pointed out (Goodman 1998).

Resources


This report of a hearing on Pell Grant fraud and abuse and investigation of proprietary IADE American Schools discusses the effectiveness and improvement of Department of Education oversight.


Profiles include charter school serving grades 5-8 through a Cradle-to-Career program integrating career exploration and career-related curriculum themes; Bureau of Indian Affairs charter school, part of a school-to-work coalition serving 1,800 students in 8 communities.


After scrutiny and battles over quality and legitimacy, proprietary institutions have gained increased esteem as members of the higher education community.

California Postsecondary Education Commission. The Effectiveness of California’s Oversight of Private Postsecondary and Vocation Education. Sacramento: CPEC, 1995. (ED 403 863)

Reform legislation protected the integrity of proprietary school degrees and diplomas, protected students from misrepresentation and unfair practices, and promoted schools' financial integrity. Recommended: added oversight/enforcement authority/resources, consistent standards for degree/nondegree programs and profit/nonprofit institutions.


Online commercial newsletter for career schools includes brief articles on student services, accreditation, and business operations.


Addresses the issue: Are proprietary schools becoming more or less like community colleges? Articles cover mission, governance, funding, history, student characteristics; default, accreditation, articulation; federal student aid policy; state oversight; future directions.


Public community and technical colleges should provide clearer information on transfers from private career schools and appoint a career school liaison; improvements are needed in transferring credits from career schools.


The importance of partnerships between charter school for adjudicated youth and state/local agencies is discussed.


The director of a school integrating the arts into core academics attributed poor recordkeeping and a decline in state proficiency test scores to the difficulty of combining a small business and an educational institution.


Presents data on ethnicity, gender, marital status, program enrollment, grade point averages, and hours worked per week of students in community colleges and 2-year proprietary schools.

Forrest, B. "Private Schools and Agricultural Education in North Carolina." Agricultural Education Magazine 70, no. 6 (May-June 1998): 7, 11.

Explains how private schools provide secondary agricultural education and leadership training through Future Farmers of America.

General Accounting Office. Proprietary Schools: Analysis of Comments Received from an Association of Schools. Washington, DC: Health, Education, and Human Services Division, GAO, 1997a. (ED 413 422)

Following objections from a proprietary school association, the GAO defended findings that inappropriate job projection and other practices by proprietary school may lead to training students for oversupplied occupations.

Described the extent of federal Title IV financial aid to proprietary school students; found that inappropriate job projection and other practices by proprietary school may lead to training students for oversupplied occupations.


Profile of three Arizona charter schools shows similarities to the school-to-work concept—basic rationale, community involvement, accountability, choice, and options.


Describes a charter school that embraces project learning, real-world problem solving, student freedom, multilevel classrooms, and video student work portfolios.


Kansas City Career Academy, a charter school founded when the district's vocational high school was closed, is driven by local labor market demand and school/business collaboration and partnerships.


Identifies four career orientations (career preparation, career focus, career informed, noncareer partnership) and six recurring themes (stages of school development; adapting to environment; career path identification and choice; customized design options; variation in organizational structure; impact of state legislation).


Case studies focused on the vision of founders, learning in context, meeting work force development needs, staffing, and role models and mentoring.

Lewis, M. V. *Student Outcomes at Private, Accredited Career Schools and Colleges of Technology: An Analysis of the Effects of Selected School/College Characteristics on Student Outcomes for School Years 1990 through 1993.* Columbus: Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University, 1995. (ED 379 492)

Graduation, withdrawal, training-related placement, and federal student loan default rates for full- vs. part-time students were identified. Characteristics associated with school performance included total enrollment, main or branch campus, dual accreditation, satellite facilities, average program length, faculty turnover, and percentage of "ability to benefit" students.

Lewis, M. V. *An Examination of the Standards Established by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology.* Columbus: Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University, 1999. (ED 432 694)

Results showed strong to very strong administrator support of standards. Very positive student, graduate, and employer responses indicated that standards were producing intended conditions and outcomes.


State-certified private career schools should be involved in program articulation, regional partnerships, proposed state scholarship program, and expanding customized training.


Proprietary schools train students for immediate employment but can also help students develop in more general areas. Public and proprietary schools have about the same rate of completions, job placements, and earnings.


Orients graduates to career schools and issues (e.g., curriculum, credentials, accreditation, placement services and rate, training methods and quality, scholarships and financial aid, affordability, income and career potential, and student commitment).


Employer-linked charter schools can increase business "ownership," promote different forms of relationships with public education, and serve diverse and disadvantaged student populations.


Results showed that students were representative of the state population, entered schools to gain job skills and got them, and generally found related employment. Improvements in math instruction and job-seeking advice were found.


Based on a very small sample, private career schools were found generally weaker than other programs for adults in general workplace skills, communications, and support service access.


Can state funding follow students to alternative learning environments like charter schools? No laws were found either requiring or prohibiting it.

Web Resources

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCCT) <http://www.accscct.org> provides information on the accrediting process, other links and resources, and ACCSCCT accreditation standards.

Career College Association provides links to national and regional accrediting agencies, state associations, and other education associations <http://www.career.org/related_orgs.html>.

Employer-Linked Charter Schools <http://www.employercharterschools.com> provides information, resources, links, and publications, including case studies.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. ED-99-CO-0013. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Trends and Issues Alerts may be freely reproduced and are available at <http://etric.info.org/ta/a>.
NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☒ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").