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“Introducing the Gordon Principle for Regional Development”

In 1967 Laurence J. Peter developed a proposition that rapidly gained such recognition that it became known as The Peter Principle: Anything that works (ideas, people, machines) will be used in progressively more challenging situations until it fails.

The example of this principle inspired me to attempt to encapsulate my basic thinking on the forces central to the health of regional economic and workforce development. Here is the Gordon Principle: For sustainable economic viability, regions need to develop education-to-employment systems aligned to labor market changes.

In the United States, over 10 million jobs remain vacant while there is growing unrest among Americans who are either unemployed or underemployed. This is feeding populism of the left and right and the development of a variety of scapegoats to blame for their plight. However in my opinion, the basic culprit is escalating technological change. Change is never easy for individuals, organizations or societies. The key component in the Gordon Principle is keeping labor-market demands and education and training programs in alignment. Public-private partnerships that feature cross-sector collaboration are vital for identifying changes in labor-market demands and then making corresponding changes in the education-to-employment pipeline.

There are U.S. communities that are supporting intense public-private regional collaborations that are rebuilding their local talent pipelines. These initiatives promote systemic changes that are providing educational preparation to more people for a job market that continues to demand more learning. Here are two examples:

Chicago, IL Manufacturing Connect is a program operated by Manufacturing Renaissance. This intermediary includes 55 local manufacturing employers and three inner city Chicago Public High Schools. Manufacturing Connect offers manufacturing technology classes through which participants can earn industry credentials and college credits, obtain work experience opportunities with local manufacturing firms, and access a wide variety of supportive services. Funders include the U.S. Department of Labor, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, foundations, Boeing and 22 local manufacturers.

Charleston, SC Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeships is a partnership among 4 local high-school districts, Trident Technical College, 122 employers, Apprenticeship Carolina, the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, and the Charleston Regional Development Alliance. This is a two-year program in which high-school juniors take academic classes at their high school in the morning, go to Trident Tech for career-specific courses in the afternoon and work part-time at a business during the school year and full-time during the summer.

Although the federal government recently has added more programs supporting career education, the major questions remains, “How can we bring to scale public-private collaborations that establish and maintain regional talent-delivery systems for 21st-century jobs and careers?”

The next Gordon Report will explore some of the major cultural roadblocks that must be cleared away to advance the critical components of systemic change.

Edward E. Gordon is president and founder of Imperial Consulting Corporation (www.imperialcorp.com). His book, *Future Jobs: Solving the Employment and Skills Crisis*, winner of an Independent Publishers award, is now available in an updated 2018 paperback edition.