

Neuroscience discoveries alter public policy debates

April 5 2012

Neuroscience has made tremendous progress in understanding the adolescent brain, creating opportunities as well as challenges for using that knowledge in relation to public policies, according to an article in the Spring 2012 edition of *Issues in Science and Technology*.

The journal is produced by the [National Academy of Sciences](#), National Academy of Engineering, Institute of [Medicine](#) and The University of Texas at Dallas.

Laurence Steinberg of Temple University writes that “incontrovertible evidence” has shown changes in brain structure and function continue much longer than once thought, but it remains unclear whether this now accepted understanding changes the expectations of young people.

“Some policymakers will use this evidence to argue in favor of restricting adolescents’ rights, and others will use it to advocate for policies that protect adolescents from harm,” he wrote. “Science can help in deciding where best to draw the lines.”

Also in the latest edition, Richard Van Atta and Marko M. G. Slusarczuk of the Institute of Defense Analyses write that U.S. leadership in the semiconductor industry is threatened by competitors in Europe and Asia.

When challenged by Japan 25 years ago, the United States responded vigorously. U.S. industry convinced the government to make investments that helped preserve and sustain U.S. leadership.

But today's situation is in some ways worse, and so far, the authors write, there has not even been a policy discussion about it.

In another article, Robert D. Atkinson of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation in Washington, D.C., argues for a new approach to strengthening U.S. capacity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Atkinson writes that although most policymakers agree that a stronger skills base in these fields is critical for boosting the country's innovation and competitiveness, the current approach is misguided.

Instead of a "some STEM for all" approach -- in which all U.S. students receive as much STEM education as possible -- he advocates an "all STEM for some" approach. Using that strategy, most resources would be devoted to rigorous training for students who are most interested and capable of doing well in STEM.

More information: www.issues.org/

Provided by University of Texas at Dallas

Citation: Neuroscience discoveries alter public policy debates (2012, April 5) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-neuroscience-discoveries-policy-debates.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.