



The Daily Dish

Improved “Quit Rate” but Mediocre Hiring

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | FEBRUARY 10, 2014

“U.S. workers are slowly getting a bit bolder. The percentage who voluntarily left their job—the nation's “quit rate”—hit 1.8% in November, the highest in the recovery and up from a low of 1.2% in September 2009, according to the Labor Department,” writes the [Wall Street Journal](#) this morning. “About 2.4 million workers resigned in November. Some retired or simply chose not to work. But most quit to hunt for a new job or because they had already found one. Figures for December, due Tuesday, will probably show further gains in quitting, economists say.”

The jobs report on Friday, however, showed that “U.S. job creation slowed sharply over the past two months, turning in the weakest performance in three years and raising the prospect that the economy may be losing momentum. At the same time, however, the unemployment rate hit a new five-year low of 6.6 percent in January even as Americans piled back into the labor market to search for work,” according to [Reuters](#).

DHE wrote his analysis of the jobs number in the [U-6 Fix](#): “The bottom line: The January report far from clarifies muddy waters. The question was whether December job growth was a weather-related aberration that disguised modest acceleration. The only bottom line is that the answer is no. There is no catastrophe, but no evidence of acceleration either.”

Eakinomics: The Common Core Controversy

The [Common Core State Standards Initiative](#) (“Common Core”) is a state-based effort to set voluntary educational standards for K-12 education in English and mathematics. The basic idea is to ensure that high-school graduates are prepared for college or the workforce. The greatest accomplishment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law has been to document failures in the K-12 school system, identified down to the state, district, school, principal, teachers, and students. Such failures are far too prevalent and it is an imperative that the

U.S. improve the ability of its young to compete and thrive in the future.

In light of NCLB, it is at first blush surprising that Common Core is controversial. In part this stems from the Obama Administration's decision to tie federal dollars ("Race to the Top" funds) to adoption of the Common Core; decisions look a lot less "voluntary" when they are done in response to an apparent bribe. Adding fuel to the controversial fire, administration officials have strengthened opposition with comments that suggest that white suburban moms opposed tougher standards when they realize that ["their child isn't as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn't quite as good as they thought they were."](#)

Putting the Common Core into a partisan battle did not do it a service.

A more fundamental concern has been that it intrudes on "local control" and the ability of parents to influence their childrens' schools. On one hand, intruding on local control is a necessity. In too many places, "local" control means union control; which in turn means a commitment to fighting change at the expense of the future of America's young. On the other hand, setting sensible expectations does not preclude parents or local administrators from considerable input into how students meet those expectations.

A reality of public policy is that no approach fits everyone perfectly. There will be parents and schools whose expectations exceed the Common Core. There will be those who satisfy the Common Core and still struggle in college or the labor market. But there is little that is threatening about a voluntary system that responds to the stark reality of widespread educational failure.