

Apprenticeship Program Requirements and Apprenticeship Completion Rates in Canada

Patrick J. Coe
Carleton University

January 2011

Abstract

Over the past two decades there has been considerable growth in the number of new apprenticeship registrations in Canada. However, this has not been matched by a corresponding increase in the number of apprenticeship completions. As a result Canadian apprenticeship programs have seen declining completion rates over this period. Across provinces, trades and time there is considerable variation in apprenticeship completion rates. In Canada apprenticeship programs are provincially regulated and there are differences in requirements across trades and provinces and, to a lesser extent, over time. Therefore, this paper asks to what extent the differences in completion rates are related to differences in the structure of apprenticeship programs, as well as differences in demographic variables and unemployment rates. Results suggest that apprenticeship programs for which certification is mandatory have completion rates that are about ten percentage points higher than those without mandatory certification. There is little evidence to support the view that either the length of the work experience term or the technical training requirement act as a barrier to completion. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the format in which technical training is delivered is related to completion rates. While the decline in completion rates during the 1990s coincided with the raising of education requirements, accounting for the trend in completion rates implies a positive relationship between these two variables across trades and provinces. On average, trades with a higher fraction of female apprentices and apprentices with a younger average age tend to have higher completion rates. Finally, in general the results are consistent with high unemployment rates acting as a barrier to completion.

JEL Classification:

J24

Keywords:

Apprenticeship Completions, Program Requirements

The author thanks the Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researchers Network (CLSRN) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) for financial support for this project. The author especially thanks Benoit Cadieux from the Trades and Apprenticeship Division at HRSDC his help in response to numerous requests for advice and access to data. Finally, the author would also like to thank Paul Stoll at the Centre for Education Statistics at HRSDC for access to data, Pierre Brochu, Jennifer Hunt, an anonymous referee and participants at the CLSRN Apprenticeship Workshop in Vancouver for many useful comments and suggestions. All remaining errors are the sole responsibility of the author.