

Attrition in apprenticeships – some recent research results and future research needs

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Apprenticeships are a major source of skilled labour for Australian industry. The output of qualified tradespeople with skills relevant to the needs of employers is a key indicator of success in apprenticeships and traineeships. The rate of attrition is an important indicator of efficiency and effectiveness in the system. The higher the attrition rate the higher the costs of achieving a given level of output of skills and qualified labour, and the less effective the system is in providing appropriate skills and training.

Deriving an accurate estimate of the apprenticeship attrition rate, while fairly straight forward in theory, is extremely difficult in practice. Historically it has not been possible to accurately determine an overall rate for Australia and best estimates have been plagued with data problems.

This study utilises a methodology which takes into account the effect on the attrition rate of apprentices who cancel or withdraw and subsequently recommence and complete their training. It also provides a methodology for the calculation of an accurate year-on-year attrition rate for the first time. Because of data problems, previous studies have generally been unable to provide this level of accuracy in attrition rates.

The following issues are addressed:

- What is the true level of attrition in apprenticeships prior to New Apprenticeships?
- What do previous studies tell us about attrition?
- To what extent is apprenticeship attrition a problem?
- What are some of the influences on attrition? and
- What research on attrition in New Apprenticeships appears warranted?

Topic area: Apprenticeships, New Apprenticeships

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