

## NCVER synthesises recent adult literacy research

### ADULT LITERACY

The issue of literacy and numeracy, including its relevance to the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia, has undergone substantial research and policy development in recent years.

Many consider that this momentum should be maintained so that literacy and numeracy is sustained and extended into mainstream policies and further research.

NCVER has published two resources that aim to provide concise summaries of recent research into adult literacy and numeracy.

By presenting new knowledge and information from recent research in easy-to-read publications, it is hoped the relationship between research and policy development will be strengthened. It is also hoped that training providers and practitioners will be able to better support the needs of literacy and numeracy clients in the VET sector.

*Adult literacy and numeracy: At a glance* extracts key findings and significant insights from an extensive body of research conducted in 2003 and 2004 for the Adult Literacy National Project\*.

Emerging from this synthesis are five key messages:

- Attempts to propose any single definition of literacy and numeracy are relatively futile when social, cultural and technological changes shape our understandings and alter the way we think about literacy and numeracy. As our concepts change with the times, so do approaches to developing these skills.
- Recognising the multiple dimensions of literacy should lead to diverse teaching and learning strategies. This has implications for adult literacy practitioners and indicates a need for more professional development opportunities.



- The challenge is not confined to those with poor basic skills but extends to all people trying to understand new forms of communication and information as they take on different roles in life and work. The continuous emergence of new ways of communicating means that literacy and numeracy learning should be a lifelong process.
- There are many different and changing contexts in which literacy and numeracy skills are applied—in workplaces and industry, communities, public and home life. In each of these contexts, the literacy and numeracy demands are equally as varied. Learning about language, literacy and numeracy is not restricted to conventional educational environments. It can also be integrated into work and community settings, but this requires effective collaboration and coordinated approaches.
- While basic skills are an important tool, they are not sufficient in themselves. People with limited literacy can lead very successful lives, achieving stable employment, economic self-management and academic success. In doing so, they often have to be particularly determined and able to make clever use of networks and technologies.

NCVER has also published *Adult literacy research overviews*. These single-page overviews provide a comprehensive summary of the 14 NCVER-managed adult literacy reports. These are a great starting point beyond the *At a glance* for those who do not have time to immediately reach for the full report.

The research covered by the overviews is extensive—from literacy and numeracy definitions in policy-making and teaching and learning terms, to literacy practices and various approaches across Indigenous and ethnic communities, industry, volunteer and community settings.

**Adult literacy and numeracy: At a glance, by Sue Foster and Francesca Beddie, is available from the NCVER website at [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1584.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1584.html).**

**The Adult literacy research overviews, by various authors, are available from the NCVER website at [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1485.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1485.html).**

**For more information on the adult literacy research program, contact Jo Hargreaves, [joanne.hargreaves@ncver.edu.au](mailto:joanne.hargreaves@ncver.edu.au).**

### IN THIS ISSUE

2

Students and courses 2004 results

Survey expands to include non-TAFE VET students

3

New job landscape requires different approach

Getting to grips with learning styles

4

Tailoring VET to the emerging labour market

Consultation helps build VET providers capability

5

International Insight: Charting a career essential to life's journey

6

Addressing skill shortages in the minerals sector

NCVER Breakfast briefings: VET and employers needs

7

Recent releases

8

Older workers in New Apprenticeships

Making the most of tradition and technology

\* Work undertaken in 2003 and 2004 for the Adult Literacy National Project was funded by the Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Science and Training.

## Students and courses 2004 results

### VET STATISTICS

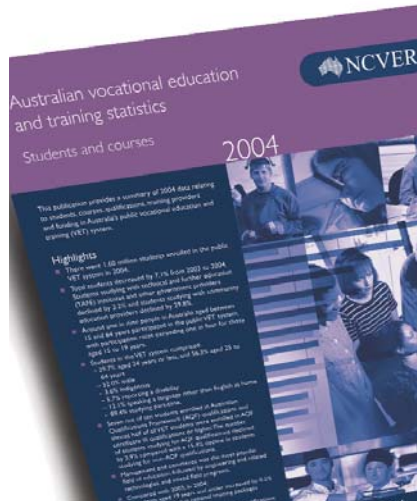
**Participation in Australia's public VET system decreased from around 1.7 million students to 1.6 million between 2003 and 2004.**

Almost 60% of the national decline is associated with a decline in students attending community education providers. The number of students enrolled at community providers fell from 244 258 in 2003 to 171 390 in 2004—a 29.8% decrease.

This is mainly due to a large drop in numbers reported from community education providers in New South Wales, some of which is attributable to software problems experienced by these providers. Excluding students training with community providers, the decline was 4.6% across students in TAFE and other registered training providers (both public and private).

Tasmania (7.8%) and the Australian Capital Territory (2.2%) were the only areas to increase their student numbers. The largest decline occurred in New South Wales (12.1%). In the remaining states, the decrease was below the national average.

Younger people are continuing to participate in VET at a higher rate than older people. Over one in four people in Australia aged 15 to 19 years were enrolled in a VET course in 2004. This participation rate diminishes with age, with around 6% of the Australian population aged between 45 and 64 years participating in VET.



Of the 1.6 million students in vocational education and training in 2004:

- around four in ten (39.7%) are aged 24 years or less
- most studied on a part-time basis (89%)
- around 15.5% were apprentices and trainees doing their off-the-job training with a publicly funded VET provider
- half enrolled in training packages
- seven in ten (69.2%) undertook Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications.

Groups of students, including equity groups, with relatively small decreases in student numbers between 2003 and 2004 include:

- full-time students (1.8% decrease)
- students aged 20 to 24 years (3.7% decrease)

- Indigenous students (2.5% decrease)
- students reporting a disability (1.4% decrease)
- students who speak a language other than English at home (4.3% decrease)
- apprentices and trainees doing their off-the-job training in the public VET system (3.1% decrease).

Increases in student numbers were reported for students aged 19 years and under (0.5%), and for those enrolled in AQF certificate III qualifications (2.0%).

Management and commerce continued to be the dominant field of education with 20.6% of students, followed by engineering and related technologies (16.2%) and mixed field programs (11.8%). Between 2003 and 2004, the mixed field program recorded the highest growth (14.1%) while the largest decrease (-21.7%) occurred in health. Consistent with 2003, the greatest proportion of women studied courses related to management and commerce, while the most popular courses for males were in engineering and related technologies.

*Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2004—Summary, by NCVER, is available from the NCVER website at [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1595.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1595.html).*

## Survey expands to include non-TAFE VET students

### STUDENT OUTCOMES

**This year's NCVER Student Outcomes Survey will provide a broader focus on VET outcomes through the inclusion of publicly funded students from all types of providers—not just those from technical and further education (TAFE) institutes—and also fee-paying students in TAFE institutes.**

This year around 300 000 students are being asked to comment on the benefits and relevance of their training and their level of satisfaction.

The survey's questions centre around employment and further study outcomes, reasons for doing the training, satisfaction

with the training, as well as reasons for not undertaking more training.

Students taking part in the survey include graduates and those who successfully complete part of a course (module completers) at TAFE and other registered training organisations in receipt of public VET funding.

Another first in this year's survey was a financial incentive to encourage more people to complete the survey, with one student in each state and territory winning \$1000 simply by completing and returning their survey by mid-June.

In preparation for the reporting of 2005 results, summary data from the 2003 survey highlighting outcomes for students

from all VET providers is now available for the first time. This information can be accessed at [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1603.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1603.html)

NCVER has conducted the Student Outcomes Survey every year since 1997. Publications and questionnaires for each year can be accessed at [www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/21052.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistic/21052.html)

*The results from the 2005 Student Outcomes Survey will be released in November. To be alerted when this publication is released, subscribe to NCVER News at [www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html).*

## New job landscape requires different approach

### CAREER DEVELOPMENT

#### A stronger culture of career development needs to be built in Australia, recent research suggests.

Changing work practices and Australia's ageing demographic require a re-think of the ways in which we might better allocate human resources. The notion of 'a job for life' is rapidly being replaced by the reality that individuals now face the prospect of many career changes during their lives.

In order to cope with these changing work structures, career guidance over the course of one's life will become essential. People need to be encouraged to develop and manage their own career pathways.

Currently, career guidance services are primarily designed to cater to school children and tertiary students and often do not consider the needs of those outside the labour market and educational systems.

Women returning to work, the long-term unemployed, older jobseekers and people whose employment is tenuous were at the centre of this recent study, which investigated the feasibility of developing a national model for providing career and learning guidance to these target groups.

"Building the individual's capacity to manage a career pathway is a joint



Lifelong career guidance is becoming essential.

responsibility of the state, the individual and the employer," says principal researcher Francesca Beddie.

"Most adults, especially those disengaged from the labour force, are unlikely to be proactive in seeking career guidance."

The study suggests strategies to overcome this gap in career advice, including developing a social marketing campaign to help people recognise the contemporary need to manage and monitor their own careers, and encouraging wider recognition and endorsement of lifelong career development and guidance services.

Other suggested initiatives include greater support for affordable and independent career guidance services, further

development or adaptation of learning materials to assist disengaged clients in overcoming barriers to learning—such as poor English language or information technology skills—and widespread professional development for people whose jobs involve aspects of career development and guidance.

**Enhancing career development: The role of community-based career guidance for disengaged adults, by Francesca Beddie, will be available soon from the NCVER website. To be alerted when this publication is available, subscribe to NCVER News at [www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html).**

## Getting to grips with learning styles

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

#### A study of learning styles suggests that VET practitioners need a range of teaching methods to help them meet the needs of each student.

According to the research, understanding learning styles assists the practitioners to cater for individual student requirements.

So, what are the typical characteristics of VET learners? Students are inclined to be more visual than verbal and like to observe rather than read or listen. They are inclined to be hands-on and learn by doing. They also like to learn in groups and tend not to be self-directed learners, but prefer to be guided by an instructor.

*Getting to grips with learning styles*, by Peter Smith and Jennifer Dalton, suggests there is no one 'right' theory of how people learn.

"It's best to select one or two that make sense to you and work with them," says Peter Smith.

"Just watching students carefully and observing what seems to work for them, as well as talking to them about their preferences, helps. Suitable learning resources and strategies can then be identified and implemented."

Self-directed learning is regarded as the most empowering—when learners take the lead themselves.

According to the research, these sorts of self-driven learning skills are also what employers are looking for in their employees, so it is important that practitioners work with students to help them develop these skills.

This publication complements research published by NCVER earlier this year.

*Accommodating learning styles: Relevance and good practice in vocational education and training*, also by Peter Smith and

Jennifer Dalton (available at [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1554.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1554.html)), identified how VET practitioners view learning style

differences between students and how they take account of those differences in designing and delivering teaching.

The latest publication has been designed to give VET practitioners some clear and simple information about students' learning styles and how knowledge about them can help deliver training more effectively. It describes what learning styles are and some of the major theoretical ideas underpinning them and their use. It then describes how learning styles and preferences are determined and provides some practical suggestions to help practitioners use this information more effectively.

**Getting to grips with learning styles, by Peter Smith and Jennifer Dalton, will be available soon from the NCVER website. To be alerted when this publication is available, subscribe to NCVER News at [www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html).**

## Tailoring VET to the emerging labour market

### INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYERS

**A major research consortium program is assessing Australia's skills development system at a time when Australia is experiencing the highest level of skill utilisation in the economy for the past three decades, as illustrated by relatively low levels of unemployment (around 5%).**

"This strong employment market has highlighted imbalances between the types of skills supplied and those demanded," says program director, Professor Sue Richardson.

"These differences often go unnoticed when there is excess supply of skills, but employers make sure that they are noticed when there is a skill shortage. By assessing weak spots, the vocational education system in general can identify sensible responses to skill development."

The two-year research program is being undertaken by the National Institute of Labour Studies (NILS) and the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong

Learning (CPELL) at the University of Melbourne.

It aims to understand how the labour market is evolving and then to identify how the VET system can maximise its contribution to enhancing the level of skills and the match between skills supplied and skills demanded in the Australian economy.

Through several projects, the consortium will explore the meaning of a skills shortage and how to recognise it, consider current strategies used by the VET system to identify expected skills shortages, look at improving ways in which the VET system may identify and respond to anticipated skill shortages and also examine obstacles that prevent people from obtaining skills of which they are capable.

The future supply of skills will be investigated through two major projects. The first will look at the dramatic changes in the demographic structure of the Australian population—including the low and falling birth rate and the retirement of

baby boomers—and the consequences for the workforce. The second project will investigate the extent to which the people in the workforce actively acquire vocational skills, both when young and as adults.

At its conclusion, the research consortium will bring together findings about where shortages are likely to occur, where potential extra supply can best be found, how to draw this extra supply into the skill set (through getting new people into training and through facilitating refreshment and upgrading of skills) and how the VET system can best identify emerging skills shortages and surpluses and react rapidly to this intelligence.

**For more information about the research consortium program, A well-skilled future: Tailoring vocational education and training to the emerging labour market, contact Joanne Hargreaves at [joanne.hargreaves@ncver.edu.au](mailto:joanne.hargreaves@ncver.edu.au).**

## Consultation helps build VET providers' capability

### THE VET SYSTEM

**A new research consortium examining how best to help build the capability of VET providers and their workforces has already opened strong lines of communication with stakeholders.**

The consortium started its ambitious research program by consulting a wide range of key stakeholders and giving a number of presentations to get their research efforts 'on the map'.

This contact with stakeholders aimed to obtain a good understanding of the VET sector's requirements to shape the direction of ongoing research.

"It has been a hard six months, but it has been well worth it," says program director Professor Roger Harris.

"So far, we have talked to over 50 stakeholders in all states and territories and delivered presentations, workshops and focus groups in Western Australia, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

"Over 240 people have attended these presentations, which has helped build awareness of what we are trying to do. It's also helped us build the networks we need for this research program to work."

In addition to strong support for the



**High levels of communication underpin the VET research project.**

research, the initial consultation has helped to uncover initiatives in a range of jurisdictions and organisations, and the consortium has identified synergies with their work.

The consortium is committed to high levels of communication. Newsletters have been widely distributed in April and early July, and the consortium has established a website.

"This website aims to be dynamic, so it is definitely one to bookmark," says Berwyn Clayton, another of the consortium's key researchers.

"It has a discussion forum so practitioners and others interested in the research can contribute and have their say."

It is expected that early publications reporting work in progress should soon start to appear on the website.

Key activities over the next couple of months include publication of literature reviews from three of the research projects and a summary of the outcomes of consultations and state-based forums.

**For more information about the research consortium program, Supporting vocational education and training providers in building capability for the future, go to [www.consortiumresearchprogram.net.au/html](http://www.consortiumresearchprogram.net.au/html)**

# INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT

*International Insight* is a regular feature about trends and issues emerging internationally in vocational education and training (VET). In this issue, *International Insight* investigates career guidance.

## Charting a career essential to life's journey

**The continual development of new technologies and ways of working, and the subsequent need for lifelong learning, has pushed career guidance up the policy agenda ladder internationally—so says the European Training Foundation (ETF) in a review of career guidance published in 2003.**

Changes in society today, particularly in learning and work, are creating an increasingly complex array of choices and challenges for education and employment, so much so that career guidance is now an essential part of an individual's life-planning processes. In simple terms, career guidance can be described as 'services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers' (OECD 2004).

The availability and effectiveness of career guidance impacts on a nation's economic and social well-being. There is 'widespread consensus that access to guidance is central to constructing a competitive, knowledge-based economy, advancing active employment and welfare policies, and to social inclusion' (CEDEFOP 2004).

A search of literature shows an increasing amount of research into career guidance in recent years.

In some European countries, there is a clear acknowledgment of the importance of career guidance to the individual (ETF 2003). Watts and Sultana (2004) report that career education is being included in school curriculums, in some instances as a separate service from other school-based functions. Career management courses, opportunities for work experience and profiling and portfolio systems are also being introduced within the tertiary curriculum.

The ETF also reports a number of other developments, including: integration of career guidance with other services to encourage clients to be more proactive in searching for information and making decisions; improved articulation of professional qualification and service standards for career guidance practitioners; enhancement of cross-sector collaboration; and the 'borrowing' (particularly in Europe)

of policies, strategies, tools, resources and training in guidance services from other countries.

Information communication technology-based systems of career guidance are also being developed. Watts and Sultana (2004) point to the online national career information system in Australia, [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au), as a good example. They also report that in most countries career guidance is provided through publicly funded services or employers. Only in a few countries (notably Australia, Canada, Germany, Netherlands and the United Kingdom) is there a market, albeit quite limited, for fee-for-service career guidance.

While these developments hold much promise, there are numerous issues still to be resolved.

Career guidance continues to be seen by many governments as a marginal activity (ETF 2003). Consequently, it is rare to find dedicated leadership positions in career guidance and the career guidance services of large-scale providers, such as schools and public employment services, are typically conducted by people with other responsibilities, such as teaching and helping people with personal and study problems. Many of these practitioners do not have specialised qualifications and training in career guidance (OECD 2004).

The OECD (2004) and ETF (2003) reports also identify a number of other factors that can be detrimental to the quality and effectiveness of career guidance provision. For example, tendencies to emphasise provision of information rather than guidance and to focus on immediate decisions at the expense of longer-term career management is a concern. They also suggest that much of the guidance is aimed at the individual when, in some cases, group approaches would ensure wider and more economical access to guidance services. Other ways in which they say career guidance could be made more accessible to people include self-help programs (such as those provided on the *myfuture* website), creation of open-access resource centres, use of community members and wider use of support staff.



In the case of career guidance for adults, services can often be quite limited and provided in the context of public employment services. They tend to be remedial in nature and narrowly targeted to the unemployed with an immediate goal of finding them employment (EFT 2003). Gaps can also be identified in the career guidance provision for special groups, such as the disabled, migrants and refugees.

Within schools, Hughes and Karp (2004) reporting on the United States warn that, career guidance for school students tends to focus on short-term employment outcomes with few lasting benefits. The OECD (2004) warns that when school-based career guidance is provided by schools themselves, it can be too remote from the labour market, too much linked to the self-interests of particular institutions and too subordinate to personal and study guidance if it is provided by those who are not career guidance specialists.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of career guidance—to the individual, to industry and to the economic and social well-being of a country. It is a fast developing field and there are still many issues to be resolved. But most importantly, something is happening—services are being developed and refined and people of all ages and backgrounds are now reaping the benefits of more systematic, comprehensive and accessible career guidance services.

**For more further information about the publications mentioned in this article see page 7.**

## Addressing skill shortages in the minerals sector

### INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYERS

**The threat of skill shortages looms as a major challenge for the Australian minerals sector and a three-part response is emerging as a result.**

The minerals sector has enjoyed a boom in recent years, much of it driven by strong demand from China. The anticipated demand for its ore and other products is such that investment in new projects is likely to yield a good return. If skilled labour cannot be secured to construct and operate these new sites, these projects may be jeopardised.

The industry is experiencing skill shortages. However, there is a fair level of variation in the extent and impact.

Across the sector as a whole, there is evidence of rapid employment growth, rising vacancy rates and of salary-bidding leading to relative wages growth.

These trends emerged in a project undertaken by NCVET, with the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University, for the Chamber of Minerals and Energy (Western Australia) and the Minerals Council of Australia.

Several companies reported a gradual reduction in the quality and number of job applicants. Remotely located mines, in particular, experienced high levels of labour turnover and difficulty encouraging people to relocate to nearby settlements.



**Upskilling existing workers can help mineral companies counter skill shortages.**

Skill shortages were reported across all trade and operator areas, while an acute skills shortage of supervisory shift or site production managers and forepersons was noted by almost all companies.

For some companies the lack of skilled labour seriously impacted on their expansion plans and on immediate productivity.

It is not possible to quickly remedy skill shortages in a sector where the level of skill required is highly specialised. Putting into place strategies for remedying skill shortages also requires a judgement about the sector's medium-term prospects.

The minerals sector has long been characterised by boom/bust cycles. The most solid forecasts for the industry predict strong employment growth over

the next decade, but with continued uneven annual growth rates.

As skill shortages are likely to be persistent for several years to come, a medium-term response would consist of three strategies, all of which are being used with some success by one or more of the companies visited during the research:

- **Aim to improve retention rates**, by looking at total remuneration packages, flexible rostering, fly-in/fly-out arrangements and instituting clear career pathways within companies.
- **Widen the labour pool**, by employing more women, more young people (especially through pathway programs with schools and training providers), more Indigenous people, more 'green' workers (i.e. from outside the industry but with transferable skills) and more skilled migrants.
- **Enhance capability among the workforce**, by upskilling existing workers through employer-provided training developed in partnership with government and training providers, and the introduction of more multi-skilling and multi-tasking.

*The report, **Prospecting for skills: The current and future skill needs in the minerals sector**, is available at [www.minerals.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/9040/Prospecting\\_for\\_Skillsfull.pdf](http://www.minerals.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/9040/Prospecting_for_Skillsfull.pdf)*

### NCVER BREAKFAST BRIEFINGS

## Taking care of business: VET and employers' needs

**Australia's VET system is focused on meeting employers' skill needs. But how effectively is this happening? Over breakfast, NCVET will present an overview of findings from the latest research about how employers view and engage with training.**

#### The briefing will cover:

- employers' use and views of both accredited and non-accredited VET
- enablers and barriers to employer participation in VET
- improvements employers want to the VET system.

#### For further information:

[www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/events/employers/breakfast.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/events/employers/breakfast.html)  
EMAIL [events@ncver.edu.au](mailto:events@ncver.edu.au)  
OR TELEPHONE 08 8230 8491

The presentation will be based on the initial findings of the 2005 national VET survey of Australian employers and a range of other recently completed research projects. These include employers' use and views of qualifications and less formal VET, and diverse case examples from the oil and gas, and aged care industries, and issues specific to small, medium and large business, and seasonal workers.

#### Dates and venues:

<b>Perth</b>	8 NOVEMBER 2005	NOVOTEL LANGLEY
<b>Adelaide</b>	9 NOVEMBER 2005	ADELAIDE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE
<b>Canberra</b>	10 NOVEMBER 2005	CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
<b>Melbourne</b>	11 NOVEMBER 2005	WILLIAM ANGLISS CONFERENCE CENTRE
<b>Brisbane</b>	15 NOVEMBER 2005	HOLIDAY INN
<b>Sydney</b>	16 NOVEMBER 2005	RADISSON PLAZA SYDNEY

**Time:** Registration is from 7AM FOR 7.30AM – 9AM.

**Registration fee:** EARLYBIRD \$55 (payment before 30 September 2005)  
OR \$65 (payment after 30 September 2005).

## RECENT RELEASES

You can access these publications in the following way:



**Purchase hard copies by phoning 1800 00 99 66 or visit [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/search.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/search.html)**



**Most recent NCVER reports can be downloaded as a pdf file in full for free at [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/search.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/search.html)**

- **Alternative mechanisms to encourage individual attributions to vocational education and training** Sandra Haukka, Jack Keating & Stephen Lamb  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1520.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1520.html)
- **Adult literacy and numeracy: At a glance** Sue Foster & Francesca Beddie  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1584.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1584.html)
- **An aid to systematic reviews of research in vocational education and training in Australia** Alison Anlezark, Susan Dawe & Sarah Hayman  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1575.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1575.html)
- **Australian vocational education and training statistics: Apprentices and trainees—December quarter 2004, Summary** NCVER  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1587.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1587.html)
- **Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2004—Summary** NCVER  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1595.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1595.html)
- **Enterprises' commitment to nationally recognised training for existing workers** Erica Smith, Richard Pickersgill, Andy Smith & Peter Rushbrook  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1550.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1550.html)
- **Factors pertaining to quality outcomes of shorter duration apprenticeships and traineeships** Kaye Bowman, John Stanwick & Ann Blythe  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1571.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1571.html)
- **Getting the job done: How employers use and value accredited training leading to a qualification** Ray Townsend, Peter Waterhouse & Marg Malloch  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1578.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1578.html)
- **Learning through Indigenous business: The role of vocational education and training in Indigenous enterprise and community development** Kate Flamsteed & Barry Golding  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1572.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1572.html)
- **Reframe, rename, revitalise: Future directions for the language, literacy and numeracy National Reporting System** Kate Perkins  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1579.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1579.html)
- **Skilling a seasonal workforce: A way forward between vocational education and training and higher education** Sue Kilpatrick & Helen Bound  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1567.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1567.html)
- **The mature-aged and skill development activities: A systematic review of research** Peter Thomson, Susan Dawe, Alison Anlezark & Kaye Bowman  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1574.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1574.html)
- **The place of recognised qualifications in the outcomes of training** Lee Ridoutt, Kevin Hummel, Ralph Dutneal & Chris Selby Smith  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1569.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1569.html)
- **Vocational education and training provision and recidivism in Queensland correctional institutions** Victor Callan & John Gardner  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1592.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1592.html)
- **What value do Australian employers give to qualifications?** Lee Ridoutt, Chris Selby Smith, Kevin Hummel & Christina Cheang  
[www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1553.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1553.html)

## UPCOMING RELEASES

- **A huge learning curve: TAFE practitioners' ways of working with private enterprises** Roger Harris, Michele Simons & Julian Moore
- **Apprentice and trainee completion rates** Katrina Ball & David John
- **Contradicting the stereotype: Case studies of success despite literacy difficulties** Peter Waterhouse & Crina Virgona
- **Enhancing career development: The role of community-based career guidance for disengaged adults** Francesca Beddie
- **Funding and financing vocational education and training: Research readings** Editor: Katrina Ball
- **Getting to grips with learning styles** Peter Smith & Jennifer Dalton
- **Integrated approaches to teaching adult literacy in Australia: A snapshot of practice in community services** Lynne Fitzpatrick & Rosa McKenna
- **Sustaining the skill base of technical and further education institutes: TAFE managers' perspectives** Berwyn Clayton, Thea Fisher & Elvie Hughes
- **Training skilled workers: Lessons from the gas and oil industry** Alf Standen & Jane Figgis
- **Unmet student demand for tertiary education** Margaret Giles, Michael McLure & Mike Dockery
- **What it's worth: Establishing the value of vocational qualifications to employers** Mark Cully

## INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT: Listed below is information about the reports mentioned in our page 5 article

CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) 2004, *Guidance policies in the knowledge society*, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Luxembourg.

ETF (European Training Foundation) 2003, *Review of career guidance policies in 11 acceding and candidate countries*, European Training Foundation: Synthesis report, European Training Foundation, Turin.

Hughes, K & Karp, M 2004, *School-based career development: A synthesis of the literature*, Columbia University.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) 2004, *Career guidance and public policy: Bridging the gap*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris.

Watts, A & Fretwell, D 2004, *Public policies for career development: Case studies*

*and emerging issues for designing career information and guidance systems in developing and transition economies*, World Bank, Washington.

Watts, A & Sultana, R 2004, 'Career guidance policies in 37 countries: Contrasts and common themes', *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Amsterdam, 4: pp105-122.

Insight is a publication of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. We welcome your comments.

**Editor:**

Colleen Young

**Telephone:**

08 8230 8400

**Facsimile:**

08 8212 3436

**Email:**

colleen.young@ncver.edu.au

**Address:**

PO Box 8288  
Station Arcade  
South Australia 5000

If you would like to be added to our mailing list - please fax or email your:

- name, title
- organisation
- postal address

**Facsimile:**

08 8212 3436

**Email:**

insight@ncver.edu.au

# Older workers in New Apprenticeships

## OLDER WORKERS

**Older apprentices and trainees with a commitment to higher-level qualifications are making their mark in Australia's labour system.**

The number of apprentices and trainees has increased substantially since the early 1980s, with particular growth in 'non-traditional' contracts of training by people aged 25 years and over, according to recent analysis by NCVER.

There has been particular growth in commencement numbers for New Apprenticeships in occupation groups such as cleaners, advanced clerical and service workers, and road and rail transport drivers.

Older people, particularly men aged 45 years and over, are significantly increasing their share in the system after the abolition of age restrictions in 1992.

Additionally, there has been a shift overall towards higher-level qualifications, more commonly undertaken by older apprentices. This has seen the emergence of Australian Qualifications Framework certificate level III as the dominant qualification in

New Apprenticeship entrants in 2003.

One of the reasons for the big growth in older apprentices and trainees was the introduction of incentives in 1998 for existing workers undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship. These workers tend to be over 25 years of age and in the occupation groups of intermediate clerical workers, intermediate sales and related workers, and business and administration associate professionals. In 2003, existing workers made up over 40% of the entrants in 2003 in the 25 to 44 years age groups and 60% of the 45 years and over age groups.

Comparison with Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data suggests that workers aged 45 years and over are using New Apprenticeships as a pathway for re-skilling, with the proportion of apprentices and trainees to employed persons aged 45 years and over increasing substantially in the occupations of intermediate production and transport workers, associate professionals, and labourers and related workers.

Therefore, with a wider system of people with different ages, sexes and occupations, between 1997 and 2003, the conventional apprentice or trainee has become somewhat less typical. Traditionally, apprentices were young men who wanted to learn a trade and women who wanted to be hairdressers.

Today, some occupations in the apprenticeship system are dominated by older people. For example, there is a higher proportion of men aged 25 years and over in the occupation groups of road and rail transport drivers and other intermediate production and transport workers than any other group. Business and administrative associate professionals have good representations from both men and women, with most from the middle-age group.

**Older workers in New Apprenticeships, by Tom Karmel, will be available soon from the NCVER website. To be alerted when this publication is available, subscribe to NCVER News at [www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html).**

## Making the most of tradition and technology

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

**Education that utilises computer technology for teaching, or 'e-learning', has its benefits but a new study reveals that traditional teaching practices are still just as important.**

E-learning follows the growth and development of information and communication technology (ICT) and its application to learning and teaching in the past few decades. It provides some cost advantages for educational institutions and training systems because it does not always depend on physical classrooms. It expands individual choice in when and where students undertake learning. Nevertheless, the ways in which the teacher and learner adopt and utilise the technology continue to be important.

A new study examines e-learning in Australia and South Korea, where, despite different policy and institutional traditions, there has been a rapid expansion (by international standards) in the uptake of ICT and in government promotion and support for its

application in education and training.

The study indicates that, in both countries, e-learning used in isolation accounts for small proportions of total course options, and blended learning approaches are the norm. There is a continuing need to motivate learners, teachers and trainers to engage with technology by providing skills, resources and on-going support. There is also a need to formally acknowledge the different patterns of working required by e-learning teachers.

According to the study, there are differences in the practical strategies being implemented by the two countries to increase the uptake of e-learning in educational institutions and training organisations.

Among others, these concern the application of incentives for the uptake of e-learning programs in South Korean enterprises, and the limited application in that country of copyright standards. They also concern the burden placed on South Korean teachers and trainers by having to

translate all overseas commercially available materials before use.

In Australia, the uptake of e-learning in educational institutions and enterprises has also been driven by the availability of special funding for the introduction of innovative learning methodologies, and by the need for enterprises in certain sectors (especially the financial services and airline industry sectors) to ensure compliance with government regulations.

The study concludes that e-learning is here to stay and that the real challenge is to ensure that both traditional and e-learning approaches can enhance the other to provide learning that meets the needs of individuals and organisations.

**E-learning in Australia and Korea: Learning from practice, by Josie Misko, Jihee Choi, Sun Yee Hong and Insook Lee, will be available soon from the NCVER website. To be alerted when this publication is available, subscribe to NCVER News at [www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news.html).**