

Motivators and Influences that affect apprentices decisions to enter a specific trade.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to determine if there is any evidence to demonstrate why an apprentice selects a specific construction trade.

Desktop research

The research examined papers from several countries: Australia, United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.

From the research it quickly became evident that there is limited information relating to why an apprentice chooses one specific trade over another.

However, it is universally acknowledged across research papers that the biggest influencers in a student choosing to enter a trade pathway are:

- Parents/guardians
- Teachers
- Career Advisors
- Relatives and friends.

Findings

In the case of research undertaken by the Construction Training Fund in 2015-16¹ it was found that 39% of apprentices found their position through family or friends. However, it did not identify why the apprentices chose a specific trade.

NCVER research² in 2007 found that 80% of those planning to pursue a trade had discussed apprenticeships with their parents. Again, it did not identify a choice of specific trade.

NCVER research³ in 2017 found that post-school VET choice can be driven by students' personal experiences and VET-related occupational experiences, demonstrating the importance of exposing students to possible VET options in both forms of settings (such as VET in Schools) and information settings (such as classroom activities).

¹ *The need for pre-employment vocational training in the Building and Construction Industry*, Painted Dog Research (2016).

² *Doing an apprenticeship: What people think*, NCVER 2007

³ *From school to VET: choice, experiences and outcomes*, NCVER (2017)

According to Ainley, Elsworth and Fullarton, (2001), it appears that the majority of entrants to the trades comes from families of skilled tradespeople. Possibly, the experience of growing up in a home environment generates an interest in trades-related activities, or parents who are themselves working in skilled trades can provide contacts with potential employers.

In 2007, a Canadian report ⁴ showed that;

- 51% stated that interest in the trade was a dominant reason.
- 12% stated that recommendations from others and previous job experience or knowledge of the trade were other reasons.
- 31% indicated that they had taken some form of technical training prior to entry to an apprenticeship.
- 34% indicated that they had taken high school programs directly trade/vocational/technical in nature as an entry point for their apprenticeship.
- 28% of respondents indicated that previous work experience was an influence and 25% reported a hobby as a source of influence.

Most motivating influences investigated were, interest in the trade and a relatively large number of respondents also had relatives or friends in the trade.

In 2011 a New Zealand⁵ report found that,

- Factors influencing post-school career choices include parents and schools, students' academic achievement, subject area interests, and information obtained about the costs and financial supports provided by various post-school alternatives (Leach and Zepke, 2010).
- The predominant reason for selection of a specific trade by both pre-trade student and first-year apprentices was interest in the work tasks if the work matched the individuals perceived affinities.
- Overall pattern of entry into an apprenticeship for apprentices is recommendation through family, friends or employers or workplaces.
- Pre-trade students and apprentices in building, joinery and glazing stated the reason for going into the trade would lead to a 'trade for life' and something to 'fall back on' as they progressed up the career pathway or moved on to another occupation.

In 2007 NCVER⁶ reported that the motivational and personal attributes that influenced apprenticeship decisions rested with:

- 80% of those planning to pursue an apprenticeship had discussed apprenticeships with their parents

⁴ *Motivation to enter apprenticeships – National Apprenticeship Survey*, Canadian Council of Directors, (2007)

⁵ *Belonging, becoming and being: First-year apprentices' experiences in the workplace*, AKO – National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence – Research Report – 2011

⁶ *Doing an apprenticeship: What people think* – NCVER 2007

- Teachers advising students to enter an apprenticeship
- Having friends already in an apprenticeship or contemplating an apprenticeship had a positive influence on apprenticeship uptake.

In 2009, research by the Altegis Group⁷ found that the decision to take up a specific trade (bricklaying) was influenced, in rank order, by:

- Parent or guardian
- A bricklayer they knew
- Other family members
- Friends in an apprenticeship/trade
- A tradesperson other than a bricklayer\friends not working in a trade
- TAFE teacher
- Secondary school teacher/career advisor
- Job Network Provider.

Summary

From all the evidence it was not possible to clearly identify what drives the decision to select a specific trade. It was identified throughout the research that the predominant drivers for choice were, the apprentices themselves drawing on advice from parents/guardians, school teachers/advisors and family and friends.

⁷ *Barriers and Drivers for Bricklaying Apprenticeships*, Altegis Group – July 2009