

Stakeholder Summary

For employed adults, learning activities don't (and shouldn't) end at graduation

The individual and social benefits of lifelong learning are well established and numerous government programs are in place to encourage adult participation in continued learning. But a new study from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), finds that only three of five employed Canadians and Ontarians reported engaging in job-related education and training at some point between 2002 and 2008.

In its report, *Employed Adult Learners in Ontario and Canada: Engaged and Disengaged*, the authors note that the commitment to formal learning doesn't end at graduation and educational institutions must ensure that their graduates are equipped to keep learning.

Project description

The study used Statistics Canada's 2008 Access to Support to Education and Training Survey (ASETS) to analyse the participation of Canadian and Ontario adults in job-related learning between 2002 and 2008. ASETS surveyed more than 22,000 Canadians under the age of 65, from June to October 2008; exclusions include individuals living in the three territories in the North and Aboriginals living on reserves.

Data on 13,533 Canadians were analyzed, including 3,916 Ontarians, who were aged 24 to 64 and were employed for the period studied. Those who participated in job-related education and training during this time period are considered "engaged" and those who did not are considered "disengaged."

Findings

Engagement in job-related learning was higher for younger workers, for those from higher income households, workers in unionized jobs and employees of larger firms. Those holding a bachelor's degree or more were also more likely to engage in job-related education and training.

Visible minorities, Aboriginals, people with disabilities and immigrants had higher levels of disengagement, trends that were true in both Ontario and in Canada. Workers employed in the private sector also had higher levels of disengagement compared to the public sector.

Rural residents were less likely to be engaged in job-related learning, though this was only true in the Canadian context. Participation levels in Ontario were comparable regardless of locale.

While those who identified as French-speaking or bilingual Ontarians were more engaged than their English-speaking peers, the opposite was true at the national level. More single than married/common-law respondents were engaged in job-related education and training in both Ontario and at the Canadian level.

Part-time workers were less engaged in job-related education and training than their full-time counterparts in both Canada and Ontario, and workers' engagement with learning activities declined as the length of their job tenure increased. Workers in certain occupations including processing, manufacturing and utilities were the least engaged, while health at the Canadian level and social sciences, education, government services, religion, art, culture, recreation and sports in Ontario had the highest levels of engagement.

Recommendations /Future research

The authors note that given the prevalence of adult job-related education and training, educational institutions must ensure that their graduates have “learned to learn” and are equipped to keep learning. They also emphasize that employers play an important role in supporting and in some cases providing educational and training opportunities for employees. Additional research could explore ways to motivate those with lower levels of academic attainment to access job-related learning throughout their careers. “Our data demonstrate that individual Canadians’ commitment to learning activities cannot and indeed does not end at graduation.”

*Authors of *Employed Adult Learners in Ontario and Canada: Engaged and Disengaged* are Tomasz Gluszynski and Gugsá Werkneh of ESDC, and Huizi Zhao, formerly of HEQCO, now at Centennial College.*