

4.3.3 Technical and trades training

Technical and trades training varies between and within provinces. It is offered in public and private institutions such as community colleges, institutes of technology, trade schools and business colleges. It may also take place on the job, in apprenticeship programs or in training programs of industry.

History. Early in the 20th century, the rapid growth of industrialization gave added importance to technical skills. Since public schools or universities rarely gave such instruction, this was one of the first areas of education in which the federal government became actively involved. In co-operation with several provinces, an agricultural training program was set up in 1913. Three years earlier the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Vocational Education had made recommendations, a number of which were implemented in the Technical Education Act of 1919. Under the act, federal authorities offered to support provincial programs but few provinces were ready to participate. By World War II, however, enough programs had been instituted to warrant appointment of a national council of federal, provincial and public representatives to advise the labour minister on matters relating to vocational education. At that time most vocational institutions were administered by a variety of provincial government departments such as labour, agriculture, commerce and industry.

During the 1950s a shortage of technical manpower prompted federal officials to give the provinces more aid for vocational training. By 1960 about 30 technical institutes had been opened. The Technical and Vocational Education Act, designed to encourage the provinces to extend and improve facilities, was passed in 1961. Thereafter, new comprehensive schools frequently incorporated vocational programs. Federal participation increased after 1966 with adoption of the Adult Occupational Training Act and purchase of courses given in various types of provincial institutions. Under this act, a training-in-industry program was inaugurated in 1967 and a training-on-the-job program in 1971. Both were superseded by an industrial training program in 1974.

Institutions and programs. Technical career programs are conducted in community colleges and related postsecondary institutions. High school graduation is usually required for admission. In programs lasting up to four years, students are trained to practise a career directly upon graduation. Some community colleges also give vocational instruction but graduates of career programs are generally qualified for semi-professional work.

Trades level courses emphasize manipulative skills and performance of established procedures and techniques. Less than one year is normally needed to complete them. Grade 9 or 10 is usually required for entrance but prerequisites vary.

Public trade schools and vocational centres concentrate on vocational skills and are administered by a provincial department. They may be separate establishments, but in most provinces they now exist as divisions of a community college. Only persons who have left the regular school system and are older than compulsory age may attend. High school graduation is not usually required. Depending on the province and the trade, admission standards can range from grade 8 to grade 12. Included in this group are adult vocational centres and schools related to specific occupations such as police work, forestry and nursing.

A number of institutions offer academic upgrading courses designed to raise a trainee's general level of education in one or a series of subjects. Courses may be taken to qualify for admission to higher academic studies or vocational training. The federal government sponsors basic training for skill development in community colleges and adult vocational centres. However, completion of levels corresponding to the final grades of secondary school does not give high school graduation status.

Rather than attend an educational institution, individuals may acquire trades training as they work, related to a specific trade or occupation. Training on the job is organized instruction offered in a production environment.

Business and industrial establishments train new employees, retrain experienced workers or upgrade their qualifications. Publicly supported, in full or in part, or entirely financed by the company, training can be on the job, by classroom instruction, or a combination of the two. Under cost-sharing agreements the federal government reimburses companies that provide training. The provincial governments monitor the publicly supported company programs and approve them for federal support.

Apprenticeship programs combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction. Persons contract with an employer to learn a skilled trade and eventually reach journeyman status. Apprentices may be registered with a provincial or territorial labour or manpower department. The department sets standards for journeyman qualification: minimum age, educational levels for admission, minimum wages, duration of apprenticeship and the ratio of apprentices to journeymen. Non-registered apprentices enter into a private agreement with an employer, perhaps in association with a labour union. They are not subject to regulations established by the provincial department for that trade.

The federal Vocational Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons Act facilitates trades-training for the handicapped. The federal government reimburses the provinces for 50% of costs for programs that enable disabled people to support themselves fully or partially. The provinces provide training directly in