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for adult literacy and numeracy

SUMMARY REPORT

The Teacher Study
The impact of the Skills for Life strategy on teachers

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Introduction

This is a study of 1027 teachers[1] of literacy, numeracy and ESOL in England from 2004 to 2007. The teachers were interviewed in depth on at least three occasions during this period shedding light on all aspects of their professional life. The Teacher Study aimed to find out who these teachers were, what they do at work and what they think about their job. It has a particular focus on the impact of the Skills for Life strategy on them and their work.

'I strongly support the Skills for Life strategy. However I am constantly frustrated by the level of bureaucracy within my organisation and the sector in general. I am convinced that processes and procedures could be simplified which would make all our lives easier and enable us to spend more time with learners – after all it is the learners we are supposed to be helping!'

'I think it is an absolutely great thing, that in particular, for me, basic skills is recognised by the Government, possibly for the first time, as a subject that has great importance.' [Int41]

'The Skills for Life agenda has made me feel part of a larger movement. I find this motivating.'[2]

As these comments suggest, the impact of the Skills for Life strategy on those who teach and train Skills for Life learners is varied and multifaceted. For some teachers, the strategy has given a new standing and respectability to the field and the career in which they have worked for many years. Others perceive that the standards, targets and bureaucracy that have come with the initiative create administrative burdens and divert teachers from their commitment to social justice and their main business of improving learners' knowledge and skills. Many have welcomed the new professionalism that Skills for Life has brought; for others the strategy has emphasised divisions between different teachers in different education sectors.

The Skills for Life strategy was introduced in March 2001. It was formulated in response to *A Fresh Start* (1999), the report of the working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser. The report concluded that up to seven million adults (one in five of the adult population) in England had difficulties with literacy and numeracy – a higher proportion than in any other European country apart from Poland and Ireland. The strategy initially set out to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of 2.25 million adult learners by 2010, with interim targets of 750,000 by 2004 and 1.5 million by 2007; these were met. Its aim is to 'make sure that England has one of the best adult literacy and numeracy rates in the world', and, its long term vision is 'ultimately to eliminate the problem' of poor levels of adult literacy and numeracy (National Audit Office 2004, p.20).

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1 Throughout this report we use the terms 'teachers' and 'teacher' to refer to those who lead learning. In some of the quotes from teachers in this report they may be referred to as teachers, trainers, tutors or lecturers.
2 Quotes 1 and 3 are open-box responses from teachers to the final question in the first survey (2004–2005), asking if they wanted to add anything about their work in the Skills for Life sector.

Skills for Life emphasises the needs of priority groups at risk of exclusion, including unemployed people and benefit claimants; prisoners and those supervised in the community; public sector employees; low-skilled people in employment; and younger adult learners aged 16–19.

Undoubtedly, Skills for Life has raised the profile of adult literacy, language and numeracy learning among the general population. Many reports and press articles have been devoted to the UK's skills deficit. There has been a widespread advertising campaign designed to attract adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills into provision, and more recently debates over eligibility, funding and access for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, and the *Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills* (2006) with its emphasis on employability and improving the skills of the workforce, have ensured that the issue of adult basic skills retains its recently acquired high profile.

Less public attention has been paid to the teachers upon whose hard work and commitment the targets for improved skills depend. A core component of the Skills for Life strategy is to improve the quality of teaching and learning through a new national learning, teaching and assessment infrastructure. In 1999 the Minister for Education, Baroness Blackstone, announced that all post-16 teachers would need to be qualified and that basic skills teachers would also require a subject specific qualification. After 2002, the Government developed mandatory teaching qualifications for new teachers, using a framework which recognised that adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL were specialist subjects. As part of Skills for Life, new national literacy, numeracy and ESOL core curricula for adults have been introduced, based on national standards at each of five levels (Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2), as well as assessments, both diagnostic and summative, through the National Test. The

aim of these has been to transform the quality of teaching by setting out the specific skills that need to be taught and learned at each level within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The core curriculum for each subject area is designed to ensure consistency and continuity for the learner and help teachers using focused teaching methods to meet the needs of individual learners. This new approach has been supported by induction and training courses for teachers, new teaching standards, and a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes and initiatives have been offered at regional, national and local levels.

The Teacher Study was designed to find out more about the impact of these initiatives on Skills for Life teachers. One of the largest projects in the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) portfolio, its broad aims were to provide a picture of who Skills for Life teachers are and what they do in their working lives; to find out which kinds of teacher characteristics might affect responses to the strategy, and to trace how this effect changes over time.

The Teacher Study provides a rich picture of who Skills for Life teachers are; what qualifications they hold; how much CPD they undertake; what their employment status is; how many contact hours they have with learners and much more. It then explores the relationship between this picture and the impact of the strategy, to identify areas of success and areas of concern. The analytical approach the Teacher Study takes recognises the pivotal role that teachers play in the implementation of educational reform. In essence our analysis addresses the question, how do teachers feel about or value the process of change? As an earlier article on the study's methodology (Giannakaki 2005) put it:

Having information about teachers' attitudes towards the new strategy, and about the factors shaping these attitudes, will allow proper

measures to be taken to reduce resistance to change, increase teachers' personal commitment to the goals of the strategy, and ultimately, make implementation easier and more effective. (p.324)

According to Fullan (1991) teachers are essential to the implementation of educational reform, because making changes to existing institutions, structures and classroom practices is impossible without teacher participation. From this, Fullan (1999) argues that for an education reform to be successful, teachers must feel they have a personal investment in its outcomes. In effect, teachers are required to become agents of change. The knowledge, skills and judgement that teachers bring to their role as 'change agents' (Sanders 1999) have critical roles to play in educational change. ■

Note

The questionnaire data in this report was collected in three phases: 2004 to 2005, 2006 and 2007. We refer to these three phases of data collection as Phase One, Phase Two and Phase Three.

2

Staff profile of Skills for Life teachers

This chapter introduces the teachers on which this report is based. It describes the general profile of teachers delivering to learners within Skills for Life and looks at which subjects they considered themselves specialists in, what sort of learners they taught and how they felt about their role in the organisations they worked in.

Socio-demographic and employment characteristics

- Seventy-seven per cent of those in the Skills for Life teaching workforce were female.
- On average, 13% of the Skills for Life teaching workforce came from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The two largest age-group bands were 40–49 years (35%) and 50–59 years (28%): only 10% of Skills for Life teachers were under 30 years old. The mean age of a Skills for Life teacher was 45 years.
- Only 33% of Skills for Life teachers worked full-time; 21% had fractional contracts, and 46% were hourly-paid.
- Sixty-four per cent of Skills for Life teachers had permanent contracts.
- The majority of Skills for Life teachers (54%) were employed by FE Colleges. Slightly more than one-fifth (22%) worked for Adult and Community Learning (ACL) providers such as Local Education Authorities. Around the same proportion (21%) worked in 'other' types of provision, such as work-based learning or learndirect.

In addition to previously mentioned employment characteristics, one-fifth of Skills for Life teachers had more than one job in the post-16 education and training sector and 13% had another job outside the sector. The mean figure for hours per week that Skills for Life teachers were contracted to work was 21.

On average, at the start of the project, Skills for Life teachers had been working in post-16 education and training for eight years; one-third of teachers had between one and four years' teaching experience. A substantial proportion (41%) of Skills for Life teachers also had experience in pre-16 education; on average these respondents had spent five years in the compulsory education sector. Nearly one-third of Skills for Life teachers had some experience in curriculum management, that is, experience in managing the provision of one or more subjects.

Subject specialism

When asked to name what they considered their main teaching subject 46% chose ESOL, 24% literacy, 15% numeracy and 15% another non-Skills for Life subject. Teachers in this last group taught Skills for Life as either a secondary subject or as part of a vocational or embedded programme. Around a quarter of all teachers had taught on embedded programmes in the three months prior to the first survey.

There is evidence to suggest that ESOL and numeracy are seen as more specialist areas. In the three months before the first set of interviews, only 85% of teachers who taught literacy considered themselves to be primarily teachers of literacy whereas the equivalent figure for ESOL was 96%. Non-specialists were also more likely to be teaching literacy than ESOL or

numeracy. This could be due to literacy being taught by teachers who consider themselves 'English' teachers rather than literacy teachers.

TABLE 2.1

Main Skills for Life subject taught, 2004-05

Subject	%	N	Main subject	%
Literacy	17	175	Literacy ESOL Other subject	85 1 15
Numeracy	13	130	Numeracy Literacy ESOL Other subject	89 4 1 6
ESOL	38	394	ESOL Literacy Other subject	96 1 3

It appears that it is common for Skills for Life teachers to cover more than one Skills for Life subject – 28% taught two concurrently and 5% all three. Nineteen per cent taught both literacy and numeracy; interestingly, of these 44% were neither literacy nor numeracy specialists, whereas within the 8% who taught both ESOL and literacy, and the 1% who taught both numeracy and ESOL, this figure was far lower.

TABLE 2.2

More than one Skills for Life subject taught, 2004-05

Subject	%	N	Main subject	%
Literacy and numeracy	19	190	Literacy Numeracy Other subject	33 23 44
ESOL and literacy	8	78	Literacy ESOL Other subject	19 75 6
ESOL and numeracy	1	12	ESOL Numeracy Other subject	71 25 4
All three subjects	5	46	Literacy Numeracy ESOL Other subject	30 8 31 31
Total	100	1025		

For some teachers, assuming multiple teaching roles is a result of circumstances partly beyond their control such as staff shortages, particularly in smaller providers or rural locations. The extract below comes from an interview with a numeracy teacher working in an FE college:

> I: So did you do literacy to help out?
> T: I probably did it for over a year, filling in, or helping out.
> I: Did you feel qualified to do that? To teach literacy for a year?
> T: To that level, yes. And if I needed any help there were always other tutors around to ask and get ideas from. So that wasn't a problem. [Int33]

In some organisations an identity as a subject specialist teacher may have less currency than that of a 'basic skills' teacher, with a knock-on effect on teaching allocations. As one FE college teacher explained:

> 'I applied for [a job] as a basic skills tutor. And I went along and set my stall out, I said, you know, I am literacy. I had finished the Level 4 at that stage and knew that I had passed, although I didn't have my certificate, and that was it. I was given the job and that was great. But when I got there I discovered that their interpretation of basic skills tutors means you should be able to turn your hand to anything. Including their ICT, of course. So although I don't have any numeracy qualifications I had to learn pretty damn quick. Because that is what is expected. And when I voiced concerns about being asked to deliver something I had no knowledge of, and didn't feel confident to do, I was told – this is what it is like in Further Education colleges. It is not like Community Ed. where the disciplines are distinctly separate. You are expected to just do it.' [Int25]

For some teachers, this kind of situation was indicative of the differences between a job in Skills for Life and other teaching jobs:

> 'I am more qualified in literacy because I have done the Level 4. And this year I am intending to do the

Level 3 in numeracy, and I will consider whether I will go on to do the Level 4 the year after […] I would have liked to have just specialised in one thing […] teachers at secondary school, they would not expect to teach Maths and English. There might be the odd one who does, but you would not expect them to specialise in both things. I think it is very difficult.' [Int4]

These quotes may reflect a point in a period of change. There appears to be a growing pattern of colleges reorganising curriculum divisions to, for example, bring numeracy and maths teachers closer together in teacher education. There is also growth in teachers' training to teach both literacy and ESOL.

Others felt that there were positive sides to this educational culture:

'[I'm] Jack-of-all-trades. I think, actually, within Skills for Life you have to be very multi-skilled. I think it is an area you need to be, because I do specialise in numeracy, that is my field. But if the literacy tutor is off I am expected to step into her shoes. As long as it was a level I feel comfortable with. […] I think it also expands your skills. I don't think it is a good thing to be blinkered and only do one area. Especially in the changing world of education, you definitely need to be multi-skilled.' [Int14]

Teachers' workload

The mean number of contact hours respondents had with learners was 17 hours per week. On average, teaching groups contained 10 learners, and teachers reported that spare capacity, the maximum number of learners that the teachers felt was appropriate for teaching and learning, was an additional two learners per group.

Just over half (55%) of Skills for Life teachers

taught learners aged 16–19 years in the three months prior to interview, although we are unable to say what percentage of these learners were in each class.

A great many respondents also had experience of teaching learners who were identified on enrolment as having disabilities or learning difficulties. We are unable to report on the number of these learners within each class, but across all classes taught in the period of three months preceding the Phase One interview:

- 55% taught learners with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia)
- 38% taught learners with mental health problems
- 28% taught deaf or partial-hearing learners
- 20% taught blind or partially-sighted learners
- 37% taught learners with mobility problems or disabilities
- 12% taught learners with autistic spectrum disorders.

Attitudinal characteristics

The Teacher Study questionnaire measured Skills for Life teachers' perceptions of the managerial support they received using four questions:

1. How much help and support do you receive from managers?
2. How much help and support do you receive from your line manager?
3. How much does your line manager value or recognise your work?
4. How well informed is your line manager about your work and any problems you face?

Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from 0 for 'not at all' to 4 for 'a great deal'. Overall, 59% of Skills for Life teachers thought they received 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of help and support from managers in general

and 66% thought they received 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of help and support from their line manager in particular. An even higher proportion (78%) thought that their line manager was informed 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' about their work and any problems, and 82% believed their line manager valued and recognised their work 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot.'

Views on the extent of involvement in the employing organisation's decision-making process were measured in eight different areas. Unsurprisingly, teachers felt that they had far more involvement in decisions at course level (course design – 46%; course evaluation – 45%; content, topics and skills to be taught – 60%; evaluation and assessment of learners – 71%) than they did over wider college issues (evaluation of organisational performance – 20%; goals and policies of the organisation – 14%; selection/hiring of staff – 12%; allocation of financial resources – 7%).

Questions were also asked to measure the degree to which Skills for Life teachers collaborated with their colleagues. However, just 59% of teachers reported that they 'very often' or 'quite often' collaborated with colleagues in their subject area, and 23% answered likewise for collaboration with colleagues in different subject areas. Just over a fifth (22%) of teachers agreed that they felt isolated from other teachers in their organisation and a slightly higher proportion (27%) agreed that a lack of collaboration made them feel they were reinventing the wheel.

Teachers were presented with a series of statements for agreement and disagreement to measure their perceptions of the clarity of their professional role, and the conflicts they experience in their professional role. Three-quarters agreed that they had clear, planned goals, and almost three-quarters (72%) agreed that they knew exactly what was expected of them, while 61% agreed that they received clear explanations of what to do.

In response to statements about perceived conflicts in teachers' professional roles, one-third agreed that they received incompatible requests from two or more people, and one-third agreed that they did things that were apt to be accepted by one person and not by others. Slightly fewer teachers (31%) agreed that they received tasks without adequate resources and materials to complete them. ■

3

Teacher qualifications and training

This chapter focuses on teacher qualifications and professional development. It describes the levels to which Skills for Life teachers were qualified, both in general and in the subject(s) they taught, and analyses the factors that predict which teacher, teaching and employment characteristics influenced a teacher's qualification status. It also explores teachers' perceptions of the relationship between qualifications and teaching practice and looks at the professional development activities they engaged in.

Introduction

The average Skills for Life teacher was 45 years old and had eight years' experience in the field and they held a wide range of qualifications and combinations of qualifications. This reflects both the variety of routes they have taken into employment and the different qualifications initiatives for literacy, numeracy and ESOL professionals that have formed the background to this period. Altogether this makes for a complicated qualifications profile and goes some way to explaining why notions of what it means to be 'a qualified Skills for Life teacher' – both in terms of having subject specific knowledge and being qualified to institutional or governmental standards – cause confusion.

New Skills for Life teachers are expected to have a generic teaching qualification such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or Certificate in Education (CertEd) and a new subject specialist certificate. Existing teachers are also being encouraged to take these qualifications and it is proposed that by 2010 all teachers in the post-16 sector will be fully-qualified.

Previous research shows that levels of teacher qualifications are a powerful predictor of student performance. Darling-Hammond (2000) and

Rivkin et al. (1998) concluded that the effects of well-prepared teachers on learner achievement can outweigh learner background factors such as poverty or minority status. Of particular interest is the impact of policy-relevant teacher qualifications such as generic teaching qualifications and subject specific qualifications at degree level.

While a clear picture is beginning to emerge regarding the effect of teacher degrees and certification at the high school level, the evidence in the post-16 sector is virtually non-existent. However, some initial analysis correlating data from the Teacher and Learner Studies suggest that the higher a teacher's level of qualification, the greater the learner's progress.

Highest level of qualifications

Respondents were initially asked about their highest level of qualification.
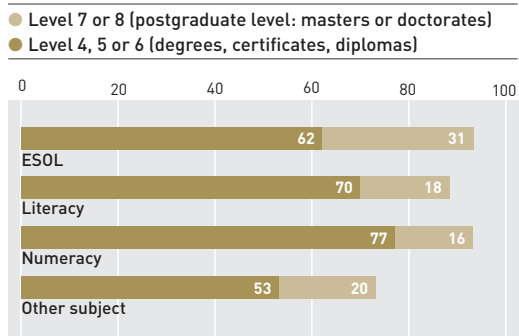
- Thirty-eight per cent of Skills for Life teachers were qualified to Level 7 or 8 (doctorate, masters degree, postgraduate certificate or diploma, including the PGCE).
- Thirty per cent were qualified to Level 6 (bachelor degree, graduate certificate or diploma, including the CertEd).
- Twenty-five per cent were qualified at Level 4

or 5 (diploma or certificate of higher and further education, foundation degree).
- Seven per cent were qualified to Level 3 or below.

Within this picture, teaching sector is relevant. Teachers working in FE colleges were more likely to be qualified to Levels 7–8 than those in ACL and 'other' types of provision (28% compared to 22% and 15% respectively). Those qualified only to Level 3 were more likely to be found in 'other' types of provision (12% compared to 4% of FE college teachers and 8% in ACL).

As Figure 3.1 shows, teaching subject is also pertinent. Respondents who selected ESOL as their main teaching subject were more likely to be qualified to Levels 7 and 8. Those who taught Skills for Life subjects, but did not consider Skills for Life to be their main teaching subject (these respondents were predominantly vocational teachers), were less likely to be qualified at Levels 4 or above than those who chose literacy, numeracy or ESOL as their main teaching subject.

FIGURE 3.1

Highest level of any qualification, by main teaching subject area (%) (N=1009)

- Level 7 or 8 (postgraduate level: masters or doctorates)
- Level 4, 5 or 6 (degrees, certificates, diplomas)

When we looked at teachers' highest qualifications in mathematics and English, we discovered that overall Skills for Life teachers were higher qualified in English than they were in mathematics (only 3% below Level 2 compared to 14%). As might

be expected, numeracy teachers were slightly higher qualified in mathematics (45% at Level 3 and above) than ESOL (31%) and literacy (16%) teachers. However, 50% of numeracy teachers only held a Level 2 qualification in mathematics, far lower than the 20% and 34% of ESOL and literacy teachers respectively whose highest qualification in English was at Level 2.

TABLE 3.1

Highest qualifications in mathematics and English by subject taught (%) (subjects can overlap)

	All		Literacy		Numeracy		ESOL	
	Maths	English	Maths	English	Maths	English	Maths	English
Level 7–8	1	11	1	9	2	3	2	19
Level 4–6	11	26	4	32	16	14	9	29
Level 3	22	28	11	21	27	21	21	30
Level 2	53	33	72	34	50	60	52	20
Level 1	7	1	4	1	2	1	9	1
None	7	2	8	3	4	1	9	2
Total	100 (N=1027)	100 (N=1027)	100 (N=443)	100 (N=443)	100 (N=343)	100 (N=343)	100 (N=490)	100 (N=490)

Fully-qualified

To gain an overview of the extent to which teachers can be described as fully-qualified to teach in Skills for Life classes, they can be divided into four broad groups and several subgroups. 'Fully-qualified' means teachers who had both of the qualifications expected of teachers in 2006, that is, a full generic teaching qualification (a Certificate in Education/PGCE or Level 4 Certificate in Further Education Teaching Stage 3) and a Level 4 subject specialist qualification in ESOL. 'Part-qualified' in this report means that a teacher has one or other of these two qualifications, and 'unqualified' that they have neither. These 'unqualified' teachers may or may not have other qualifications. 'Part-qualified' can be further broken down into four sub-categories, and 'unqualified' into six. For analysis, the category of 'unqualified' has been split into two

sections based on the amount of training required to become fully-qualified. Whereas teachers who fall into the first four unqualified sub-categories need some training to become fully-qualified, those who fall into the last two are, in effect, starting from a low baseline and need full training.

It should also be noted that the first group of 'unqualified' teachers includes those who have ESOL Diplomas at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 7 – teachers who can be thought of as very highly qualified indeed, but who still need some additional work for their qualifications to match current requirements. Throughout the following discussion, this group should be kept in mind, both in terms of overall qualification levels in general and ESOL in particular.

1. Fully-qualified
a. Teacher has both a generic teaching qualification (e.g. a PGCE) and a new Level 4 subject specialist qualification.

2. Part-qualified
a. Generic qualification only
b. Generic teaching qualification plus legacy subject specialist qualification (e.g. CELTA, C&G 9285)
c. New subject specialist qualification only
d. New subject specialist qualification, with legacy generic teaching qualification (e.g. C&G 7307, Stage 2).

3. 'Unqualified' – requiring some training or certification to become fully-qualified
a. ESOL Diploma at NQF Level 7
b. Legacy subject specialism only
c. Legacy generic teaching qualification only
d. Legacy subject specialism and legacy generic teaching qualification.

4. 'Unqualified' – requiring full training or certification to become fully-qualified
a. Introductory qualifications only (e.g. C&G 7307 Stage 1, C&G 9281 series)
b. No qualifications.

Table 3.2 shows a complete breakdown of qualification levels for literacy, numeracy and ESOL teachers against these categories.

TABLE 3.2

Qualification levels of the Skills for Life teachers, 2005/06, all categories are exclusive by subjects taught (%) (subjects can overlap)

Qualification level	Literacy	Numeracy	ESOL
1. Fully-qualified			
Total fully-qualified	**21**	**29**	**28**
2. Part-qualified			
(a) Generic qualification only	30	28	21
(b) Generic with legacy subject specialism	5	5	11
(c) Subject specialist qualification only	19	4	9
(d) Subject specialist with legacy generic	1	2	–
Total part-qualified	**55**	**39**	**41**
3. 'Unqualified' – requiring some training or certification to become fully-qualified			
(a) ESOL Diploma at NQF Level 7	–	–	12
(b) Legacy subject specialism only	1	1	14
(c) Legacy generic teaching qualification	7	4	–
(d) Legacy subject specialism and legacy generic qualification	0.4	2	1
Total unqualified	**8**	**7**	**27**
4. 'Unqualified' - requiring full training or certification to become fully-qualified			
(a) Introductory qualifications only	10	7	2
(b) No teaching qualifications	6	18	3
Total 'Unqualified'	**16**	**25**	**5**
Total (absolute numbers)	443	343	490

A number of figures stand out here. A higher proportion of literacy and numeracy teachers than ESOL teachers only had introductory qualifications or none at all. In fact, amongst numeracy teachers this accounted for a worryingly high 25%. However, when only those teachers who taught numeracy

and no other subject were included the figure fell to 7%. At the same time the figure for fully-qualified numeracy teachers rose from 29% to 57%. Together these figures imply that where numeracy provision was taught by numeracy specialists, the level of qualifications of the teachers was significantly higher than for literacy or ESOL, but that where provision was taught by non-specialists the opposite was the case. Among literacy and ESOL teachers this effect was less apparent. However, as a rule those who taught two or more subjects were less likely to be fully-qualified than those who taught only one subject. In the light of these figures it is interesting to note that over half those interviewed who taught more than one subject felt that they did not require any additional training to teach these other subjects, particularly where they taught on lower-level courses. One respondent who taught all three Skills for Life subjects, said:

'For the level I do I would say I have the knowledge for that. I have got no problems delivering those levels. If I was to have to deliver them at a higher level then there may be ones I would have to concentrate more on.' [Int55]

However, those who either wanted to take on more teaching in their supplementary subject(s), or to teach these at a higher level, did see the value in additional training:

'Literacy is probably the one I would need more training on, because my literacy itself is not … I know my vowels are, and things like that, but delivering it to our students, I would want more training.' [Int2]

Another factor may also be levels of job security; if teachers are unsure for how long, and for how many hours a week, they are going to be required to teach their secondary subject they are likely to remain reluctant to take qualifications in it.

I: So do you feel you need more training in numeracy?
T: I just wonder how long it is going to last. Because it is only one lesson a week. But if it is more than one lesson a week ongoing definitely, then perhaps I should consider taking a Level 3 or something[3]. [Int31]

Subject specialist teaching qualifications

Respondents were asked about their teaching qualifications in the subjects they taught. Sixty-three per cent of literacy and numeracy teachers and 48% of ESOL teachers had City & Guilds teaching qualifications, ranging from the very basic to more advanced levels such as the City & Guilds 9285. Fifty per cent of ESOL teachers had a certificate (e.g. CELTA) and 20% a diploma (e.g. DELTA) in ESOL.

Overall 31% of those teaching literacy across all three phases (from 2004 to 2007) had the subject specific qualification compared to 26% of ESOL teachers and 25 % of numeracy teachers. Considering that these qualifications had only recently been introduced it could be argued that these figures are actually quite high.

As would be expected, teachers gave multiple and complex reasons for embarking on the Level 4:

'I knew it was coming into being. I knew it was something that was likely to be required in the future. And I never took A-Level maths. So I didn't have that level of qualification. And I felt it would be useful for me to brush up my maths

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3 Although this ESOL teacher refers to a Level 3 qualification 'or something', he would have actually needed a subject specific qualification at Level 4.

skills and get the qualifications I needed anyway, at some point. And it was being run in-house and the person who was responsible for it is the person I was talking to you about, who I have respect for. So I thought it was a good opportunity to do it.' [Int28]

To understand why some teachers have gained these new qualifications and others have not, we looked firstly at the effect of socio-demographic characteristics – gender, ethnicity, age and teaching experience. Male teachers in all three subject areas were less likely to have a Level 4 subject specialist qualification. Although older literacy teachers were more likely to have the qualification, this likelihood decreased the more experience they had, implying that age was less of a factor than how recently they had gained their previous teaching qualifications.

Next the variables for employment status, number of paid hours and sector were entered into the models. Part-time teachers who did not want full-time contracts were less likely to have a subject specialist qualification than those who were either on full-time contracts or wanted to change to full-time contracts. Indeed, this last group were the most likely to have the qualification. Both literacy and ESOL teachers who wanted to be promoted to a higher managerial position were much more likely to have the qualification. Both of these factors imply that the qualifications are perceived to have a high value in the field in terms of career development.

There was little evidence that managers in education providers were pressurising teachers into taking courses; rather, teachers appeared to recognise the professional advantages of obtaining fully-qualified status by 2010. Those thinking of their longer-term career saw it as part of their professional development:

'[The decision to do a Level 4 was] not because the Government said we had to. But the writing was there that said we ought to. I thought it was a good idea and I thought it would benefit my teaching. And I would get some good ideas from it as well.' [Int38]

When attitudinal variables were entered into the models, these suggested that literacy and ESOL teachers who believed they had a clear professional role and those who said they received less managerial support were more likely to have the qualification. These factors could be seen as related. Perhaps managers see these teachers as needing less support, firstly because their role is clear and secondly because, as they have the qualification, their managers perceive them to be capable of working more independently. However, it could also be argued that gaining the qualifications has given these teachers an increased sense of professional worth and greater understanding of the levels of support that they should get, leading to increased levels of dissatisfaction when these expectations are not met.

Choosing to take a course

We asked teachers why they did not have, or were not working towards, subject specific and generic teaching qualifications. The most common reason given was the belief that their existing qualifications were sufficient; this is most likely a reference to the so-called 'legacy' qualifications gained in the past.

It was clear that there was some confusion among teachers about the new qualification requirements. For example, ESOL teachers with CELTA and DELTA qualifications were not always aware that they would need to take further courses, including 'top-up' and extension modules in order to have fully-qualified status. Other teachers who were highly qualified in their subject (including to masters level) wrongly assumed that this would negate the need to do a Level 4. Other teachers lacked conviction that the

new courses would add to their knowledge or skills base:

'If I could gain something from that so I could teach better, I would. With literacy I feel like I would have to be convinced I would learn enough to make it worthwhile […] I have done a masters in English, and so I think I know most of the ins and outs of a lot of stuff.' [Int20]

The next most popular reasons given were time constraints and balancing course demands with an existing heavy workload: 'It's in remission of your teaching time and getting cover while you are doing it is very difficult.' [Int2]. However, in this it was notable that there was far greater reluctance among those who did not have a generic teaching qualification than among those who lacked a subject specific qualification. This may be due to the fact that more of those who only had the generic qualification were closer to retirement. However, the comments below question whether requiring experienced teachers to retrain sends out a negative message about their professionalism and could also impact on their reluctance.

'It is very undermining to the profession. Forget what qualifications you had before, forget your teaching experience. Because this Level 4 qualification isn't just going on the course and doing assignments, it is something like thirty hours of teaching practice and you have to be observed again, and, you know, it is like saying to an experienced teacher – you are starting from the beginning.' [Int51]

Professional development and training needs

We asked teachers about their Continuing Profession Development (CPD) in Skills for Life. Between 2001 and 2003, 64% of literacy teachers attended the core curriculum training in adult literacy; 55% of numeracy teachers attended the training in adult numeracy, and 64% of ESOL teachers participated in the ESOL training. In addition:

- 38% of all respondents attended the national training in the new diagnostic assessment tools
- 32% attended the national training in the new learning materials
- 18% attended the national training in using Access for All
- 12% of respondents attended the national training in the adult pre-entry curriculum framework
- 11% participated in professional development programmes or activities offered by the Key Skills Support Programme.

On average, respondents spent five days in CPD activities in the 12 months before they completed the Phase One questionnaire. Within this the range was wide, with some teachers engaging in no CPD at all, and others clocking up more than 30 days; 16% of respondents participated in more than 10 days. In Phase Two, respondents attended an average of five CPD days in the 10 months between September 2005 and June 2006, with 13% attending more than 10 days. In Phase Three, respondents averaged four days of CPD in the eight months between September 2006 and April 2007, with 7% attending more than 10 days.

The Phase Three survey included a new question designed to find out what proportion of this professional development activity was specifically focused on Skills for Life teaching and learning

activities, materials or tools. Results show, for example, that only 4% of teachers did not attend any CPD that specifically focused on Skills for Life; 17% were present at sessions where between 76% and 90% of the time concentrated on Skills for Life teaching and learning activities, materials or tools; while 35% of teachers went to sessions where the whole training was devoted to these aspects of Skills for Life.

New questions also discovered more about where and how teachers accessed Skills for Life professional development programmes between Phase One and Two, and Phase Two and Three.

- One-quarter of respondents participated in national or regional CPD.
- 20% participated in local CPD activities.
- 53% participated in in-house training.
- 19% attended CPD funded or organised under the Skills for Life Quality Initiative.
- 5% participated in CPD organised by the Skills for Life Strategy Unit.
- 26% participated in CPD arranged by another national or regional funding body.
- One-quarter of respondents did not know who funded/organised the CPD activities they attended.

The reasons that teachers who attended no CPD activities in Skills for Life most commonly cited were lack of time (30%), a lack of appropriate courses (25%) and big workloads (22%), but teachers also mentioned problems of getting release from work (7%) and lack of managerial support (5%). Interestingly, 19% said they did not see the need to attend any CPD activities. ■

4

Employment status and mobility

This chapter analyses the employment status of the Skills for Life workforce and the employment mobility of the teachers in the Teacher Study sample. It examines teachers working on three types of job contracts – full-time, fractional and hourly-paid – and outlines the factors influencing employment status. It also looks at the relationship between employment status and job satisfaction.

The adult basic skills sector has historically been characterised by part-time and sessional work. For employers, a workforce that is mainly part-time allows for a flexible response to market fluctuations, especially those relating to insecurities in funding. For teachers, part-time work benefits those looking to work for a limited number of hours because, for example, they have other commitments, are not the main household earner or because teaching is not their first career.

The introduction of the Skills for Life strategy, however, raises questions about the relationship between the Government's drive for a new professionalisation of the workforce in this sector and the capacities and capabilities of a workforce where the majority is employed on fractional or sessional contracts. One of the teachers we interviewed noted that an hourly-paid contract was at odds with the professionalism of sessional teachers:

'I am not in [Skills for Life] to earn "pocket money" or to "keep myself busy" but as a professional teacher.'

It can be argued that a professionalised Skills for Life sector needs more teachers who work both full-time and are on permanent contracts in order to move it more in line with the school sector. Educational researchers such as Gleeson

et al. (2005) argue that not only can part-time work increase the distinctions between core and periphery teachers with knock-on effects in terms of pay, pensions and conditions of service, it can also cause difficulties with recruitment and retention.
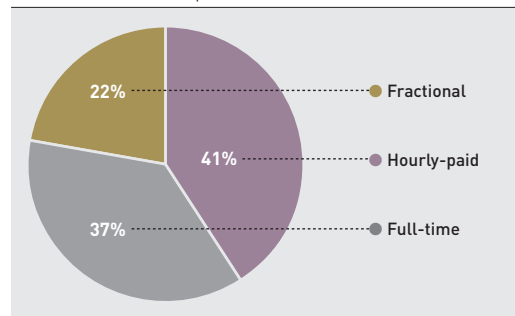
Employment status

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, on average in each of all three phases of the Teacher Study, 63% of Skills for Life teachers worked part-time and 37% worked full-time. A greater proportion of part-time contracts were hourly-paid than fractional – 41% compared to 22%.

FIGURE 4.1

Employment status of Skills for Life workforce
(Pooled data from all three phases (2310 observations))

- 22% Fractional
- 41% Hourly-paid
- 37% Full-time

**Employment status with main employing organisation**

Looking more closely at the employment status of Skills for Life teachers, data from the Teacher Study suggest:

1. Fewer female teachers than male teachers were employed on full-time contracts (33% and 50% respectively). Female Skills for Life teachers were also more likely to be hourly-paid than their male counterparts (35% compared to 43%).

FIGURE 4.2

Teacher contract types by gender (%)
(pooled data male N=521; female N=1789)

● Full-time ● Fractional ● Hourly-paid
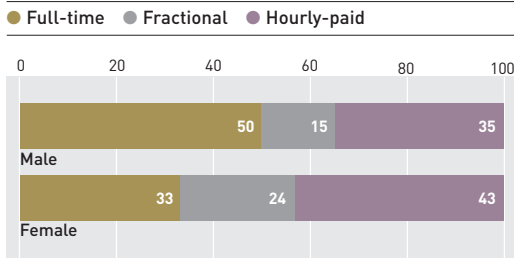
2. Teachers on full-time contracts tended to be in their thirties. The 30 to 39 age band contained the highest proportion of teachers on full-time contracts (46%); the second highest proportion was for teachers under 30 (37%).

3. Full-time contracts tend to be less common in ACL. Across the three phases, the highest proportion of hourly-paid teachers (63%) and the lowest proportion of full-time teachers (16%) came from this sector.

FIGURE 4.3

Teacher contract type by sector (%)
(pooled data FE college N=1222; ACL N=627; Other N=460)

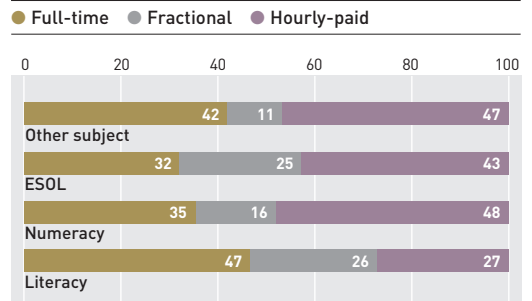● Full-time ● Fractional ● Hourly-paid
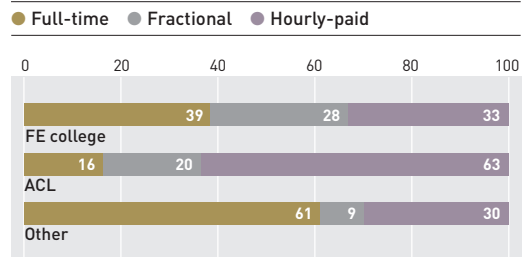
4. ESOL teachers were less likely to have full-time contracts than literacy or numeracy teachers. Literacy had the lowest proportion of hourly-paid teachers.

FIGURE 4.4

Job contract type by main subject taught (%)
(pooled data Literacy N= 565; Numeracy N=351; ESOL N=1090; Other subject N=262)

● Full-time ● Fractional ● Hourly-paid

5. On average, teachers on full-time and fractional contracts were characterised by both a longer period of teaching experience and longer service with their main employer than hourly-paid teachers.

6. On average, fractional part-time staff were contracted to work more hours than hourly-paid teachers: for fractional teachers the average contract was for 22 hours per week and for hourly-paid teachers 12 hours per

week. Full-time teachers were contracted to work an average of 36 hours per week.

Hourly rate

Forty per cent of hourly-paid teachers were paid for some other duties associated with teaching separately to the rate they were paid per contact hours. New questions added in Phase Two probed what these hourly rates covered:

- Preparation time for lessons (81%)
- Time for paperwork (66%)
- Time spent marking tests outside class (57%)
- Annual leave (45%)
- Public holidays (38%)
- Attending administrative meetings (31%)
- Sickness pay (30%)
- Attending CPD (20%)

In Phase Three, a further question was added which asked Skills for Life teachers on full-time or fractional contracts if they worked more hours each week than they were contracted to: three-quarters (75%) said that they did so. Overall, the average figure for additional unpaid hours worked per week was 12, with full-time respondents working 13 extra hours, and teachers on fractional contracts, 10 hours per week.

For full-time teachers, no effect on additional hours was observed for the variables for age, level of managerial responsibility, number of paid working hours and proportion of learners aged 16–19. However, the more learners full-time Skills for Life teachers taught, the more additional hours they reported working. This suggests that the additional hours teacher are working are integral to their teaching.

The subject of these additional unpaid hours, or 'gift labour', was also explored in qualitative interviews, where two-thirds of interviewees (including hourly-paid teachers) reporting that they regularly worked more hours than they were

contracted to, which for some represented a substantial increase in their workload. When probed as to why they did so, the main reason respondents gave was they that wanted to be more prepared for their classes than their timetables allowed for.

> 'I like to be on top of it. Once you are in the class all angles covered. In the sense that I have planned well, know what I am doing and I am not all over the place when I am in the class. So when learners are asking me for information it is all there. I am organised as well. That is what I can use, with myself, personally, if I am organised and planned well, I am OK.' [Int29]

Others linked this preparation specifically to the needs and past experiences of Skills for Life learners:

> 'I want to be well prepared, I think the students have been failed by the educational service once and I think they deserve the best.' [Int34]

Although a number of teachers felt they were 'always on the treadmill' [Int32], most accepted that working extra hours on top of their contracted hours was part of the teacher's job, whatever the education sector:

> 'I think it is just part of life now. It is something you accept early on and you just get on with it, and just continue. To be honest I don't really think about it.' [Int12]

Other employment

In Phase One, 28% of part-time teachers had another job in post-16 education and training and 17% had another job outside the sector. In Phase Two these figures fell slightly, to 23% and 12% respectively. By the final fieldwork phase, 17% of part-time teachers had other post-16 education employment and 15% had additional employment outside the sector.

The likelihood of having more than one job is related to the type of part-time contract a teacher had. In Phase One, those on hourly-paid contracts were more likely to have other employment in post-16 education (31% compared to 22%) and those on fractional contracts were more likely to have employment outside the post-16 sector (22% compared to 15%).

The qualitative data reveal some reasons why part-time Skills for Life teachers have more than one job. Interviewees spoke of how, in a sector characterised by a limited availability of full-time posts, having more than job allows teachers to make up a sufficient number of hours and wages to live on. As one teacher told us:

'A number of my colleagues, who are very well qualified, do part-time jobs where they might have to work at two or three colleges to make ends meet'. [Int6]

Employment status and job satisfaction

The questionnaire also examined how satisfied Skills for Life teachers were with aspects of their job relating to working conditions and employment status. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction (on five-point scales ranging from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied' or from 'a great deal' to 'not at all') with a series of items.

Administrative tasks
While a majority of all teachers, regardless of contract type, were dissatisfied with the proportion of time they spent on administrative tasks, dissatisfaction was higher among part-time than full-time teachers. Across all three phases, 65% of fractional, 70% of hourly-paid and 54% of full-time teachers were dissatisfied.

The qualitative data support the finding that most Skills for Life teachers felt they spent too much of their time on administration. Although such tasks were generally accepted as part and parcel of the job, several teachers referred to an increasing volume of paperwork and form filling, a phenomenon Bolton (2007: 14) refers to as 'administrative task creep'. Furthermore, interviewees spoke of their perception that the administrative burden was greater for part-time teachers:

'They [management] keep on asking us to do

TABLE 4.1

Satisfaction with working conditions and employment status

(Pooled data from all three phases (2310 observations).)

	Full-time (N=854)			Fractional (N=513)			Hourly-paid (N=943)		
	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied
Job security	12	16	72	21	16	63	32	22	46
Career prospects	26	37	37	27	47	26	38	36	27
Proportion of time spent on administrative tasks	54	20	26	65	21	14	70	16	15
Salary and other benefits	32	25	44	40	36	24	57	21	23
Support received from managers	22	19	59	21	25	54	22	19	59
Training and development opportunities	18	22	60	23	27	50	26	22	52
Availability of resources and facilities	15	28	58	20	27	54	25	22	53
Balance between work and personal life	32	21	47	34	24	43	35	27	39

more for less time [...] We are supposed to have done a lot more paperwork than we ever did in the old days and have to be kept up to date all the time, which is very time-consuming, particularly if you are part-time. It is all right for me, but people who are part-time, I think they must really struggle.' [Int3]

Salary

- A higher proportion of part-time teachers were dissatisfied with their salary and other benefits compared to full-time teachers. Across all three phases, 40% of fractional, 57% of hourly-paid and 32% of full-time teachers were dissatisfied.

One female teacher interviewed in the qualitative strand believed that some Skills for Life contracts were poorly paid for the level of responsibility required:

'If you look at the jobs available in FE, there are a lot of jobs out there, but the pay is absolutely abysmal [...] I was looking at my local college, and they wanted somebody to actually be the coordinator and run the department, whatever, and they were only offering just under seventeen thousand a year[4].' [Int49]

Support from managers

- No difference was observed between part-time and full-time teachers in their satisfaction levels with the general support they received from managers. Part-time and full-time teachers were also similarly satisfied with how their line managers valued and recognised their work (82% stated they were valued by their manager a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot').

Resources and facilities

- Satisfaction levels with the availability of

resources and facilities were related to employment status. Only 15% of full-time teachers were dissatisfied with the availability of resources and facilities, but among part-time teachers the figure was slightly higher: 20% for fractional and 25% for hourly-paid teachers.
- Satisfaction levels were also related to teaching sector. Hourly-paid teachers in ACL were more dissatisfied than their full-time or fractional colleagues compared to the differences observed in FE colleges and 'other' types of provision.

One teacher spoke of the problems some part-time staff can face when accessing resources:

'I think you do a lot more things in your own time. You don't have access to lots of things at work, like stationery or photocopying equipment as easily. I do a lot of photocopying at home [...] I know you can submit photocopying a week ahead, but it is often that things happen and you may want to do something quite topical. And it is not always able to be planned for in that way really.' [Int40]

Job security

- A higher proportion of part-time teachers were dissatisfied with their job security compared to full-time teachers. Across all three phases, 21% of fractional, 32% of hourly-paid and 12% of full-time teachers were dissatisfied.
- For full-time and hourly-paid staff, evaluation of job security was not related to the sector in which they worked. Teachers on fractional contracts, however, were less likely to be dissatisfied with their job security if they worked in FE colleges than if they worked in other sectors (19% compared to 33%).
- Part-time teachers employed on fixed-term or

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4 Although we cannot be sure of the exact year the teacher is talking about, she was interviewed in 2006. If we assume that she was referring to a gross annual average salary, secondary school teachers were earning £30,428 in 2006 (Office for National Statistics, 2007).

casual contracts were particularly dissatisfied compared to part-timers on permanent contracts (39% compared to 14%).

Qualitative data highlight the job insecurities Skills for Life teachers face and the implications for the profession of this, particularly where labour is casualised. Teachers whose employment breaks over the summer vacation, for example, lack job security for the coming academic year. One teacher recalled a social gathering for teachers who had taken a Level 4 course together:

'I met with the tutors on the course, and my colleagues who had been on the course [...] And they were telling me [...] they had all received letters, the sessional tutors, saying there probably wouldn't be any work for them that year, that term, that academic term, because [the college] was in financial difficulty. Well what kind of message does that give? I was one of those ladies. I have a mortgage to pay. What I used to do, in the holidays, was take temping work in offices. Now that is not being treated as a professional [...] that is all I can say. Because we are just treated like little ladies who want to earn a bit of pin money.' [Int25]

This hints at an uneasy tension in the sector between the professionalisation brought about by Skills for Life and an historic perception that 'basic skills' teachers are primarily older women engaged in a 'spare time' occupation.

• In terms of job security, the highest levels of dissatisfaction (84%) were for those teachers who were under 30 years of age and worked on fractional contracts (see figure 4.5). In all other age groups except teachers aged 50–59, a higher proportion of hourly-paid staff were dissatisfied compared to fractional or full-time staff.

Percentage of teachers dissatisfied (i.e. 'very dissatisfied' and 'dissatisfied') with job security by age and employment status (%)
(Pooled data from all three phases (2061 observations))

● Full-time   ● Fractional   ● Hourly-paid
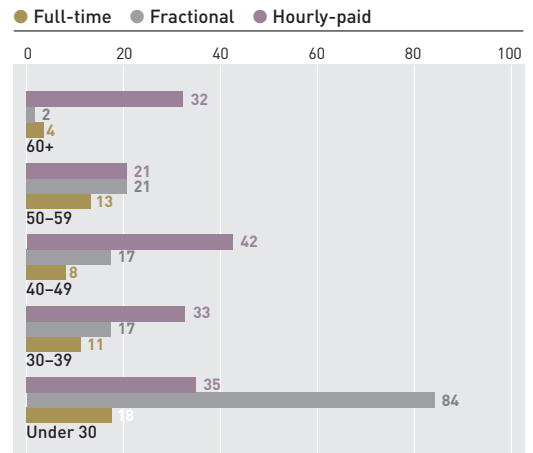
Work/life balance

• A lower proportion of hourly-paid teachers were satisfied with the balance between work and personal life than fractional or full-time teachers (39% compared to 43% and 47% respectively).

In qualitative interviews, most teachers on fractional contracts told us that the number of hours they worked both suited their current life circumstances and led them to feel less pressurised:

'Obviously I could do with more money, but I have the time to do what I need to do, without feeling stress'. [Int37]

• Teaching sector is related to satisfaction with work/life balance. In FE colleges, full-time and fractional teachers were somewhat less satisfied with their work/life balance than hourly-paid teachers (33% and 38% compared to 49%). The reverse was the case in other

sectors, with full-time and fractional teachers being more dissatisfied than their hourly-paid colleagues (57% and 59% compared to 32%).

Collaboration with colleagues

- Hourly-paid teachers talked less often to their colleagues and were less likely to believe that they shared an understanding with them compared to full-time and fractional teachers.
- Part-time teachers collaborated less with their colleagues than full-time teachers and believed that they had less influence on the decision-making process. Although 61% of part-time teachers talked 'very' or 'quite often' with other teachers about practice issues and 69% agreed that had a 'shared understanding' with their colleagues, these percentages were higher for full-time teachers (71% and 79%).

The qualitative data explain aspects of this part-time/full-time divide. One full-time teacher commented, with reference to her part-time colleagues:

'You don't feel included in the college. A lot of them say they just come in, they teach, and then off they go again. You don't get the rapport with the other staff that I have got. Sharing of ideas and good practice. You don't get that if you are part-time. You are very isolated, I think.' [Int5]

Moreover, deficiencies in collegiality may impact on teacher retention. One numeracy teacher told us:

'I am strongly debating whether or not to just resign altogether [...] this lack of consultation as to what they actually require from me, and why they have given me Application of Number, I have no idea. That is worrying, because I know from experience, if I am not comfortable

delivering a course it is a waste of my time being there and a waste of the students time being there.' [Int35]

Differences in the views of full-time and part-time teachers concerning their influence on decision-making stem from disparities between full-time and hourly-paid teachers: there was almost no variation between teachers on full-time and fractional contracts. Also, the more hours a respondent was contracted to work, the more they perceived they had an influence on decision-making, regardless of employment status.

Employment mobility

As longitudinal data were gathered over three fieldwork phases, NRDC could examine which teachers wanted to change their contracts; which teachers did change and what changes were made; and the factors which predicted change.

Changing employment status

In Phase One, 35% of part-time Skills for Life teachers said they would like to change to full-time contracts. A number of factors distinguish those who would like to change to full-time work from those who did not. Teachers were more likely to want to change if they were:

- dissatisfied with their job security (34% compared to 23%)
- on hourly-paid as opposed to fractional contracts (40% compared to 23%)
- on fixed-term or casual contracts as opposed to permanents contracts (45% compared to 23%)
- male rather than female (48% compared to 32%)
- under 30 (68% compared with 17% of those aged 30–39; 41% of those aged 40–49; and 27% of those aged 50–59). This is particularly true among male teachers under 30 (86% compared to 59% for similarly aged female teachers).

We can speculate that willingness to change may then be related to life-stage. Women with domestic commitments are more likely to work part-time; teachers in their thirties may be starting families or have young children; teachers in their twenties, particularly men, may have fewer ties and a stronger desire to build careers. Qualitative data supports this hypothesis, suggesting that different structural constraints at different life stages influence the employment decisions that teachers make. As a 40-year-old female teacher explained:

'It is totally insecure and I think if I was the main wage earner I couldn't have [made a career in teaching LLN] [...] So it wasn't saying I would make a career out of it, because the only people who had the permanent contracts tend to be the full-timers, which at that point I wasn't interested in doing. But now it would be of interest because I don't have the same constraints at home.' [Int40]

Another female teacher in her forties made the change from part-time to full-time work, partly because it afforded a career development opportunity and partly because of financial considerations:

'I was asked if I wanted to [work full-time], because they were taking on this family learning and they needed more tutors, and they said if I did that then I could use those extra hours for family learning. That was one reason. The other reason was the financial reason, because my daughter has started university and I wanted to be able to contribute towards the fees, didn't want her to be massively in debt. That was the other reason.' [Int4]

Teachers who leave post-16 education and training
Sixty-two respondents (7%) in Phase Two and 37 respondents (7%) in Phase Three no longer worked in post-16 education and training.

Younger Skills for Life teachers, those without generic teaching qualifications, those with shorter service, ESOL teachers and teachers whose main subject was not Skills for Life, were all more likely to leave to work in another sector. Further information available for 89 of these 99 respondents revealed that:

- 40 were in other full- or part-time employment (22 in some other aspect of education)
- 15 had retired
- 5 were unemployed
- 10 were on maternity leave
- the remainder were not working – for health reasons (10), or because of family (6) or educational commitments (3).

In addition:

- 13 respondents stated that they intended to return to the post-16 education and training sector within 2 years
- 26 respondents were unsure if they would return in the next 2 years
- 22 stated that they would not return to the sector.

The most common reasons given by teachers for leaving the post-16 education sector were fixed-term or temporary contracts coming to an end, a desire to pursue a new career, long working hours, the demanding nature of the job and family commitments.

Teachers who changed employer
Between Phases One and Two, 65 respondents changed their main employer and 32 did so between Phases Two and Three. On average, 7% of teachers in each phase continued to teach Skills for Life but changed their main employing organisation. Of the teachers who changed employers:

- On average, about half kept the same employment status with their new employer.

- Between the first and second phases, the same proportion (17%) upgraded their employment status when they changed employer (for example, from fractional to full-time) as downgraded[5] their employment status (for example, from full-time to hourly-paid).
- Between the second and third phase, five times as many teachers downgraded as upgraded their employment status when changing their main employer.
- Models controlling for gender, age, other teaching qualifications and years of teaching experience in post-16 sector, showed that White British teachers; teachers working outside of FE colleges; teachers whose service with their main employer had been shorter; and teachers who experienced less managerial support were more likely to change their main employer.
- Part-time teachers who did not want to change to a full-time position were more likely to change employing organisation compared to full-time teaching staff.
- Those working in FE colleges were less likely to change sector when changing employer. After Phase One, 64% moved to other FE colleges; after Phase Two, the figure was 50%. Lower numbers of FE teachers moved to ACL (29% after Phase One and 36% after Phase Two) and to other sectors (7% after Phase One and 14% after Phase Two).
- By contrast, more than half of ACL teachers who changed employer between Phases Two and Three moved to jobs in FE colleges.

Teachers who changed employment status

Over the course of the study, looking only at those teachers who participated in all three surveys, the proportions of full-time and fractional teachers increased and the proportion of hourly-paid teachers decreased.

TABLE 4.2

Employment status by phase

	Phase 1 (N=1027)	Phase 2 (N=737)	Phase 3 (N=546)
Full-time	30	39	42
Fractional	22	24	26
Hourly-paid	49	37	32

A third (34%) of those who indicated in Phase One that they would like to change to full-time work did so. Female teachers, teachers under 30 and teachers aged 40–49 were more likely to change from part-time to full-time contracts. Teachers on fractional contracts were more likely to change to full-time positions than those who were hourly-paid. Although in the first phase a higher proportion of hourly-paid than fractional teachers indicated that they were willing to change from part-time to full-time contracts, fractional teachers were almost 1.5 times more likely to do so. Teachers who indicated they wanted to change to full-time contracts were 2.6 times more likely to change their employers after Phase One. This suggests that it may be hard to secure full-time work at the same organisation.

Sixty-eight per cent of teachers did not change employment status across the three phases of the study:

- 26% stayed full-time
- 13% stayed fractional; and
- 29% remained hourly-paid.

5 The terms 'upgraded' or 'downgraded' are used here to mean that teachers changed their contractual status, for example, downgraded from full-time to hourly-paid or upgraded from part-time to full-time. The terms are used descriptively and are not intended to signify that one is somehow 'better' or 'worse' than the other.

Twenty-six per cent changed their employment status upward:

- 11% from hourly-paid to full-time
- 10% from hourly-paid to fractional; and
- 5% from fractional to full-time contracts.

Five per cent experienced a downward change in their employment status[6].

Constraints on change

The fact that two-thirds of the part-time teachers who indicated in Phase One that they would like to change to full-time contracts did not do so is a reminder that there are limited opportunities for full-time employment within the Skills for Life sector. This is underscored by the qualitative data. For example, a 32-year-old male who found teaching work through an agency told us he 'would love to be working full-time' and that it would 'make a real difference' to his life and his financial security. However, he acknowledged that in his locale, the majority of opportunities were part-time and hourly-paid: 'It is very rare that a full-time job comes up, and when it does there is a lot of competition for them.' [Int32] Moreover, another young teacher, a 29-year-old woman, suggested that the lack of full-time, permanent positions discouraged some young people from pursuing a career in Skills for Life.

'I think the part-time hours and the bits and pieces here and there are brilliant. And what they do attract is a lot of people who maybe have left the school sector, maybe retired from the school sector, and still want to do a little bit of work. And that is fantastic, but what it doesn't attract is people straight out of uni, who want full-time hours to run a house, support the family, and I think we lose a lot of people who would be really good at it [...] a

temporary contract for eight hours a week. You just can't work to that. You need full-time, permanent jobs.' [Int8]

The qualitative data suggest that although Skills for Life teaching provides attractive opportunities for teachers who either want to work part-time or can afford to work part-time only, external employment constraints are problematic for those teachers, particularly younger teachers, who want to make Skills for Life their main career and need a full-time, permanent contract.

Staying the same

The majority of teachers on fractional contracts who were interviewed for the qualitative strand were content with their employment status and had no plans to change to full-time work: 'I was offered a full-time contact but I wanted to keep the balance with home life.' [Int 63]

In quantitative responses, female and male teachers gave different reasons why they did not want to change to full-time work (see Figure 4.6). Female respondents most commonly mentioned family commitments (40% compared to 4% of male respondents) whereas men emphasised that the flexibility of a part-time position allowed them freedom and time for other things in life (40% compared to 16% of female respondents).

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6 This is a far smaller figure than the 17% who reduced their hours or moved from full-time to hourly-paid between the first two phases of the survey. This difference may be explained by the fact that those who remained in the study through the three phases were more likely to be in stable employment; those who changed employer and employment status were more difficult to track over the three years of the study.

FIGURE 4.6

Reasons why part-time teachers did not want to change to full-time contracts (%)

(Data from Phase One N=239)

caring responsibilities, and those pursing a secondary or pre-retirement career.

However, not all part-time teachers actively choose to work part-time. Teachers on hourly-paid contracts were more likely to have other jobs in education and more likely to want to change to full-time contracts than fractional staff. This may hint at particular levels of discontent within the hourly-paid cohort, a suggestion borne out by sessional teachers' dissatisfaction levels with their working conditions and job security. As one teacher put it:

'I, like many of my colleagues who are hourly-paid, feel that we are overworked and underpaid. [...] The workload has made people sick, both physically and mentally. [...] I could get the same money at Tesco for less stress.'

There was a perception among respondents that there were practical constraints on the changes that could be effected in a teaching environment where there are fewer full-time posts than would-be full-time teachers. Hourly-paid teachers may face particular challenges in upgrading their employment status to full-time.

However, for some teachers, change was indeed possible. Findings about job mobility over the course of the three phases were in tune with what Gleeson et al. (2005) term 'the long interview' (p. 450), that is, the process whereby teachers serve an apprenticeship of a number of years in part-time work before they achieve a full-time permanent position. Career pathways in Skills for Life are more possible for teachers who are employed on fractional contracts, have a number of years' experience, including some in management, and are able to move to another employer. The theme of career pathways is discussed further in the next chapter. ■

Conclusion

Data from the Teacher Study confirm that the Skills for Life sector is characterised by part-time contracts: the majority of the workforce do not teach full-time for one employer. Those teachers who work part-time are more likely to have hourly-paid contracts than fractional contracts, particularly if they work in learning sectors other than FE colleges, or if they teach ESOL. Data also suggest that many in the Skills for Life workforce welcome the availability of part-time contracts. The fact that teachers on part-time contracts tended to be female, or aged over 40, is a reminder that Skills for Life presents opportunities to those with childcare or other

5

Teaching as a profession and a career

This chapter examines what motivated people to teach Skills for Life subjects and places these motivations into three broad categories: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic. It goes on to examine the extent to which Skills for Life teachers saw teaching Skills for Life as a profession; how they collaborated and how they were supported at work and the extent of their autonomy. It finishes by exploring how Skills for Life teachers viewed their future career prospects.

Why teach Skills for Life?

Context
A number of studies (for example, Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000, Moran et al. 2001) have investigated what motivates people to become teachers. The main reasons can be split into three broad categories:

1. Altruistic reasons: those that are rooted in the perception that teaching is socially important and where prospective teachers are motivated by their desire to help people as individuals and society as a whole.
2. Intrinsic reasons: those that are connected to components of the work itself, such as enjoyment of teaching, working with specific learner groups, interest in and knowledge of the teaching subject, a match with qualifications and experience, or the connection between the job and personal growth and development.
3. Extrinsic reasons: those that are related to the job but not inherent in the work itself, including lifestyle considerations such as holiday entitlement and flexibility, material benefits including level of pay, professional status, job availability and adaptability to personal circumstances, and job security.

Of course, not all reasons or the same combination of reasons are important to all teachers. However, whatever the motivation, the degree of match between what people want from their job and the extent to which they think a particular job can offer this and continues to offer this has a crucial influence on their decision-making processes. In the context of this report, a greater understanding of what motivates people to teach Skills for Life serves a dual purpose for both policy-makers and providers: knowing what is attractive about the job supports recruitment and offsets attrition and teacher turnover.

Intrinsic
In the Phase One questionnaire, respondents were asked to list in an open-box the main factors that influenced their decision to teach Skills for Life subjects. Just over 70% of respondents mentioned intrinsic reasons such as enjoyment of a subject (20%), enjoyment of teaching (8%) and, specifically, teaching adult learners, who many perceived as more motivated than younger pupils (18%). As one ACL teacher explained in an interview:

'I was convinced, from talking to people, and from my own experiences, that teaching was something that came naturally for me, and wanted to explore it further, but didn't really have the confidence to cope with whole classes of

children, so felt that working with adults, especially as I was approaching 50, would be, perhaps, easier for me. Smaller classes and people who wanted to be there, and stuff. So that is the background and that is how it all came about.' [Int. 50]

Some teachers viewed the job as a good fit for their experience and qualifications (17%) or a challenge for their personal development (4%). Others expressed their desire to work with specific learner cohorts, such as foreign learners (5%) or less-able/special-needs learners (2%).

Altruistic

Two-fifths (41%) of respondents gave altruistic reasons, linking their choice of profession to wanting to make a difference through helping people and improving society. As one ESOL teacher explained in an interview:

'Well, it was really to do my bit to help people around the world who have kind of got a rough end of the deal, and since I am not very adventurous or interested in travelling abroad it was something I could do within my own country.' [Int. 63]

Extrinsic

Just under a quarter of respondents gave extrinsic reasons for teaching Skills for Life: 10% mentioned long holidays, flexible working hours and the opportunities offered for part-time work, as well as salary and job security; 8% said their decision was influenced by job availability in Skills for Life; and 5% were told to do it or guided by their managers because it was part of funding or government directives. The following example from an interview with an ESOL teacher illustrates an extrinsic motivation for joining the profession:

'I found out that there were basic skills when I was on the general 7307 course and I remember saying, because it sounded like I could get a proper job in it, and I just remember saying – how can I teach it? I wasn't inspired. It was completely practical. I wanted money.' [Int23]

Teachers responding to extrinsic motivations showed themselves to be pragmatic in the face of organisational change. For example, one male teacher moved from IT to numeracy.

'At the time the college was making huge reductions in its IT [...] So basically I chose something where provision at the time was growing. So it struck me as a more secure field to specialise in.' [Int12]

This perception that the stature of the basic skills specialism was growing – the new prioritisation that came with the introduction of Skills for Life – is matched by a perception among some respondents that, for those disillusioned with school teaching (due, for example, to increasing amounts of paperwork, a lack of resources, large class sizes, poor pupil behaviour and stress), the sideways shift to adult basic skills is a pragmatic response to transferring existing skills to a different context.

Of course, for some teachers, their path to Skills for Life is less about career strategy and more about serendipity or circumstance, with 'no real thought process behind it'. [Int17] As one teacher recalled:

'I just sort of fell into it really [...] my youngest child was four and going to playgroup, and it was an old school, and across the yard from the playgroup building there was something going on, which was training. And I just popped in and said – I hang around for my daughter for half an hour, can I come in and do some volunteer reading? And they said that was great. So I went in as a volunteer and within about a term they said – we have spoken to the LSC and we can actually run a course teaching literacy and numeracy, would you be interested in teaching it one day a week? [...] So I started teaching there a day a week, continued with doing supply teaching, going into schools, and home tuition for disaffected kids as well, and then that tailed off and the other stuff took on more time.' [Int44]

In qualitative interviews teachers were also asked if

they had role models or key individuals who had influenced their career choices: their decision to enter the profession, their pedagogy, or their practice. Around three-quarters of respondents named role models and a quarter said that they had not been influenced by a particular person. Interestingly, in terms of professional identity, the most commonly cited role model was a fellow basic skills teacher, where teachers had been inspired by seeing their classroom practice and/or their interpersonal relations. This had either been in the past, or they were working alongside them at the moment. Managers, of various levels, and teacher educators also featured prominently.

Skills for Life teaching as a profession

Whatever an individual's reasons for their career choices, the extent to which their chosen job fulfils their personal and professional expectations impacts on both job satisfaction and professional identity. When that job, or the context of that job, changes – in this case, through a major educational policy initiative – the issue of the match between expectations and reality becomes more acute.

### Teacher autonomy in the classroom

Existing research (Shain and Gleeson 1999, Gleeson et al. 2005, Locke et al. 2005) suggests that autonomy has a critical role to play in a teacher's job satisfaction and the professionalisation process. Turnbull (2002) found that teachers are more likely to support reform when they not only have adequate training, resources and helpful support, but also participate in decisions and have control over the implementation of reform in their own classrooms. This suggests that for teachers, part of their professionalism is linked to having a degree of autonomy in implementing these educational changes in the classroom. In essence, part of a teacher's professionalism lies in integrating aspects of reform with their existing knowledge of their learners, of their subject and of their subject pedagogy. If teachers do not trust educational reform to effect meaningful change for their

learners, there is a negative impact on the altruistic aspects of their professional identity.

As Figure 5.1 illustrates, the Teacher Study data suggest that for Skills for Life teachers the highest levels of control and autonomy are experienced in relation to classroom practice, including skills to be taught and topics to be taught, course design, and course evaluation. On average, only a fifth of teachers thought they had influence on the evaluation and assessment of learners. Whereas in course design and evaluation an increasing proportion of teachers in each phase agreed they were influential, in areas where teachers perceived that they had the least influence – the hiring of staff, the allocation of financial resources, or the evaluation of performance at their organisation – there was no significant change over time.

FIGURE 5.1

Autonomy and control: participation in decision-making ('strongly agree' + 'agree') by phase (%) (N=476)[7]
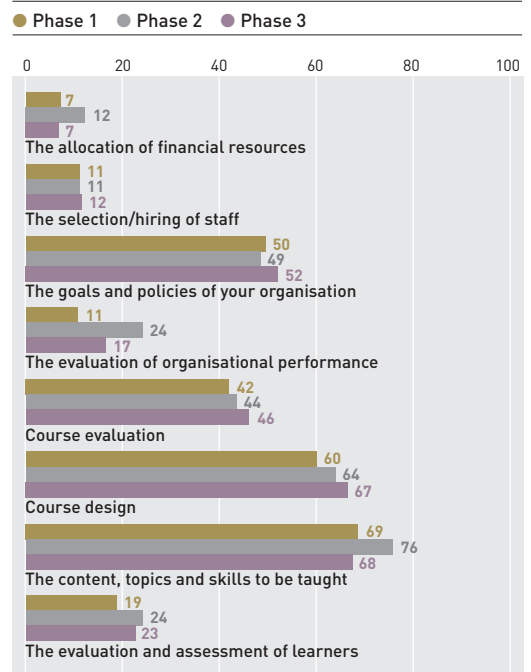
7 These figures are for respondents participating in all three phases only.

Respondents were also asked about the areas in which they would like to have more influence. The most frequently mentioned answers were:

- size of classes (40%)
- timetabling (32%)
- the goals and policies of their organisations (32%)
- appropriate qualifications for learners (30%)
- selection and recruitment of learners (27%)
- the allocation of financial resources (27%)
- choice of examination boards (26%).

Managerial support

Autonomy means not complete freedom from any restraints, but rather active involvement in decision-making processes and educational reforms through networking. Accordingly, one way of assessing the impact of an educational reform on teacher autonomy – and in particular the impact of a new culture of national standards, qualifications, and targets – is to examine teacher collaboration.

One aspect of collaboration – remembering that autonomy is not confined solely to the narrow sphere of the classroom – is managerial support. The role of managers is vital to ensuring that teachers feel they have a role to play in shaping change, rather than having reform imposed upon them, and the degree of managerial support a teacher receives can influence both their job satisfaction and career decisions.

Overall, those teachers who participated in all three phases of the Teacher Study perceived that they received 'quite a lot' of managerial support and felt valued by their line managers: relatively few teachers reported that they received 'very little' or 'no' support. Yet, as Figure 5.2 illustrates, over the course of the three phases there was a downward trend in teachers' views about managerial support. A decreasing proportion of teachers stated that they received support from their managers and their line managers, that they

felt valued and recognised by their line manager, and that their line manager was informed about their work and any problems they were experiencing.

FIGURE 5.2

Managerial support and appreciation by phase (%) (N=476)[8]

● Not at all + very little　● To some extent
● Quite a lot + a great deal
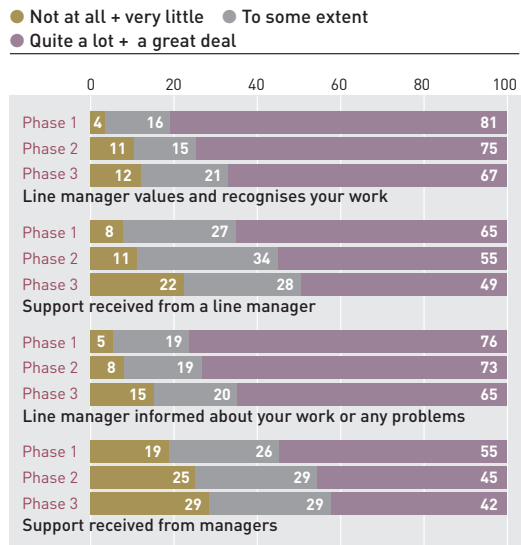
Collaboration

Figure 5.3 presents a summary of data on collegial networks, in this case, collaboration with colleagues, and shared goals and visions at an organisational level. More than two-thirds of Skills for Life teachers suggested that there was 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of shared understanding and clarity of organisational goals and priorities. Very few teachers believed that their organisation could be characterised by conflicts and disagreements. Indeed, the proportion of respondents who believed their organisation was characterised by conflicts reduced by a half by the third phase of the survey.
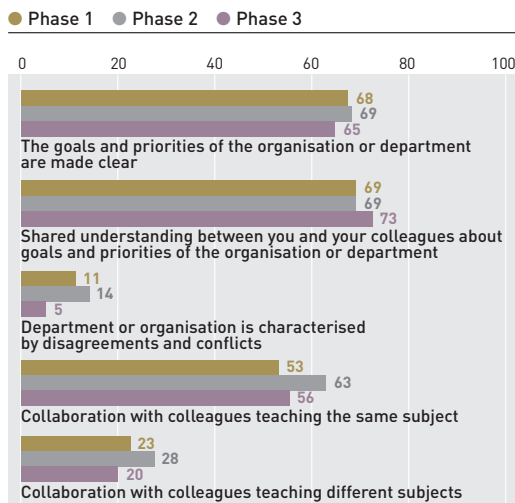
Although collaboration between colleagues who taught the same subjects was quite widespread (more than half of respondents did this 'a great deal'

8 These figures are for respondents participating in all three phases only.

or 'quite a lot' across all three phases), networking among teachers who taught different subject was far less frequent: slightly more than one-fifth of respondents did this 'a great deal' and 'quite a lot' across all three phases.

FIGURE 5.3

Collegial networks: collaboration and shared goals ('a great deal' + 'quite a lot'), by phase (%)
(N=476)[9]

● Phase 1   ● Phase 2   ● Phase 3

FIGURE 5.4

Professional role clarity and conflict (strongly agree + agree), by phase (%)
(N=476)[10]

● Phase 1   ● Phase 2   ● Phase 3
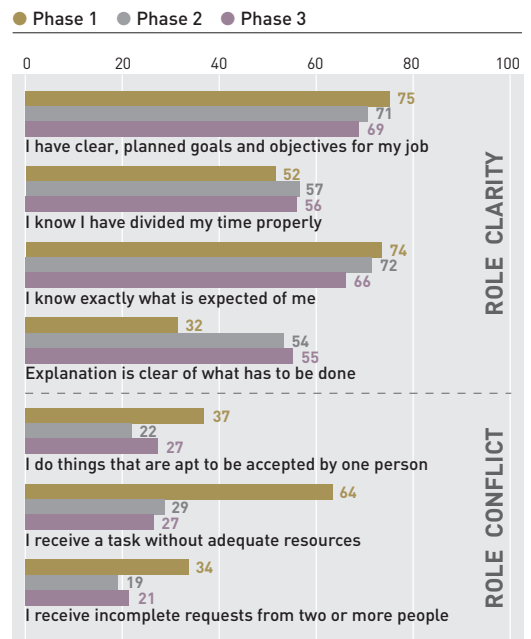

Clarity of professional role
About two-thirds of respondents believed that they had clear, planned goals and objectives for their job and knew what was expected from them in their work. In Phase One, one-third (32%) of Skills for Life teachers agreed that they received clear explanations of what had to be done at work: this proportion increased to 55% by the third phase. As Figure 5.4 illustrates, professional role clarity (how clearly teachers feel about their professional role) improved slightly over time and the proportion of teachers who agreed that there were conflicts in their professional role decreased quite dramatically.

9 & 10 These figures are for respondents participating in all three phases only.

Career pathways

If Skills for Life teaching is to be viewed as a 'profession' in the same way that school teaching is, there need to be clear pathways that all teachers are able to access for career advancement. If teachers perceive that a job offers only limited possibilities for advancement then understandably there may be an impact on both recruitment and retention.

Managerial posts

Across all three phases, 38% of teachers indicated that they were willing to be promoted to a managerial or higher managerial post. Certain factors can be isolated as influencing a teacher's willingness to be promoted. Younger teachers were more likely to want to be promoted to a managerial position as were teachers on permanent contracts. The more managerial support Skills for Life teachers received and the higher the level of clarity they had about their professional role, the greater the likelihood of them wanting a managerial position. However, part-time Skills for Life teachers who did not want to change to a full-time position were less likely to want to be promoted to a managerial post compared to teachers who worked full-time.

Dissatisfaction

Over a quarter (28%) of respondents were dissatisfied with their career prospects. A slightly lower proportion of full-time teachers were dissatisfied with their career prospects (22%) than part-time teachers (31%). Hourly-paid part-time teachers were more likely to be dissatisfied with their career prospects (33%) than teachers on fractional contracts (27%). Male part-time teachers were more dissatisfied than female part-time teachers with their career prospects (38% compared to 29%). The gap in satisfaction levels between part-time and full-time teachers with their prospects for career advancement was greater in teaching sectors other than FE.

Among younger part-time teachers, the proportion

of respondents dissatisfied with their career prospects was far higher than that seen in all other age groups (71% compared to less than 30% on average) and than in young teachers who worked full-time (18%).

A number of teachers interviewed believed that it was easier to make a career as a basic skills teacher now than it was prior to Skills for Life. Around a third of these teachers thought that it was possible to make a career as a Skills for Life teacher, and that the structures and pathways were in place to facilitate this:

'If you can get a decent college, and you have got yourself a fairly water-tight contract, it is a good profession'. [Int35]

Such teachers tended to be on either fractional or full-time contracts and only one of these teachers was hourly-paid.

Permanent contracts

Many qualitative interviewees made the connection between career progression opportunities and the lack of availability of full-time permanent contracts: the options open to teachers depend on where they work and what sector they work in. To progress teachers must be highly-motivated, appropriately-qualified, flexible enough to change employer, possibly train in more than one subject specialism, and be prepared to replace some of their teaching hours with managerial activities.

Career paths in Skills for Life can follow different trajectories. As teachers' reasons for joining the profession illustrate, some begin at a volunteer level and progress through learning support to teaching. For those in teaching, progression may involve spending less time in the classroom and more time in curriculum management, department management or teacher training. For those unwilling to take on managerial responsibilities or who are committed to

remaining in the classroom, the promotional options are more limited:

'The higher up you go, with FE, or the higher up you go at our place anyway, the less teaching it involves and it is more managerial stuff, which is not what I want to do, it is not what I am there for.' [Int19]

Retention
Turning to retention, three-quarters of teachers across all three quantitative phases believed that they would be teaching Skills for Life subjects in the post-16 education and training sector in 1–2 years' time; 18% were unsure about their future prospects; and 7% said they were unlikely to be teaching Skills for Life subjects in the next 1–2 years. ■

6

Job satisfaction

This chapter asks how satisfied teachers were with their professional roles and explores the factors that influenced this, both positively and negatively.

Learners

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with key aspects of a Skills for Life teacher's job. The main areas where teachers expressed their satisfaction across all three phases (see Figure 6.1) were 'appreciation of work by learners' (89% very or mainly satisfied); 'learner progress and achievement' (84%); and 'learner behaviour' (89%).

Satisfaction with aspects of teaching job with main employer (%)
(pooled data N=2310)

● Mainly satisfied + very satisfied ● Neutral
● Very dissatisfied + dissatisfied

Appreciation of work by learners	89	9 2
Learner behaviour	89	7 4
Learner progress and achievement	84	12 4
Job security	59	19 22
Support and help received from managers	58	20 22
Availability of resources and facilities	56	24 20
Training and development opportunities	55	23 22
Balance between work and personal life	43	24 34
Salary and related benefits	31	26 44
Prospects for career advance	30	39 31
Proportion of time on administration	19	19 63

In qualitative interviews, the link between teaching, learners and job satisfaction was a recurrent theme; as one teacher expressed it, 'we are so lucky to have this opportunity to teach these people and make such a difference to their lives'. For this

teacher, satisfaction came partly from a 'contract' developed with learners:

'I am driven. I have to be completely prepared when I go in the classroom. I have to be organised and I expect my students to work hard and they expect me to work hard. I work really hard for them. We are on a joint project, me and my students.' [Int27]

For other teachers, satisfaction was derived from the very visible progress that learners made. The quotation below comes from a teacher working in the prison sector:

'I got more and more into it, it interested me more and more, especially the success stories that came about with the learners, especially with offenders, you see a great change in their lives. Just to see them for three months, even, it had a great impact on them, especially gaining qualifications, some had got jobs from this, when they finished their probationary period, and others moved on to do courses at the college, so there was a great insight there.' [Int29]
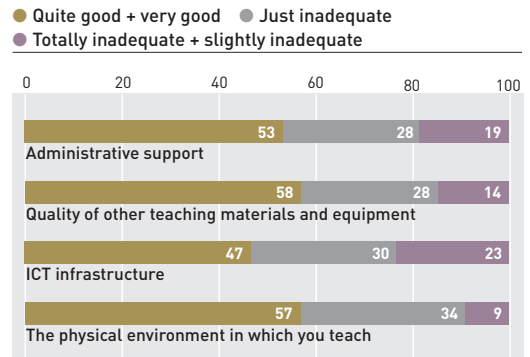
Resources

Figure 6.2 shows that around half of all teachers perceived that the physical environment, the ICT infrastructure, the teaching materials and equipment, and the administrative support at their employing organisation was very good or quite good.

FIGURE 6.2

Satisfaction with aspects of teaching job with main employer (%)
(pooled data N=2310)

- Quite good + very good   • Just inadequate
- Totally inadequate + slightly inadequate

Administrative support: 53 | 28 | 19
Quality of other teaching materials and equipment: 58 | 28 | 14
ICT infrastructure: 47 | 30 | 23
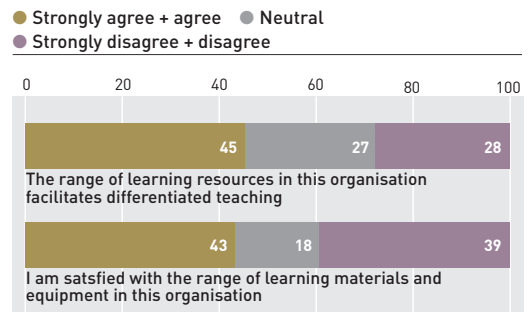The physical environment in which you teach: 57 | 34 | 9

As Figure 6.3 illustrates, there was also some dissatisfaction with the resources available to teachers – 39% felt that that the range of learning resources did not facilitate differentiated teaching.

FIGURE 6.3

Satisfaction with aspects of teaching job with main employer (%)
(pooled data N=2310)

- Strongly agree + agree   • Neutral
- Strongly disagree + disagree

The range of learning resources in this organisation facilitates differentiated teaching: 45 | 27 | 28
I am satsfied with the range of learning materials and equipment in this organisation: 43 | 18 | 39

However, the satisfaction teachers derived from their work with learners could outweigh any negative aspects of their job. According to one teacher: 'Working with the learners and seeing how they progress makes it all worthwhile. I love my job, despite the infuriating lack of facilities'.

Age and experience

Older teachers and those with more post-16 experience, as well as those who are more qualified, were less satisfied with their job overall. It may be that this group of teachers, having been through a number of different periods of reorganisation and change during their careers, have less enthusiasm for the new processes and infrastructure of Skills for Life. They may also be uncertain about the changes brought about by Skills for Life and their own position within it, in particular, whether the investment they have made in their career is being undermined. As we have seen, 60% of Skills for Life teachers are over 40 years old; some may resent the challenge to their established practices or even hark back to a golden age before the resources and attention brought by Skills for Life. This again underlines for policy-makers the importance of engaging a new generation of Skills for Life teachers.

Career advancement

One area where dissatisfaction was revealed was prospects for career advancement; this was only rated positively by 30% of respondents. In qualitative interviews, several teachers linked the opportunities available to them in their career as linked to the context they worked in:

'We are a very small college and there is nowhere for me to go here. So if I want to get a promotion I will have to leave this college, which is unfortunate.' [Int8]

One teacher who moved from a work-based learning employer to an FE college noted the differences this made to her career prospects:

'I think, first of all [the main difference is] the size of the organisation. It is a lot bigger at college. And one of the reasons why I decided to make this move is again, for progression routes, because I feel there are a lot more

opportunities available, in terms of my own development.' [Int43]

There was a perception that some organisations were restructuring in order to offer clearer and more effective progression strategies:

'Now they have actually put extra stepping stones in for people. There is supposedly a promotion ladder, which there wasn't before. So I think the college is valuing the area more than it previously did.' [Int14]

For some respondents this clarity of career opportunity was explicitly linked to the changes the Skills for Life strategy had brought to the sector:

'I was amazed, all the training [the college] got me, and put me on a PGCE as well, while I was on basic skills, it was excellent for me, felt like it was fast track. And all the training support within the department, because the department was quite close. It was great and you could see ways of moving up within the college anyway.' [Int29]

Teaching environment

Those who work outside FE colleges were among the most dissatisfied. In qualitative interviews, one teacher expanded on the reasons why those teaching outside larger FE colleges can struggle to find the right support:

'It is small. And it can be isolating. But we do have network meetings and things like that, where we can share good practice. Although we find everybody tends to be doing their own different things. Even though we are doing the same thing.' [Int9]

In qualitative interviews, teachers linked the physical and emotional support environment at work with a feeling of dissatisfaction and isolation, and highlighted how this varies

between learning context:

> 'You see your colleagues on a day-to-day basis [in FE colleges]. You share an office, there is professional support from line managers, because you see them. In ACL you are really out on a limb, and unless you go to the main centre you very rarely have any kind of support or leadership. You are just battling away by yourself and you may be doing it wrong, but you don't know that you are doing anything wrong until you get observed once a year [...] And you carry about your classroom and office in the back of the car. You haven't got a base to work from or an office to use.' [Int45]

Administration

Many teachers recognised there is a need for planning and record systems and that these can be beneficial to both teacher and student. However, the qualitative data reveal that many teachers also believed that the level of their administrative workload detracted from the efficacy of their teaching and some were suspicious of a perceived culture of accountability.

> 'It is all down to accountability. At the end of the day does it make me a better teacher? Am I improving the learning of my students? And a lot of the time you have to say – no, this is just form filling. I am covering my back and everybody else's along the way. And that is what I found quite irritating really.' [Int49]

This is not just an issue in Skills for Life but also in other educational sectors (IRS Research 2000; PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2001; Smithers and Robinson 2001, 2003). Some respondents made the link between administrative demands and job satisfaction:

> 'allow us to do what most of us are good at and enjoy – that is teaching and helping learners to learn.'

Conclusion

To find that teachers were most satisfied with their learners' behaviour and appreciation and least satisfied with the proportion of time they spend on administration is perhaps unsurprising. Further analysis shows that managerial support, collaboration with colleagues, involvement in decision-making and a clear professional role had a positive effect on the job satisfaction of the Skills for Life teaching workforce. These factors are all related to teachers' sense of professional autonomy; they allow teachers a stake in the ownership of the processes that affect them and their learners. Policy-makers and managers of Skills for Life teachers need to involve teachers in decision-making and provide the support they need to enable them to focus their attention on the needs of their learners and facilitate collaboration among them. This would appear to have a positive effect on teacher satisfaction and makes the profession more attractive, thus aiding retention of existing teachers as well as attracting the new generation of Skills for Life teachers that is urgently needed. ◼

7

Teachers' attitudes to Skills for Life

Research[11] suggests that those seeking to instigate educational changes that teachers feel negatively about, or exhibit behavioural resistance towards, face serious obstacles. Therefore, it is essential to consider teacher attitudes towards any educational reform they are involved in and to identify the factors that are associated with the attitudes teachers express. This chapter examines teacher attitudes toward six different aspects of the Skills for Life Strategy including the curricula, teacher qualifications, national tests, inspections, assessment and the Skills for Life infrastructure, and gives an overview of the aspects of the strategy that teachers regard as positive and negative.

Attitudes to Skills for Life

Skills for Life has invested heavily in innovative marketing, notably the Gremlins campaigns, to raise awareness of the strategy amongst the general public and to encourage learner participation. There has also been major investment in development activities and learning materials to ensure that practitioners know about the different elements of the strategy and are able to take advantage of them. It appears that this has been successful; overall 63% of respondents stated that they were very well or quite well informed about Skills for Life initiatives.

Below we have outlined how positively respondents felt toward five different aspects of the Skills for Life strategy and the changes they have brought:

- The Skills for Life curricula and other initiatives
- New Skills for Life teacher qualifications
- National tests and learner morale
- Inspections/quality assurance
- Use of Skills for Life infrastructure

The Skills for Life curricula and other initiatives

Teachers were asked to assess whether the Skills for Life curricula had:

- given them confidence and helped them to be innovative and creative;
- expanded the range of teaching techniques they used and improved their teaching; rendered the teaching of adult literacy, ESOL, and numeracy more interesting as a job;
- provided development opportunities to make teachers feel valued.

They were also asked about the extent to which they felt that Skills for Life initiatives had brought down barriers to learning and enabled providers to attract more learners from hard-to-reach social groups while taking proper account of the needs of lower ability learners. Overall 60% of respondents reported positive attitudes to these aspects of the strategy and its impact.

In the telephone interviews 26 teachers referred to the Skills for Life curriculum, although they were not asked any direct questions about this; the great majority spoke of the Skills for Life

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11 Hargreaves (1998), McNess et al. (2003), Van den Berg et al. (1999).

curriculum in positive terms. Those commenting positively drew attention to the fact that not only did the curriculum provide them with ideas, it also offered a framework that gave structure and focus to teaching, and outlined what it expected for each subject and each level. For teachers with longer experience in the field these aspects of the curriculum were a welcome contrast to life prior to 2001:

'When the core curriculum came out it gave it [the curriculum] all a bit more focus. It was a bit woolly and a bit loose really before that.' [Int59]

Those teachers who raised the topic of the curriculum were probed about how they used it in their teaching. Almost all stressed that they viewed the curriculum as a framework rather than a prescriptive tool, and that they adapted it to the needs of their learners and their own teaching practices:

'So long as I'm following the guidelines laid out by the curriculum, I can do it as and when I want to, and how I want to.' [Int64]

For some, this framework brought the benefits of standardisation to both learners and teachers:

'I think it is useful to have that framework because it means we are all singing from the same song sheet. We are all doing the same things, which makes the skills that the students learn more transferable. A lot of our students move around a lot, they travel for work, and if they are halfway through a maths course here they can pick it up at another college quite easily now because it is the same curriculum. It is not just me teaching them what I think they want to know, it is me teaching them what I should be teaching them.' [Int8]

'If you are covering for somebody as well, you know exactly where they are up to. And you can just deliver more or less … if you have got three

English classes you are delivering more or less the same.' [Int18]

New Skills for Life teacher qualifications
Teachers were asked if they thought that the new Level 4 qualification would fill important knowledge gaps and whether those achieving the qualification would be better prepared to deal with the realities of teaching adults with poor literacy or numeracy skills. They were also asked to assess whether the new requirements are driving many excellent teachers out of the profession or undermining the employability of many experienced teachers. Overall 45% had positive views on these questions, significantly less than viewed the Skills for Life curricula and other initiatives positively.

Skills for Life teachers with a generic teaching qualification and teachers who were qualified to Level 3 (compared to those with a degree) were slightly more negative about the new qualifications, perhaps pointing to insecurities brought about among teachers who had previously considered themselves to be adequately qualified and resented or felt threatened by the new requirements. On the other hand, Skills for Life teachers who had gained a new Level 4 qualification were more positive, suggesting that the courses they had taken had increased their confidence in their ability to meet the requirements of their job roles.

National tests and learner morale
The new national tests in literacy and numeracy have been a focal point of much debate amongst teachers and others involved in Skills for Life. We asked respondents to assess how far they agreed or disagreed that the tests motivate learners to attend and study, and that they increase the self-esteem of disaffected people, and conversely whether learners find them daunting and may be deterred from enrolling onto programmes. Overall, 60% had positive views on these issues.

In the course of the qualitative interviews, 22 teachers mentioned the national tests for learners. Some listed the benefits to learners when they gained a national qualification, perhaps for the first time:

'I like the national tests for one reason; because I have seen how much learners get from that, the qualification.' [Int4]

Teachers reported that gaining qualifications boosts learner confidence and self-esteem, and that the prospect of getting a certificate was often a motivation for learners taking the course in the first place.

However, enthusiasm for the national tests was more muted when teachers viewed these from their own rather than the learner perspective. For some teachers, the tests were a curb on their teaching: in effect some felt that class work had become

'geared towards cramming, teaching strategies for cramming them for the test.' [Int22]

Others questioned the relationship between a test-focused system and improving skills:

'That [teaching towards a test] isn't what I would call Skills for Life work. That is not proper basic education. That is not actually moving people's skills forward a great deal. It is getting them through a piece of accreditation'. [Int34]

A common issue that teachers pointed out was that the Level 1 and 2 tests do not contain an element that requires a written response and instead contain multiple-choice questions:

'The biggest problem with it is that it is essentially a reading test, something that is computer marked, that you can do in an hour,

has to be a reading test. And it doesn't test what a lot of people really want to do, which is their writing skills and spelling skills, that is what they want to work on.' [Int34]

Inspections and quality assurance
Every learner has the right to expect that they will receive high quality learning which is appropriate to their needs and circumstances. One mechanism for ensuring this is the inspection regime. In the period of the Teacher Study survey this was carried out by the Adult Learning Inspectorate and is currently a responsibility of OFSTED. We asked teachers whether they agreed that the judgements of external inspectors were objective and contributed to raising standards of teaching and whether they had any hesitation in trusting the knowledge and experience of external inspectors. We also asked whether they felt that there was a hidden agenda in external inspections.

Only 25% of teachers answered the questions positively, perhaps reflecting the pressure that inspection naturally brings to teachers, particularly in the light of a number of negative inspection reports in Skills for Life areas in recent years.

Those teachers who had taken part in more CPD were more positive about inspections, and those who perceived they were receiving more managerial support and who collaborated more with colleagues, also had a more positive attitude towards the inspections. These findings suggest that where teaching teams had been given the opportunity to work together with the support of their managers and prepare effectively for inspection they were less threatened by the experience.

Use of Skills for Life infrastructure
The survey also asked teachers about their use of the Skills for Life infrastructure: diagnostic assessment tools, Individual Learning Plans

(ILPs), core curricula, Access for All and the new Skills for Life learning materials. Overall the data show a moderate usage of these by respondents: on average, the most popular answer teachers gave when asked about how often they used these resources was 'to some extent'. More experienced teachers and those who taught for providers other than FE colleges used the Skills for Life infrastructure slightly less often. Teachers with a higher proportion of learners aged 16–19 in their classes used the Skills for Life infrastructure less. Teachers selecting numeracy as their main subject used the Skills for Life infrastructure slightly more than literacy teachers did, and literacy teachers used it slightly more often than those who have either ESOL or non-Skills for Life subjects as their main teaching subject.

A positive effect was observed from CPD: the more days a respondent had spent in CPD, the more often they used the Skills for Life infrastructure, highlighting the importance of development activities in introducing elements of the infrastructure and allowing teachers to consider ways in which to incorporate these in their professional practice. Interestingly, the opposite effect was observed for collaboration with colleagues: the more Skills for Life teachers collaborated, the less often they used the Skills for Life infrastructure, perhaps suggesting that those teachers who were able to work closely with colleagues were more likely to produce locally generated materials and processes to meet the specific needs of their learners.

In telephone interviews, teachers made a number of comments about the Skills for Life infrastructure when they were asked about the impact of the Skills for Life strategy on their teaching practice. While some used diagnostic materials and assessments with all their learners on enrolment, others relied more on their professional judgement and experience, often using the materials in conjunction with tests they had developed themselves.

'We use it [a diagnostic test] with every student, so when they come in, it is part of the screening process, after we have chatted to them we use the initial assessment and diagnostic assessment. A great tool. It is more often than not right on the nose, the diagnostic is very good because it helps you with these spiky profiles where they are strong in one area and weak in another. It saves a lot of time cut out of your learning plans for the students when you are trying to work out what you are going to teach them for the next several weeks.' [Int9]

Others were more circumspect, and spoke of the limitations of using generic tools. As one ESOL teacher explained:

'If they are used properly they are very useful. Like all these things, if you bother to move to support materials, and you use them properly, they are fantastic. Unfortunately a lot of people don't. They just go through the motions, as they are required by the college. [...] A tool is only as good as the person using it.' [Int6]

Turning to the use of ILPs, some teachers commented that these were a useful way to record learner progress and to involve learners in this process. However, the majority of teachers who spoke about ILPs held far more negative views, particularly those who taught ESOL. For some teachers ILPs appear to be more to do with a target culture than improving teaching and learning. One aspect of this is the amount of class time and overtime ILPs can take up if a teacher wants to do the resource any kind of justice:

'At the moment I think I have got 74 students across my groups. That is seventy-four ILPs. Seventy-four of everything I have to do. You know, guidance and planning and tracking and all the rest of it. So it is a lot of work. And you run out of time. At five o'clock you run out of time. You end up doing some of it at home. And I do it at weekends as well.' [Int18]

Over half the teachers interviewed commented on the Skills for Life teaching materials. Although some teachers thought they were of a good quality and some judged them so poor that they did not use them, the majority were rather ambivalent. One teacher commented that although the Skills for Life materials are not perfect: 'The fact that they exist is a good platform for a lot of teachers.' [Int41] Others said that 'They provide some great shortcuts and a great skeleton but don't go far enough.' [Int23]

And:

'They are not bad. It is very difficult to design materials that suit every teacher in every context, but given those limitations they have done pretty well.' [Int31]

Teachers' views on the impact of the Skills for Life strategy

The Phase Three survey included two new questions in which teachers were invited to list up to three aspects of the Skills for Life strategy that had had the most positive and most negative impact on their professional role.

Positive impact
Out of the 546 teachers who participated in Phase Three, 66%, or 328, listed some positive impacts; 7% said there were no positive impacts; and 27% were unsure. Below are the categories in which the answers of these teachers fall, with the percentage of respondents in brackets. We have also listed some of the aspects teachers were positive about in each category.

Teaching materials and resources (27%)
- practicality and usefulness
- range
- ideas
- relevance of topics to everyday life

National standards (18%)
- standardised criteria for assessment and progress
- all teachers working to the same standards
- standardisation of NQF levels and qualifications

CPD (17%)
- core curriculum training
- general professional and personal development opportunities

Raised profile and status of sector (18%)
- raised profile of Skills for Life within their organisation
- raised profile among general population
- gaining more respect and status
- feeling more professional

Teaching practice (18%)
- advice about different teaching techniques and strategies
- guidance on differentiating between learners' needs
- help with short and medium-term planning, helping map learning objectives to the curriculum

Assessment materials (13%)
- diagnostic assessments
- ILPs

More opportunities (9%)
- being able to train other teachers
- being a mentor
- opportunities to work with employers
- opportunity to become a Skills for Life teacher

Teacher qualifications (9%)
- the new Level 4 subject specific qualifications

Improving the lives of learners (9%)
- the chance to achieve a national qualification
- interesting learning activities
- opportunities for learners working at lower levels

- bringing hard-to-reach adults back into main stream education

Learner qualifications and national tests (8%)
- the benefits of the national tests
- giving learners the chance to gain a qualification
- willingness of learners to take tests
- tests empowering learners

Personal benefits (7%)
- a deeper understanding and awareness of a range of issues
- increased levels of confidence

A more detailed picture emerges from the qualitative interviews, where no interviewees spoke about the strategy in entirely negative terms. Teachers spoke of how the Skills for Life strategy had played a part in increasing their professionalism and increasing their status both within and outside of education providers:

'The thing I like about it is we are recognised and it is all written down that this is what we do. And people know. They don't think we are a Mickey Mouse outfit just doing anything we like when we turn up for classes, or something.' [Int27]

'Bringing in the new qualifications, it has increased our prestige within the college and there is a much greater understanding now of appreciation of that.' [Int36]

One ESOL teacher spoke of the ways in which the strategy had improved delivery:

'I can speak of the ESOL strategy which did make a massive change to the way we delivered the resources that we had accessed. I think what it did for me was it just enabled everything to be … it gave it that cohesion that it needed, because everyone was working autonomously, which I think was OK, but what we lacked was that curriculum and the guidelines that we currently

have through the new Skills for Life strategy, and the new curriculum, as well.' [Int44]

Another ESOL teacher emphasised the positive impact of a new focus on employment:

'I see a lot of positive work being done out in the field and in the workplace... [There] is more emphasis on the workplace, as it has grown, and employers are getting behind it. Getting involved. I think that is a very positive move.' [Int18]

Negative impact
Out of the 546 respondents, 41% listed some negative impacts, 36% said there were no negative impacts and 23% were unsure. When classifying these aspects as negative, this group of 187 teachers were far more likely to expand and justify their assertions than when they were speaking positively.

Focus on accreditation and qualifications (27%)
- 'learners work on tasks to pass tests rather than tasks that are useful'
- 'funding is accreditation driven so achievement is more important than improving skills'
- 'too reliant on results from tests and not distance travelled'
- 'colleges force people to take an exam for their achievement when they are not necessarily ready to do so then when they fail it is my fault'

Target driven (20%)
- 'conflict between chasing targets and ensuring needs of learners are met'
- 'unrealistic targets set by the LSC'
- 'imposed targets put more emphasis on providing for students who can succeed in tests quickly rather than the most under-skilled members of the population'

National tests, no writing, multiple choice (19%)
- 'I am not convinced that the national tests are a true reflection of students' abilities'
- 'rigidity of multiple-choice national tests'
- 'contexts used within tests are often not applicable to a learner's experience'
- 'inadequate testing or recognition of learners' writing skills in tests'
- 'I have lost learners who are intimidated by national tests'

Curriculum (19%)
- 'need to map everything to curriculum'
- 'allocating irrelevant curriculum references to documentation is extremely time-consuming'
- 'although initially useful as a teaching aid and guidance to levels of expectation, the core curriculum can be restrictive and inflexible'
- 'the core curricula documents, including Pre-Entry framework, are cumbersome and inhibiting to good, creative teaching'

Paperwork (17%)
- 'it has increased the amount of paperwork and much of the paperwork has little consequence for learners'
- 'teachers are spending more and more time on questionable paperwork exercises when they could be preparing better lessons'

Funding (16%)
- 'students that have achieved Level 1 but are unable to gain Level 2 do not have the funding to remain on course'
- 'removal of funding for Entry 1 and 2 levels means that some learners are in inappropriate classes'
- 'funding too tightly tied to outcomes. Some low level learners cannot fully achieve in one year'
- 'some learners need maintenance rather than progression and this is difficult to fund'

Different learner levels (11%)
- 'only E1 are funded – so for the first time we

have to ditch slow learners - or they don't give us an outcome'
- 'pre-entry ESOL or literacy students – no funding'
- 'most students now have to pass exams within a year – or they are out – few E1 and E2 recruited'

Teaching qualifications (9%)
- 'too many taking Level 4 numeracy not strong enough with own skills to really teach numeracy'
- 'too many changes, first need a PGCE then a Level 4, too much time spent on coursework'
- 'new CPD qualifications are very demanding on time and don't take account of the wealth of experience many staff possess. The Level 4 diploma is too broad and doesn't allow tutors to identify and focus on specific areas which they consider worthwhile'
- 'a loss of good colleagues due to not wanting to upgrade their qualifications'

ILPs (9%)
- 'laborious ILPs'
- 'completing of an ILP with each learner'
- 'sometimes an over emphasis on ILP completion for short courses'

Materials not appropriate (9%)
- 'the production of resources to be used in whole class situations at very specific levels – this is a waste of materials when teaching students with a range of requirements and abilities'
- 'not appropriate for higher level attainment learners, especially work migrants'

Learner qualifications (5%)
- 'the requirement to move a level per year is too demanding'
- 'inappropriate qualifications – need to be modular'

Conclusion

The analysis shows that Skills for Life teachers have more positive attitudes towards different aspects of the Skills for Life strategy if they are employed full-time, but work fewer hours, have fewer learners and do not have managerial responsibilities; in other words their workload is smaller. A clearly defined professional role, satisfaction with development opportunities, available resources, collaboration with colleagues and managerial support were all factors that had a positive influence on the teachers' perceptions of the Skills for Life Strategy. Also, the more information Skills for Life teachers had about the Skills for Life strategy, and the more they participated in the actual decision-making, the more they made use of all available tools.

Teachers preferred to use the Skills for Life materials and tools as a guide and repeatedly stressed that their main strength lay in their flexibility and the fact that they could be adapted for different learners and to different teaching situations. As one teacher remarked when talking about the core curriculum:

'I don't use it prescriptively, but when we have learners they are always initially assessed, and we do the diagnostics, etc, and then we always use the curriculum to refer to. Sometimes they have good ideas as well, and we think, "yes I will do that". It isn't a case of sticking to it to the letter. Basically you use it as background guidance really but you are guided by what the learners do in the group.' [Int40]

Teachers are appreciative of the fact that they have the opportunity to be creative and use these standardised materials in an innovative way. This observation appears to be one of the key factors in the successful implementation of Skills for Life. More often than not, teachers working in this field are motivated by a clear sense of purpose, even moral purpose, and a commitment to social justice. If they are to function as agents of change and agents of the social, cultural and, particularly, the economic transformations that the Government trusts Skills for Life will achieve, then they must not only feel included in the reform process but share ownership of the reform initiatives. Retaining the power to feed a wealth of classroom experience into teaching and learning materials is one aspect of this.

In conclusion, the changes that the Skills for Life strategy has brought have contributed greatly to the professionalisation of the Skills for Life teaching workforce. To continue and to increase this impact mechanisms need to be found to give teachers more ownership of future changes and be empowered to adapt them for their teaching practice in flexible ways. ■

8

Methodology

The Teacher Study aimed to find out who Skills for Life teachers were, what they do at work and what they think about their job and the Skills for Life strategy. It was also designed as a longitudinal study to enable NRDC to assess how these profiles were developing. The original design of the survey had called for 1500 randomly selected teachers from 245 adult education organisations using six different funding streams. These organisations were to be randomly selected from a sample of 18 Learning and Skills Council areas which represented all nine regions of England. However, it proved extremely difficult to secure the participation of organisations, managers and teachers in the study, and so the sample became a volunteer (non-probability) study.

A sample of 1027 Skills for Life teachers were recruited using existing NRDC and other Skills for Life networks. Data were collected three times between 2004 and 2007, with participants completing questionnaires, mostly web-based. There was an attrition rate of 46% across the three phases, meaning that by Phase Three 560 of the original 1027 teachers remained.

A later 'Snapshot Survey' of all providers of Skills for Life, carried out by NRDC for LLUK (Carpentieri et al. forthcoming), collected data to establish the size of the Skills for Life workforce and its key characteristics. These data were used to adjust the Teacher Study survey data to make the latter a representative sample. The figures used throughout this report are weighted with the LLUK survey data, thus allowing the Teacher Study data to provide a statistically robust, representative picture and allow NRDC to be confident in the analysis of the Skills for Life workforce contained in this report.

As well as the quantitative data gleaned from the questionnaires, 63 teachers from the Teacher Study survey participated in in-depth telephone interviews, as did 70 teachers in the related NRDC Learner Study. Quotes from some of these teachers have been used in this publication to illustrate messages from the survey figures. ■

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THE TEACHER STUDY

THE IMPACT OF THE SKILLS FOR LIFE STRATEGY ON TEACHERS

SUMMARY REPORT
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