

Sector Skills Assessment 2010 NORTHERN IRELAND



NORTHERN IRELAND

Contents

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	5
Section 1: Introduction	8
Section 2: Methodology	9
Section 3: The Lifelong Learning Sector in Northern Ireland	10
An overview of the employment and skills landscape in Northern Ireland	10
Lifelong learning sector profile for Northern Ireland	12
Section 4: What Drives Skills Demand?	17
Political drivers	17
Economic drivers	19
Social drivers	20
Conclusions	21
Section 5: Current Skills Needs	23
Recruitment and skills shortages	23
Skills gaps	24
Training provision in the lifelong learning sector	25
Section 6: Anticipating What Lies Ahead	27
Working futures projections	27
Future scenarios	29
Section 7: Conclusions and Skills Priorities	30
Recommendations for employers in lifelong learning	31
Recommendation for stakeholders and policy makers in lifelong learning	31
References	32
Appendix A - Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes	34
Appendix B – Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes with examples from the lifelong learning sector	35

Foreword

PHOTO REDACTED
DUE TO THIRD
PARTY RIGHTS OR
OTHER LEGAL
ISSUES

Our purpose as a sector skills council is to advance the education and training of all those working in the field of lifelong learning. This work benefits the nation by improving the educational standards of the lifelong learning sector workforce; by advancing the education of those in lifelong learning, and by improving the educational standards of the workforce as a whole, thereby improving the nation's competitiveness.

In order to deliver these benefits, we undertake an annual review of the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland to ensure that learning professionals have the right skills and knowledge to meet demand. The results of the 2009 Sector Skills Assessment identified a number of skills priorities, including:

- Skills for managing change
- Skills in working with others, including partnership and collaboration
- General business skills
- Key skills, such as literacy, language and numeracy
- Teaching and learning related skills

Since these findings were published, Lifelong Learning UK in Northern Ireland has taken significant action to address these skills priorities.

One example of effective partnership working in Northern Ireland is the recent development of professional standards which underpin the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (Further Education) delivered by the University of Ulster. These professional standards were consulted upon across all sectors and are designed for all teachers, tutors and tutor role trainers in the lifelong learning sector. Following a consultation exercise across the nation, the Standards were launched in June 2009 to support the overall development of the further education (FE) teaching workforce by enhancing the University of Ulster's teacher education framework through the introduction of a standards-driven award.

To address the demand for technology skills, further education colleges are working with us to develop a new standards based 'Technology in Learning Delivery' (TLD) professional development qualification. This qualification will be available on the Qualifications and Credit Framework and form part of the Department of Education and Learning's requirements for e-learning.

The development and subsequent launch of national occupational standards for Libraries, Archives and Information Services, Youth Work, and Working with Parents are testament to our ongoing work in the transformation of the lifelong learning workforce, consistent with the demands of employers and key stakeholders.

The drive to improve Northern Ireland's competitiveness on the world stage is a priority for the Department for Employment and Learning with the Minister encouraging individuals to enter skills competitions to qualify for WorldSkills 2011, the largest skills competition in the world. The UK is hosting WorldSkills in

London in October 2011. We have an obvious and vital role to play in the success of Northern Ireland at the WorldSkills event. Funded by DEL NI, we are working closely with employers across the sector to develop competitive coaching skills for teachers and tutors.

The Northern Ireland WorldSkills Celebration event in March 2010 was widely regarded as a very successful coming together of all the major employers and stakeholders involved in skills competitions and led to a further extension of the World Class Skills Coaches Project for 2009/2010. The impact of this highly successful initiative is in the development of the FE/WBL teacher/tutor workforce. Teachers and tutors are beginning to develop competition coaching skills as an integral addition to their professional teaching skillset. Apprentices and trainers are more professionally prepared for the challenges of skill performance and are beginning to reflect this in the myriad of skills competitions that are rapidly expanding across Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland government has requested that we evaluate the existing coaching qualifications that are available with a view to having a customised qualification specifically addressing the identified CPD requirements of Northern Ireland's teacher/tutor workforce on the Qualifications and Credit Framework by April 2011. This work will eventually link to the work of UK Skills so that this workforce development is articulated across the UK.

Although the current recession is impacting on all sectors in Northern Ireland including lifelong learning, businesses are increasingly realising that investment in skills is crucial to their survival in the current economic climate and consequently for their future growth and success. We look forward to having a significant role in skills development in the nation.



Brian Henry

Director, Northern Ireland
Lifelong Learning UK

Executive Summary

This document is the Sector Skills Assessment for Northern Ireland 2010, a 'state of the nation' report identifying employer skills needs in the existing and future workforce within the social, economic and political landscapes of Northern Ireland. It provides employers with intelligence on future skills needs so that skills development can be prioritised for the short, medium and long terms.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of current and future skills and drivers of skills demands in Lifelong Learning UK's sectors in Northern Ireland, namely:

- Career guidance (CG)
- Community learning and development (CLD)
- Further education (FE)
- Higher education (HE)
- Libraries, archives and information services (LAIS)
- Work based learning (WBL)

The report also makes practical recommendations, based on the evidence collected, about how the skills priorities within the lifelong learning sector should best be addressed.

The skills profile of Northern Ireland has been improving steadily and targets for 'NVQ Level 4 and above' qualifications levels in 2020 are likely to be exceeded. However, Northern Ireland currently has more working age people with low level skills and fewer with high level skills than other nations in the UK. Northern Ireland also has relatively low employment and productivity when compared to the other UK nations.

There are 1,167 employers in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland employing almost 43,300 people. Approximately 63 per cent of the lifelong learning workforce in Northern Ireland is female and 50 per cent is aged 45 and above (although the problem of an aging workforce is significantly greater among library staff). Overall, the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland has a highly qualified workforce, with 73 per cent of staff qualified to NVQ level 4. The percentage of staff qualified to NVQ level 4 or above ranges from 46 per cent in adult community learning and work based learning (grouping based on SIC codes) to 88 per cent in further education colleges.

Drivers of skills demand in the Northern Ireland include the current economic situation, new and existing legislation; and new technologies. An analysis of these drivers show emerging patterns in the skills demand of the workforce. As public funding faces significant current and ongoing reductions, there will be the need for more efficient use of resources, both material and human. More will have to be produced, by effective collaborative working both within the lifelong learning sector and with other agencies across all sectors in Northern Ireland to take advantage of economies of scale. It is likely that this will involve the introduction of new ways of delivering learning and information, such as efficient digital technology and new/social media. Although professional development qualifications are being developed to address this requirement, their implementation requires strategic leadership skills to ensure that changes are managed well.

It is vital that front line services in the lifelong learning sector are maintained through the current economic situation. Now, more than ever, learning providers will have to be responsive to the demands of learners, but also engage with employers and communities to ensure that their provision is fit-for-purpose and meeting demand.

The majority of these skills issues have also been identified as skills gaps and/or shortages by employers responding to primary research informing this report.

Recruitment and skills issues: Relatively few employers in the sector in Northern Ireland report having vacancies, although those that do frequently report that the vacancies are difficult to fill. Employers report that the main cause of difficult to fill vacancies is a low number of applicants with the required skills or qualifications. In line with the findings from the review of skills drivers, the skills in demand (that were identified as those most lacking among external applicants) were employer engagement, advanced ICT skills, delivery of e-learning and skills for supporting diverse learners.

In addition to problems in recruiting staff with the necessary skills and qualifications, it is also the case that existing employees may not have the necessary skills needed for their job or the organisation (a skills gap). Employers report a small minority of employees with skills gaps, mostly among managers and senior officials, administrative and secretarial staff, associate professionals, and elementary staff.

The skills gaps are mainly related to technical advances in new e-technology solutions such as social media, advanced ICT, management of digital information. Job specific skills gaps include employer engagement, marketing/promotion and fund raising. The main causes of skills gaps were a result of staff having difficulty keeping up with change, lack of experience or qualifications, and insufficient training and development provision by employers.

Training and professional development: In the past 12 months 95 per cent of lifelong learning employers had funded or arranged some form of training for their employees in the past year, compared with 74 per cent of employers across all sectors. Managers, professionals and associate professionals were the main recipients of off-the-job training. A large majority of employers surveyed have an organisational training plan and a training budget.

A small minority of employers had not funded or arranged training for their staff. This is a cause for concern, possibly linked to the recession and decreased training budgets. Common reported barriers to training and development are lack of funding and not being able to spare staff time for training.

The consideration of future skills needs has important implications for stakeholders and employers in the lifelong learning sector. This can be expressed in terms of addressing the current skills shortages and gaps within the financially difficult circumstances brought about by the current economic situation, whilst also retaining a long-term vision to prepare the workforce for the future. Strategic leadership and planning was reported as a skills need by a minority of employers which confirms that some employers are considering the future and have recognised the importance of adequate leadership and planning in meeting future skills requirements.

Although lifelong learning employers are already working in partnership across the sector in Northern Ireland, it is anticipated that there will be a greater requirement for organisations in the sector to engage in collaborative working as a way of addressing training needs and in order to enter joint bids for funding. This is likely to be assisted by the relatively small geographical scale of Northern Ireland compared to the other nations, which makes 'joined up' initiatives easier to develop and implement.

Conclusions and recommendations: This report identifies the following skills priorities for the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland:

- Partnership and collaborative working
- Provision of flexible learning and new methods and modes of learning and information delivery, including e-enabled methods to make learning accessible to all
- Greater employer engagement and involvement
- Strategic leadership and management of change
- Essential skills provision, i.e. literacy, numeracy, and ESOL

These skills issues have also been identified by analysis of political, economic, social and technological drivers of skills demand, and have been reported as skills gaps and/or shortages by employers responding to the 2010 SSA Survey. They should be regarded as current and future skills issues to be addressed as a priority.

Recommendations for employers and stakeholders in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland are presented in the main body of the report. These recommendations are specifically designed to address the skills issues identified above and are summarised below.

Employers should:

- Continue to increase collaboration and partnership working to share effective practice and take advantage of economies of scale
- Develop more flexible credit based qualifications and on-line access for learners, while continuing to ensure staff have the skills to deliver and support these methods of learning delivery
- Continue to improve the quality of methods of identifying staff training and development needs – National Occupational Standards can be useful here
- Maintain focus on continuing professional development
- Embed equality and diversity into working policy and practice

Stakeholders and policy makers should:

- Work with employers to ensure that the recommendations above can be implemented, even in the current economic situation.

The report makes a number of recommendations for employers, stakeholders and policy makers that are vital for the continuous improvement of skills levels and productivity in the lifelong learning workforce and across all sectors.

Section 1: Introduction

Lifelong Learning UK is the independent employer-led Sector Skills Council responsible for the professional development of those working in the lifelong learning sector across the UK. Lifelong Learning UK represents around 1.2 million people working in lifelong learning in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and is the voice of employers in this sector on skills issues. Lifelong Learning UK provides the strategic perspective for workforce planning and development and influences and shapes relevant policy across the four UK nations. It leads the collection of workforce data and provides analysis on workforce characteristics and trends to better inform future workforce planning.

All Sector Skills Councils produce an annual Sector Skills Assessment (SSA) for the whole of the UK as well as each of the four nations. The SSA builds on Stage 1 of the *Sector Skills Agreement* (LLUK 2007a) and serves as a 'state of the nation report' identifying employer skills needs in the existing and future workforces within the social, economic and political landscapes. It provides employers with intelligence on future skills needs so that skills development can be prioritised for the short, medium and long terms.

The SSA identifies four key elements:

- Drivers of skills demand
- Current skills needs including skills gaps and shortages
- Future skills
- Four nation perspective

Within this context, Lifelong Learning UK has developed the Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Assessment 2010 which,

Gathers information from across the four UK nations, paying specific attention to geographical differences in the sector and highlighting where specific skills issues are manifest

Provides a comprehensive overview of current and future skills and drivers of skills demands in Lifelong Learning UK's sectors, namely:

- Career guidance (CG)
- Community learning and development (CLD) – which includes the seven strands of Community based adult learning; Community development; Community education; Development education; Family learning; Working with parents; and Youth work
- Further education (FE) – within this report, this focuses specifically on FE Colleges
- Higher education (HE)
- Libraries, archives and information services (LAIS)
- Work based learning (WBL)

Makes practical recommendations, based on the evidence collected, about how the skills priorities within the lifelong learning sector should best be tackled

This document is the Sector Skills Assessment for Northern Ireland for 2010 and provides an update to the Sector Skills Assessment (Northern Ireland) of 2009 (LLUK 2010).

Section 2: Methodology

To meet the aims and objectives of the Sector Skills Assessment, as guided by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills' (UKCES) *Common Labour Market Information (LMI) Framework* (UKCES 2009), a mixed methods approach incorporating primary and secondary information analysis was adopted, including the following strands of work:

Qualitative group discussions and interviews – Three semi structured group discussions covering over 30 employers about the drivers of skills and future skills and what employers may be doing to order to deal with future skills issues

Survey – a sample survey, based on a proportional allocation of employers in each sector in each nation. The survey, which was hosted on Lifelong Learning UK's website, started in mid June and a data cut was taken in mid September for the purpose of the Sector Skills Assessment 2010. However, the survey will remain open throughout the year so that data accumulates. It is Lifelong Learning UK's intention to promote the survey at different parts of the year to garner responses. For the rest of this document, the survey will be referenced as the 2010 SSA survey. 38 responses from organisations operating in Northern Ireland have been received to date.

Secondary analysis¹ – Literature has been analysed from various sources including Northern Ireland Assembly reports, stakeholder reports, Education and Training Inspectorate reports and skills research papers. Data has been reviewed from the most recently available Employer Skills Monitor Survey (DELNI 2008a); Labour Force Survey (ONS 2009) and other sectoral datasets (See Appendix A).

Analysis and interpretation – All the information from the above mentioned sources has been analysed to develop common skills themes in terms of current skills gaps and shortages as well as future skills.

Structure of report – This report sets out findings for Northern Ireland, making comparisons with the UK as a whole where appropriate. The Section 3 gives the background to the lifelong learning sector and workforce in terms of employment and skills. Sections 4 to 6 present findings for Northern Ireland in relation to drivers of skills demand, current skills needs, anticipating what lies ahead, training and workforce development, and priority sectors. Section 7 draws conclusions and sets out skills priorities for the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland.

Note on qualification levels: This report uses research findings from UK-wide data sources such as the Labour Force Survey, which use National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Levels to categorise qualification level. International sources, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, use Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) Levels. The levels are defined in the text when comparison is required.

In the current economic and political climate, many policies, headline statistics and trends are changing rapidly. All the information presented in this report is accurate at the time of publication.

¹ Key sources include the employer skills surveys for each nation. Data Northern Ireland was collected in 2008. Scotland data was collected in 2008 as well, England data in 2009 and Wales data in 2005.

Section 3: The Lifelong Learning Sector in Northern Ireland

3.1 An overview of the employment and skills landscape in Northern Ireland

Latest estimates in June 2010 from the *Quarterly Employment Survey* (DETINI 2010) showed that the total workforce in employment in Northern Ireland was 818,700, an increase of just under 1 per cent since 2009, compared with a decrease of 0.6 per cent in the UK (ONS 2010) for the same period.

According to the Labour Force Survey (ONS 2009), the employment rate for the population aged 16-64 in Northern Ireland during April – June 2010 was 66.4 per cent, an increase of 2.4 percentage points since 2009. Compared to this, the employment rate for the working age population in the UK was 70.7 per cent in 2010, unchanged from a year earlier.

Gross Value Added (GVA) per head, which is a commonly recognised measure of regional economic success and prosperity², was 78.9 in 2008 (index UK=100) and has decreased steadily from 80.1 in 2004. (ONS 2009)

The 2008 *Skills Monitoring Survey* (DELNI 2009), which covered 4,000 employers, estimated that 12 per cent of employers across all sectors in Northern Ireland had vacancies, 4 per cent reported difficult to fill vacancies and 3 per cent reported skill shortage vacancies; 14 per cent of establishments reported internal skills gaps, and 8 per cent of the employed workforce are considered by their employers to be less than fully proficient in their jobs; 78 per cent of employers provided some training to their staff in the previous year, with 60 per cent having provided on-the-job training and 34 per cent off-the-job training.

The skills of Northern Ireland's workforce have an important role to play in helping Northern Ireland to reach its full economic potential. The government has already adopted similar aims to those outlined in *Ambition 2020* (UKCES 2009). The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL NI) is currently consulting on a revised *Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Success through Skills 2* (DEL NI 2010). The strategy reviews the current skills base, examines the skills that will be needed in future to grow the Northern Ireland economy and highlights areas for action. This document will provide an overarching strategy for skills development in Northern Ireland over the next decade. It sets aspirational skills achievement targets for 2020 as follows:

- 84-90 per cent at QCF Level 2 (from a baseline of 71.2 per cent in 2008)
- 68-76 per cent at QCF Level 3 (from a baseline of 55.6 per cent in 2008)
- 44-52 per cent at QCF Level 4 (from a baseline of 33.2 per cent in 2008)

A high percentage of the Northern Ireland workforce have no educational qualification of any kind – 22 per cent compared with 13 per cent in Scotland, 16 per cent in Wales and 13 per cent in England (NIACE 2009).

When compared internationally, data from the OECD (OECD 2009) shows that in Northern Ireland, 34.9 per cent are qualified to intermediate skills levels (QCF Level 2-3)³. This compares to 36.5 per cent for the whole of UK, which currently ranks 21st in the international skills position out of the 30 OECD countries, ahead of Belgium, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. For high level skills⁴ (QCF Level 4-8), Northern Ireland has 28.3 per cent qualified to that level, compared to 31.8 per cent for the whole of UK, making Northern Ireland rank ahead of France, Germany and Italy.

² GVA is used in the estimation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is a key indicator of the state of the whole economy. In the UK, three theoretical approaches are used to estimate GDP: 'production', 'income' and 'expenditure'. When using the production or income approaches, the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector is measured using GVA (ONS website, 2010)

³ Intermediate level skills refer to "upper secondary education" or equivalent and identifies a level of attainment (not necessarily reached while the individual was actually participating in secondary education). In the United Kingdom it means attainment of QCF Level 2-3, or a minimum of five GCSEs/SCSEs at grades A* to C (or an equivalent vocational qualification such as NVQ2), up to A-levels or NVQ3.

⁴ High level skills refer to "tertiary-level education" or higher education, which is equivalent to QCF Level 4-8 and includes HND courses and degrees, including bachelor, masters and post-graduate degrees.

Recent research by UKCES (UKCES 2010) highlights the Ambition 2020 targets for Northern Ireland in terms of the percentage of the workforce that should be qualified to particular levels, and provides projections based on current progress to determine whether the targets are expected to be met or not.

The following table, which is based on the data from UKCES, suggests that the 2020 target for NVQ Level 4+ qualifications (QCF Level 5+), which is to have 36 per cent of the workforce qualified to that level, will be surpassed by five percentage points. Targets for NVQ Levels 3 and 2 will not be met as there will be a lower proportion of the workforce qualified to those levels.

For qualifications below NVQ Level 2 and for 'no qualifications', the targets are to reduce the percentage of the workforce at these levels to four and seven per cent, respectively. According to the forecasts, these targets will not be met either, with a higher proportion of the workforce (eight and eleven per cent, respectively) remaining at these levels. The table below is a summary of the Ambition 2020 targets, projected attainment and resulting gaps as indicated by the UKCES.

Northern Ireland Qualifications – Attainment in 2008 and projected attainment 2008-2020

Qualification levels (NVQ)	Percentage of workforce at the qualification level in 2008	Target percentage of workforce to be at the qualification level (based on Ambition 2020)	Projected attainment of percentage of workforce at the qualification level	Gap
Level 4+	28	36	41	5 percentage points above target
Level 3	20	29	21	8 percentage points below target
Level 2	20	23	19	4 percentage points below target
Below Level 2	11	4	8	4 percentage points above target
No qualifications	21	7	11	4 percentage points above target

Source: UKCES 2010

3.2 Lifelong learning sector profile for Northern Ireland

There are 1,167 employers in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland, compared to approximately 53,000 lifelong learning employers across the UK. The table below shows the distribution of Northern Ireland employers by sector.

Northern Ireland: employer numbers

Sector	Number of employers
Career guidance(a)	12
Community learning and development(b)	1,000
Further education(c)	6
Higher education(d)	5
Libraries, archives and information services(e)	34
Work based learning(f)	110
Total(g)	1,167

Source: Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, 2010; LSDA NI database of WBL providers; Archives profile study (Lifelong Learning UK 2008b); Lifelong Learning UK and stakeholder estimates.

Notes:

- (a) Includes two publicly funded agencies providing career guidance and career guidance provision in each university and college in Northern Ireland, so this figure double counts FE and HE. There are also private sector providers of career development services.
- (b) Many CLD organisations will be very small, some only employing one member of paid staff.
- (c) Six regional colleges
- (d) Two universities, the Open University and two university colleges
- (e) Libraries NI, one library in each university and college based in Northern Ireland and archives that took part in the LLUK archives survey, so this figure double counts FE and HE.
- (f) This figure includes six regional colleges (double counting FE).
- (g) Total excluding the double counting described above: 1,140

Northern Ireland employers in the lifelong learning sector employ approximately 44,460 people, compared to approximately 1.2 million lifelong learning staff across the UK. The table below shows the distribution of employees in Northern Ireland by sector.

Northern Ireland: employee numbers

	Total
Career guidance (a)	210
Community learning and development	26,724
Further education	6,357
Higher education (b)	7,595
Libraries, archives and information services	1,059
Work based learning	1,625
Education support activities (c)	892
Total	44,462

Source: Labour Force Survey (ONS 2009); Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff record for 2008-09; Libraries NI; Youth work profile study (Lifelong Learning UK 2008a); archives profile study (Lifelong Learning UK 2008b); Work based learning profile study (Lifelong Learning UK, 2008c); stakeholder estimates.

Notes:

(a) Staff in the “Careers advisors and vocational guidance specialists” SOC code who are not covered by a Lifelong Learning UK SIC code have been included in the career guidance estimates.

(b) The higher education staff figure is rounded to the nearest five.

(c) It was not possible to allocate staff in ‘educational support activities’ to lifelong learning sectors.

Characteristics of the lifelong learning workforce include gender, ethnicity, diversity and qualifications profiles, as well as working patterns and occupational levels. This information is based on data from Labour Force Survey (ONS 2009) and other sectoral data sources. Please note national data sources are based on:

- Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, which do not fully cover the entire lifelong learning sector, the details of which can be viewed in Appendix A
- Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, the details of which can be viewed in Appendix B

Gender profile: Approximately 63 per cent of the lifelong learning workforce in Northern Ireland is female and 37 per cent is male. By contrast, there are more men than women working in archives and records management and as academic staff in higher education.

⁷ BME staff includes all individuals except for those in the ‘White British’, ‘White Other’ and the ‘not known / not provided’ categories.

Age profile: 50 per cent of the lifelong learning workforce in Northern Ireland is aged 45 and above, whereas only 25 per cent are below 35. The age profile does not differ considerably across the UK and this can be seen in the table below.

Comparison of age profile in Northern Ireland and the UK

	Percentage of the Lifelong learning workforce in NI	Percentage of the lifelong learning workforce UK wide
Under 25	5	6
25-34	20	20
35-44	26	24
45-54	25	28
55-64	19	19
65 and over	6	3

Source: Labour Force Survey (ONS 2009)

In Northern Ireland, the proportion of staff aged 45 to 54 is much higher in archives and records management (35 per cent) and work based learning (30 per cent) in comparison to all staff in the sector (25 per cent) (LLUK 2008b and 2008c respectively).

Ethnicity profile: Over 90 per cent of the workforce in all sectors and across the lifelong learning sector as a whole is White. Overall, the percentage of staff who are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups varies among sectors, ranging from 4.8 per cent in educational support activities to 8.9 per cent in libraries and archives.

Disability and learning difficulty profile: 15 per cent of the lifelong learning workforce across the UK has a disability, compared to 10 per cent of the lifelong learning workforce in Northern Ireland.

Working pattern: Approximately 69 per cent of staff in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland work full time and 31 per cent work part-time. There are clear differences in working patterns in the sectors. Colleges NI reports that of the 4,100 lecturing staff in further education, 56 per cent work on a full-time basis. As much as 88 per cent of archives staff and 85 per cent of teaching staff in higher education work on a full-time basis. Conversely, only 19 per cent of paid youth work staff are employed full-time.

Occupational profile: More than half of the lifelong learning workforce in Northern Ireland is employed in professional occupations and 10 per cent are in associate professional and technical occupations. The following table shows the occupation profile of the sector in Northern Ireland and compares it to the UK picture. (Please see Appendix B for details of the occupational categories in the table).

Comparison of occupational profile in Northern Ireland and the UK

	Percentage of the Lifelong learning workforce in NI	Percentage of the lifelong learning workforce UK wide
Managers and Senior Officials	12	9
Professional occupations	53	49
Associate Professional and Technical	10	17
Administrative and Secretarial	10	13
Skilled Trades Occupations	*	2
Personal Service Occupations	11	6
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	*	1
Process Plant and Machine Operatives	*	1
Elementary Occupations	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: Labour Force Survey (ONS 2009), Notes: * denotes data too low to report.

Qualifications: The level of qualifications held by individuals is widely used as a proxy for skills. However, not all skills are captured by qualifications and not all qualifications are necessarily related to the job in which people are employed. Despite these limitations, qualification levels remain the primary and most widely available indicator, allowing comparison over time and across nations, regions and industries.

Overall, the lifelong learning workforce in Northern Ireland is a highly qualified workforce, with 73 per cent of staff qualified to a NVQ level 4, which is higher than the average of 70 per cent across the UK. Only 5 per cent have no qualifications, which is slightly higher than other nations where the percentage ranges from 2 per cent to 4 per cent.

The percentage of staff qualified to NVQ level 4 or above ranges from 46 per cent in adult community learning and work based learning to 88 per cent in further education colleges. The high percentage in further education probably reflects the statutory requirements on learning provision in Northern Ireland (full-time and associate lecturers in further education without a teaching qualification must complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Further Education), a two year provision, the first of which must be completed in the first year of teaching). There are notably high levels of staff with no qualifications in adult community learning.

Some sector specific data on qualifications show the following results:

According to the archives and records management profiling study in Northern Ireland, over 50% of employers who participated in the survey reported that their staff held degree level qualifications or above. Employers of archivists, librarians and records managers were most likely to report that their staff held higher degree or equivalent qualifications (Lifelong Learning UK 2008b).

A work based learning staff profiling study in Northern Ireland revealed that over 80 per cent of directors, managers and teachers, tutors and trainers held a qualification at NVQ level 4 or above, whereas two-fifths of administrative staff and one-fifth of vocational support staff had such qualifications (Lifelong Learning UK 2008c). The survey reported that less than 1 per cent of the workforce did not have a formal qualification.

Overall, the workforce in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland closely mirrors the lifelong learning workforce across the UK.

The next section will look at the drivers of change and see how that has impacted the workforce since 2009. It will investigate the effects of these drivers on skills demand as well as analysing employer demand for current and future skills.

Case Study

Organisation: Southern Regional College, Northern Ireland

Skills Need: ICT skills

To address this skills need, the Technology in Learning Delivery (TLD) programme has been established to up-skill around 6,000 staff in the further education (FE) sector in information and learning technology (ILT) skills for on-line delivery of learning content. The programme will result in a Level 4 qualification provided by four awarding bodies based on a common framework developed in conjunction with LLUK.

“ILT and Blended Learning are rapidly becoming more prevalent in the FE sector in Northern Ireland,” commented Brian Henry, LLUK’s Nation Director, Northern Ireland. *“Government is committed to assuring the quality of provision and wants to ensure that staff are skilled appropriately.”*

Working with LLUK, Southern Regional College established a sector working group to devise a strategy that would produce an agreed framework for ILT development. By taking a multi-agency approach, the college ensured that the qualification could be purchased from more than one awarding body. A framework for the qualification has been developed and new qualifications will appear on the QCF by April 2011.

Justin Edwards, Director of Curriculum and Student Services at Southern Regional College, has been involved in TLD from the beginning. *“Although developing a new qualification is challenging, working together with awarding bodies on this programme has been very rewarding for us. The TLD programme will benefit the FE sector in Northern Ireland by ensuring transferability of skills among employers and enhance the learning experience for students.”*



Southern Regional College

Section 4: What Drives Skills Demand?

The demand for skills is driven by the existing economic, political, social and technological factors. Since the publication of the 2009 Sector Skills Assessment, one of the biggest changes in the UK wide lifelong learning sector (and indeed the labour market in general) has been a recession hit economy. Moreover, the Coalition Government in Westminster is implementing its policies for reduced public funding, which will have an impact on the Northern Ireland economy. In these circumstances change is inevitable – in policy, in economic climate, in society – and all of these will have an impact on the skills demands in the workforce in general as well as in the lifelong learning sector.

This section undertakes an analysis of political, economic, social, technological and environmental factors to understand how current drivers may affect the lifelong learning workforce.

4.1 Political drivers

Specific skills demands and issues arise from political drivers in the form of government policy and sector specific programmes. The key drivers of change for workforce skills are explored in detail below, with reference to the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland and individual sectors within lifelong learning, where relevant.

Legislation and policies relating to learning and skills for all

The two key policy documents from DEL NI, *Success Through Skills* (DELNI 2006) and *Success Through Skills Progress Report* (DELNI 2007a), set out the vision for the Skills Strategy and its contribution to Northern Ireland's productivity and competitiveness in the global economy. The vision is that, by 2015, Northern Ireland's economy is highly competitive in global terms. To deliver this, the Department identified four themes which underpin the strategy:

- understanding the demand for skills
- improving the skills level of the workforce
- improving the quality and relevance of education and training
- tackling the skills barriers to employment and employability

Success for Skills remains the overarching framework for the delivery of skills in Northern Ireland, and aims for Northern Ireland to be a global competitor in economic terms by 2015. However, the Department for Employment and Learning is consulting on a revised Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – *Success through Skills 2* (DEL NI 2010a), which will provide the overarching strategy for skills development in Northern Ireland over the next decade.

The drive to improve the skills of the whole workforce is also echoed in *The All-Island Skills Study* (DELNI, 2008a). The Northern Ireland Skills Expert Group and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs from the Republic of Ireland agreed to work together on the basis that a skilled workforce will be a key resource for a globally competitive all-island economy. The study provided the evidence to underpin policies for delivering the necessary workforce skills across Ireland and Northern Ireland. The study concluded that it is important to take a long term view of skills demand issues and noted that “the structure of skills demand on the Island points towards a continuing movement towards a higher skill profile of the workforce to serve the all-island economy's shift towards higher value service sector and hi-tech manufacturing activities”.

Forecasting Future Skill Needs in Northern Ireland (DELNI 2009), a report commissioned by the Department for Employment and Learning in association with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, and the Department of Finance and Personnel, outlines the skills needed by the Northern Ireland workforce under a range of economic scenarios up until 2020, and was used to inform the Review of the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Success through Skills. The report highlights that, whilst there has been a steady increase in the skill level of the Northern Ireland population, individuals need to continue to improve their skills to ensure they are able to make the most of the employment opportunities created by the continued move towards a more knowledge-based economy.

Improving the skills levels of Northern Ireland's entire workforce is a top priority mentioned in the *Executive's Programme for Government 2008-11* (DEL NI 2008b) and the Department for Employment and Learning Corporate Plan (2008-12). One of the main aims of these is the promotion of learning and skills to prepare people for work and to support the economy. It highlights the need to address the problem of economic inactivity among the working age population and the importance of a better qualified and more flexible workforce.

A way to ensure promotion of learning and skills is the provision of flexible and accessible training to all learners and some work is already being undertaken to achieve this goal. The Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011, *Building a Better Future* (Northern Ireland Executive 2008), tasks DEL NI with improving fair access to higher education, year on year, to 2011. The achievement of this target is an essential element for DEL NI in addressing skills barriers to employment and employability. The Department has established the Higher Education Widening Participation Regional Strategy Group, comprising relevant experts from the education, public, private and voluntary/community sectors to help to develop an integrated strategy for Northern Ireland. The work of the Group focuses on groups who are currently under-represented in Higher Education so that everyone can consider this route as a realistic option for economic and social progression. The Group plans to oversee the development and implementation of an integrated regional strategy for Northern Ireland and explore ways to stimulate demand among (and ease access for) under-represented groups to participate in higher education.

Moreover, increased regulation in youth work and informal learning has developed in Northern Ireland in order to allow youth workers to help deliver the extended schools agenda, and through this to try to re-engage young people at risk of exclusion, or those defined as hard-to-reach. However, enabling youth workers to either work in school or as part of the school day requires new skills and has created new pressures on those directing youth work.

Legislation and policies relating to self evaluation and improvement planning:

In the *Quality Improvement Strategy for FE and Training in Northern Ireland* (DEL NI, 2007b), the Government sought to promote best practice in FE and training to ensure that the strategy met the needs of employers and was responsive to learners. This ensured that learners had real influence in shaping the quality of their education and training. The strategy included a commitment to continuous self-improvement through well-embedded and rigorous self-evaluation and improvement planning. It also ensured that FE and training providers would be able to access a coherent framework of support and guidance that focuses on self-improvement, high quality leadership and management, and continuous professional development.

Regulatory pressures, in particular a new Charity Commission in Northern Ireland, has focused on the need to demonstrate public benefit as an educational institution, affecting private providers in particular. It has also meant greater regulation, and a higher level of awareness required by staff working in relevant organisations.

Moreover, a review of the Higher Education strategy for Northern Ireland is currently underway chaired by Sir Graeme Davies. This strategy will cover the period up to 2020 and will impact on the sectors contribution to the social, economic and cultural landscape in Northern Ireland. A consultation document will be published in the autumn of 2010.

Other sector specific policies:

In January 2009, an independent all-age Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy was launched to facilitate more joined up provision (DEL NI, 2009b). The overall aspiration was that young people and adults will develop the skills and confidence to make the most of their life choices and follow the career path that suits them. This will be achieved by improving: careers education; access to careers information; the provision of careers guidance (especially for young people and adults, vulnerable to social exclusion); improvements in quality; the development of an evidence-based approach and professional development through the introduction of a qualifications framework and provision of appropriate continuing professional development.

An extensive public consultation exercise was undertaken about the future of the public library service which resulted in the publication of a libraries policy framework, entitled *Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries - principles and priorities for the development of public libraries in Northern Ireland* (DCAL NI 2006). DCAL's vision for the public library service is: 'A flexible and responsive library service which provides a dynamic local point in the community and assists people to fulfil their potential'. Focusing the service to achieve this vision will impact on working practices, managerial culture and the ethos of the service.

4.2 Economic drivers

The Spending Review (HM Treasury website 2010) cut Northern Ireland's capital expenditure by 40 per cent, resulting in a total budget reduction of £4billion in real terms across the Spending Review period. This means the budget allocation for Northern Ireland in 2014/15 will be down by more than £1.4 billion on the figure spent in the last financial year in real terms. Reacting to this, Finance Minister Sammy Wilson said that this "will provide a test of the Executive in the weeks and months ahead... (however), whilst the level of budget reductions we are facing is unwelcome, and will present a serious challenge, it comes as no great surprise" (Northern Ireland Executive website 2010). This is because the recent economic downturn is, unarguably, the most important driver of change across the UK, in all sectors and its impact has been evident over the last few years.

Northern Ireland's *Stuart Review* into student fees (DEL NI 2010b) and the *Browne Review* (BIS 2010) were both published in October 2010. The Browne Review was tasked with making recommendations to the Westminster Government on the future of higher education funding in England. Westminster has subsequently announced plans to allow universities in England to charge tuition fees of up to £9,000 per year, amid major budget cuts to institutions' teaching budgets.

Universities in Northern Ireland currently charge the same level of fees as England, although this is to be reviewed in the light of these recent publications:

“I hope that the findings of the Browne and Stuart reviews and the future consultation will stimulate a mature and responsible debate on the funding of higher education here. It is vital that we create a long term, strategic plan for the future of our students in Northern Ireland. Whilst we await the detail and implications for all departments of the Comprehensive Spending Review, nonetheless, one of my concerns is to protect, as far as possible, Northern Ireland’s position as having the highest participation rate of all the regions in higher education. In addition, we in Northern Ireland have led the way in attracting students from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education and I want this excellent work to continue.”

Sir Reg Empey MLA, Employment and Learning Minister, October 2010

Economic drivers continue to have a significant impact on the skills needs and operation of many organisations across the lifelong learning sector. For instance, in Northern Ireland, as in other nations within the UK, the current economic situation is reported to have created an increase in demand for lifelong learning, including courses within further and higher education, library use and requests for career guidance. However, the negative impact of the downturn has also been felt in some sectors. For example, in August 2008, the two main providers of community education, the Workers’ Educational Association and the Ulster People’s College, had a substantial reduction in government funding. As part of the same drive, the six regional further education colleges have been given a clear mission to focus their efforts primarily on the needs of the local economy. The colleges are now expected to respond to new funding drivers that reward more emphasis on vocational, particularly priority skills. In general, the funding at all six colleges is currently reliant on staff delivering the recognised training that is underpinned by National Occupational Standards.

4.3 Social drivers

Demographic changes

The Northern Ireland population, as reported by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA 2009), is projected to exceed 1.84 million by 2023. The number of people of current working age is projected to increase marginally from 1,098,000 people in 2008 to a projected 1,132,000 people in 2023, an increase of 3 per cent; in contrast the number of people of current pensionable age is projected to increase markedly from 296,000 in 2008 to 416,000 in 2023, an increase of 41 per cent.

With a change in the demographic profile, employers will be faced with challenges, such as to; retain employees and their vital skills; attract and retain young people; provide a positive image and career pathways, and adapt to more flexible ways of working.

Inward Migration

Historically, the Northern Ireland workforce has been reduced by significant levels of outward migration of skilled people as many people chose to study and secure employment outside its borders. The *Review of Competitiveness of Northern Ireland* (Varney 2008) recommends that Northern Ireland should focus on attracting students and graduates with appropriate skills from outside Northern Ireland.

The Equality Commission has released a report (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2009) which highlights the issues and challenges that have come about due to the recent rise of inward migration in

Northern Ireland. The report argues that the experience of sustained large-scale inward migration “should now convince policy-makers that forward planning is central if the pressures and inequalities that follow are not to become a cause of sustained community conflict.” It makes a number of recommendations for public policy, including for the forthcoming Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration for a Shared and Better Future, in relation to the impact of economic policies, monitoring, language policy, and the inclusion of community and voluntary sector in policy development.

4.4 Technological drivers

Technological advances always have an impact on the skills development of the workforce. With new electronic technologies being introduced regularly, the workforce need relevant skills to use digital technology effectively in order to help deliver innovative and inspiring learning experiences. The workforce needs to be agile to adapt and learn how to use digital learning resources and platforms (e.g. websites, online seminars; virtual learning environments) in order to deliver e-learning, distance learning and blended learning in a way that engages and stimulates learners from diverse backgrounds. It is not possible to specify exactly what makes a ‘good quality’ learning resource, because so much depends on the “type of the resource (tutorial, simulation, game, podcast, video, presentation, text document, etc.); the purpose of the resource; the way in which the resource is used, and the characteristics of the particular users.” (elearning network website, 2010)

The introduction of new technologies including ICT and ILT systems, social media, e-services and changes in methods of delivery linked to changes in technology, such as e-learning, distance learning and blended learning, will require continual updating to keep pace with rapid technological innovation. This implies changes in the skill sets required by staff across the lifelong learning sector.

4.5 Conclusions

There are various and complex factors driving the demand for skills within the lifelong learning sector. The most significant drivers of change are the economy and public policy and legislation. Based on these, the two overarching aspects within which the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland is currently positioned are the economic climate and the need for a world class, competitive workforce. Given this context, there will be the need for more efficient use of resources, both material and human. More will have to be produced by effective collaborative working both within the lifelong learning sector and with other agencies across all sectors in Northern Ireland to take advantages of economies of scale. Increasing integration between lifelong learning sectors in Northern Ireland will result in growing demand for multi skilled employees and partnership working across all parts of the lifelong learning sector.

It is likely that this will involve the introduction of new ways of delivering learning and information such as efficient digital technology and new/social media. Although professional development qualifications are being developed to address this requirement, their implementation requires strategic leadership skills to ensure that changes are managed well.

It is vital that front line services in the lifelong learning sector are maintained through the current economic situation. Now, more than ever, learning providers will have to be responsive to the demands of learners, but also engage with employers and communities to ensure that their provision is fit-for-purpose and meeting demand.

Finally, the new infrastructure will rely on a much improved Information and Communications Technology Professional Development regime and a clearer emphasis on Essential Skills as an integral and embedded element of all lifelong learning activity.

In order to achieve all these, there will be a critical skills demand for strategic leadership in the lifelong learning sector and across all sectors. Strategic leaders can problem solve, think creatively and innovatively. These skills will be of prime importance for smaller organisations (such as those involved in community learning and development or work based learning) as they will have to prioritise the daily business over sustainable, long-term strategic planning.

In summary, the drivers mentioned above will create a demand, in general terms, for the following skills and training:

- Delivery of flexible learning that is accessible to all
- Partnership and collaborative working
- Greater employer engagement and involvement
- New methods and modes of learning and information delivery, including e-enabled methods – for teachers and tutors this will link to DEL policy and Lifelong Learning UK developed standards
- Strategic leadership and management of change
- Essential skills provision i.e. literacy, numeracy, and ESOL.

Section 5: Current Skills Needs

This section will cover skills shortages and gaps in the lifelong learning workforce as stated by employers and defined through data from various sources. As proposed in the Common LMI Framework, data from the latest available Skills Monitoring Survey (DEL NI 2009a) is used to report on skills shortage vacancies and skills gaps as viewed by employers in the lifelong learning sector. The Skills Monitoring Survey classifies the lifelong learning sector using SIC codes, which do not cover the totality of LLUK's sectors and, in some cases, have incomplete data. (Please refer to Section 2 – Methodology – for more details). Information is also used from other sources including LLUK's online employer survey to obtain richer details in terms of skills shortages and gaps.

5.1 Recruitment and skills shortages

DEFINITIONS:

Skills shortage vacancy - A subset of hard-to-fill vacancies where the reason given for the difficulty filling the position is a low number of applicants with the required skills, work experience or qualifications

Skills gap - This exists when the employer indicates that staff at the establishment are not fully proficient at their jobs.

Data from the Skills Monitoring Survey covered 4000 employers in Northern Ireland, 162 of which were in the lifelong learning sector, and represented 12 per cent of employers in the sector. This is supplemented by the responses from 38 employers in the 2010 SSA survey, which covered 27,316 employees of which 12,594 were paid and 14,722 volunteers.

The Skills Monitoring Survey (ibid.) reported that 27 per cent of lifelong learning employers had a vacancy in 2008, compared to 16 per cent in 2005. For all employers, this figure was 12 per cent in 2008, compared with 11 per cent in 2005. Although the number of employers reporting vacancies has risen, vacancies accounted for only one per cent of staff employed in the lifelong learning sector in 2008, which has decreased from almost three per cent in 2005 (ibid.).

According to the 2008 Skills Monitoring Survey, across all sectors of Northern Ireland, 29 per cent of all vacancies are difficult to fill, whereas the equivalent percentage for the lifelong learning sector is 26 per cent. The all sector average has almost halved since 2005 whereas the lifelong learning percentage has remained somewhat constant (ibid.). This situation, however, may change due to the current economic climate and reductions in Government spending. Some respondents to the SSA Survey 2010 mentioned that the current recruitment freeze meant that new vacancies from staff leaving would not be filled:

“The main problem... not being allowed to fill vacancies as staff leave, (will mean that) we will need to do more with less”

LAIS Employer, Northern Ireland

In the 2008 Skills Monitoring Survey report, the 92 per cent of difficult to fill vacancies in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland were due to external skill shortages, compared to almost two-thirds (of difficult to fill vacancies) in all sectors.

Respondents to Lifelong Learning UK's 2010 SSA survey reported that the main causes of difficult to fill vacancies were:

- Low number of applicants with the required skills
- Lack of qualifications in demand by employers
- Not enough people interested in doing this type of work
- Low number of applicants with the required attitude, motivation or personality

In line with the findings from the review of policy drivers, the skills in demand (identified as those most lacking among external applicants) were:

- employer engagement
- advanced ICT
- delivery of e-learning
- supporting diverse learners
- promoting and marketing the organisation

5.2 Skills gaps

In addition to problems in recruiting staff with the necessary skills and qualifications, it is also the case that existing employees may not have the necessary skills needed for their job or the organisation.

This section examines the extent to which employers are experiencing skills gaps amongst their existing workforce. This is self defined by employers when they perceive that the skills held by an employee prevent them from being fully proficient in their current job role.

According to the 2008 Skills Monitoring Survey, three per cent of employers in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland reported skills gaps (down from nine per cent in 2005). This compares to eight per cent for all sectors in Northern Ireland having remained somewhat constant since 2005.

In 2008, 22 per cent of employers across all industries within Northern Ireland and 24 per cent of employers in the lifelong learning sector reported skills gaps between the skills of their current employees and the skills they need to meet their business objectives. Both these figures have increased since 2005, from nine per cent and ten per cent, respectively (DEL NI 2009a).

Most of these gaps were amongst four occupational groups:

- Managers and senior officials
- Administrative and secretarial
- Associate professional
- Elementary staff.

Respondents to the 2010 SSA survey reported that the main causes of skills gaps were related to staff having difficulty keeping up with change, lack of experience/ qualifications and lack of motivation, and insufficient training and development provision by employers. Employers reported that the skills gaps among their staff were mainly related to:

- promotion and marketing
- technical advances in new technology solutions such as social media
- management of digital information
- advanced ICT
- fund raising
- employer engagement
- strategic leadership and planning

5.3 Training provision in the lifelong learning sector

According to the 2008 Skills Monitoring Survey, 95 per cent of lifelong learning employers and 74 per cent of all employers in Northern Ireland have established formal measures related to training provision and this indicates a continued commitment by employers to staff training and development. This was consistent with employer responses to the 2010 SSA Survey.

“The majority of staff are qualified in their roles and those who are not receive the appropriate training.”

Career Guidance Employer, Northern Ireland

In the 2008 Skills Monitoring Survey, 77 per cent of lifelong learning employers and 53 per cent of employers across all sectors provided off-the-job training, an increase from 2005 of 67 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively. In 2005 and 2008, lifelong learning was amongst the sectors with the highest levels of off-the-job training for employees covering training or development activities away from the individual’s immediate work position for staff. Managers, professionals and associate professionals were the main recipients of off-the-job training.

Based on the same study, on-the-job training was provided by 86 per cent of employers in the lifelong learning sector and 60 per cent across all sectors. Again lifelong learning employers were amongst the highest in providing on-the-job training to their staff when compared with employers in other sectors in Northern Ireland (DEL NI 2009a). Additionally, a majority of respondents to the 2010 SSA survey highlighted the importance of continuously updating staff skills and provision of CPD to deal with future skills issues.

Approximately 5 per cent of employers in the 2008 Skills Monitoring Survey (compared to 26 per cent across all sectors in Northern Ireland) had not funded or arranged training for their staff. This is a cause for concern, possibly linked to the recession as around one-third of the SSA 2010 survey respondents reported a decrease in their training budget. A majority of respondents reported common barriers to training and development as lack of funding and lack of spare staff time for training.

Collaboration with other organisations – either to share good practice or to benefit from the economies of scale - was cited in the 2010 SSA survey, as an important way in which organisations can address training needs. This highlights the important role of stakeholder organisations in promoting and facilitating partnership working amongst provider organisations.

The importance of Continuing Professional Development is well recognised in Northern Ireland and DEL NI policy is already driving up the skills levels of the lifelong learning workforce. It is vital that that such CPD and professional qualifications continue to be developed and underpinned by professional standards as an ongoing part of the quality improvement strategy for the workforce in Northern Ireland. As the overall skills level of the lifelong learning workforce increases, learners will benefit from improved learning provision and support.

Section 6: Anticipating What Lies Ahead

The consideration of future skills needs has important implications for stakeholders and employers in the lifelong learning sector. This can be expressed in terms of addressing the current skills shortages and gaps within the financially difficult circumstances brought about by the current economic situation, whilst also retaining a long-term vision to prepare the workforce for the future.

There is an important distinction between future skills that are ‘continual needs’ – which broadly mirror current skills needs, suggesting they are perceived as long term needs or those difficult to address- and those which are ‘new needs’ – or those that are arising from new and emerging issues.

It is anticipated that there will be a greater requirement for organisations in the lifelong learning sector to engage in collaborative working as a way of addressing training needs and in order to enter joint bids for funding. Employers in Northern Ireland are already working in partnership across the sector and beyond. Collaborative working is likely to be assisted by the relatively small geographical scale of Northern Ireland compared to the other Nations, which made ‘joined up’ initiatives easier to develop and implement. Greater collaborative working could also stimulate further dissemination of best practice examples, already occurring in Northern Ireland and the other nations.

Future skills needs identified through the 2010 SSA survey include:

- Delivery of E-learning
- Promotion and marketing
- Strategic leadership and planning
- Management of digital information, including web content
- Employer engagement
- Partnership working

6.1 Working futures projections

Employment projections, known as Working Futures, are produced for every Sector Skills Council by the Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER). The latest projections are available for a ten year period between 2007 and 2017. Forecasts developed in 2009 can be extracted for the UK and the four nations. The main aims of Working Futures are:

- to help in clarifying aims and objectives of policy interventions
- to provide focus for discussion
- to enable more strategic actions to be taken
- to allow employers, employees or others to make better decisions about their own futures.

It is important to note that projections in this section are indicative of likely trends based on past data and does not aim to make precise forecasts of what will inevitably happen and that the projections do not take into account the recent economic downturn. Nonetheless, they provide useful information and intelligence about employment trends to influence and change behaviour, and therefore outcome.

Working Futures classifies the lifelong learning sector using SIC codes, which do not cover the totality of LLUK's sectors, and in some cases have incomplete data. (Please refer to Section 2 – Methodology – for more details).

Overall employment projections

Overall, employment levels in the lifelong learning sector in Northern Ireland are forecasted to rise by approximately four per cent compared with around six per cent across all sectors between 2007 and 2017. Similar patterns are apparent across the UK.

Employment projections by gender

Female employment in the lifelong learning sector is expected to increase by around 9 per cent in Northern Ireland by 2017 which is similar to the percentage across all sectors. However, male employment in the Northern Ireland lifelong learning sector is forecasted to experience a fall of almost six per cent in comparison to a four per cent rise in male employment across the economy.

Employment projections by working pattern

The number of full-time staff is expected to increase across all sectors in Northern Ireland. In comparison, the full-time lifelong learning workforce is expected to decrease by around 4 per cent. The number of part-time staff in the Northern Ireland lifelong learning sector is expected to increase (by 12 per cent) at a faster rate than the all sector increase (of 8 per cent) between 2007 and 2017.

Employment projections by occupation

Between 2007 and 2017 in Northern Ireland, it is predicted that there will be an increase in managers, professionals, associate professionals and personal service occupations and a decrease in administrative, skilled trades, sales, machine operatives, and elementary occupations. These trends are somewhat similar to the UK.

6.2 Future scenarios

The current recession is impacting on all sectors in Northern Ireland including lifelong learning. However businesses in Northern Ireland are increasingly realising that investment in skills is crucial to their survival in the current economic climate and consequently their future growth and success.

The Government's newly published draft skills strategy for Northern Ireland, *Success through Skills 2* (DEL NI 2010) emphasises the importance of upskilling the entire workforce to grow a dynamic and innovative economy

Higher education institutions in Northern Ireland have an important contribution to make to the Northern Ireland economy. Within higher education the agenda is moving towards widening access and increasing participation. HE institutions will have to work increasingly in partnership with government and business to provide a flexible and dynamic higher education system. This will require a range of quality and innovative workforce CPD interventions to ensure that HE can deliver on this crucial agenda.

FE colleges will need to provide a more flexible, demand led system which responds to the needs of employers and the wider economy. Teachers, tutors and trainers will be required to use technology to deliver innovative learning solutions. Further enhancements to the new standards based professional development framework will greatly assist this development.

Libraries, archives and information services may be affected by some closures. However libraries, in particular will look to providing a responsive and flexible service through state of the art facilities, offering a range of services and forming a central part of the community.

Community learning and development will experience some funding cuts. The sector will have to work more closely with government and identify efficiencies through shared services, collaboration and possible mergers. The launch of the newly developed National Occupational Standards in Community Development will provide a qualitative framework for this to take place.

It is clear that the move towards the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA) in Northern Ireland will have substantial implications for the youth work sector. It is proposed that the Youth Council for Northern Ireland will move into this new single authority and there is an increasing awareness of the need to support and resource a standards based CPD Framework to ensure that the Youth Service is properly equipped and fit for purpose across both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Section 7: Conclusions and Skills Priorities

Current research undertaken as part of this Sector Skills Assessment, ascertains that the skills priorities for Northern Ireland in 2010 are:

Collaboration, partnership working including engagement with communities: Guided by legislation and demanded by the current economic circumstances, skills of collaborative and partnership working with multiple organisations, with the third sector, and with communities are vital to ensure the most efficient use of resources

Skills relating to the utilisation of e-technology: skills to deliver learning and information to a diverse audience by making use of e-technology, social media and VLEs. For teachers, this is the new world of digital pedagogy where staff have to learn to use new modes of e-teaching in order to access a vast number of learners who may be from diverse backgrounds and remotely based. Related to this, the demand for advanced ICT skills is also on the rise, with employers demanding that their staff possess knowledge of ICT in relation to web content and doing things using electronic media. The overarching need is for a workforce that is agile enough to learn how to make use of new technology in classrooms, libraries, work based training and all other learning environments.

Management skills relate to managing change in the current economic circumstances: managing contracts and projects; managing staff including volunteers; managing behaviour; managing a diverse set of customers – be it learners or people visiting a library, and managing the change into e-learning

Essential skills provision i.e. literacy, numeracy, and ICT

Transferable skills – so that the workforce can adapt to new and changing circumstances. This includes skills of communications, interpersonal skills, ICT among others

Delivery of flexible learning and new methods and modes of learning and information delivery, including e-enabled methods to make learning accessible to all

Leadership To achieve the above, a vital skills need relates to strategic and forward thinking leadership – skilled leaders who can plan and guide their organisations, their management staff and their whole workforce into a world where public funding is limited and the electronic media is far advanced. Leaders who can think ahead, who can ensure their workforce are producing high quality products by efficiently using limited resources. Leaders who can understand the current policy context as well as plan for the future to ensure that their organisations remain competitive and in the forefront of their sectors in the future

The skills priorities in Northern Ireland are similar to those identified in 2009 (LLUK 2010), even though they have to be viewed in the changing economic and political climate.

7.1 Recommendations for employers in lifelong learning

The impact of these issues can be addressed by creating a landscape in which the following approaches to skills development are facilitated, encouraged and valued. In order to achieve this, employers in the sector should:

- Continue to increase collaboration and partnership working to share effective practice and take advantage of economies of scale
- Develop more flexible credit based qualifications, bite sized training and on-line access for learners, while continuing to ensure staff have the skills to deliver and support these delivery methods.
- Continue to improve the quality of methods of identifying staff training and development needs – National Occupational Standards can be useful here
- Focus on continuing professional development despite the current economic situation, in order to keep pace with change and prepare the lifelong learning workforce to support the skills needs of the rest of the workforce and drive Northern Ireland's economic recovery
- Continue to embed equality and diversity into working policy and practice – a diverse workforce is better able to support the demands of an increasingly multicultural and diverse population.

7.2 Recommendation for stakeholders and policy makers in lifelong learning

The approaches to skills development above are vital to the continuous improvement of the skills levels and productivity of the lifelong learning workforce, and all sectors in Northern Ireland.

Stakeholders and policy makers should work with employers to ensure that the recommendations above can be implemented, even in the current economic situation.

References

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010), *Securing a sustainable future for higher education: an independent review of higher education funding & student finance*
- Department of Culture Arts and Leisure - DCAL NI (2006), *Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries - principles and priorities for the development of public libraries in Northern Ireland*
- Department for Employment and Learning - DEL NI (2006), *Success Through Skills*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2007a), *Success Through Skills Progress Report*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2007b), *Quality Improvement Strategy for FE and Training in Northern Ireland*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2008a), *The All-Island Skills Study*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2008b), *Department for Employment and Learning Corporate Plan (2008) 12*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2009a), *Northern Ireland Skills Monitor Survey 2008 – Main Report*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2009b), *Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2010a), *Success through Skills 2: The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2010b), *Stuart review: Independent review of variable fees and student finance arrangements*
- Department for Employment and Learning, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department of Finance and Personnel (2009), *Forecasting Future Skill Needs in Northern Ireland*
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (2010), *Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) published 15th September 2010*
- E Learning network website (2010), *What does exemplary digital learning content look like for business?* Accessed 23rd Sept 2010
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2009), *New Migration, Equality and Integration: Issues and Challenges for Northern Ireland*
- HM Treasury website (2010), *Spending review. Accessed 20th October 2010*
- Lifelong Learning UK (2007), *Sector Skills Agreement Stage 1*
- Lifelong Learning UK (2008a), *Research into the workforce profile of the Youth Work Sector in Northern Ireland*
- Lifelong Learning UK (2008b), *Profile of the archives workforce in Northern Ireland*
- Lifelong Learning UK (2008c), *Profile of the work based learning workforce in Northern Ireland*
- Lifelong Learning UK (2010), *Lifelong Learning Sector Skills Assessment 2009 Nation's report: Northern Ireland*
- National Institute for Adult and Community Education (2009), *Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning: The Northern Ireland Perspective*
- Northern Ireland Executive (2008), *Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011, Building a Better Future*

- Northern Ireland Executive website (2010), 20 October 2010 - Spending Review outcome poses real challenge for Executive. Accessed on 29th October 2010
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2009), *Statistics Press Notice – 2008-based population projections*
- Office for National Statistics (2009), *Labour Force Survey, four quarter average for 2009*
- Office for National Statistics (2010), *Statistical Bulletin: Labour Market Statistics, October 2010*
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2009), *OECD Education at a Glance 2009*
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009a), *Common Labour Market Information (LMI) Framework*
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009), *Ambition 2020: World Class Skills and Jobs for the UK – 2009 report*
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2010), *Ambition 2020: World Class Skills and Jobs for the UK – 2010 report*
- Varney, Sir David (2008), *Review of the Competitiveness of Northern Ireland*

Appendix A - Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes

All national data sources, such as the National Employer Skills Survey and Labour Force Survey use Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, in order to classify the 'sectors' of each Sector Skills Council. For Lifelong Learning UK, the SIC codes are explained in the table below.

85.31	General secondary education	SIC 85.32 – “Technical and vocational secondary education” and SIC85.41 – “Post-secondary non-tertiary education” correspond to the further education sector, but this should also include an unknown proportion from SIC 85.31 – “General secondary education”.
85.32	Technical and vocational secondary education	
85.41	Post-secondary non-tertiary education	
85.42	Tertiary education	These two codes equate to the higher education sector.
	85.42/1 First-degree level tertiary education	
	85.42/2 Post-graduate level tertiary education	
85.59	Other education not elsewhere classified	SIC85.59 – ‘Other education not elsewhere classified’ corresponds to part of the CLD sector. However it does not include youth workers (Lifelong Learning UK’s research suggests that substantial numbers of volunteers and youth workers are overlooked by all SIC based surveys). This also includes some private WBL training providers. In reality, the CLD and WBL workforces are actually very distinct from each other
85.60	Educational support services	SIC 85.60 - “Educational support activities”. This is included in Lifelong Learning UK’s remit, but it is not clear which sectors the staff that are included work within.
91.01	Library and archive activities	SIC 91.01 – ‘Library and archives activities’ does not include records managers and some archivists as these information professionals can be embedded across the other SIC codes
	91.01/1 Library activities	
	91.01/2 Archives activities	

It is important to note that SIC codes do not completely equate to the entire lifelong learning sector workforce, with youth workers, career guidance and work based learning staff not specifically covered by any one SIC code. In the case of youth workers and career guidance professionals (neither of which are covered by a SIC code) we use Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes; namely SOC 32.31 – “Youth and community workers” and SOC 35.64 – “Careers advisors and vocational guidance specialists”. These occupational categories (when they are not already included in our SIC code total) are also included in our workforce estimates. Other gaps in the workforce data are filled using primary or secondary research to provide quantitative data or qualitative information for context. Such specific data sources are referred to in the main body of the text.

Appendix B – Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes with examples from the lifelong learning sector

Main Occupation (based on SOC codes)	Examples within the lifelong learning sector
Managers, senior officials and managers in services	Senior management; CEOs; director level positions (including Chair of governors, principals, chancellors and vice chancellors); Chief or National librarians and archivists; financial managers; chartered secretaries; marketing and sales managers; heads of training; ICT managers; R&D managers; heads of departments
Professionals delivering lifelong learning.	All professionally qualified staff such as lecturers; teachers; tutors; trainers; practitioners; assessors and verifiers; professional youth and community workers; librarians; archivists; conservators; career guidance specialists and advisors
Associate professional and technical occupations	Education support staff; any technicians employed by colleges or universities – including lab, electrical, building, engineering technicians; information officers; IT user support technicians; youth and community workers; assistant librarians and archivists; buyers; marketing; care advisors ; personnel and industrial relations officers
Administrative and secretarial occupations	Accounts and wage clerks; book keepers; telephonists; library and archive assistants; general office assistants; stock control clerks; educational assistants; PAs; receptionists; typists
Skilled trade occupations	Electricians; computer engineers; cooks; buildings and estates maintenance
Personal service occupations	Caretakers; cleaning managers or supervisors
Sales and customer service occupations	Sales assistants; call centre staff; customer service staff or supervisors
Machine and transport operatives	Drivers
Elementary occupations	Cleaners; grounds staff; security staff (including janitors or caretakers); kitchen and catering assistants



Skills for Learning Professionals

Lifelong Learning UK

BELFAST

2nd Floor, Midtown Centre, 25 Talbot Street, Cathedral Quarter,
Belfast, BT1 2LD

Tel: 0870 050 2570 Fax: 02890 247 675

CARDIFF

Sophia House, 28 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2066 0238 Fax: 029 2066 0239

EDINBURGH

CBC House, 24 Canning Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8EG

Tel: 0870 756 4970 Fax: 0131 229 8051

LEEDS

4th Floor, 36 Park Row, Leeds, LS1 5JL

Tel: 0870 300 8110 Fax: 0113 242 5897

LONDON

Centurion House, 24 Monument Street, London, EC3R 8AQ

Tel: 0870 757 7890 Fax: 0870 757 7889

Email: enquiries@lluk.org

www.lluk.org/ssa

Ref: RES/01_2011/04



Part of the Skills for Business network of
25 employer-led Sector Skills Councils