Learning Through Work

Literacy, language, numeracy and IT skills development in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces

Literature Review

Becci Newton
Linda Miller
Peter Bates
Rosie Page
Karen Akroyd

ies
Report 433

Published by:

INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT STUDIES
Mantell Building
University of Sussex
Falmer
Brighton BN1 9RF
UK

Tel. + 44 (0) 1273 686751
Fax + 44 (0) 1273 690430

http://www.employment-studies.co.uk

Disclaimer

Views expressed in this report are those of the Institute for Employment Studies. They do not necessarily those of the South East of England Development Agency or any of its partners.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 1 85184 362 0

Printed in Great Britain

The Institute for Employment Studies

The Institute for Employment Studies is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. It works closely with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, and professional and employee bodies. For over 35 years the Institute has been a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets and human resource planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation which has over 60 multidisciplinary staff and international associates. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, publications and the Internet.

IES aims to help bring about sustainable improvements in employment policy and human resource management. IES achieves this by increasing the understanding and improving the practice of key decision makers in policy bodies and employing organisations.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Tessa Bowden (SEEDA) and Alex Braddell for their assistance, support and enthusiasm throughout this project. In addition, we wish to thank their partners who are co-funding this project: Skills for Health (the sector skills council for health), the Department of Health's Widening Participation in Learning Strategy Unit, Hampshire-Isle of Wight Strategic Health Authority and Investors in People UK.

Finally, we wish to thank the research and support teams at IES: Dilys Robinson, Jim Hillage, Jonny Gifford, Gill Howd, and Denise Hassany.

Contents

Executive Summary

The SEEDA-funded basic skills programme has created learning partnerships centred on the low-paid workplace in NHS Trusts across the south east region. These learning partnerships deliver literacy, English language, numeracy and IT (LLNIT) skills in NHS workplaces. These have offered a valuable opportunity to investigate, across a number of sites, how on-the-job LLNIT learning might widen participation in learning, to support both organisational performance and the skills development of low-paid workers in the south east.

In summer 2005, SEEDA commissioned a project to further explore these issues and, on the basis of this work, to consider how public funding might most cost-effectively be used to promote on-the-job LLNIT learning opportunities for people in low-paid and low-skilled occupations. The work focuses on the low-paid workforce, as it is among this group that the greatest unmet need for LLNIT skills is likely to exist.

This summary and the accompanying report present findings from the first stage of this project: a data analysis of low pay and low skills in the south east; and a literature review which seeks to characterise low pay, low-skilled work and workplaces, and to identify current practices and opportunities to develop LLNIT skills.

Low pay and low skill in the south east

- The south east population is more qualified than that of the UK as a whole, with fewer people reporting low levels of educational attainment. However, there remains a sizeable group in the south east with low levels of educational attainment, who are very likely to have literacy or numeracy development needs (we estimate just over ten per cent of the south east population would fail level 1 literacy, and 40 per cent would fail level 1 numeracy).
- People with these low qualification levels are disproportionately more likely to be older (aged between 46 and state pension age) or belong to minority ethnic groups. Variation by gender in level of qualification held is marginal, and lower rates of

educational attainment among women represent historic differences rather than current achievement rates.

- Those with low or no qualifications have much lower than average rates of participation in, and are more likely to withdraw from, the labour market.
- Low qualified people who remain in the labour market are disproportionately represented in declining industries (eg agriculture and manufacturing) or service-sector industries (eg hotel and restaurant sector). This group is disproportionately represented among process plant and machinery operative and elementary occupations.

There are similarities between the sectors and occupations that employ a large percentage of people with low educational attainment and sectors that have a high proportion of employees who are on low pay. Using the OECD definition of low pay ie based on hourly earnings that are less than two-thirds of the national median, we find that:

- around 18 per cent of those employed in the south east are low-paid, compared with an average of 20 per cent in the UK as a whole
- women are twice as likely as men to be working in low-paid jobs (percentage women cf percentage men), and nearly one-half of all younger people (16 to 25 year olds) in the region also work in low-paid jobs.

Comparisons of pay across occupations and industries in the south east with qualifications and demographic factors yield some interesting observations. In broad terms:

- those occupations and sectors which offer low pay are, in general, also those that employ people with low or no qualifications
- sectors and/or occupations offering entry-level employment to young people (eg the hotel and restaurant sector and sales and customer service occupations) are also more likely to offer low pay
- sectors and/or occupations that disproportionately employ women (eg customer service occupations and personal service occupations) are among those most likely to offer low pay.

Finally, on the subject of gender differences, it would appear that low qualified women are more likely than low qualified men to enter occupations or industries that offer low pay. Male dominated jobs, such as those in the construction sector and process plant and machinery occupations, employ very high proportions of people who have low attainment as demonstrated by qualifications, but have a below-average proportion of people on low pay.

Characterising the low-paid, low-skilled workplace

- The incidence of low-paid work in the UK has been rising and this has not happened solely by chance. Global economic trends and competition, pursuit of flexible labour market policies and technological change have all served to alter the environment in which low-skilled individuals in the labour market operate.
- Organisations such as those in the retail sector, smaller organisations, and those competing on the basis of cost, are more likely than other organisations to have low-paid employees.
- Low-paid, low-skilled workplaces are characterised in the main by low quality competitive strategy, few development and progression opportunities, poor human resource management practices, high staff turnover, and a lack of a union presence (although there are exceptions to this pattern).
- There are patterns in the types of individual likely to be doing low-paid work: women (and often women returners) and younger people (often students supporting full-time study) are over-represented. It is, therefore, not the case that everyone in low-paid, low-skilled work has LLNIT development needs. However, amongst those whose labour market position is more entrenched, higher numbers are likely to have such needs. This group of workers have few employment options because of skill deficits.
- Some low-skill jobs in the UK have what is described as 'neo-Taylorist' forms of work organisation that are designed to leave employees with little autonomy or room for discretion. This can create a vicious cycle in which low-skilled workers are offered few on-the-job development opportunities and little hope in the way of progression.
- The low-skilled workplace tends to be low involvement, low trust, and offering little opportunity for progression, learning, development or promotion. Human resource management policies can reflect these characteristics and are aimed at controlling lower-skilled workers who are left with little autonomy.

Job design and requirements for on-the-job LLNIT skills development

- Job design is a key determinant of the LLNIT skills required in the workplace and can be seen to impact in two different ways: the design of work can either de-skill or routinise work, or, alternatively, job design may drive the requirement for extended skills amongst low-paid, low-skilled workers.
- The design of work to limit any form of discretion has a negative impact both on employee engagement and on the culture of the workplace. The design of work can limit not just the opportunities available to employees for learning but also for

applying the outcomes of that learning. A corollary of this is that factors such as a 'command and control' approach to management in the work environment can serve to promote or inhibit employee learning and development.

- There is an argument that generic skills are increasingly critical and that jobs and tasks should be designed to foster the development of skills such as problem-solving, communication and IT skills.
- However, the extent to which low-paid, low-skilled workers are offered opportunities to develop and apply their skills is limited by the culture of the organisation, ie whether organisation-wide learning is cultivated; and the local work setting, ie whether line managers encourage the development of such a culture.
- Employers find it hard to understand the concepts of deficits in literacy and numeracy amongst their workers when these skills are considered in isolation. However, when these skills are put into context, for example how they are required in task completion, or how they might enable workplace change, there is greater recognition of their value.
- The appraisal and management systems for low-paid, low-skilled workers can differ from others in the organisation hierarchy: where personal development plans exist for these workers they are likely to be task- rather than development-focused, and the organisation may have little expectation that such workers will be engaged in continuous learning activity.
- We found little information in our search of the literatures about precisely how LLNIT needs were identified, or about how agreement was gained from senior staff to proceed with a programme of learning in these areas.
- A few accounts were found of good practice, for example, of how, once access has been agreed, practitioners may undertake an organisation communication analysis, and in some cases, link to this individual training needs analysis. As well as senior staff such as HR and training directorates, trade unions may be involved in negotiations.
- However, although there are some accounts of good practice of this type, it is generally the case that, within the low-pay, low-skilled workplace, supervisors and line managers are key to the implementation of training in general, and for our purposes, LLNIT skills development in particular. This gatekeeper role means they are also barriers to development where they do not see the need for LLNIT skills in their workers.
- Where LLNIT skills development programmes are taking place, there are some indications of their effectiveness, but little by way of systematic evaluation.

Defining LLNIT skills and practices

- This area of skill development is characterised by disagreement about the naming and nature of 'underpinning' or 'enabling' skills. What is certain, however, is that these skills (literacy, language, numeracy and IT), while non-technical in nature, are widely viewed as essential to learning and performance at work.
- The concept of LLNIT skills builds out of notions of basic skills, functional skills, employability skills and generic skills. The definitions of these skillsets share common themes about the ability to communicate and process information. These concepts are at the heart of the definition of LLNIT skills, ie that workplaces require literacy, language, numeracy and IT skills to be applied and the application of these skills is central to the ability to communicate and process information.
- In undertaking this review, the assumption has been made that LLNIT skills extend beyond concepts of literacy, language, numeracy and IT, and encompass ideas of workplace learning design and delivery, ie focused on job needs. A further aspect of the review was the assumption that, for many low-paid and low-skilled workers (and their managers) such skills may be better delivered on the job rather than requiring time out away from the job.
- Further to this is the consideration of how any development is delivered. Therefore, in considering the LLNIT concept, we have assumed that the development of these skills must include ideas of informal learning as well as formal delivery.

Current LLNIT skills development practice

- Despite the growing interest in improving adult basic skills in the workplace, the evidence of current practice largely emanates from practitioners who report back on their experiences of delivering programmes in organisations. Generally, there is little information about in situ, on-the-job, LLNIT skill development, little about the involvement of anyone other than the trainer (and perhaps the learners), and little by way of systematic follow-up or impact evaluation.
- Case study evidence shows there is a variety of ways in which LLNIT skills needs are identified for development, with good practice indicating the need to involve managers and advisers in the development of the curricula to ensure its work focus. Other good practice included the appointment of current employees as learning signposters (who receive development to fulfil this role) to promote the available LLNIT learning opportunities.
- Much current LLNIT learning takes place in a workplace environment, although not necessarily on the job. This helps employees to relate the skills they learn to their own work, and also helps avoid problems such as getting staff released to attend training elsewhere.

- A conclusion from the evidence is that those who facilitate learning require some understanding of theories of situated learning in order to adapt work activities for this purpose, and to help staff to use whichever learning methods may be most appropriate for a specific context. That is not to say that individuals involved in delivering LLNIT skills development in the workplace (or other types of learning, such as vocational training, that may require LLNIT skills support for the learner) do not have these skills, but rather that there is a need to recognise the need for this skillset.
- Learners who have been identified as needing to improve their LLNIT skills can sometimes feel stigmatised. The way in which these skills are 'marketed', and the naming of the programmes used to teach LLNIT skills, is therefore important. Employees may find it easier to say that they are attending a 'computing course' rather than a 'basic skills' or literacy or numeracy course.
- Evidence from case studies reveals a variety of approaches to the acknowledgement, recognition or accreditation of LLNIT learning. However these case studies also demonstrate that it is not always considered appropriate to seek a qualification for learning and some learners do not wish to work towards accreditation.
- What is largely missing from the literature at present is any account of which types of performance deficit arise from individuals' lack of LLNIT skills, or the way in which such skills are used by employees and managers, or how, and at what level they are required by organisations.
- In tandem with, and perhaps because of, this lack of a link between LLNIT skills and performance, there is little evidence (from reports in the literature) of job re-design where LLNIT skill development has taken place, although there are some anecdotal reports of changes to jobs leading to increased skill requirements. Given this lack of linkage, there is little hard evidence to date of the value of LLNIT learning to the organisation.
- However, what evidence there is suggests that learners gain confidence as a result of LLNIT development, and the applied nature of the work-based programme enables them to quickly see the outcomes and utility of development.

The future of learning for the low-paid, low-skilled workforce

- Workplaces can become effective sites for the development of knowledge and employees can be helped to learn in informal ways, such as learning from colleagues, and through observation and listening. These methods are consistently reported as effective means for employee learning.

- Workplace learning can be improved in various ways; for example the development (and implementation) of a work environment which invites individuals to learn, the tailoring of a workplace learning curriculum to particular tasks, and the encouragement of participation by both those learning and those guiding the learning.
- Developing a culture of learning where participation in some form of learning is expected is a facilitative measure. Where a range of curricula is available, a range of staff may become involved and LLNIT skills development can become de-stigmatised.
- Practitioners using organisational communications analysis report that this is effective, as the approach examines individual learning needs as well as structural, emotional and socio-cultural issues in (and barriers to) learning.

Conclusions and recommendations

- There is much to indicate that more research is required to illuminate the extent of learning in low-skilled, low-paid workplaces and also the extent to which on-the-job and informal methodologies can be used to facilitate LLNIT skills development.
- There is evidence to suggest the linkage between LLNIT skills and performance although this exists at the macro, national level. There is a dearth of evidence about how these skills (or lack of them) affect the ability of the individual to perform within the organisation or affect organisational performance as a whole.
- This lack of specific evidence makes it difficult in some cases to persuade employers of the value of developing LLNIT skills in their low-paid, low-skilled workers. This is doubly problematic given that employers have difficulties in recognising and identifying LLNIT skill needs within their workforces.
- Were employers to be persuaded of the value of these skills to their organisation, the release of individuals from their work to engage in learning could prove a further barrier to development particularly for those in low-paid, low-skilled work.
- Given employers' reluctance to release individuals for training, on-the-job training has obvious advantages. However, there is little information about the design, impact, outcomes or utility of approaches to on-the-job skill development, although it should be noted that this is in common with a lack of specific information about design and impact within this area of activity in general.
- There have been few studies of the skills needed by those involved in developing LNIT skills in workers on the job, although a substantial skillset is likely to be needed.

- Further research will be needed to identify specific sub-sets of LLNIT skills needed in specific jobs and the consequences of lack of appropriate skills, both for individuals and for organisations.
- As a first stage in gaining further information about the way in which LLNIT skills are used and developed in work, an audit tool was designed using the findings of this literature review as a basis. This work is reported in a subsequent volume.

1 Introduction

The SEEDA-funded basic skills programme has created learning partnerships centred on the low-paid workplace in NHS trusts across the south east region. These learning partnerships deliver literacy, English language, numeracy and IT (LLNIT) skills in NHS workplaces. They offer a valuable opportunity to investigate simultaneously, across a number of sites, how on-the-job LLNIT learning might widen participation in learning, to support both organisational performance and the skills development of low-paid workers in the south east.

In 2005 SEEDA commissioned a project to further explore these issues and, on the basis of this work, to consider how public funding might most cost-effectively be used to promote on-the-job LLNIT learning opportunities for people in low-paid and low-skilled occupations. The work focuses on the low-paid workforce, as it is among this group that the greatest unmet need for LLNIT skills is assumed to exist.

The initial task in this project was to set up the project's structure and management arrangements (including confirmation of partners and organisations offering access to workplaces) for the purpose of gathering practice evidence. The next part of the work was to review the literature on low-paid, low-skilled work and then to generate a model of the low-paid workplace, which identified its key features and the opportunities that might exist within the low-paid, low-skilled workplace for on-the-job LLNIT learning. This research was to be the basis for a project which in its later phases would involve the following stages.

Immediate phases

- The gathering of practice evidence and expert evaluation to determine what opportunities the low-paid workplace offers for on-the-job LLNIT learning
- The gathering of practice evidence and expert evaluation to determine how those opportunities can be maximised and made as accessible as possible

Longer term work

- Expert evaluation to determine how public funding could most cost-effectively support this kind of skills development

1.1 Aims and methodology

Here, we report the aims of the first stage of the project. The aim was to carry out a scoping/research review to establish what is already known about the following key questions:

- How is the low-paid workplace best defined? (Why?)
- Who is present? (Why?)
- What takes place? (Why?)
- How are LLNIT skills best defined? (Why?)
- How are LLNIT practices best defined? (Why?)
- What LLNIT skills and practices does the workplace require?
- How are the current demands for LLNIT skills and practices presently negotiated?
- What perceptions exist within the workplace about LLNIT skills and practices?
- What are the consequences of current practices for the workplace?

At the end of the review, the research team would develop practice evidence gathering guidelines that would be used by practice evidence gathering (PEG) teams to audit the opportunities the low-paid and low-skilled workplace currently offers for on-the-job language, literacy, numeracy and IT (LLNIT) learning. The framework would be trialled at a 'learning lab', which would also be used to disseminate the outcomes of the analysis and recommendations from the review.

1.1.1 Methodology

Three methods were used to generate an initial pool of relevant material for inclusion in the literature review for this first phase of the project. The materials were identified through:

- searching relevant electronic databases, such as Ingenta and PsychoInfo and the websites of organisations involved in areas of LLNIT skills development and impact, such as NIACE, The Network (at Lancaster University) and the Basic Skills Agency
- reviewing previous IES research and publications in related areas

- contact with national and international expert partners to request information on publications and sources likely to be of use to the review; in particular, this route was used to identify literature not likely to be found through databases (eg commissioned work not publicly available, that is, 'grey' literature).

The outcomes of these searches were then screened for relevance and those relevant to the research questions were included in the review.

The use of expert partners to help in generating the literature pool was an essential stage of this work, since 'grey' publications, by their nature, are not available through the academic resources. Compounding this, there is the issue of a lack of interest amongst the academic community in workplace LLNIT development. Payne (2002) has commented that 'academic research has shown little interest in the issue of workplace basic skills... [and] …[t]here has been no consistent effort to 'capture' local knowledge about what works and what does not work in this field'. The result of this is the lack of a 'broad base of relevant research activity within the UK' (Payne, ibid.).

Aside from the basic skills literature, the review also looked at literature on the nature of low-paid and low-skilled work and the management practices that link (whether positively or negatively) work and development. The activities and tasks involved, the way these are changing in response to market pressures, and the implications these changes to the job role had for further development were also considered. However, before reporting our analysis, it is useful to provide some definitions of the key factors under review: low pay, low skill and LLNIT skills.

1.1.2 Structure of this report

Chapter 2 explores the first of the key themes for this project, where we assess the nature of low pay, low-skilled work: the characteristics of the employing organisations, the nature of the available jobs and the people working within them. In concluding this chapter we discuss some common characteristics of these kinds of workplaces. In Chapter 3 we explore the linkage between job (re)design and LLNIT skills requirements for low-paid, low-skilled workers, and the kind of skills that are required by such work. Within this chapter, we explore attitudes towards LLNIT skills development within organisations and also review how demands for such development are negotiated.

Chapter 4 provides a definition for LLNIT skills as used in this project, and explores the related concepts that are inferred in its definition. In Chapter 5 we review examples of LLNIT skills development practice and discuss what knowledge 'gaps' are left by the literature. We also explore in this chapter the impacts of LLNIT skills development on the organisation, and the learners as well as wider outcomes. We conclude with a view of the future of LLNIT skills development.

In the next sections of this chapter we briefly explore definitions of low pay and low skill, and follow this with a note about the definition of LLNIT skills. In section 1.2 we

present an analysis, based on the Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005, of low pay and low skill in the south east. This contrasts the situation in the south east with that of the UK as a whole.

1.1.3 Defining low pay and low skills

At an early stage of the work the decision was taken to look at low-paid, low-skilled work rather than isolating either pay or skill, since many jobs that are poorly remunerated do demand high skill levels. Incumbents of such high-skilled jobs are far less likely to require development of LLNIT skills, although that is not to say that all highly skilled workers do not require LLNIT development. However, quite what constitutes 'low-paid' and indeed 'low-skilled' requires some exploration, and these form the basis for the first two sections of these definitions.

Lucifora at al (2005), provide three measures for the definition of low pay. The first is as a share of the wage distribution, for example, the bottom 10, 20 or 30 per cent; however, they indicate that this formulation does not allow for evolution over time. Their second measure is low pay as a relative measure, usually calculated as a percentage of the median pay levels, which they subsequently used for their international assessment of low pay (discussed below). As with the previous method, a disadvantage of this approach is that it does not allow for change over time. A final way of defining low pay is as an *absolute* level of pay below which one is assumed to be in, or near, poverty. However, Lucifora and colleagues argue that this last approach lacks utility in making international comparisons, which was a purpose of their analysis.

While this last measure may not be useful for international comparisons, it has been used in national studies of low pay. Research for the Basic Skills Agency in 1997 adopted the 'absolute' approach in looking at the proportions of people earning a low income in the UK. 'Low income' was defined as below £200 per week for men and £150 for women. It is worth noting that those with poor basic skills were up to twice as likely as other workers to earn little. Another perspective on low pay rates is to consider the hourly, rather than the weekly wage, like the National Minimum Wage, which is currently £5.05 per hour, and is expected to rise to £5.35 per hour in October 2006 (Low Pay Commission website, February 2005). Broadly, it is this kind of level of pay that we are considering in this report although we have not, for instance, specified pay levels in our trawl of the available sources.

From the work by Lucifora et al. (2005), we can gain some idea of the extent of low pay in the UK and the characteristics of workers in receipt of low pay. Their analysis is based on the median measure in each country. Nearly one-fifth of full-time UK workers (19.8 per cent) were low-paid, a higher incidence than in all of the comparator countries in their study (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands) except the US.

More women in the UK than men were low-paid (26.9 per cent of women compared with 15.6 per cent of men). Low-skilled workers and those employed in unskilled manual work were more likely to receive low pay compared with the national average: 32.3 per cent and 54.0 per cent, respectively. Other groups were also identified as relatively more likely to earn low wages compared with the average: those working in shops (46.3 per cent), retail (54.9 per cent) and hotels and catering, in which sector over two-thirds – 69.6 per cent – of workers were low-paid. Lucifora et al. (ibid.) also note that the incidence of low-paid work is growing across Europe: low-pay increased by 2.6 per cent in the UK between 1979 and 1996.

In our analysis (reported in the next section of this chapter) we have used the OECD standard for low pay, that is levels of pay that are below two-thirds of the national median hourly rate of pay.

The focus of this report is, in part, to identify and define the combination of low-pay, low-skilled work, and particularly the skills required to do it. Before doing so, however, there is value in reviewing how low-skills have been defined. Skill levels in general often are defined by proxy, using qualifications or occupations as an indicator of the skill levels required. Those with qualifications below level 3 (see Table 1.1), or working in jobs assessed as needing skill levels less than, or equivalent to, level 3 (or assessed as not requiring specialist skills, see Table 1.2) may be broadly understood to be low skilled.

Table 1.1: Understanding qualification levels

Framework level	Level indicators
Entry	Entry level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations.
Level 1	Level 1 qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities which mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence.
Level 2	Level 2 qualifications recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles.
Level 3	Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply, a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills.
Level 8	Level 8 qualifications recognise leading experts or practitioners in a particular field. Learning at this level involves the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.

Source: National Qualifications Framework, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

Table 1.2: Examples of job roles in occupational categories

Occupation classification	Examples
Elementary	Farm labourers, forestry workers, labourers in construction or foundries, goods handling and storage, couriers, hospital and hotel porters, waiting and bar staff, security guards and related occupations, shelf fillers
Operative	Food, drink and tobacco process operatives; plant and machine operatives; manufacturing assemblers; scaffolders, stagers, riggers; heavy goods vehicle drivers; fork-lift truck drivers
Sales	Sales and retail assistants, retail cashiers and check-out operators, roundsmen/women and van salespersons, call centre agents/operators, customer care occupations
Personal services	Nursing auxiliaries and assistants, childminders and related occupations, veterinary nurses and assistants, sports and leisure assistants, hairdressers, barbers, and beauticians; caretakers
Skilled trades	

Source: Office for National Statistics

However these ideas of low-skill have quite a deal of variability and the people considered as low-skilled may range from those with considerable literacy and numeracy problems, to those who have gained qualifications but at a low level. Russell Sage Foundation in the United States notes that the low-skilled title is normally accepted as including those with 'modest skills or educational credentials' (Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), while Illeris (2006), provides a relative definition describing the low-skilled as 'those who are in a vulnerable situation in relation to the competence demands of modern society and economy'. However, Illeris also notes that as the demands of the economy are growing in complexity it is becoming increasingly difficult to define who belongs to the low-skilled group.

However low skill is defined, whether by use of qualification or occupation as a proxy, or by other more relative approaches, it is nonetheless the case that significant numbers of adults in the UK are considered to be low-skilled. For example, the Department for Education and Skills, on its website, estimates that 'In England 5.2 million adults have literacy levels below the levels required to achieve a GCSE grade D to G, while 6.8 million adults are estimated to have difficulties in adding/subtracting using 3 digit numbers (numeracy skills below entry level 3). A total of 15 million adults have skills at the same low level and have difficulties with fractions, decimals and simple percentages'. Similarly, the Employers' Organisation, the professional body for local government, finds that 16.3 per cent of the local government workforce do not possess a qualification at level 2 and 11 per cent have no qualification at all. (Employers' Organisation, 2004).

1.1.4 A note about language, literacy, numeracy and IT (LLNIT)

Throughout this report, we use the term 'LLNIT' which we fully define in Chapter 4. From one perspective, LLNIT is simply an acronym of language, literacy, numeracy and IT, and we have used it as a short-hand to refer to any learning or development

within these curriculum areas, reported in the literature. However, we present a definition that encompasses concepts of information processing and communication, and that involves workplace design and delivery.

1.2 Review of educational attainment and low pay in the south east

In this section we review the education and labour market information related to low educational attainment and low pay in the south east. The first part of the section begins with an examination of evidence related to numeracy and literacy skills in the region and considers its relationship with educational attainment. The section continues by examining the profile of people in the region with low educational attainment, their economic activity and the nature of their employment. The second part of the section concludes by considering the incidence of low pay in the region and the propensity of those with low educational attainment to achieve to low pay.

1.2.1 Education and basic skills in the south east

There is little detailed information of the scale of the basic skills needs within the south east region. The most recent comprehensive study by the DfES (2003) suggests that, although the south east does better than the national average, a substantial proportion of the population does not possess the literacy or numeracy skills that would be expected of a person completing their secondary school education. More specifically, over ten per cent of adults in the region would fail level 1 literacy, while 40 per cent would fail level 1 numeracy (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Literacy and numeracy skills in the south east

	Numeracy		Literacy	
	South east	England	South east	England
Entry level 1 or below	4	5	2	3
Entry level 2 or below	12	16	1	2
Entry level 3	24	25	8	11
Level 1	27	28	37	40
Level 2	32	25	51	44

DfES, 2003

Data on literacy and numeracy skills needs in the south east are limited, we know from the DfES study that these skills needs are generally, but not exclusively, associated with educational measures. For example, at a national level around 83 per cent of those with no formal qualifications had literacy levels that were below level 2, compared with 70 per cent of those with level 1 qualifications (ie fewer than five GCESs grades A to C). Although the proportion of the population achieving below level 2 in literacy falls as qualification attainment rises the report still suggests that 30

per cent of those with degree-level qualifications score below level 2 in literacy. It is necessary, therefore, to exercise some caution when using educational attainment as a proxy for a wider potential basic skills deficit.

1.2.2 Educational profile of the south east and UK

Looking at the educational profile of those living in the south east, we can see that the region's population is highly qualified relative to the that of the UK as a whole (Table 1.4).Around three in ten of the south east population has a higher education qualification, compared with one-quarter of those living in the UK. A further 46 per cent of individuals in south east have qualifications equivalent to GCE A-level or five GCSEs grades A to C, ie equivalent to level 3 or level 2. The remaining 22 per cent of the region's residents either have below level 2 qualifications (eg fewer than five GCSEs grades A to C) or no qualifications. Although the proportion of people with below level 2 qualifications in the south east is lower than that of the UK (27 per cent), it should be noted that this percentage still equates to nearly 1.1 million people of working-age.

Table 1.4: Profile of educational attainment in the south east and UK, spring 2005

	South east	UK
Degree or equivalent	20.5	17.6
Higher education	8.7	8.4
GCE A-level or equivalent	24.4	23.6
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	23.9	22.9
Below level 2	21.8	26.6
of which		
other qualifications	11.8	12.5
no qualification	10.0	14.1
Don't know	0.7	0.7
Total	4,949,000	36,395,000

Note: The working-age population is defined as men aged between 16-64 years and women aged 16-59 years inclusive.

Labour Force Survey, spring 2005

Education by individual characteristics

A review of the educational profile of those living in the south east by demographic characteristics suggests that women, older individuals (especially those 45 years of age and over) and people from minority ethnic groups are more likely than average to have below level 2 or no qualifications (Table 1.5).

- Among those individuals aged between 16 and 35 years approximately one-fifth had qualifications below level 2 or no qualifications at all. This proportion rises to

over one quarter (26 per cent) among those aged between 46 and 55 years, and nearly one-third (31 per cent) among those aged 56 years to retirement.

- The difference in qualification levels between white individuals and individuals from minority ethnic groups is equally as striking, with just over one-fifth (21 per cent) of the white population reporting to have below level 2 or no qualifications compared with one-third of those from minority ethnic groups.
- Variations in the levels of qualification held by men and women are marginal (ie less than one percentage point), and women are more likely to report lower levels of educational attainment than men.

Table 1.5: Profile of educational attainment in the south east by age and gender (row %), spring 2005

	5 GCSE A-C quals or above	Below 5 GCSE A-C quals	No quals	Below level 2
Gender				
Male	78.4	11.6	10.0	21.6
Female	77.7	12.2	10.1	22.3
Age				
16-25 years	80.9	8.8	10.4	19.1
26-35 years	83.0	11.8	5.2	17.0
36-45 years	80.0	12.8	7.1	20.0
46-55 years	74.0	13.1	12.9	26.0
56-64 years	68.6	12.8	18.5	31.4
Ethnicity				
White	78.8	11.3	10.0	21.2
Minority ethnic group	67.0	21.5	11.6	33.0

Note: The working-age population is defined as men aged between 16-64 years and women aged 16-59 years inclusive. Below L2 is defined as those with below 5 GCSEs at grades A to C or no qualifications.

Labour Force Survey, spring 2005

The differences in education attainment by gender and age reflect historic differences in educational participation and success. In recent years, for example, educational participation and performance among women has been higher than that of men.

1.2.3 Labour market activity by education levels in the south east

We now turn to consider the relationship between educational attainment and labour market activity in the south east, drawing the distinction between those in paid employment, people who are unemployed and looking for work, and those who are economically inactive (ie neither in employment nor looking for work). Table 1.6 shows that the majority (79 per cent) of the working-age population in the south east are in employment, but this proportion varies considerably by educational

attainment. While 82 per cent of individuals with level 2 qualifications or above are in paid employment, the proportion falls to 75 per cent among those with level 1 qualifications, and 56 per cent among those with no qualifications.

Table 1.6: Economic activity of working-age population in the south east by educational level

	5 GCSE A-C quals or above	Below 5 GCSE A-C quals	No quals	All
In employment	82.3	74.5	55.5	78.7
Unemployed	2.7	3.9	4.0	3.0
Inactive	15.0	21.5	40.6	18.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: The working-age population is defined as men aged between 16to 64 years and women aged 16 to 59 years inclusive.

Labour Force Survey, spring 2005

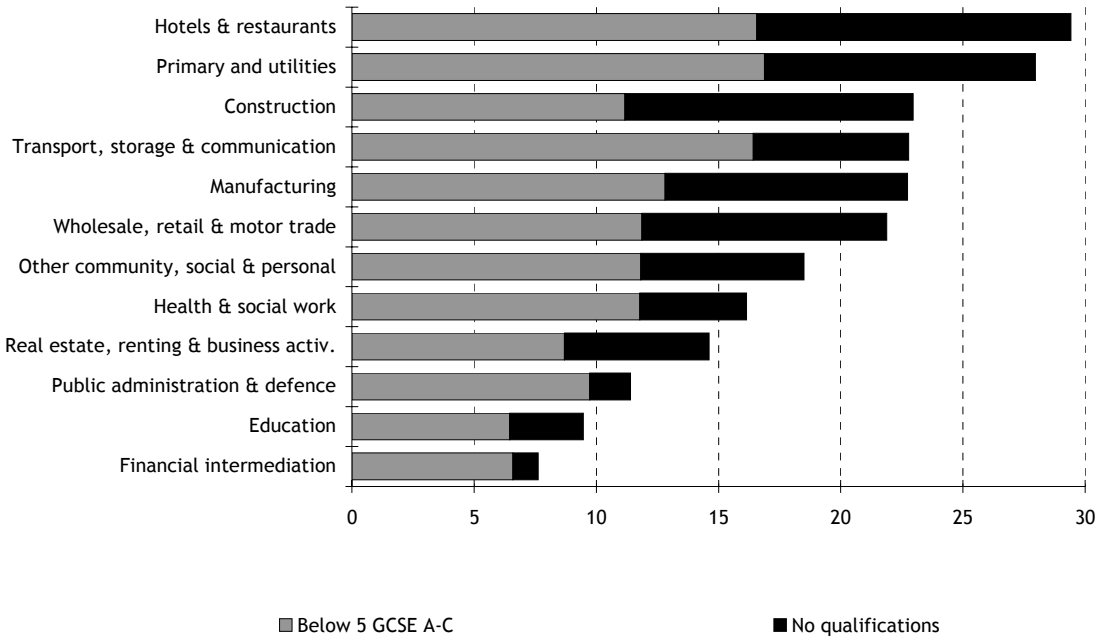
The decline in the proportions within paid employment is not explained by higher levels of unemployment among those with lower level qualifications or no qualifications, as unemployed across the groups varies by approximately one percentage point (from 2.7 per cent among those with at least a level 2 qualification to 4.0 per cent among people with no qualifications). Instead, those with lower level qualifications or no qualifications are more likely than those with higher level qualifications not to be actively engaged in the labour market at all. This is largely because economic inactivity is particularly high among low qualified women, who are more likely to withdraw from the labour market to look after dependent children, and among low qualified older people, who are more likely to chose early retirement or withdraw from the labour market because of ill-health.

1.2.4 Profile of employment among low qualified people in the south east

Among those in paid employment within the south east, there are also clear variations between the industrial and occupational profile of their employment and their educational attainment. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, the hotel and restaurant sector has the highest proportion of people who do not hold a level 2 qualification (29 per cent), closely followed by the primary and utilities sector (28 per cent). Four other sectors (transport, storage and communication; manufacturing; wholesale, retail and motor trade; and other community, social and personal services) all have above average proportions of people with low educational achievement, ranging from 22 to 23 per cent. Although the remaining sectors all have higher than average proportions of people with at least level 2 educational attainment, at a more detailed sectoral level there are some variations in attainment within these sectors. Within the health and social care sector, for example, people working in social work within accommodation have a lower than average educational profile, while within the business services industries, subsectors such as those related to security services, industrial cleaning

and packing activities all employ a high proportion of workers with few or no qualifications.

Figure 1.1: Proportion of working-age people in employment across industrial sectors who have low/no qualifications, south east 2005



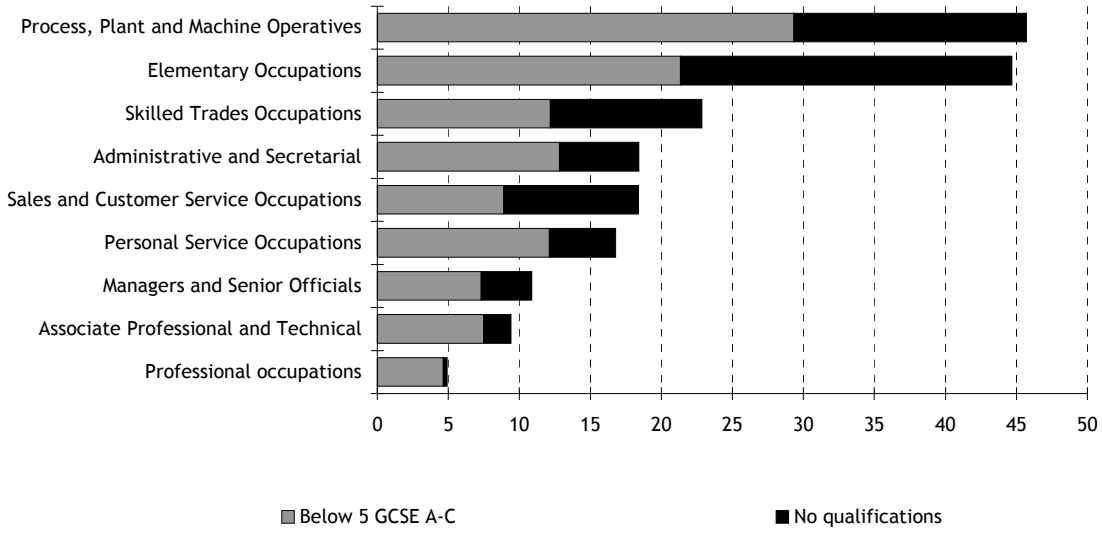
Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

If we consider the relationship between occupational distribution and low qualification attainment we find an even greater level of segregation than that observed across the industrial sectors. Around 45 per cent of those working in process, plant and machinery operative occupations or elementary occupations in the south east have low or no qualifications. Those working in skilled trades were slightly more likely than average to report low educational attainment (23 per cent), while administrative and secretarial, sales and customer service occupations, and personal service occupations, all reported levels of educational attainment marginally above the national average (between 17 and 18 per cent).

1.2.5 Characteristics of low pay workforce

There is no single accepted definition of what constitutes low pay. One of the most commonly quoted definitions of low pay is that used by the OECD. The OECD defines low pay as earnings that are lower than two-thirds of the median hourly rate of pay. In spring 2005, the median gross hourly pay in the UK stood at £8.52. The low pay threshold is, therefore, calculated at £5.68, and those earning less than that amount have been classified as low pay workers.

Figure 1.2: Proportion of workforce across occupational groups who have low/no qualifications, south east 2005



Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

The first point to note is that the south east has a lower proportion of low-paid workers of working-age than the rest of the UK. Around 595,000 employees in the south east (17.8 per cent) can be termed low-paid, compared with an average of nearly 20 per cent in the UK. The sub-region of the south east with the highest proportion of low paid workers is Kent (19.7 per cent), followed by Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (19.2 per cent), Berkshire, Buckinghamshire (17.4 per cent) and Oxfordshire (15.8 per cent). Although Surrey, East and West Sussex have the lowest proportion of employees who are classified as on low pay, it should be noted that within this sub-region there are still areas of relatively high deprivation and below national average pay rates.

Table 1.7: Proportion of low-pay employees in the south east sub-regions and UK, spring 2005

	%	N
South east	17.8	595,000
of which		
Berks, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire	17.4	172,000
Surrey, East and West Sussex	15.8	151,000
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	19.2	140,000
Kent	19.7	133,000
UK	19.5	4,451,000

Note: The low pay limit is defined as £5.68, based on the OECD definition of less than two-thirds of the median hourly rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

Comparisons of the distribution of low-paid workers across the demographic groups suggest that women and young people (aged 16 to 25 years) in employment are disproportionately more likely to be low-paid. Nearly one-half (48 per cent) of young people can be classified as low-paid, compared with between nine and 12 per cent of employees in older age groups. Similarly women are nearly twice as likely as men to report having an hourly wage rate than is less than two-thirds of the national median. Although within each of the demographic groups employees in the south east are less likely than those working nationally to report having low pay, the pattern of low pay across these demographic groups in the region is consistent with that of the UK overall.

Table 1.8: Proportion of low-pay employees in the UK by age and gender, spring 2005

	South east		UK	
	%	N	%	N
Male	12.7	216,156	13.9	1,681,813
Female	23.2	378,880	25.6	2,913,009
16 to 25 years	48.0	308,562	45.4	1,892,000
26 to 35 years	9.0	71,894	14.0	788,000
36 to 45 years	11.8	102,212	13.5	850,000
46 to 55 years	11.3	77,845	13.9	707,000
56 to 64 years	10.4	34,523	15.6	358,000

Note: The low pay limit is defined as £5.68, based on the OECD definition of less than two-thirds of the median hourly rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

As would be anticipated, there is a clear relationship between low pay and qualification attainment. Whereas only five per cent of those with degree level qualifications are classified as low-paid workers, among those with qualifications below level 2 that proportion is 21 per cent, while nearly one-third (32 per cent) of those with no qualifications report being in low-paid jobs.

Levels of low pay vary by industrial sector and occupational groups. Private service sector industries such as hotel and restaurants and wholesale, retail and the motor trade have among the highest proportions of low paid workers, 54 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. Across occupations, employees most likely to report low pay were those working in sales and customer service occupations (50 per cent), elementary occupations (49 per cent) and personal service occupations (38 per cent). These proportions are, once again, consistent with those observed within the UK in general.

Table 1.9: Proportion of low pay employees in the UK by highest qualification attainment, spring 2005

	South east		UK	
	%	N	%	N
Degree or equivalent	4.9	36011	4.5	223,000
Higher education	8.3	27311	8.6	202,000
GCE A-level or equivalent	19.4	158868	19.0	1,133,000
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	26.0	217223	27.4	1,526,000
Other qualifications	21.4	88536	27.8	728,000
No qualification	32.3	63743	39.8	760,000

Note: The low pay limit is defined as £5.68, based on the OECD definition of less than two-thirds of the median hourly rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

Table 1.10: Proportion of low pay employees in the UK by industrial sector, spring 2005

	South east		UK	
	%	N	%	N
Primary and utilities	16.9	10,037	15.9	68,000
Manufacturing	9.9	44,760	13.2	444,000
Construction	8.2	12,699	11.1	153,000
Wholesale, retail & motor trade	36.2	199,657	40.1	1,494,000
Hotels & restaurants	53.9	84,481	59.2	605,000
Transport, storage & communication	5.4	12,780	12.2	193,000
Financial intermediation	6.4	11,799	4.7	55,000
Real estate, renting & business activ.	8.5	34,557	12.9	305,000
Public administration & defence	2.2	5,298	4.3	83,000
Education	15.3	48,122	13.6	314,000
Health & social work	21.1	81,040	17.9	580,000
Other community, social & personal	23.5	42,665	28.9	323,000

Note: The low pay limit is defined as £5.68, based on the OECD definition of less than two-thirds of the median hourly rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

1.2.6 Low-paid, low qualified workers in the south east

In this final sub-section we report upon those people who can be classified as having both a low level of educational attainment and who work in low-paid jobs. In total, around one-quarter of employees (or 152,000 people) with low levels of educational attainment are also working in low-paid jobs. Confirming the findings in the previous sub-section, employees with low qualifications are most likely to be low-paid if they

are young or female. Over one-half (52 per cent) of 16 to 25 year olds with below level 2 qualifications, and around one-third (32 per cent) of women with similar qualifications, are also in low paid work (Table 1.11).

Table 1.11: Proportion of low-pay employees in the UK by occupation, spring 2005

	South east		UK	
	%	N	%	N
Managers and senior officials	1.8	10,230	4.4	151,000
Professional occupations	2.2	10,015	2.0	60, 000
Associate-professional and technical	3.5	16,681	4.2	138, 000
Administrative and secretarial	10.6	47,919	14.0	451, 000
Skilled trades occupations	19.2	53,312	16.9	348, 000
Personal service occupations	38.0	103,877	35.4	662, 000
Sales and customer service occupations	50.0	138,162	51.9	1,068, 000
Process, plant and machine operatives	17.9	33,421	19.2	338, 000
Elementary occupations	49.0	180,857	48.6	1,375, 000

Note: The low pay limit is defined as £5.68, based on the OECD definition of less than two-thirds of the median hourly rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 2005

Looking at the occupational profile of low-paid, low-qualified employees in the south east, the highest minority (43 per cent) work in elementary occupations, such as cleaners, bar staff and catering assistants and security guards, while a further 18 per cent work in customer services and 13 per cent in personal service occupations. Process, plant and machinery operative and skilled trade occupations each account for around ten per cent of those who are low-qualified and are on low pay.

The final column of Table 1.12 reports on the percentage of low qualified employees who are in low-paid work within each occupation. Sales and customer service occupations have the highest the proportion of low qualified employees who are also low-paid (52 per cent). This is followed in relative magnitude by elementary occupations and personal service occupations, in which 38 per cent of low qualified workers are low-paid.

Table 1.12: Profile by age and gender of people with below level 2 qualifications who are on low pay, Spring 2005

	N	%	Low-qual / low-paid
Gender			
Male	60,341	39.6	18.6
Female	91,938	60.4	32.1
Total	152,279	100	24.9
Age			
16 to 25 years	44,640	29.3	52.4
26 to 35 years	19,825	13.0	20.3
36 to 45 years	37,461	24.6	24.6
46 to 55 years	35,615	23.4	20.3
56 to 64 years	14,738	9.7	14. 7
Total	*152,279*	*100*	*24.9*

Note: The working-age population is defined as men aged between 16-64 years and women aged 16-59 years inclusive. Below L2 is defined as those with below 5 GCSEs at grades A to C or no qualifications.

Labour Force Survey, spring 2005

Table 1.13: Profile of occupation with below level 2 qualifications who are on low pay, spring 2005

	N	%	Low-qual / low-paid
Managers and senior officials	*	*	*
Professional occupations	*	*	*
Associate professional and technical	*	*	*
Administrative and secretarial	*	*	*
Skilled trades occupations	14,816	9.7	15.6
Personal service occupations	18,859	12.4	37.6
Sales and customer service occupations	27,266	17.9	52.0
Process, plant and machine operatives	14,651	9.6	15.7
Elementary occupations	65,155	42.8	37.9

Note: The working-age population is defined as men aged between 16-64 years and women aged 16-59 years inclusive. Below L2 is defined as those with below 5 GCSEs at grades A to C or no qualifications.

Labour Force Survey, spring 2005

1.2.7 Conclusion

This section explored the relationship between south east labour market and population's educational profile (a proxy for potential literacy or numeric needs) and levels of low pay.

- The south east population is more qualified than that of the UK, with fewer people reporting low levels of educational attainment. However, in absolute terms, there are still a sizeable number of people in the south east who have low levels of educational attainment, and who are very likely to have literacy or numeracy needs.
- People who had low qualificational achievement were disproportionately more likely to be older (46 to retirement) or belong to minority ethnic groups. The variation by gender is marginal, and lower rates of educational attainment among women represent historic differences rather than current achievement rates.
- Those with low qualificational attainment have much lower than average rates of participation in the labour market, ie they are more likely to withdraw from the labour market.
- Low qualified people who remain in the labour market are disproportionately represented in declining industries (eg agriculture and manufacturing) or private service sector industries (eg hotel and restaurant sector). This group is disproportionately represented among process plant and machinery operative and elementary occupations.

There are similarities between the sectors and occupations that employ a large percentage of people with low educational attainment and sectors that have a high proportion of employees who are on low pay. Using the OECD definition of low pay – hourly earnings that are less than two-thirds of the national median – we find that:

- around 18 per cent of those employed in the south east are low-paid, compared with an average of 20 per cent in the UK
- women are twice as likely as men to be working in low-paid jobs, while nearly one-half of all younger people (16 to 25 year olds) in the region also work in low-paid jobs.

Comparisons of pay across occupations and industries in the south east with qualifications and demographics profile of these sectors yield some interesting observations. In broad terms:

- those occupations and sectors that offer low pay are, in general, also those that employ people with low or no qualifications
- sector/occupations offering entry-level employment to young people (eg the hotel and restaurants sector and sales and customer service occupations) are also more likely to offer low pay
- sectors/occupations that disproportionately employ women (eg customer service occupations and personal service occupations) are among those most likely to offer low pay.

Finally, on the subject of gender differences, it would appear that low qualified women are more likely to than low qualified men to enter occupations or industries that offer low pay. Male dominated jobs, such as those in the construction sector and process plant and machinery occupations, employ a very high proportion of people who have low qualificational attainment but have a below average proportion of people on low pay.

2 The Low-paid, Low-skilled Workforce

The incidence of low-paid work in the UK has been rising (Lucifora et al.,2005) and this has not happened solely by chance. Global economic trends and competition, pursuit of flexible labour market policies and technological change have all served to alter the environment in which low-skilled individuals in the labour market operate. Specific organisations, such as those in the retail sector, smaller organisations, and those competing on the basis of cost, are more likely than other organisations to have low-paid employees. There are also patterns in the types of individuals likely to be doing low-paid work, with women and younger people over-represented. This chapter discusses each of these issues in turn and concludes by describing the characteristics and nature of low-paid and low-skilled jobs. The impact this has on the individuals undertaking this work, and implications for developing LLNIT skills via the workplace are then explored.

2.1 Creating the low-paid, low-skilled workforce

The world of work has changed considerably over the last twenty years. Many economic processes and trends have significantly influenced the low-paid workforce, for example technological changes, new forms of work organisation and the declining influence of labour market institutions (we explore these themes below). In the last twenty years the incidence of low wage employment has risen over periods both of falling and rising unemployment (Lucifora et al.,2005). There has been substantial growth in low-skill and low-wage occupations with a growing section of the workforce now in these types of jobs. Low-skill and low-wage jobs include shop assistants, waiters and waitresses, canteen workers, and cleaners (Hughes et al.,2004).

The processes that have increased the incidence of low wage employment have been both global and national. Globalisation has lead to increasing competition for many companies with low-skilled workers, although many low wage employees provide local services which are fixed geographically. Technology has also played a part and helped to create what has been termed 'skilled-biased technological change', which

means that changes in technology have altered work processes so that many jobs now require a greater level of skill than was previously the case (Fonda, 1995).

In the UK, policy changes to try to create a more flexible labour market have led to privatisation of previously public companies, deregulation, and, more recently, to the contracting-out of specific occupational functions from the public to the private sector. One example of this is cleaning services in the National Health Service.

Globalisation has increased the pressure faced by companies and employers in the developed world. Firms in America and the UK are now competing with firms based either wholly, or in part, in other parts of the globe where there are competitive advantages. For example, locating a firm in the Far East creates a cost advantage for firms as the cost of living is less and, therefore, lower wages can be paid to local people for undertaking the same work that would have been undertaken by employees in the developed world. This way of organising the firm, or outsourcing the production of goods and services, helps to reduce the cost of production and, therefore, the cost of the final product or service can be reduced (Applebaum, 2003).

Many organisations have responded to such global pressures by worsening the terms and conditions of employment and pay for their less-educated workers and those performing low-skilled occupations (Applebaum et al.,2003). However, it should be noted that not all companies or organisations compete on a global level and in some instances a service needs to be provided close to a specific location (such as a popular tourist site) or to serve a specific population. It has been estimated that only ten per cent of service sector jobs are directly exposed to international competition, since many of these jobs are tied to population centres or to tourist destinations and are not suitable for moving offshore (Gray, 2004).

Increased competition is reported to have led to placing increased demand on lower skilled workers. This has occurred through moves to flatten management structures, as well as increasing expectations of customer care and service (Arkelian and Braddell, 2005). In many instances the roles of non-managerial workers are changing, with many required to take on new duties and responsibilities to try to ensure that organisations get the most from their workers (Fonda, 1995). For example, in care work, jobs which once fell under the remit of the NHS now fall within Social Services and 'care staff', who in the past have been regarded as manual workers, are increasingly required to take on tasks previously done by trained nurses, (Rainbird et al., 1999, p4, Executive Summary). Fuller et al. (2005), have summarised this trend in the following terms:

> *'..(global) economic drivers are underpinning employers' attempts to 'sweat' more productivity from their human resources.'* Fuller et al. (2005) p1

Globalisation has to some extent been made possible by advances in information and communications technology (ICT) and the use of ICT at work has affected the way

that skills are used in the workplace in two ways. Firstly, technology is now able to perform some of the tasks that were once undertaken by lower-skilled employees.

> *'When jobs consist of routine, repetitive and predictable tasks, whether processing information or handling materials, the opportunities for using technology to replace frontline workers are great.'* Applebaum et al. 2003, p13

Secondly, many jobs which once would have been considered low-skilled now require the use of technology, which increases the skill requirements for the job (Fonda, 1995).

Competitive pressure and new economic conditions have brought a change in organisational contracting arrangements. One sector which has been particularly affected is public healthcare, where there have been drives for efficiency via published targets, coupled with growing consumer choice and raised expectations (Caley, 2005). Drives for efficiency in the public sector have increasingly led to privatisation of services or to contracting-out to the private sector. The services which are contracted-out tend to be those which are low-paid and low-skilled. Gray (2004) cites an example of contract cleaners where rationalisation at the lower-end of the market in the public services has increased the level of insecurity faced by people in low-paid and low-skilled cleaning work.

The presence, or absence, of government regulation plays an important role in shaping how the labour market operates and the terms and conditions on which workers are employed (Applebaum et al., 2003). As well as contracting out in the public sector, many industries have been deregulated and moved from public to private control. The deregulation of industries such as telecommunications has increased price competition and intensified pressure on firms to reduce costs (Applebaum et al., 2003). Changes in the financial markets have increased pressure on managers to achieve short-term results, making it increasingly difficult to make long-term investments and promoting cost-cutting as an attractive option.

Many employers have responded to increased economic pressure by reducing costs and a prime focus for cost-cutting is usually the wage bill. Reducing labour costs can be done by using temporary workers (who until recently did not qualify for the same benefits as permanent staff)[1], or by sub-contracting or outsourcing lower-skilled work (Applebaum et al., 2003). Payne (2004) cites a number of authors who have noted that, in the UK, a combination of lightly regulated labour markets, weak trade unions and pressure on companies to maximise short-term shareholder returns, frequently causes firms to follow a low value-added, low skills, and low innovation competitive strategy.

This process of low value-added, low cost management strategies may have helped to create growth at the lower end of the labour market distribution and, in combination

---

[1] This situation has largely been changed by the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 which introduced new rights for part-time workers.

with other processes described earlier in this chapter, such as skill-biased technological change, create a dual labour market. A dual labour market divides the jobs in the economy into 'primary' and 'secondary' sectors. The 'secondary' sector is characterised by jobs which are often short-term or temporary, offer few prospects for internal promotion, are low-skilled and easy to enter and where the determination of wages is primarily by market forces (Doeringer and Piore, 1971). The jobs in this sector are at the greatest risk of contracting out since they are viewed as 'secondary' to the organisation's mission. Conversely, the 'primary' economic sector is characterised by relatively high-skill, high-reward jobs with prospects for progression. These jobs are considered critical to the organisation.

The labour market position of lower-skilled workers is believed by some authors to have deteriorated in relation to the position of more highly-skilled workers (eg Asplund, 2004). Middle level jobs, which may once have offered promotion and progression opportunities to people who entered the labour market at the lower end, have diminished in number, and the service sector is reported to be missing the middle strata of jobs; therefore, the workforce in this sector is highly segmented (Gray, 2004). This may affect individuals' progression through the labour market and routes out from lower-paying and lower-skilled jobs.

2.2 Organisational characteristics

Within the global and national economic context there appear to be several organisational level factors which also affect, or are characteristics of, the degree of low-paying, low-skilled and low-status work. Lower-skilled and lower-paid workers are reported to be less likely to receive employer-funded training (see section 2.4). The organisational characteristics related to whether or not a company trains its staff, include company size and sector (NCVER, 2003), and these factors also characterise the low-skilled, low-paid workplace.

Various dimensions and measures of job quality and pay vary inversely with job size, that is to say that smaller firms typically are more likely to offer lower paying jobs which are of poorer quality. Analysis of German firm-level data has shown that wages are lower, job security is worse, work organisation is less rigid, institutional possibilities for workers' participation in decision-making are weaker, and opportunities for skill enhancement are worse in small firms compared with large firms. In addition, the average wages per worker tend to increase with firm size. Extra payments, such as bonuses, also increase with enterprise size (Wagner, 1997). This is supported by a more recent study by Lucifora et al. (2005) who found that smaller companies had a higher proportion of low-paid workers when compared with larger companies.

Organisations in all parts of the economy and in a variety of sectors employ workers on low wages who work in a wide variety of occupations (Applebaum et al., 2003). However, specific examples of sectors which largely offer lower paying and lower

skilled jobs include retail, hotels and catering (Asplund, 2004). This is supported by Bryan and Taylor (2004) who report that low-paid workers are most likely to be employed in the retail, hotel and restaurant, and health and social work sectors. Lindsay (2005) also describes call centres as an industry which is typically low-paid and which offers low-skilled work.

Keep (2000) presents an analysis of the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey by Culley et al. (1999) which asked employers to estimate the proportion of their non-managerial workforce which they would consider to be skilled. The proportion of workplaces reporting that less than one-quarter of their non-managerial staff were skilled (ie > 75% unskilled) are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: The proportion of employers reporting that less than 25 per cent of their non-managerial workforce were skilled, by industrial sector

Sector	Percentage of employers
Hotels & restaurants	82
Wholesale and retail	80
Financial services	80
Transport	75
Public administration	58
Health	55
Other communication services	53
Manufacturing	44
Construction	31
Other business services	30
Elect gas & water	10
Education	2

Source: Culley et al. (1999) cited in Keep (2000)

Hotels and restaurants, retail and the financial service sector are the three industries in which employers reported the highest incidence of low-skilled staff among non-managerial employees (Table 2.1). Keep (2000) also reported the results of an employee skills survey from 1997 which detailed the percentage of workers who believed that their employer would require no qualifications from applicants to fill the job that they were doing. The highest incidence of this perception was among employees in the retail sector and in hotels where 57 per cent and 43 per cent of employees respectively reported that their employer would not require candidates to have any qualifications to undertake their job. This perception could be correlated to low pay as the findings presented in Table 2.2 indicate that hotels and catering and retail are two of the lowest paying sectors in the UK.

Section 2.1 described the dual labour market and noted that a firm's competitive strategy can affect the quality of jobs that it offers. Asplund (2004) reported that the level of the firm's quality was critical in determining whether or not employees

received employer-funded training. This implies that, to some extent, lower-quality companies are likely to offer fewer progression opportunities and therefore lower-skilled workers are likely to have a greater chance of progression in companies which follow a strategy based on quality. Therefore it is not the sector, such as hotels and retail, per se, that offers low quality jobs, rather it is owing to the product strategy of companies in those sectors.

Firms which pursue a competitive strategy based on low cost often have human resource management practices based on Taylorist principles of control and cost minimisation. When firms are managed in this way they invariably create jobs with low levels of skill variety and autonomy, have minimal training, learning and development opportunities and which are poorly paid (West el al., 2002). On the other hand, progressive human resource management practices aim to maximise the knowledge, skill and motivation of employees and hence tend to follow a management strategy based on competing on quality. These progressive human resource management practices are thought to enhance organisational productivity and profitability, often by enhancing 'citizenship behaviour' amongst employees so that they are more willing to take on tasks or make efforts beyond what is formally required in the job (West et al., 2002).

Low-skilled and poorly paid jobs may not just be an accident of design, but rather be created as a by-product of a deliberate management strategy. Gray (2004) argues that characterising the lower end of the service sector as innately low-paid and casualised confuses cause and effect. He suggests that the absence of institutions such as trade unions and collective bargaining allows the sector to suffer severe wage competition, resulting in low wages and poor working conditions. Therefore, the poor characteristics of these jobs are not pre-existing, but rather are socially constructed:

> *'The institutional vacuum found in the lower-end of the service sector allows and encourages firms to compete by slashing wages and benefits and demanding numeric flexibility'* Gray, 2004, p27

Certainly, whether or not an organisation has a recognised trade union has been shown to affect the prevalence of low paying and casualised work in specific organisations and sectors. A study of firms in America found that, to some extent, unions had been able to prevent the minimisation of labour costs and therefore wages, which was seen to be the first competitive option chosen by most employers in the face of competition (Applebaum et al., 2003).

Another characteristic which is symptomatic of lower-skilled and lower-paid workplaces is the degree of staff turnover. Lower-paying organisations and lower-skilled workplaces tend to have a relatively high proportion of employees leaving the organisation each year (Levenson, 2001).

This section has described the characteristics of the low-skilled and low-paying workplace. These characteristics were reported to include the following: a low quality

competitive strategy, few development and progression opportunities, poor human resource management practices, high staff turnover, and a lack of a union presence. We turn next to consider the characteristics of individuals in low-paid, low-skilled jobs.

2.3 Individuals' characteristics

The lowest paid individuals in the labour market earned more in 1999 than they did in 1975 in absolute terms. However, in real terms, when inflation and the rising cost of living is taken into account, their relative pay in 1999 was considerably lower (Lucifora et al., 2005). A range of individuals find themselves in low paying and relatively low-skilled work either for intermittent or longer-term periods in their careers and the individuals who make up this section of the workforce are a diverse group. Although a proportion of individuals in jobs paying the minimum wage are less well educated, as Bryan and Taylor (2004) illustrated with an analysis of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), not all individuals undertaking low-skilled jobs are low-skilled. Equally it is likely that there will be individuals who require support with LLNIT but who do not work in low-paying jobs.

Salverda et al. (2001) compares the characteristics of the low-paid groups in the UK, France, USA, Netherlands and Germany (Table 2.2). In the UK nearly one in four people in work are in what has been classified as low-paid work. This is a similar level to America, which has a highly deregulated labour market, but significantly more than the other European countries in the comparison, France, Germany and the Netherlands, who have a higher density of trade unions and more tightly regulated labour market.

Table 2.2 shows that women are more likely to be in lower-paid occupations than men. Although there is likely to be some element of pay discrimination on the basis of gender, women are disproportionately represented in lower paying sectors, such as retail, and in part-time roles, which are also typically lower paying than the average. Analysis of the BHPS data analysis showed that low-paid workers are disproportionately likely to be female and, in particular, females who are married (Bryan and Taylor, 2004).

Women are more likely than men to undertake part-time work, primarily to fit around caring and other family responsibilities and this part-time and temporary work is more likely than full-time work to be low-paid (Lucifora et al., 2005). There is a tendency for part-time jobs to be located within low-waged segments of the economy, such as retail and hotel and catering. From a series of qualitative interviews with managers in workplaces where part-time work is common Grant et al. (2005) found that many managers had negative views about the jobs that part-time workers do and about part-time workers themselves. Often the managers did not realise that part-time workers were capable of more highly-skilled work and some felt that the low level of

pay offered in these part-time positions was appropriate because the workers were characterised as working for 'pin money' (Grant et al., 2005).

Table 2.2: Incidence of low pay by selected categories – percentage of employees earning less than the national low pay threshold

	USA	France	Germany	Netherlands	UK
Overall	25.5	8.9	12.6	14.4	22.7
FT men	18.2	6.5	6.8	8.2	15.6
Women	31.4	12.0	20.4	23.2	31.6
FT women	27.0	10.1	15.5	23.0	26.8
PT employees	59.1	19.1	24.8	25.4	42.0
Under 25	61.3	43.7	37.2	61.3	57.6
Low-skilled	59.5	12.9	19.2	22.6	32.2
Shop work	45.0	35.7	27.9	32.2	54.0
Unskilled manual work	50.5	22.0	43.1	36.1	54.9
Employment tenure less than 2 years	41.4	21.9	26.0	32.1	29.8
Non-national	–	–	13.5	17.7	–
Retail	45.4	17.6	25.8	40.0	46.3
Hotel and catering	60.5	35.2	52.3	34.4	69.6
Between 1-9 employees	–	18.4	40.2	29.5	38.6
Non-permanent contract	–	–	26.9	46.2	31.8

Note: '–' indicates no available data

Source: Salverda W, Bazen S, Gregory M (2001), The European-American Gap, Wage Inequality, Earnings Mobility and Skills: A Study for France, Germany and the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, European Low-wage Employment Research Network

Indeed some individuals who work part-time are the second earner in their household. Analysis of the BHPS found that low-paid members of households generally did appear to be secondary earners. The most common pattern in these households was that the national minimum wage earner was employed part-time, and the income of the household was supplemented by a full-time worker (Bryan and Taylor, 2004). However, it is likely to be the case that low-paid work for some individuals does not represent 'pin money', but rather the means by which they financially support their family.

Klein (2000), cited in Lindsay (2005), reports that entry-level service jobs are increasingly undertaken by second earners, primarily because they do not provide a living wage to cover essential living costs. Another group of individuals that Klein (2000) cites as frequently undertaking low-paid work in the service sector is students. In the UK, increases in tuition fees are likely to make working alongside full-time study essential for many students and their numbers in the low paying areas of the service sector are likely to increase.

Younger workers more broadly, including students, are a group that is more likely to receive the minimum wage and to be in lower-paid work (Bryan and Taylor, 2004; Rainbird et al., 1999). Lucifora et al. (2005) suggest that, for many younger workers, low-paid work might be a transitory situation before they move up the career ladder and into better paid employment. This suggests that many young people undertake low-paid and low-skilled work either in order to fund their studies or to gain work experience before moving up the labour market into better paid and jobs which require higher-skills. Many younger workers in low-skilled and low-paid employment have higher levels of qualifications than are required for the job (Rainbird et al., 1999).

Over-qualification in low-paying and low-skilled jobs is common in the UK. About one-half of employees qualified to level 2 or 3 are in jobs that do not require this level of qualification (Keep and Payne, 2002). Table 2.2 shows that, in the UK, only 32 per cent of the low-paid workforce are low-skilled, which is significantly lower than the proportion of other demographic groups in low-paying work. For example, 42 per cent of women are in low-paying work and 58 per cent of people aged under 25 are in low-paying work, which indicates that some at least, of these groups, are more highly qualified than would be indicated by their pay level.

That is not to suggest that low-skilled individuals are not over-represented in low-paid and low-status work. A study using data for a cohort of individuals from the National Child Development Survey found that individuals with poor basic skills were more likely to be unemployed or in jobs with a low income, have fewer opportunities for work-based training and fewer progression opportunities than individuals with higher levels of literacy and numeracy (Basic Skills Agency, 1997). Although no data is available in Table 2.2 on the incidence of ethnic minorities or non-nationals in low-paying employment in the UK, ethnic minorities and immigrants are reported to be disproportionately represented at the lower end of the service sector (Gray, 2004).

The diversity of workers in the low-skilled workforce and the presence of low-skilled people in jobs which require higher-level skills indicates that basic skill needs within organisations are not necessarily limited to workers in the lowest skilled jobs. This is likely to have implications for how the LLNIT needs of the low-skilled are addressed in the workplace. Payne (2002) suggested that a company-wide policy is likely to be required:

> *'An approach that emphasises the need for basic skills to lay the foundation for further learning will be in danger of ignoring literacy or numeracy needs of workers who already hold positions of responsibility.'* Payne, 2002, p6

Individuals who leave school with low or no qualifications are reported often to experience alternating periods of employment and unemployment (Illeris, 2006) and to be social excluded and in poorly paying occupation (Parsons and Brynner, 1999). Low wage workers are also more likely than others to experience periods of

unemployment (Lucifora et al., 2005) and people with low literacy and numeracy are more likely than others to be detached from the labour market, for example, either claiming sickness benefit or full-time carers (Ananiadou et al., 2003).

Men with low literacy skills are more likely to be in work at an earlier age than their higher-skilled peers (Basic Skills Agency, 1997). However, by the time they reach their mid-twenties this picture has reversed; lower-skilled men in their mid-twenties are less likely to be in employment than higher-skilled men (Ananiadou et al., 2003). This is partly attributable to the fact that many of the lower-skilled jobs are filled by new entrants to the workforce, who tend to be younger. It is also because the job incumbents leave these jobs, for whatever reasons.

There are also particular patterns of labour market engagement and detachment for employees in lower social classes who have lower than average wages. Individuals in this group tend to experience a halt in any wage increases by the time they reach the age of 30 and after that their wages are then flat (or falling) until retirement. This is the opposite to higher-paid and higher-level jobs where wages typically rise throughout individuals' careers. At the lower end of the labour market in low skilled and low wage jobs, therefore, there appears to be little prospect of wage growth or change in their situation (Lucifora et al., 2005).

Section 2.1 outlined some of the processes that have caused change in national economic conditions. With these processes there have been some sectors where employment growth has expanded, such as in retail, and other sectors where employment has fallen, such as 'frontline' staff (Applebaum et al., 2003). Some adults, however, may find themselves having to take on low-skilled work, but may in fact be skilled in other tasks, for example if they were previously employed in a sector or organisation which reduced its workforce. While these people may be seen as low-skilled as they do not have the types of higher-level skills currently in demand in the labour market, they may not be low-skilled per se (Illeris, 2006).

This section has summarised research that has looked at the characteristics of individuals in low-paid, low-skilled jobs. In general, the individuals who undertake these jobs have few employment options because of skill deficits. However, the research also reveals that some individuals within these jobs are not necessarily themselves low-skilled or indeed unqualified, but move into low-paid, low-skilled jobs when there are no other options available to them. In the next section, we move on to consider the characteristics of low-paid and low-skilled jobs.

2.4 Characteristics of the job

Good jobs in the service sector have been described as ones 'that offer realistic wages, decent conditions and the kind of opportunities for personal development and advancement that are available to workers across a range of other sectors' (Lindsay, 2005). However, many jobs in the service sector do not offer these kind of advantages

and opportunities, and instead are described as de-skilled, low quality jobs, poorly paid and with poor working conditions and offering few opportunities for development (Lindsay, 2005).

The nature of low-skilled and low-paid work has been described as highly routinised and monotonous (Payne, 2004). Interviews with a group of unemployed people revealed that they perceived low-skilled jobs as having high levels of insecurity, being in tightly controlled environments, and not providing the opportunity to make a living or to develop a sustainable career path (Lindsay, 2005).

The low status character of the tasks carried out by unskilled workers was noted in a study involving workers in a hospital. The induction and training for a new worker undertaking low-skilled tasks involved a brief explanation of the routine by the supervisor. This was done only once as the tasks were felt to be low in complexity and therefore not to need re-explaining. Once the individual was doing the work, the low-skilled nature of the job meant that they rarely got praise for doing something well and indeed there was little feedback to let them know if they were doing something poorly. The organisational structure was highly-segmented, providing little contact with others. In addition, while much of the work was unproblematic, it was performed 'solo'. These two drivers of isolation for such workers meant that they were neither able to contribute to the organisation's stock of knowledge nor were required to communicate or engage in any problem-solving. This lack of expectation for any contribution to wider organisational aims led to little involvement of the individual with other levels of the organisational hierarchy (Hughes and Moore, 1999).

Some low-skill jobs in the UK have what is described as 'neo-Taylorist' forms of work organisation which are designed to leave employees with little autonomy. For example, low-autonomy jobs may involve scripted conversations with customers, or high levels of surveillance by management or supervisors (Keep and Payne, 2002). Low-skilled and low-autonomy work has:

> *'low trust, low involvement styles of management…and job design where there is little room for genuine discretion, reflection, innovation or learning for those on the shop floor/frontline.'* Keep, 2000

Work that is designed to have little discretion and/or few opportunities for learning can create a vicious cycle in which low-skilled workers are at risk of falling into a trap where their low skills are combined with poor job progression and on-the-job training opportunities, meaning that their work situation does not improve over time (Asplund, 2004). Few promotion prospects and progression opportunities are characteristics of low-skilled jobs and low-skilled workers are less likely than more highly-skilled workers to have been promoted. For example, using data from the National Child Development Study of men and women aged between 23 and 37, three quarters of women and 63 per cent of men with very low literacy skills had never

been promoted, compared with one-third of men and two-fifths of women with good literacy skills (Basic Skills Agency, 1997).

Lack of promotion opportunities may either be a cause or effect or may indicate a further characteristic of low-skilled and low-paid work, ie the lack of training and development opportunities. In the National Employer Skills Survey 2004 employers reported that there were more skills gaps – ie gaps between the level of skills of the workers doing the jobs and the level actually required to undertake the work effectively – in lower-skilled occupations. However, paradoxically, the same survey found that these groups were the least likely to receive employer-funded training. This could be because within a limited training budget, employers prioritise training for other staff , such as those with higher-level skills, who they perceive will provide the company with a greater return on its investment (Page and Hillage, 2006). Equally, employers may not wish to raise the expectations of individuals in this group if there are no progression opportunities for them within the company, which might only succeed in increasing staff turnover and dissatisfaction with what are perceived to be boring and menial jobs (Keep, 2000).

Asplund (2004) found that lower-skilled employees usually had more opportunities for internal rather than external advancement. This may be because qualifications are a frequently used screening device in recruitment and therefore these employees may be screened out of succeeding in external job applications on this basis (Newton et al., 2005).

An individual's training and development needs are usually reviewed through a company's appraisal process. However, not all low-skilled employees may have this opportunity. For example, an evaluation of an initiative to involve low-skilled workers in the health sector found that the appraisal system for low-skilled employees had been discontinued when the employment of these workers (in areas such as catering, linen, and portering) was seconded to a PFI contractor (Oxfordshire Skills for Health, 2005). Lack of an appraisal system may limit, to some extent, the opportunities there are for involving staff, assessing performance and developing training opportunities. Lindsay (2005) cites Talwar (2002) who reports that shift-working, which can frequently be a part of low-skilled work, can preclude workers from taking up training or engaging in networking that might otherwise provide opportunities to move up the career ladder.

In general, lower status workers are not offered the same development opportunities as higher status workers, although the distribution of training opportunities can vary between sectors and organisations (Billet, 2001; Keep 2000). For those low-skilled individuals who do receive training, it is frequently job-specific in nature with little developmental or external value (Keep, 2000). Lack of training, learning and development is a key characteristic of low-skilled jobs (Parsons and Bynner, 1999) and one which reduces the ties between workers and employers. It promotes high levels of employee turnover, reinforces the segmented labour markets and damages any

prospects of internal promotion as individuals are not able to develop the skills necessary to progress higher up the labour market (Gray, 2004).

Training can lead to up-skilling, progression and to pay increases. However, without training or progression and development opportunities, it seems unlikely that low-skilled and low-paid workers will be able to change their situation and gain pay increases. Applebaum et al. (2003) found that in workplaces where low-paid workers predominate, the regularity with which these workers receive regular pay increases or increments is ad hoc and often does not happen at all, even in line with inflation, or with a change in job role.

Within the service sector, the skills demanded by employers to work effectively have changed, for example to include a greater emphasis on communication skills and 'aesthetic labour'. This means that there is a greater emphasis placed on skills that cannot easily be accredited or defined and therefore are not easily rewarded (Lindsay, 2005). However, jobs at the higher end of the service sector also require good communication skills and other skills which cannot be easily accredited, and these occupations are well-rewarded.

With a lack of progression and promotion opportunities, the routinised nature of the tasks, lack of autonomy, little involvement in decision-making and few training or development opportunities, it is easy to see how individuals in these low-skilled and low-paid jobs might feel uncommitted and disengaged with the workplace. Insecure work, and highly rationalised environments can undermine employee commitment and job satisfaction (Lindsay, 2005).

> *'If you do the same thing every 20 seconds… and it is a simple task, you rapidly become robotic…The consequences of designing jobs in this way, in terms of alienation and ensuing conflict, are well understood. Thus, the first rule in the search for the HR and performance link, is that jobs must be designed to allow more elbow room to those who carry them out.'* CIPD, 2002

In an initiative in the health service, designed to engage individuals in lower-skilled and lower-paid occupations through the appraisal process and involvement in decision-making, a key conclusion was that staff feel disempowered and lack an understanding of how to influence decision-making (Oxfordshire Skills for Health, 2005). The staff in this study had limited awareness of organisational structures and systems and were therefore unable to identify communication channels or effective mechanisms to pursue action plans or to influence the decision-making process (Oxfordshire Skills for Health, 2005).

As well as feeling alienated and disengaged from work, employees in low status groups tend to be sceptical of, and to resist engagement in, intervention programmes on the basis of their previous adverse experience of the benefits of education and a lack of trust (O'Brien et al, 2004). Workers in low-status positions can be cynical about the rewards that engagement techniques, training, learning and development can

deliver. They are perhaps disaffected in the opportunities that training and learning can provide as they see no possibilities for advancement as a result.

> *'Playing the development game should only appeal to pyramid climbers who believe that personal advancement is possible within a given organisational system.'* O'Brien et al., 2004

As noted in section 2.2, low-skilled and low-paid workers are often managed in a way and through an organisational system designed to disempower. O'Brien and her colleagues (2004) cite Kelly and Kelly (1992) who identify four reasons for cynicism and disengagement among low-status groups:

- lack of choice about whether or not (and how) they participate in development programmes
- lack of trust in the programmes and in who has been chosen to deliver them
- a sense of unequal status and power and of unequal shares in the benefits that result from the programmes
- a lack of genuine institutional support for programme ideals – ie feeling that 'empowerment' is lip service.

When trying to engage these types of workers in LLNIT training it is likely to be important to bear these factors in mind and to try to challenge these barriers in the process. Low-status workers tend to have lower levels of organisational identification. In a survey among hospital staff of their engagement with the organisation low status groups had both the lowest response rate and lowest levels of participation (34 per cent compared with 45 per cent response among higher status groups, Brien et al., 2004).

2.5 Impacts and implications of findings

An increasing proportion of the UK workforce is in low-wage and low-skilled jobs. In some instances employers are making increasing demands on these workers, in their use of ICT, customer service expectations and responsibilities via devolved responsibilities and flatter management structures, while in others, low-skilled jobs are deliberately designed to be routine and de-skilled. Privatisation, contracting out and the weakening of union power have all worsened the terms and conditions of lower-paid workers.

As we have noted, a dual labour market – with a lack of middle level jobs – is likely to make it more difficult for people who enter the labour market at the bottom to progress. In addition, many companies, particularly those who compete on cost, generally do not demand workers to be more qualified. Indeed, a large proportion of individuals who work in low-skilled and low-paid jobs are already over-qualified.

The low-skilled workplace tends to be low involvement, low trust and offering little opportunity for progression, learning, development or promotion. Their human resource management policies can reflect these characteristics and are aimed at controlling lower-skilled workers who are left with little autonomy.

There is a diverse range of people in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, some of whom are there as a transitory or temporary position, whereas for many others there is little hope of any progression or advancement. Although many of the people undertaking these types of job are likely to require help and support with LLNIT, some individuals in occupations that are not traditionally seen as low-skilled yet may have LLNIT skill development needs. Therefore, just focusing on low-skilled people may mean that individuals in other parts of the organisation miss out. This suggests that a company-wide policy to tackling LLNIT skills in the workplace may be required.

Many low-skilled individuals enter the labour market at a relatively early age but are then pushed out some years later. This suggests that LLNIT interventions through the workplace which occur early in individuals' careers are likely to be most effective at 'catching' these individuals before they leave or are pushed out of the labour market. Care needs to be taken when labelling the jobs and groups of individuals we have discussed as low-skilled, because they are a diverse group, not all of whom will be low-skilled at all tasks, perhaps just those in demand in the modern economy, and not all of whom will need to develop their LLNIT skills. For example, individuals in low-skilled jobs may nonetheless be highly-skilled in sectors which now are in long-term decline and have moved into low-skilled work to avoid unemployment. In addition, young people, women and ethnic minorities are over-represented in the groups of lower-paid workers. Of these groups, individuals with English as a second language are more likely to need additional support with LLNIT skills.

2.5.1 Building a model of the low-paid, low skilled workplace

As we have seen, there is a range of work, approaches to management, and not least people in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces and the situation is indeed likely to be too complex to summarise into a model that fits all circumstances. We believe, however that there are some common characteristics, and in this last section we explore these and summarise their impacts on learning.

The utility of training the low-skilled and low-paid

The way that much low-skilled and low-paid work is organised creates a culture of disengagement and cynicism and it can be difficult to motivate individuals who cannot see better prospects for themselves at the end of the learning process (Payne, 2005). However, there are contradictions within this literature. For example, while employers may avoid training low-paid and low-skilled workers for fear that subsequent disaffection owing to a lack of progression may lead to increased

turnover, there is evidence that lack of training itself promotes higher levels of staff turnover.

For this and other reasons, many low-skilled and low-paid workers are locked into a cycle of low-pay, no training, learning and development, and no progression opportunities. Employers do not train because they fear this will lead to increased turnover; employees leave because there is no training or progression.

Recognising and rewarding improved skills

To break into this cycle, it will be necessary to help employers understand the full implications – both the benefits and the dangers – of skill development in low-paid low-skilled workers. Without doubt, the lack of subsequent progression and promotion opportunities following on from training may cause some staff to leave. However, set against that is the question of whether an organisation that fails to capitalise on increased skills in its workers is behaving in the most cost-effective way. It is also reasonable to ask whether improved performance in low-paid and low-skilled workers should be left unrecognised and unrewarded. However, the absence of performance management systems in many organisations may mean that employers are simply unaware of any organisational benefits that accrue to training interventions (and this criticism is probably valid across the board, not just in the context of basic skills training). We turn to this point next.

Performance management

The issue of how performance is managed within organisations is central to the debate about skill development. In many cases, the literature suggests that managers make training decisions based on their attitudes rather than any real information about the need for, or potential impact of, improved skills. The literature implies that managers often view low-paid and low-skilled jobs not as low-skilled but rather as almost entirely lacking in any skill requirement. Where this is the case, it is questionable whether managers consider the possible outcomes of employees performing these jobs sub-optimally or indeed incompetently. Similarly, where such negative attitudes to the skills requirements of jobs exist, managers also are unlikely to consider the possible benefits to be reaped from any skills uplift to arise from training.

Such attitudes towards the skills requirements of jobs and individuals (or perhaps it is more accurate to say the 'lack of skills required by these jobs') are most likely to exist where the HR system fails to review the skills requirements of jobs, seek performance feedback, or consider what rewards might be justified by improved performance. As we have seen, these low-skilled, low-paid and low-valued jobs typically are found in jobs with restrictive management practices. In contrast, many authors now consider training initiatives focused on basic skills for lower-skilled workers to be an integral part of moves towards high performance work systems. While the government

appears to have taken this significantly to heart in its various recent policy documents (eg the DfES Employer Toolkit and the Skills Strategy White Papers) and is encouraging employers to move towards such systems, employers still appear unconvinced, and job design and management techniques in many low-paid low-skilled workplaces appear still to hinge around Taylorist principles rather than any notion of engagement. We turn to this point last in this chapter.

Trust and engagement

We have pointed to the need for employers to consider how they could better understand the skill needs of their organisation and reward individuals for development in line with those skill needs. This would be one step on the road to building a culture of trust, where individuals feel that they can make a difference and that their skills are valued. This, together with more participative HR styles, will be critical to encouraging learning and development in the workplace. On this point, the CIPD has commented that:

> *'Management must engage with employees by way of regular communications and involvement to maintain a high level of trust in the employment relationship. Two-way or multiway communication (or voice) helps underpin a shared sense of trust between managers and employees – sometimes called the 'psychological contract'.* CIPD, 2006, p.20

The CIPD report goes on to observe that a lack of trust can create resistance to the types of changes that will be needed in the workplace to improve skills and productivity. These changes include tackling the underlying causes of what they see as the current 'low demand for skills' and placing relatively more importance on informal, work-related learning. We would argue that persuading employers of the need to identify the skills that are required in the modern workplace, is also central to changing managers' attitudes towards the value of skill development amongst low-skilled and low-paid workers. Recognition of the value of opening up progression pathways for those with improved skills is also likely to contribute both to organisational development and to improved engagement of these groups of learners.

These issues of job design, skill requirements and HR practices are addressed in more depth in the next chapter.

3 Job Design and Requirements for On-the-job LLNIT Skill Development

Job design is a key determinant of the LLNIT skills required in the workplace (eg Francis, 1986) and can be seen to impact in two ways: the design of work either de-skills or routinises work, alternatively job design may drive extended skills requirements of low-paid, low-skilled workers. There is an argument that generic skills are increasingly critical and that jobs and tasks should be designed to foster skills such as problem-solving, communication and IT (Cairney, 2000). However, the extent to which low-paid, low-skilled workers are offered opportunities to develop and apply their skills is limited by the culture of the organisation, ie whether organisation-wide learning is cultivated (Watkins and Marsick, 1993); and the local work setting, ie whether line managers enact such a culture (Luchinelli, 2004). We consider these issues in the following chapter. In Chapter 4 we present a detailed discussion of the concept of LLNIT skills. We then, in Chapter 5, explore current practice: how LLNIT needs are identified and how LLNIT skills are applied, and discuss the impacts of these from the perspectives of learners, the organisation and the future of learning.

3.1 What LLNIT skills does the workplace require?

Two themes within the literature can be identified as impacting on the requirements for LLNIT skills in low-paid and low-skilled workplaces. One is that changes to work organisation have led to increased skill requirements of such staff, to equip them for the extra task demands such changes bring. A second, contrasting, theme suggests that many work changes bring simplification of job roles and the requirement that low-skilled staff simply follow a set of instructions and do not deflect from a prescribed set of actions. In effect, this second model proposes that changes to the work environment reduce the need for LLNIT skills and consequently lead to a reduction in the skills required in low-paid workers.

This debate is neither new nor confined to the arena of low-paid work. Twenty years ago, Francis (1986) considered these two contrasting positions when describing the

potential impact of new technology on task and skill requirements. One side of the argument was that new technology would deskill the workforce, 'destroying occupations and fragmenting skills into meaningless elements that can be performed by unskilled operators' (Price, Miller and Payne, 2000). The opposing view was that routine tasks would be taken over by machinery, leaving primarily the more complex tasks to be undertaken by a more highly-educated and skilled workforce with consequently higher levels of decision-making.

Whereas in the 1980s the focus was on the impact of new technology and on skill requirements, in the 21st century the focus of concerns has largely moved to the impact of changes to organisational structure and subsequent skill and development needs. Arguments about the outcomes, however, remain the same: on the one hand changes in the way work is organised drive forward extended skill requirements, even amongst low-paid and (traditionally) lower-skilled occupations; on the other, the changes lead to increasingly simplified and routinised jobs at the lower end of the spectrum for which there is little perceived need for employee development. Indeed, as we have seen, such jobs become a focus for outsourcing in organisation restructuring.

The literature on low paid workers suggests that, to some extent, both camps are correct. In some cases, there is evidence of increasing skill demands for workers more usually seen as unskilled; for instance, Fonda (1995) has argued that front line staff are seen less and less as 'factors of production' or 'appendages to the machine' and more and more as:

- customer services managers
- work process managers
- team-workers
- business analysts
- project managers
- change managers
- communicators

In other cases, commentators have noted the increasing routinisation of certain types of job so that they require fewer and more limited skills.

The design of work to limit any form of discretion is believed by the CIPD (2002), amongst others, to have a negative impact both on employee engagement and on the culture of the workplace. The design of work can limit not just the opportunities available to employees for learning but also for applying the outcomes of that learning. Such comments apply to learning opportunities (and the opportunity to apply that learning) in general; however, what is of interest in the context of this

review, and touched on earlier in this report, is the extent to which these different employment situations influence the provision and uptake of LLNIT skills development in particular. For instance, Karasek and Theorell (1990) have suggested that factors such as demand and control in the work environment can serve to promote or inhibit employee learning and development.

It is the case however, that authors such as Virgona and colleagues argue that it is in fact generic skills that the workplace requires (2004). For instance, they identify 'communication, problem-solving, teamwork, information technology and customer service skills' as critical to the contemporary workplace.

Similarly, Cairney (2000) in a review of the experience of LLNIT skills development in SMEs, argues that generic skills are important in developing the capacity to innovate, and sees the role of these skills in increasing competitiveness. In his view, for enterprises to be innovative (or allow for innovation) 'requires flexibility in the way work is undertaken so that skills such as problem-solving, communication, information technology skills, team building and adaptation to change' are fostered. However, the extent to which work affords opportunities to develop and apply those skills depends largely on job design and particularly the discretion allowed to employees to employ them in work.

Whether organisations have designed out any autonomy within low-skilled, low-paid work or have expanded roles (and the skills required), the implementation of new technologies or new management processes may impact anyway on the kind of LLNIT skills expected of low-paid, low-skilled workers. Jackson (2000), discussing high performance workplaces, argues that understanding these local conditions is central to the success or failure of any LLNIT learning intervention.

> *'As 'data-driven' decision-making has come to be touted as the 'best hope' of a competitive edge, literacy practices have been moved to centre stage in management of the workplace. In this new context, even 'simple' literacy tasks, such as recording dates or batch codes on a clipboard and signing a name, can have extended implications for workers, as their own written words become 'data' in a managerial process. For workers with limited power and status in that process, regardless of their literacy competence, these arrangements can make literacy requirements in work a matter of high risk and high stress. The source of this 'literacy problem' at work lies not in the functional skill deficits of individuals, but in the workplace social relationships in which the 'local meanings' of literacy tasks are being transformed.'* Jackson, 2000

Jackson cites Darville's (1995) study about the impacts of the 'textualisation' of work. This concept is linked to workplaces that emphasise continuous improvement and quality management or assurance systems. The outcome of such systems is that a great deal of data is required to be 'written up (to enter them into an organisational process)' and there is a discouragement of writing down (to relate experience or aid memory personal to the worker). Darville goes on to argue that, in organisational cultures emphasising continuous improvement characteristics, the learners'

notebook/aide memoir becomes a problem, as a 'non-conforming document' within the quality control system. For workers requiring LLNIT skills development, the process of writing up, ie to enter formal organisation processes, rather than writing down to aid personal processes, is likely to be the cause of anxiety and an avoidance of such tasks. Workers may also not perceive the value of this kind of documentation. Jackson (ibid.) notes, 'the work *'that counts'* for them is *'getting the product out the door'* which they see as the best way to keep the customer happy. Thus, even simple requirements such as keeping a written record of machine readings or product codes often turn out to be an occasion for 'resistance' or 'non-compliance.'

This indicates a need for better communication to get across the value of writing up from management to workers. More than this, however, there is a need for organisations to understand the linkage between concepts of performance and LLNIT skills. Frank and Hamilton (1993) found that employers did not relate to a need amongst its workers for literacy development; however, when such skills were put in context, such as workplace change, they readily identified staff who would benefit from development. Similarly, Frank (undated) argues that while employers identified gaps in 'management skills, general communication skills, personal skills such as motivation and computer literacy' they did not identify basic skills needs and suggests that 'organisations do not identify that isolated concepts of deficits in literacy and numeracy are their problem: it is perhaps more in the ability of employees to apply literacy and numeracy strategies, ie LLNIT skills that might best identify their gaps.'

There is then an argument that organisational structure and culture affect the likelihood of LLNIT skill development and the extent to which workers themselves will engage with any development opportunities provided. What particularly affects workers' engagement with learning is whether a culture of learning exists throughout the organisation. Watkins and Marsick (1993, cited in Balatti, undated) capture [the learning organisation's] essential properties as an organisation

> *'…that learns continuously and transforms itself. Learning takes place in individuals, teams, the organisation, and even the communities with which the organisation interacts. Learning is a continuous, strategically-used process—integrated with, and running parallel to, work ... The learning organisation has embedded systems to capture and share learning.'* (Watkins and Marsick, 1993, cited in Balatti, undated)

NCVER (2003) describe the features of learning cultures and include in these: open communication styles; innovative systems and structures particularly for assessment of learning and performance; recognition of informal learning and the role of workplace trainers; and the fostering of generic skills such as 'communication, problem-solving, teamwork, information technology and customer service skills.'

Caley and Reid (2004) have reviewed the situation in the NHS. Their view is that organisational restructuring such as outsourcing, the flattening of hierarchies, downsizing, the non-standardisation of work, imply that workers need useful

knowledge which is highly context specific. They suggest that this is best developed collaboratively at, and through, work. However, they make the point that 'learning environments differ, and this affects the amount and quality of learning that can take place.' Their work develops a framework (see Table 3.1 below) for understanding and leveraging learning in the NHS workplace, and encompasses the ideas of LLNIT development such as informal and formal ways to learn, and includes both formal and informal appraisal systems through which learning needs may be assessed and acted upon.

Table 3.1: The nine key factors which influence work-related learning set in context

Context	Factors
Systems	The organisation operates long-term planning for staff development encompassing all the workforce and including formal and informal learning
	Work is organised and managed to facilitate informal work-related learning
	Supervisory managers play a recognised and significant role in supporting employees for whom they are responsible in order to achieve continual learning
Policy	Policy about future workforce planning takes both individual and organisational learning needs into consideration
	Policy takes into account the creation of informal as well as formal learning opportunities in a social environment to enable sharing of experience
	Policy includes support in financial, psychological, infrastructural and technological forms to ensure that learning opportunities are maximised
Culture	Organisational culture fosters openness and sharing rather than hierarchy and bureaucracy
	Communication is recognised as a necessary part of working and learning and efforts to encourage this are considered important
	The organisation adheres to clearly and publicly stated values designed to promote learning

Source: Caley and Reid (2005)

While these models have many benefits in describing the organisations that leverage informal, work-related learning and conceptually link such development to performance, it is of course not the case that this situation exists for all low-paid, low-skill workers. Even where there is an emphasis on learning throughout the organisation, it may still be the case that low-paid, low-skilled workers are not offered equitable opportunities.

Rainbird et al. (1999) in their study of low-paid, low-skilled NHS staff groups such as porters, found significant variations in organisational expectations of learning amongst different occupational groups. They found that personal development plans for low-skilled occupation groups were focused solely on job-related skill development rather than concepts of personal development (which might include LLNIT). In contrast, their managers' development plans were much more likely to use this broader perspective. It is likely to be the case that learning and development is an expected part of higher-level occupation work roles (and indeed an expectation of highly skilled workers), whereas there may be little concept of need (nor little

expectation amongst workers) for learning and development in low-paid, low-skilled work.

It is also the case that, whereas a HR Director may lead training policy at board level, at local level the line manager takes responsibility for individual workers' access to training (Newton et al., 2005). This is an issue to which we return in the following section; however, in essence, this makes the case for strategic efforts to embed learning cultures at the local level. Eraut (2003) suggests desirable attributes of organisational microclimate might include:

- a blame-free culture which provides mutual support
- learning from experiences, positive and negative, at both group and individual level
- encouraging and talking about learning
- trying to make full use of the knowledge resources of its members
- locating and using relevant knowledge from outside the group
- enhancing and extending understandings and capabilities of both the group as a whole and its individual members.

McIntyre (2000) argues that work relationships and social learning between employees can influence the 'formation and modification of learning practices on work sites.' He argues that learning practices 'are to be found in *'learning networks'* as they are organised through relationships, including authority relationships with managers and supervisors'.

A further consideration for the local context and an issue for local managers to address, is the allocation of work since 'much learning stems from the demands and challenges of work' (Eraut, ibid.). This author identifies that 'lack of variation and lack of challenge lower the rate of learning, while changes in work role and/or special assignments frequently promote new learning….for many of our respondents changes in a person's duties and expectations about work processes or outcomes were the most important stimulus [to learning].'

Developing a culture of learning that extends throughout the organisation may, as we have seen, be problematic. Particularly in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces, managers (and to a lesser extent perhaps) employers, can be hard to persuade of the value of LLNIT skills with their wider social outcomes. In the next section we turn to two these key stakeholder groups' perceptions of LLNIT skills and practices in the workplace.

3.2 Attitudes in the workplace toward LLNIT skills and practices

Until recently, LLNIT skills have been the Cinderella of workplace learning and training. It can be difficult to persuade managers of the value of these skills (Miller et al., 2005); indeed this is one of the reasons for the low uptake of basic skills qualifications in the employer training pilots (Hillage et al., 2005), although in some cases the content of such provision influences take up rates:

> *'Only 11 per cent of learners are working towards a basic-skill qualification, despite considerable effort by the pilots and others to attract such learners. Some pilots have been particularly successful at signing-up basic-skill learners, partly because of a high take-up among their minority ethnic communities for ESOL-type courses. Other pilots have struggled to convince employers or to get employees to identify basic-skill needs.'* Hillage et al., 2005

The extent to which a manager will afford learning opportunities through work roles will largely depend on their view of the benefits of that learning. Lucchinelli (2004) reported that, in her work teaching basic skills in Australia, she had found that other work processes such as quality assurance, health and safety, and production processes rely on communication strategies. Hence any improvement in literacy, language and numeracy might be expected to impact on these other aspects of the workplace. In her more recent work focused on delivering UK work-related basic skills, she reports that, amongst the problems she encountered were difficulties with gaining middle management support and convincing managers of the long-term benefits of this training.

Luchinelli comments that such issues are common in this kind of skill development. In particular, she observed that managers have to be persuaded of the effectiveness of basic skills screening as they often do not see this as important: 'companies care about productivity and wastage, not qualifications' (Luchinelli, 2004). Rainbird and her colleagues (1999) comment that the *restrictive* nature of some job roles has negative impacts when trying to gain manager support for LLNIT skill development. Since often managers do not see the link between these skills and the work that staff perform, they do not see benefits arising from their development.

It is also the case, that the devolvement of responsibility for training (identification of needs and opportunities as well as in some cases delivery) to line managers within organisations, can compound the problem, with training for the low-paid, low-skilled workforce biased solely towards the immediate needs of the work. At the local level, there may be conditions that do not equate to a 'learning culture' because of the extent of engagement (or lack of it) of the local manager with the concept of learning in the first place. This can lead to training provided 'just-in-time' in chunks of 'just enough' with learning geared toward the task at hand (Raper et al., 1997). As Keep (2000) notes, such an approach 'leaves little space for… training oriented towards social

goals' (eg LLNIT requirements). However, this shift may also indicate a need to work with managers to understand, and where appropriate, try to shift their views and beliefs. Eraut (2003) argues, 'The learning of individuals and work-groups has to be high on managers' agendas, and managers have to be educated and supported in this role.'

Even where managers have supported training it may be restrictive in nature. Jude (2005) identifies this as a difficulty for the outcomes each party hopes to achieve as a result. She reports that there is a requirement to balance the needs of the employee and employer. While employers' prime concern typically is the need for a smooth running workplace, employees tend to want to acquire skills they can use outside the workplace as well as at work. This may lead to some conflict between the skills that employers see as required in the workplace and those that employees actually want and to which they will apply themselves.

More positively, there are examples of managers describing the benefits of engaging with LLNIT provision for their workers, and these may form some of the messages to communicate to managers when negotiating training. Payne (2004) reports a manager's response to a question about the outcomes of such training:

> *'On the plus side, the head manager said that – cleaners now have a certain level of professional education that can promote their QWL. If you have professional skills, like communication, you know the work better, you feel more in control, more sure of what you are doing, and better able to handle situations with other workers.'*
>
> *'When people receive this education, they feel they know better what it is they're doing and that they can negotiate with nurses on a more equal level.'*

Even where there is a strong argument for LLNIT skill development amongst certain workers, we have seen that employers can be difficult to persuade of its value. Where jobs have become more routinised (or designed to be so), it is difficult to persuade employers of the benefits of this type of skill development. Given that much of the good practice in this area of staff development speaks to the value of the workplace as a rationale for, and aid to, learning, it is also likely to be far more difficult to persuade the employees in situations with such limited demands of any immediate advantage to increasing their skills.

As Parker and Sprigg (1999) observe, the popular view is that empowerment of learners, creating a learning organisation and high-involvement learning all serve to develop self-managing, learning-oriented employees. However, they note that, more problematically, such changes can bring additional demands on the individual and increased levels of stress, which may impact on an individual's willingness to undertake development.

Indeed, it is the case that low skilled people may often be well aware of their development needs, but may lack any confidence in returning to the classroom and traditional styles of learning (Illeris, 2006). This is likely to be because of their lack of

success in this environment and particularly so if they did not gain (sufficient) formal qualifications. They may also be fearful of the impact of any such admission on their employment stability (Newton et al., 2005).

Illeris (2006) finds that contact from managers higher up in the hierarchy is the least-effective mechanism in trying to engage low-paid, low-skilled workers in LLNIT training, instead noting that they 'are more likely to respond positively to the contacts made by co-workers, union representatives.' Illeris (ibid.) continues by suggesting that establishment of trust, along with appropriately-scheduled sessions (timing and work-based location) is essential to getting these workers to engage. Indeed where these factors are in place, the experience can be hugely positive.

The utility of examples firmly grounded in the workplace is supported by the case study work undertaken by Levenson (2001). Levenson finds that that linking the basic skills curriculum to job requirements can provide a strong motivation for employees to participate, as they can see clearly how training and learning will link to their job performance. This is an easier and more direct linkage for them to make compared with more abstract examples of skill usage that are not rooted in their everyday activities and experiences.

However, despite positive outcomes for managers and employees, there may still be little shift in the work role which allows integration of skills development. In his evaluation of the Finnish Workplace Development Programme, Payne (2004) reports that an employee felt there had been 'an increase in voice and lateral communication but that the job itself had not been affected'; another employee said that 'I wouldn't say it has allowed me to use my skills or make decisions or anything like that'.

There are then clear indications of the need to link LLNIT learning to tasks within, and perhaps, beyond the design of the current job. It is also evident that two key stakeholder groups must be persuaded of its value, if learning is to be fully leveraged. In the next section, we explore how demands for LLNIT skills development are currently negotiated and follow this with an examination of who is involved in these negotiations.

3.3 How are demands for LLNIT skills development currently negotiated?

Precisely how demands for LLNIT are negotiated is an area under-reported within the literature. It tends to be the case that practitioners and authors give some details about who was involved in the negotiations; however, little information is forthcoming about how LLNIT needs were identified and agreement was gained from senior staff to proceed with a programme of learning.

From the information that is available, a developing strand in the identification of LLNIT needs is to conduct Organisational Needs Analyses (to gain information about

what the organisation requires of its low-paid, low-skilled workers) and to supplement this with a Training Needs Analysis (which determines the LLNIT needs of learners/workers in relation to their jobs). Examples of this were given by Lucinelli (2004), Holland et al. (2005) and Arakelian and Braddell (2005). In the case of Arakelian and Braddell (ibid.), there was a pre-existing relationship with the employer and the programme reported (Stepping Stones) built on prior work with other staff groups within the organisation.

Balatti (undated) reports a project she undertook to develop LLNIT skills in a remote mining company in North Queensland, Australia. Her work indicates that four layers of learning partnership (LP) are required to successfully leverage LLNIT learning, and these may indicate some ways of working within organisations to focus on LLNIT development needs. However we should note that at the outset there was an enthusiasm in the company, at least within the HR department, for this form of learning to be embedded within the organisation. Balatti (ibid.) identifies the following partnerships, shown in Table 3.2, as effective, for the reasons set out:

Table 3.2: Learning partnerships required to embed LLNIT learning

Pedagogic design team and company management	Collaboration between the provider and the company produced a proposal that was strongly responsive to the company needs. From the training provider's perspective, understanding the needs of the client is the single most important element in designing a program. The company, on the other hand, has to have a clear vision of its training philosophy and be able to articulate its training strategy. The Human Resources Development Coordinator stressed the importance of advance planning by the company to better integrate the training into the everyday work of the trainees.
Company management and employees	The peer tutor relationships developed in a workplace where work practices and, in particular, management's promotion of training, produced an environment favourable to learning… the morale of the workforce was high. Interviewees [staff who had received training] described a mutual respect between staff and management.
Delivery staff and employees	The teacher has to relate effectively with a range of people from managers to operators, from people with very low literacy skills to tutors. Good negotiation skills in dealing with supervisors or managers to arrange student release time are important. But the ability to establish good rapport with students is the most important requirement.
Employees and work colleagues	Each tutoring[2] relationship was influenced by many variables including the goals of the tutee, situational conditions such as work obligations, the personalities of the tutor and tutee, their rapport and their commitment. Meeting times were either during working hours or after work. One tutor explained that his trainee had developed the confidence and enthusiasm to enrol in additional off-site courses in his time off and that their relationship had developed into a mentoring relationship.

Source: Balatti J, (undated) Learning partnerships in the workplace

[2] In this case, employees were trained to act as tutors to other employees ie peer work in developing LLNIT skills.

As we have noted, the exact nature of how LLNIT demands are negotiated is not necessarily fully identified by the literature; however, what is certain is that the support of senior staff must be achieved if such programmes are to be embedded within organisation practice. As Levenson (2001) reported, getting the backing of senior staff and staff with budgetary control was critical to the successful implementation of basic skills training in the workplace. Beyond senior managers, other stakeholders are important in the process of negotiation, not least because, as we have seen, low paid, low skilled workers may not respond positively to approaches made by management. In the next section, we consider who is involved in negotiations for LLNIT skills development.

3.3.1 Who is involved in negotiations?

Many groups may be involved in the negotiation of LLNIT development opportunities in the workplace. A typical situation might be where a training initiative is agreed centrally by either the personnel, HR or training department, and implementation is left to line managers and supervisors. We have already noted that often there is a failure to persuade managers of the potential workplace benefits. One example is given by Payne (2004):

> *'The personnel manager noted a drive from employees for greater autonomy, eg in budgeting and setting menus, which would lead to greater exercising and development of skills. But this did not happen, due to a lack of managerial commitment*.' Payne, 2004

Trade unions can also be key partners in persuading employees to participate in workplace learning opportunities, but often there is a lack of trade union interest and involvement in such initiatives (Payne, 2004). The CIPD (2002) have commented that part of the problem is that UK trade unions often prefer to focus on terms and conditions rather than mount 'a strategic challenge to Taylorist forms of work organisation'. This, together with a focus on the supply side of skills rather than the demand for skills within jobs (Payne, 2004), has perhaps led some trade unions to ignore the value of skills development for their members. There may also be a question about the capability of union representatives to understand or assess the LLNIT skill needs of their colleagues.

However, in addition, trade unions may be reluctant to become involved in this area given that staff often feel threatened by such initiatives. The union may believe that it is in the best interests of their members to protect them from such perceived 'threats'. It is to be hoped that developments with the Union Learning Fund over the past few years may have begun to remedy this situation.

With supervisors and managers increasingly implementing training for front-line staff, there are questions not just over their willingness to implement such training but also their ability to deliver development opportunities. Smith et al. (2002) found that while line managers are increasingly responsible for training their staff, many are not trained to do so. This raises concerns about the quality of training that line managers

deliver. Fonda (1995) supports this, with a review conducted by Workbase Training revealing that:

> *'There was much criticism of on-the-job training……the training was inadequate and time consuming because the trainers often were involved in completing their own job.'*

However, where learning is situated in, and focused, on the job, then evidence suggests, that training can be much more effective. This arrangement potentially means that the learning can more easily be aligned with the organisation's own objectives (Jude, 2005). This is illustrated by one example of an ESOL training programme provided within a high class hotel. A very high proportion of the hotel staff had English as a second language, almost nine-tenths, and they were employed in a range of roles: within the kitchen and restaurant, in room service and in housekeeping, and as concierges (The Network, undated)[3]. Many of these staff interact with customers and so need to be able to communicate well in order to give a good service, such as by taking phone messages and checking for correct understanding, reading notes posted on the noticeboard about faults in service standards, and booking dates for holidays.

Tutors found that learners needed to understand what was required in terms of their own working environment. These identified tasks gave the trainers an indication of the types of skills these individuals needed in order to be able to carry out their job and that, therefore, needed to be incorporated within the ESOL course. LLNIT training based around the needs of the current job in this way can be particularly effective (The Network, ibid.).

We found little information in our search of the literatures about how precisely LLNIT needs were identified and agreement was gained from senior staff to proceed with a programme of learning. However, once access has been agreed, practitioners may undertake organisation communication analysis, and in some cases, link to this individual training needs analysis. As well as senior staff such as HR and Training Directorates, trade unions may be involved in negotiations; however, in the low-paid, low-skilled workplace, it is the case that supervisors and line managers are key to the implementation of training in general, and for our purposes, LLNIT skills development in particular. Lastly, where LLNIT skills development programmes are taking place, there are indications of their effectiveness. In the next chapter we examine how LLNIT skills have been defined and how any definition might be improved.

---

[3] The Network is a national organisation based at Lancaster University. It has been established for over ten years, working with international, national and regional agencies to help manage and establish workplace basic skills development. Their work can be found at http://www.thenetwork.co.uk

4 Defining LLNIT Skills and Practices

A wide range of terminology has been developed over time to refer to the group of skills that, for the purposes of this project, is referred to as 'LLNIT skills' (ie language, literacy, numeracy and IT). LLNIT is in effect a further, novel acronym which, at the time of writing, has not entered into the common parlance of this area of skills development. Where it is used currently, it is purely as an acronym of these four skill areas.[4] In commissioning this research, SEEDA and its partners has adopted a view of the term that goes beyond these four specific skill areas. The research has been prompted by a view of LLNIT that encapsulates notions of information processing, communication, located within activities which are demonstrable in, and useful to, the workplace.

This nuancing of definition is not unusual in debates about these skill areas; research into what might be referred to as underpinning or enabling skills, has been characterised by disagreement about both the naming and the nature of the skills. What is certain is that these skills are viewed as non-technical but essential to learning and performance at work – and to social competence in general. For these reasons, throughout this report we have used the term LLNIT as a form of shorthand that refers not just to the skills defined as language, literacy, numeracy and IT but also where similar sets of skills appear to be implied within, or can be inferred from, other authors' work (not least since the term LLNIT is largely novel to this project).

Before attempting to define what LLNIT might consist of in totality, then, we will first review the range of related skills concepts that have preceded, and inform arrival at, this definition. Terms such as 'basic skills', 'essential skills', 'skills for life' 'generic skills', 'transferable skills', 'key skills' and 'employability skills' have been adopted to group and define these skills in the many previous attempts to grapple with these areas of skill development. Further to this, we consider the applied nature that

[4] An example (one of very few) can be found in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Strategic Health Authority Workforce Development Operating Plan 2005-06, downloaded from http://www.hiow.nhs.uk/ha-05-141.pdf, March 2006. Usage here is limited to LLN.

SEEDA infer in its usage of LLNIT and the delivery mode that the later stages of this project will seek to assess. In this chapter we consider previous work in this area, and the nature of skills themselves, before considering what might be a reasonable working definition for LLNIT skills. In reviewing the previous work, we consider the extent to which notions of communication and information processing have been present within the preceding models.

4.1 Basic skills

The terms 'basic skills' (and also 'adult basic skills' and 'skills for life') are usually adopted to cover the issues of literacy, numeracy and language acquisition of the primary language in the host country (in the UK, this would be ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages). The profile of work in the basic skills area has been raised in recent years following the report of the Moser commission (Moser, 1999), which identified basic skill difficulties in a large proportion of the UK population. The Moser Report (1999) defined literacy and numeracy as:

> *'The ability to read, write and speak in English and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general.'* Moser Report, 1999

Since then, the Basic Skills Agency has slightly refined this definition so that its most recent form is:

> *'The ability to read, write and speak in English/Welsh and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function and progress at work and in society in general.'* BSA website, 16.2.2006

This definition indicates that the literacy and numeracy needs of adults go beyond absolute concepts of the ability to read or write per se, and rather lie in the ability of the individual *to apply those skills to the situations they encounter*. As Alan Wells, Director of the Basic Skills Agency (cited in Payne, 2002) has commented, 'Adults who want to improve literacy and numeracy already have a range of skills and almost none are *illiterate* in the sense of not being able to read or write at all'. In other words, their difficulties arise from having low levels of skills, rather than no skills at all. While in this example, Wells was commenting on adult learners who had identified their own needs, it might also be inferred that this is much the case in the workplace too.

This idea, of low skill, rather than no skill, underpins a model of basic skill development proposed originally by Frank & Hamilton (1999) and cited more recently by Payne, (2002). Frank and Hamilton's basic skills development model takes as its starting point enabling the individual to carry out their present job; and beyond this to help them get their next job/do their next job, cope with periods of unemployment and official bureaucracy, take part in community/political activities, access education and training, support their children at school, take part in leisure activities, write letters, and use ICT.

This last point, the use of ICT, (or indeed just IT) is noteworthy for its absence from the original Moser and subsequent BSA definitions of what constitute basic skills in the UK. It should be noted that, while the government identifies ICT as a Skill for Life, the LSC has not, so far, identified ICT as such for funding purposes; instead their Skills for Life (SFL) funding strategy covers literacy, language and numeracy and pays a weighting factor for these subjects. For the LSC, ICT is a relatively new area of SFL, so at present it is funded in the same way as any other subject such as mechanics, woodwork or plumbing. New ICT qualifications are being trialled at present and will probably be made available from September 2006; these will go from SFL level up to level 3.

4.1.1 The National Curriculum for literacy and numeracy

The standards for literacy and numeracy have been developed to reflect this central notion of basic skills as providing 'a map of the range of skills and capabilities that adults are expected to need in order to function and progress and work and in society' (DfES website, 15.03.06) The standards for literacy cover the ability to:

- speak, listen and respond
- read and comprehend
- write to communicate.

Numeracy covers the ability to:

- understand and use mathematical information
- calculate and manipulate mathematical information
- interpret results and communicate mathematical information.

It can be seen that while the standards describe the functional use of literacy and numeracy skills, both sets of standards appear to have active communication and information-processing at their core. The individual needs to be able to read and comprehend written material (ie actively process the material), and understand, interpret and use mathematical information *and* communicate this.

Thus the literacy and numeracy standards, while built around a notion of functional literacy, have at their heart a model of information processing and communication close to the models of the types of skills development identified as needed in the modern workplace by authors such as Fonda (1995). Understanding adult literacy and numeracy needs in these terms goes part way towards a definition of LLNIT. However, LLNIT in the context of this study also includes concerns about individuals' ability to develop the skills required by adults in the workplace. Therefore it can be seen that 'employability' skills are also of interest. Before we turn to review definitions and concepts of employability skills, it is important to first acknowledge

that, in policy, another terminology has recently emerged for these skill areas: that of functional skills.

4.2 Functional skills

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has been tasked with developing the functional skills curriculum in three areas: mathematics, English and ICT. The curricula for these subjects aims to build on existing key and basic skills curricula as well as those at the level of GCSE. The overarching aim is to support the vision set out in both the 14-19 and the Skills White Papers, for the creation of a single, standard and cumulative ladder of achievement in these critical skills that will be available to both young people and adults. The reforms which accompany this vision have been developed to strengthen and bring consistency to learning routes and to ensure, particularly for young people, that they have a firm grounding in these critical skills which employers, in the past, have found to be lacking. The consultation to develop definitions, standards and the curricula began in winter 2005 (QCA documentation, 2005/06).

A first task for the QCA has been to develop a definition of functional skills which it provides first, generically, then specifies the definition in relation to the subject areas (see Figure 4.1).

From the perspective of this research, these definitions can be seen to share much with their predecessors: they require the individual to actively process information and be able to communicate it appropriately to different audiences.

The focus on communication both within the work setting (with colleagues and managers) and in dealings with, for instance, the organisation's customers (eg service users) often features in debates about what it is to be competent in the workplace. Bradley et al. (2000) provide a definition of workplace communication that has much in common with the LLNIT concept.

> *'During the 1990s, industry recognised that language, literacy and numeracy skills underlie all areas of work to some extent. There has also been a growing realisation of the importance of relationship skills in team-based workplaces. This bundle of skills is often referred to as 'workplace communication skills'… The inclusion of language, literacy and numeracy information is a major contribution to the richness, explicitness and fairness of information about exactly what it takes to be competent in a workplace task. Understanding where and when language, literacy or numeracy skill is required is essential for the implementation of appropriate training and fair assessment.*

In addition, there is much the same concept behind definitions of skills as enabling social participation as much as in effective work participation, a point that leads us into an examination of concepts of employability skills, ie skills that have been understood to enhance work participation.

Figure 4.1: QCA definition of functional skills

Generic definition
Functional skills are those core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Individuals of whatever age who possess these skills will be able to participate and progress in education, training and employment as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviours that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work.
In the case of **English** this means that: • Each individual is confident and capable when using the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and is able to communicate effectively, adapting to a range of audiences and contexts. This will include the ability to explain information clearly and succinctly in speech and writing, expressing a point of view reasonably and persuasively and using ICT to communicate effectively. • In life and work each individual will be able to read and understand information and instructions, then use this understanding to act appropriately and to analyse how ideas and information are presented, evaluating their usefulness, for example in solving a problem. They will be able to make an oral presentation or report, contribute to discussions and use speech to work collaboratively in teams to agree actions and conclusions.
In the case of **mathematics** this means that: • Each individual has sufficient understanding of a range of mathematical concepts and is able to know how and when to use them. For example, they will have the confidence and capability to use maths to solve problems embedded in increasingly complex settings and to use a range of tools, including ICT as appropriate. • In life and work, each individual will develop the analytical and reasoning skills to draw conclusions, justify how they are reached and identify errors or inconsistencies. They will also be able to validate and interpret results, to judge the limits of their validity and use them effectively and efficiently. In the case of **ICT** this means that: • Each individual is confident and capable when using ICT systems and tools to meet a variety of needs in a range of contexts. For example they will use ICT to find, select and bring together relevant information and use ICT to develop, interpret and exchange information, for a purpose. • In life and work each individual will be able to apply ICT safely to enhance their learning and the quality of their work.

Source: QCA documentation (February 2006)[5]

4.3 Employability skills

Groupings of skills said to underpin 'employability' have frequently been identified within the literature over the past ten to fifteen years. One of the most recent attempts to identify what makes a person 'employable' comes from the Employers' Organisation (2004) and identifies the expectations that local government has of its employees. Alongside knowledge (and implementation) of organisational values, priorities and ways of working, they identify a set of skills and behaviours. The skills that all employees are expected to exhibit are the ability to deal with and solve issues, literacy, numeracy and basic understanding and use of IT. The ability to work effectively as part of a team, willingness to develop and improve own skills, adaptable

[5] Downloaded from the QCA website, February 2006 http://www.qca.org.uk/15983.html.

and flexible at work, ability to communicate effectively face-to-face and in writing, are the expectations of behaviour.

From this the Employers' Organisation has developed a Skills Framework which includes Skills for Life (defined as literacy and numeracy) and generic employability skills that are essential across all sectors. These are skills such as communication, team working and working with others, information technology and improving own learning and performance. In addition they identify sector-specific skills (contextualised to local government) which include health and safety, quality and improvement, and customer relationships.

The Employers' Organisation framework is one of the more recent moves to adopt the notion of 'employability skills' in the UK. This has been preceded by extensive work in the UK and elsewhere, but this notion appears to have received the most attention in Australia, where a range of researchers and authors have attempted to define the 'employability' skillset.

In their proposal for an Australian employability skills framework, NCVER (2003) noted that the requirements often are for a *combination* of skills that interact to fulfil the task. Customer service is one example they cite of this. It involves both communication and problem-solving. In their view 'it is not necessary to develop an exhaustive list of skills. It is more productive to identify a common set of skills that, in combination, lead to high job-related performance.' (NCVER, ibid.). Julian (2004) reports work commissioned by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to clarify the 'employability skills mix'. Julian starts with a review of the various frameworks of 'employability skills' and concludes that these skills 'are not usually discrete functions of work, although at times they can be.' She concludes that they 'are not a package of skills, but operate in many different ways', and sets out the following examples based on Dawe (2004):

They can be an integral part of a specific technical competency

Competency means having the capacity to improvise when equipment fails, to keep calm when a deadline is brought forward, reassure a new team member etc. These aspects are employability skills

Employability operates across tasks as well as within them

The skills serve to link a number of work tasks. Skills such as working together, time management, multi-tasking and the capacity to transfer across contexts are core skills used in any kind of work rather than skills relevant to one task only.

Employability skills are needed by individuals to manage their work life

She suggests that young people in particular need guidance with behaviours appropriate for a work environment …what is more everyone needs the skills to be able to manage themselves at work and between jobs, to identify what they need to learn and [to] access the learning they need

Employability also includes new skills needed by organisation and individuals to survive the new global commercial landscape

Increasingly, employees need to learn new cognitive and interpersonal skills…to learn the skills for lifelong learning and adaptability and to learn to deal constructively with diverse colleagues, markets and products.

Dawe notes that the need for such skill sets has been driven by changes in the business landscape and concomitant changes to work demands. We considered this issue in depth in chapter four. In Australia, such changes prompted the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with the Business Council of Australia, to produce an Employability Skills Framework in 2002. This framework is shown in Figure 4.2 below:

Figure 4.2: The Employability Skills Framework

- **Communication** skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers
- **Team work** skills that contribute to productive outcomes
- **Initiative and enterprise** skills that contribute to innovative outcomes
- **Planning and organising** skills that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning
- **Self-management** skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth
- **Learning** skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes
- **Technology** skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks
- **Personal attributes** that contribute to employability

Source: Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Business Council of Australia (2002), cited in Dawe, (2004).

An indication of the extent to which this skill debate has become clouded by terminology can be gained by the fact that these skills are presented as an employability skills framework by Dawe; in a further chapter by Curtis (2004) in the same volume the same framework is referred to as describing 'generic skills'. We move on to consider the nature of generic skills next.

4.4 Generic skills

A review of international perspectives on generic skills was undertaken by Curtis (2004) to inform the debate within the Australian context. His review starts by summarising the generic skills schemes that had been developed in the past decade in a range of countries. He notes, as well as the fact that there are differences in these schemes or frameworks between countries, that in most countries the schemes themselves have been revised or replaced across time. His summary of these developments is shown in Table 4.1.

The recommendations of the Mayer Committee (1992) set out the necessary or key skills and attributes all young people should have on entering the workplace and these were called 'key competencies'. Although they were termed 'competencies' they share more features in common with the types of skills typically viewed in more recent years as 'skills' by the employability or generic skills literatures. And indeed, the Mayer committee defined the competencies in much the same way:

'competencies [that are] essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and work organisation. They focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations… eg Competencies are not only essential for participation in work, but are also essential for effective participation in further education and in adult life more generally.' Mayer Committee, 1992

Table 4.1: Generic skill schemes by country and over time

Country	Activity before 1995	Activity since 1995
United States	SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills)	SCANS 2000 21st Century Workforce Commission
UK	Core skills	Key skills
Canada	Essential skills Employability skills	Employability Skills 2000+
Australia	Key competencies (Mayer)	Australian Industry Group Business Council of Australia and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Source: Curtis (2004)

Once again, the definition points to some form of applied skill, contextualised largely (although not exclusively) in the work situation. The seven 'key competencies' identified by the Mayer Committee are set out in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3: The seven Mayer committee key competencies (1992)

- Collecting, analysing and organising information
- Communicating ideas and information
- Planning and organising activities
- Working with others and in teams
- Using mathematical ideas and techniques
- Solving problems
- Using technology

Source: Dawe 2004

Curtis presents the UK core skills and key skills developments as an example of generic skills within Figure 4.3 above. Below we set out the UK core skills, as it is worth considering what these covered, for again they appear to go beyond the basics of literacy, numeracy and IT. Core Skills originally comprised six areas, although the sixth (a modern foreign language) was quickly dropped (see Figure 4.4 for the original set of core skills).

Later, these were revised when NCVQ decided to develop 'key skills' that could be offered alongside NVQs in the workplace, or as part of compulsory education. With the subsequent development of modern apprenticeships, key skill units were incorporated within apprenticeship frameworks. Again, these shared some aspects in common with adult basic skill descriptions, while other units that were more to do with learning, interacting and information processing in work (or indeed, in the

learning situation). The key skills, as conceptualised by Curtis (2004), for England and Wales are shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.4: The original core skills

- Communication
- Problem-solving
- Personal skills
- Numeracy
- Information technology
- Competence in a modern (foreign) language

Source: Curtis, (2004)

Figure 4.5: Key skills for England and Wales

- Communication
- Application of number
- Information technology
- Working with others
- Improving own learning and performance
- Problem-solving

Source: Curtis, (2004)

4.5 Skills and competencies

It is evident that the question of the skills that underpin the ability to work effectively, the ability to learn, and the ability to live life as a socially competent adult, have been explored extensively in the last two decades. Across each of these approaches and different conceptualisations is the notion of what might typically be viewed as a set of basic skills (literacy, numeracy, and, arguably IT) in conjunction with some form of ability to process information and interact in a meaningful way with others.

The effort that has gone into conceptualising this skillset raises the question of why none of these have been fully adopted[6]. One of the difficulties is that, generally, attempts have been driven by a desire to characterise something close to personal characteristics (indeed, the core skills that were forerunners of the key skills in the UK included a category called 'personal skills'). There are two problems here: one, the simple fact that personal characteristics are difficult to assess (viz the continuing debate on the utility or otherwise of personality tests in assessment and selection processes); and two, that these are effectively 'input' models of performance, that is,

[6] The exception within the UK perhaps being the recent rolling out of the Skills for Life programme.

they are predicated upon an idea that we can predict and/or assess what has to go into an action or behaviour in order for it to be successfully accomplished.

Given this situation, it is worth reflecting on the factors that led to introduction of the competence-based qualification system in the UK in 1986 (and, similarly, within Australia, which introduced a system closely modelled on the UK model, a few years later). Before 1986 most qualifications, vocational as well as academic streams, were based on 'input' models – that is, they comprised 'taught' component skills, activities and behaviours that were believed to underpin successful performance in the workplace. Qualification was based on completion of a course, and (not always) successful accomplishment of some form of assessment (written test, practical activity, etc.) of these component skills. They were not designed around workplace roles as such and did not consider the necessity of individuals integrating the various activities within overall performance of a role. This approach changed with the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework in 1986, based on the Job Competence Model (Mansfield and Matthews, 1983)[7].

The Review of Vocational Qualifications in England and Wales Working Group report (RVQWG, 1986) noted the complaints of many employers, that the current array of vocational qualifications was confusing and did not produce individuals who were competent at work. The review recommended the introduction of qualifications based on an assessment of whether individuals were competent at performing whole job roles, and those roles were described as a series of units of performance, known as occupational standards.

This change was based on the following reasoning. While knowing that someone had achieved certain skills or activities did not guarantee that the individual would be able to perform a whole job competently, assessing that someone could perform a whole job (or at least the amount of that job that was covered by occupational standards) did allow someone to know that they had all the skills necessary to perform the job role as described. Therefore, the focus of training changed from one of equipping an individual with skills, in the hope that the correct skills had been identified and this would equip the individual for work, to one of focusing on developing the individual to perform their job, with the understanding that this would necessarily incorporate the requisite and appropriate skills development.

4.6 The workplace and informal learning

We have seen there has been a great deal of debate about the skills required to enable individuals to perform in society and in work, but, more than that, extensive debate about how best to term these skills. In framing this project, SEEDA used a term to describe these skills that has only recently been introduced into the literature: LLNIT

[7] Bob Mansfield and David Mathews (1983), Job Competence Model, FESC.

skills. In addition, the project was to focus on aspects of the design and delivery of these skills development programmes that SEEDA believes to be a central part of rolling out skills development more widely, and that is that future development work should be focused on the delivery of language, literacy, numeracy and IT skills *in the workplace.*

A further requirement for the future development work will be that curricula will need be work-specific (ie building on tasks expected of workers) and its delivery should be *on-the-job* (ie not requiring the removal of the individual from their work tasks). For this reason, we have focused on workplace learning, including informal learning.

As Jude (2005) notes, work-based learning 'focuses on the development of knowledge and skills that is linked to developing and improving workplace performance.' More than this, she argues that off-the-job and individual-based methodologies may not be sufficiently focused to enable activation of any skills developed in the workplace. This is an issue since, where employers fund skills development they want skills gains to be evident in practice: 'Performance matters. If we want to achieve impact through learning, then we need to build in what we want to achieve into the learning design, delivery and assessment.'

In formal education there have been significant moves towards the embedding of work-based and work-related curricula from the age of 14 (for instance, the Increased Flexibility, E2E and Young Apprenticeship programmes) and extending into university programmes. Indeed the term work-based learning is understood to indicate learning demonstrated through work which is accredited via the framework of a qualification. In considering LLNIT in this project we are seeking to identify the use of the work situation to facilitate LLNIT learning opportunities to enable workers to develop, as Jude (ibid.) argues, knowledge and skills which will help improve their performance. While much of the recent provision is designed to deliver qualifications within the UK qualifications framework, there is a likelihood that some at least of the learning in this area will be informal and/or unaccredited.

Conceptualising work-based learning in this form (although not focusing on LLNIT skills development), Jude (ibid.) argues that it is collaborative in nature: 'Practical knowledge arises from the build-up of experience over time and is unique to each individual. Listening to others recount their experiences, and making linkages with their own experience, is a rich source of employee learning.' Further to this she identifies that this form of learning is derived from the tasks and actions that work requires, and the problem-solving that is involved in these. The sharing of that learning or knowledge with others, such as peers, encourages a culture of learning within the local work setting.

The IPD (1999) report, *Workplace learning, Culture and Performance*, largely agrees with Jude's (ibid.) perspective. Here the authors note that learning at work evolves from the demands and challenges of work: 'solving problems, improving quality and/or

productivity, or coping with change – and out of social interactions in the workplace with colleagues, customers or clients.' The authors find that such learning is facilitated or indeed constrained 'by the organisation and allocation of work and… the social climate of work.' The extent of the existence of a learning culture is a key factor but also the extent of engagement of line managers with such a culture.

To differentiate this type of learning from accredited academic or vocational routes, some writers have started to use the term workplace learning to refer to this type of informal, situated learning. However, it can be seen that, given the history of work-based learning in the UK (and, increasingly, elsewhere) and other developments, this is arguably not a helpful term to adopt.

Indeed, the IPD (ibid.) have found that workplace learning has acquired different

Table 4.2: Various meanings of 'workplace learning'

Meaning	Explanation
Workplace as a site for learning	Learning and work spatially separate with structured learning activity of or near the job (eg in-company training centre). Training away from the job but makes extensive use of the workplace as a source of experiential learning, with instructional practices aimed to link skills development with business objectives. The role of the trainer as staff developer is predominant.
Workplace as a learning environment	The workplace becomes the environment for learning with an array of diverse on-the-job training activity ranging from highly structured to those with minimal educational intervention. Learning is intentional and planned; aimed at training employees by supporting, structuring and monitoring their learning. Two main forms can be distinguished: ■ structured experience led learning opportunities through such as job rotation, sequencing of learner activity, increasing variety and complexity of work ■ on-the-job training through coaching, mentoring, work shadowing, supervision and job instruction.
Learning and work inextricably linked	Manager as staff developer conceived in terms of appraisal and target setting, and planned development opportunities. Underpinning concept of learning based on goals being clearly defined and learning opportunities planned. Learning support mechanisms include learning plans, individual professional development plans, journal diaries and review sessions. There may be support for reflective processes and transfer of learning to other settings. Learning becomes part of everyday work activity and is built into routine tasks; employees are expected to learn skills for their own jobs as well as skills related to others in the work unit; also how their work unit relates to the operation and goals of the business. Learning is viewed as inseparable from the productive role. Emphasis on learning that arises out of problems, puzzles and the challenges of work. Learning strategies aim to enable workers to make the most of these opportunities to develop capability to recognise and seek out learning and engage in self-directed learning. Building out of this, the IPD finds two emergent perspectives within this 'meaning': ■ strengthening informal learning in the workplace through eg equipping managers to support the learning of their subordinates, and creating an environment where learning and interaction among colleagues is encouraged ■ focus on organisational dialogue that results in mutual learning upon which the organisation can act. Here the emphasis would be on mechanisms such as quality circles, action learning, continuous improvement teams and other kinds of communication mechanisms that foster and support vertical and horizontal communication.

Source: based on IPD (1999)

meanings, a summary of which are presented in Table 4.2. We would argue that it is the third definition, that learning and work are inextricably linked, that SEEDA implies in its definition and approach to this project. However, the extent to which any of these cultures of learning are in evidence in the low paid, low skilled workplace (and particularly in some parts of it) is questionable.

An emphasis on communication can be seen within these definitions of workplace learning; a shift away from 'formal training paradigms' to informal mechanisms to develop learning from the tasks can also be detected, along with interaction with colleagues 'on-the-job'. This view of learning is shared by other authors who set out ideas that (most) workplace LLNIT learning is informal and embedded in an organisation's practices and processes, not requiring of extensive time out, and not taking place under the label of training. Indeed, time away from work is seen as a major barrier to LLNIT learning for managers and learners (Esser, 2004).

Fuller et al. (2003) locate the 'contemporary interest in *informal learning at work* in economic and policy concerns about the relationship between learning and organisational performance', however they stress that 'workplace learning is a contested area, definitionally, conceptually and in terms of underpinning disciplinary perspectives.' As a result of their analysis, these researchers argue that 'the term *informal learning* is useful… as a way of emphasizing that the majority of people's learning takes place outside *formal* education and training settings.' We may also infer that much of this type of learning is unaccredited, ie not related to the attainment of a qualification.

Other authors, as Fuller and her colleagues, push the definition of informal learning further. Dale and Bell (1999) offer an example of this – and this definition appears closely linked to SEEDA's ambitions for LLNIT skills development.

Informal learning:	Learning which takes place in the work context, relates to an individual's performance of their job and/or their employability, and which is not formally organised into a programme or curricula by the employer. It may be recognised by the different parties involved, and may or may not be specifically encouraged
Employability:	The skills, knowledge and abilities of individuals that give them the potential to obtain paid employment in their target labour market

These authors report benefits associated with informal learning that may be considered commensurate with the more formal paradigms of training such as the development of skills and knowledge, and the enhancement of employability. They note that there are positive benefits for managers and organisations from this form of learning (Dale and Bell, ibid.). However, these authors also suggest there is a significant need for organisational investment: informal learning needs to be led by managers, however, this group will also require skill development in order to support learning in this way. The ideal is that 'informal learning forms part of everyday activities, and everyday activities support learning.' Formats of informal learning vary

from instruction and demonstration, through shadowing and role modelling, to practice and constructive feedback.

Authors elsewhere agree that an important factor in this form of learning practice is to ensure the adequate support of learners and the opportunities to gain 'appropriate and meaningful feedback so they… progress' (Caley, 2004). This author cites advantages of learning on-the-job as its 'greater relevance, consistency and coherence, and moderating the barriers of some learners who have had unsuccessful experiences with school or in more traditional learning environments.' However, it is also argued that on-the-job learning 'accentuates the role of peers and line managers in fostering an appropriate learning environment and therefore their attitude and support is vital.'

An issue arising from these debates, is the nature of LLNIT *in the workplace* and how this differs from literacy (or other LLNIT skills) when they are used elsewhere. If we understand financial literacy to mean an individual can cope with information about, for instance, mortgages, loans and interest rates, what does literacy mean in the context of work? A perspective on this contextualisation of LLNIT skills is provided by authors working under the framework of New Literacy Studies such as Street (2003, and earlier). The New Literacy Studies focus not so much on the acquisition of skills, but rather on the meaning of literacy as a social practice.

The underpinning notion that these authors propose is that literacy 'varies from one context to another and from one culture to another and so, therefore, do the effects of literacies on different conditions' (Street, 2003). Thus, Street suggests, literacy is always 'embedded in social practices, such as those of a particular job market or a particular educational context and the effects of learning that particular literacy will be dependent on those peculiar contexts.' This presents a further argument for the development of LLNIT in the workplace: since the LLNIT skills that the workplace requires are likely to be context specific, developing those skills in-situ, using as source material, the demands of the job, may be the only way of delivering that skill development to the satisfaction of both workers and employers.

To return to factors that support or inhibit skill development in workplaces, management practices are important not only from the point of view of access to learning and development, but also in facilitating and embedding cultures of learning. Moreover, the CIPD (2006) argues, in its recent review of high performance working, that 'when it comes to explaining cross-country differences in productivity and performance, the quality of management, and especially people management, does indeed matter.' The study suggests a positive causal relationship between people management, productivity and skills in high performance organisations. On this issue, the authors find that 'to be used effectively, skills must be allied with other people management practices'.[8] Further to this, the authors argued that 'smart

[8] This finding was highlighted in a further study by Penny Tamkin at IES, funded by CIPD, which explores the effect of skills on organisations' 'bottom line', ie, performance and productivity.

practice would also cast light on the importance of informal ongoing learning, rather than training as such… Such learning is closely work-related – and thus can be seen as more directly relevant to the needs of employees and line managers – increasingly self-directed, and can be gained in numerous ways other than by means of formal on- or off-the-job training of a kind that gets most attention from policy-makers.'

It may not be immediately obvious how concepts of high performance working map onto the low-skilled, low-paid workplace, nor how LLNIT skills development has any place within this. As early as 1994 the International Adult Learning Survey (IALS) demonstrated that human capital had a positive impact on individuals' productivity but the issue of how development of these skills impacted on economic performance remained unclear. Recent work by Coulombe and colleagues (ibid.) suggests that 'raising the average literacy and numeracy skill level of the workforce, and reducing the proportion of workers at the lowest skill level, could yield significantly higher levels of growth in GDP per capita'.

The authors argue that '[t]he key economic implication that comes out of [this study] is that, in contrast to most previous findings, human capital accumulation matters for the long run wellbeing of developed nations.' While it has been established for sometime that increasing literacy and numeracy skills has outcomes at the individual level, this study means that there now exists a statistical model that shows the impact of literacy and numeracy skills (or more accurately their potential to impact) on the national economy[9]. At the micro-level, ie within organisations and in local work contexts, this would appear a strong argument for embedding LLNIT skills development.

To provide a working definition for LLNIT skills we have argued that the term, in its usage here, goes beyond notions of an acronym and refers to workplace learning that aims to enable workers to develop the language, literacy, numeracy and IT skills which are broadly relevant to *communication within the context of the organisation*. It also includes the ability to *process information* (eg make sense of and interpret various sources of information, coming from different levels of the organisation). A final part of its definition is in its workplace design and delivery. This set of skills, it is suggested, are key to providing low-paid, low-skilled workers with the ability to cope with workplace changes – and thus the ability to perform in the evolving workplace.

This definition goes beyond most of the more conventional ones, however, we have presented the debates that have led to its development. So, as we have seen, it is based on the ideas put forward by organisations such as the CIPD and by authors such as Fonda (1995), Cairney (2000), Virgona and Waterhouse (2004) and Dawe (2004). These authors suggest that, rather than merely underpinning individuals' abilities to learn and perform technical or work-specific skills, these skills are central to the ability to

perform in the changing workplace and acquiring increasing importance in their own right.

In the next chapter, we turn our attention to how LLNIT skills are currently developed in the low paid, low skilled workplace, and particularly what facilitates and constrains workers' engagement.

5 Current LLNIT Development Practices

Despite the growing interest in improving adult basic skills in the workplace, the evidence of current practice largely emanates from practitioners who report back on their experiences of delivering programmes in organisations. Generally, there is little information about in situ, on-the-job, LLNIT skill development, little about the involvement of anyone other than the trainer (and perhaps the learners), and little by way of systematic follow-up or impact evaluation.

To be fair, this situation probably reflects the fact that moves to embed LLNIT development within the workplace itself still are few and far between, and, where they have been introduced, have had insufficient time for reports and evaluations of such practices to make their way into the literature. This serves to limit any attempt to review, compare or assess current practices. Furthermore, as we have noted earlier in this review, an additional difficulty is the novelty of the term LLNIT itself, and the definition that SEEDA has adopted for it ie as encompassing informal, on-the-job learning

Largely for these reasons, the accounts reviewed below mainly come from practitioners involved in adult basic skill development, and largely they are individuals who are external to the organisation that employs the group of workers who are offered the development opportunity. Typically they do not refer to LLNIT skills as such, but the work described in these accounts appears to reflect some aspects of the skills encompassed by our term.

The practitioner accounts speak to the care that must be taken when identifying the skills needs of low-paid, low-skilled workers. There is some consensus that methods that appear heavily 'top-down' may cause (or are believed to cause) the stigmatisation of workers with LLNIT needs. There is some evidence to suggest that 'wrapping' LLNIT skills development into other training may be effective.

In the next section, we review the available information about how LLNIT skill needs are identified, and then in section 5.2 we explore examples of LLNIT development activity. Following this, we look at how LLNIT skill learning has been embedded within other programme, and then at the role of qualifications and accreditation. In

section 5.4 we identify the 'gaps' we perceive from the reports of practice, and in section 5.5 we review the consequences of LLNIT and its impacts on workers and organisations. We conclude with a summary of the future for learning in the low-paid, low-skilled workforce.

5.1 How are LLNIT needs identified?

Case study evidence indicates there is a wide variety of ways in which LLNIT skill needs in the workplace are identified. Furthermore, the way in which organisations deal with this issue may have an impact on the success of any subsequent LLNIT development activity.

For instance, practitioners observe is that it is important that employees are not made to feel stigmatised during the process of LLNIT skill needs identification; in other words, the person conducting the initial identification of skill needs should avoid making, individuals feel it is they personally, rather than the organisation, that lack the skills required for the job. It is important therefore that the individuals concerned trust the person appointed to carry out a needs analysis.

Where an initial assessment is carried out in-house, the use of union representatives, rather than management, to identify need, may help avoid employees feeling stigmatised, or concerned that managers are trying to identify shortfalls in their knowledge. For one project which involved the teaching of basic skills for Liverpool Leisure Services, the initial need was identified by the union learning representative who carried out 'one to one' assessments and interviews with staff (The Network, undated).

For another work-based project providing IT and essential skills training for eight hospitals and twelve medical practices in Surrey and Hampshire, however, needs were identified by training consultants with the hospital and practice managers and 'specialist staff'[10] advising to ensure the relevance of content and course materials (The Network, undated). Aligned to the implementation of the programme, a 'Learner Representative' course was delivered to develop the capacity for existing members of staff to act as mentors and take over much of the individual learner negotiation.

Other case studies point to a more specific focus. O'Hagan (2005) looks at one aspect of the 'Oxfordshire Skills for Health' programme which focused on numeracy in the workplace. The emphasis, when trying to identify workplace needs, was on situations where any errors would have significant impacts on patient care. A learning set was established whereby participants (mainly nurses) met to discuss issues of numeracy at work and to develop tools which might help them carry out their roles. Participants were asked to discuss where and how the workplace required them to do

[10] Although it should be noted that it was not made clear in the report quite what was meant by 'specialist staff' in this context.

mathematical calculations, for instance, working out volumes of liquid, or number of pills required. The subsequent learning was then geared towards these needs.

McDonnel and Zutshi (2005) report on a health pilot in the South West region which looked at a 'best practice example' of developing skills for life in the workplace. The project involved developing support for adult learning within NHS trusts in the region. In each department an employee was appointed as a 'skills for life signposter', and was trained to level 2. The aim is for it to become accepted practice for employees to speak to this member of staff about their skills for life needs. Staff have rapidly become used to the system as it is similar to an existing system of link contacts for manual handling and other operational issues. This approach is similar to that in the Context NHS programme in which members of staff undertake a 'Learner Representative' course which equips staff to advise their colleagues on learning issues and signpost learning opportunities. In these models, colleagues act both as mediators in a process of identifying training needs that is effectively led by the employee themselves, and as guides to accessing learning opportunities.

The way in which needs are identified can have implications for motivation and participation in workplace learning programmes. Employees may be reluctant to take part in a needs analysis if they feel 'singled out', or stigmatised by a lack of knowledge. This is perhaps more likely to be the case if the analysis is carried out by a line manager. As we have noted, O'Brien et al. (2004) have argued that the lack of return to previous educational programmes (eg compulsory schooling) can mean that low status workers exclude themselves from any development that is offered since, understandably, they are sceptical of any return to their effort. This refusal to engage with the organisational training offer can lead to the entrenchment of their feelings of disaffection. Where training and development is offered, these groups may feel there is a lack of choice about their participation; in addition they may have little trust in the development programme, the person who delivers it, and how their performance in development activities will be measured and reviewed..

5.2 Examples of development activity for LLNIT skills

Because individuals and organisations will have a wide variety of different LLNIT needs, methods and practices will vary considerably. One factor which needs to be taken into consideration is the environment in which learning takes place. Much current LLNIT learning takes place in a workplace environment, although not necessarily on-the-job. This helps employees relate the skills they learn to their own work, and also helps avoid problems such as getting staff released to attend training elsewhere. However, this may not be appropriate in all circumstances. The following section details some of the case study evidence in order to illustrate the methods used by tutors involved in workplace learning for the low skilled.

Evidence from the 'Oxfordshire Skills for Health' programme (O'Hagan, 2005) points to a number of practical ways to help nursing staff carry out their roles safely. Nurses

had indicated that they would like help in estimating and measuring liquids, and so tutors developed a chart, with illustrations of a variety of containers which staff used to give patients hot drinks. A pocket-sized reference book 'Fast-facts' was also produced which included notes on units and conversion, fluid balance and giving medication.

Arakelian & Braddell's (2005) report on the Oxfordshire Skills for Health 'Bite-size ESOL' pilot reveals some useful pointers for learners wishing to improve their use of English in the workplace. The pilot took place in three hospitals with twenty six staff enrolled as learners. These staff worked in a variety of departments including domestic services, portering, catering, and auxiliary nursing. The aim was to develop the language skills of lower skilled employees, based on the premise that migrant workers learn English in the workplace simply by being there and taking part in workplace activities (what they term 'natural language acquisition').

Methods of learning were based on the premise that workers are continually acquiring language skills at work, and so guided learning was offered to learners in short frequent bursts of between five and twenty minutes in the work area itself. The syllabus was devised as a result of shadowing staff at work in hospitals, to ensure relevance. General topics such as 'dealing with instructions', 'being part of a team' and 'talking about health and safety' were broken down into 'bite-sized' topics such as 'asking for help' and 'avoiding a risk'. From this, about 60 postcard sized cards were produced including items such as 'helpful tips' and 'word list'.

The programme was undertaken on-site in working time. Tutors reported that conducting the training in a more natural setting (ie the workplace) rather than a classroom, helped with skill acquisition, because the skills learned could instantly be applied in the workplace.

In an ESOL course run by City of Westminster College for a London hotel (The Network, undated), the learner group is made up of staff employed in a variety of roles, for most of whom English is a second language. The programme was centred around particular requirements in the workplace, and therefore had a practical application at work. Tutors devised Individual Learning Plans (ILP's) aimed at addressing the specific requirements of learners at work. So, for instance, rather than learners saying they wanted to 'improve grammar', they were encouraged to be more specific. Examples of this were 'an employee may have to take spoken instructions given in a hurry in an unfamiliar accent, eg Cockney' or 'a waiter needs to be able to explain the menu…' Examples of activities on the programme included listening to exchanges between staff in the workplace and picking up on jokes and clichés, and developing awareness of hotel language.

The Stepping Stones programme, run by Oxfordshire County Council for NHS staff in three Oxfordshire hospitals (Braddell, undated) aimed to provide on-site training in English, maths and computing for Facilities staff, most of whom were in low-skilled jobs. This programme subsequently evolved first into Oxfordshire Skills for Health

and currently, into the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals' Skills Escalator Centre. The outcome of this was that the development of an initial ten hours 'Key Skills' training programme, including English language, oral communication (dealing with conflict, being understood), written communication (report writing, spelling, dyslexic support), maths, IT, and communication skills for supervisors. Support was also given to employees studying for NVQs. Following completion of the initial programme, learners' achievements were recognised at an awards ceremony attended by high level staff, and participants received a certificate which recognised their commitment to lifelong learning.

A programme aimed at improving the skills of staff working within Liverpool City Council Leisure Services focused on the application of literacy and numeracy skills at work (The Network, undated). The aim was to contextualise learning, making it relevant to the workplace, and therefore workplace literature and paperwork were used as learning materials. The programme ran over 6 weeks for two full days each week. Delivery was in two hour blocks in a classroom setting with group delivery. Learners were also offered 'one to one' support and tuition. Tutors found that this short intensive course worked well for learners (The Network, undated). A similar, intensive pattern was adopted for a basic skills programme for dustmen (The Network, undated) whereby learners and were released (with full management support) to attend for 7.5 hours, once a week, for six weeks.

Holland et al. (2005) discuss some of the wider issues surrounding the teaching of language skills. They explore the notion of Organisational Communications Analysis (OCA) and contrast this with a Training Needs Analysis which, they argue is 'deficit-oriented', focusing on what knowledge the learner lacks. The premise of OCA is that language is social practice. That is, language shapes and is shaped by various communities of practice in workplaces, localities, and countries. Cognitive and emotional factors contribute to the way communities, and individual members of communities, impact on, and communicate with, each other. One of their key conclusions is that those who facilitate learning need to have some understanding of theories of learning in order to adapt learning activities and to help staff to use whichever learning methods may be most appropriate for a specific context.

5.2.1 Embedding LLNIT in other learning programmes

We have already noted that learners who have been identified as needing to improve their LLNIT skills can sometimes feel stigmatised. The way in which these skills are 'marketed', and the naming of programmes used to teach LLNIT skills is therefore important. A recent CIPD report (CIPD, 2005) encouraged employers to develop their basic skills provision, arguing that employers can help to remove the stigma of employees learning basic skills by placing the emphasis on the learning of IT skills. They point to the fact that many (often older) employees lack confidence with IT, and that learning basic skills can stem from IT training. Thus, employees may find it easier

to say that they are attending a 'computing course' rather than a 'basic skills' or literacy or numeracy course.

A similar view was expressed in an evaluation of a basic skills programme for dustmen. The tutor felt that it was useful to use 'the hook of ICT screening to draw employees into learning' (The Network, undated). Embedding the learning within the realms of IT meant that, while the target staff were able to improve their IT skills as a result, other, perhaps more important, learning outcomes arose from the initiative, which, the author noted, included improvements to service: 'There had been a history of dustbin men collecting from the wrong streets on the wrong day. It emerged that this had happened because they were unable to read their schedules or the street names accurately. This was soon sorted out by the literacy classes'. While clearly this LLNIT skills development programme had impacted on the organisation's performance, this issue also raises questions about the practices of managers supervising the work of these teams, in particular, the extent to which their performance had been monitored and any feedback given.

Another approach is the embedding of LLNIT teaching within a recognised qualification such as an NVQ. The following case study outlines a project aimed at teaching LLN as part of an NVQ level 2 in caretaking (The Network, undated). The LLN training also covered issues such as providing an update report to management or complying with Health and Safety regulations. At the beginning of the project, initial assessments indicated that most of the group would benefit from literacy and numeracy support. LLN and vocational tutors therefore worked together to establish a programme that could embed LLN skills into the NVQ without making the course any longer (The Network, undated).

One of the programme's tutors reports that 'The programme was re-written in a discreet and accessible manner…While the NVQ tutor supported learning in brickwork techniques, the LLN tutor taught how to use ratios and proportions when mixing sand and cement to make mortar' (The Network, undated). A similar approach has been taken in North Devon COVE, where vocational tutors were receiving development to help them to support work-based learners with adult basic skill difficulties (Miller et al., 2005). In previous years, work-based assessors had only spotted the more obvious basic skill problems once the NVQ training was underway, and this could disrupt assessment plans. Giving workplace assessors the skills and encouragement to undertake a basic skills analysis at the start of the training meant they were better placed to help learners develop LLN skills from the outset.

5.3 Qualifications and accreditation

Evidence from case studies reveals a variety of approaches to the acknowledgement, recognition or accreditation of LLNIT learning. It is not always considered appropriate to seek a qualification for learning and some learners do not wish to work towards accreditation. The programme at Liverpool City Council Leisure Services

(The Network, undated), which covered literacy and numeracy, gave learners the opportunity to take the National Tests at level 1. However, learners who did not feel that this was appropriate for them were able to gain college accreditation. Interestingly though, tutors reported that more learners were keen to take up the nationally recognised qualifications than had been previously been anticipated.

In another project (The Network, undated), learners attending an LLNIT programme at an Asda store were able to study for level 1 qualifications. These achievements were acknowledged with awards ceremonies and presentations at monthly meetings. At Asda, gaining a qualification was seen as a positive experience among learners. Many of the care assistants taking part in the NHS Context programme achieved Adult Numeracy level 2 qualifications, allowing them to qualify for Open University Nursing courses. For the ESOL programme for Hotel Staff, Tower Hamlets College were involved in moderation and accreditation against the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum, with learners receiving an internal college certificate.

5.4 What is missing from current practices for the development of LLNIT in the low-paid, low-skilled workplace?

Above we have summarised some of the current accounts of approaches to the development of LLNIT skills in the low-paid, low-skilled, workforce and workplace. What is largely missing from the literature at present is any account of what types of performance deficit arise from individuals lack of such skills, or the way in which such skills are used by employees and managers, or how and at what level they are required by organisations. Where any such accounts of lack of basic skills exist, they are largely emanate from reports such as those from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) berating the educational system for its failure to produce graduates with sufficient levels of basic skills. Such reviews rarely comment on the skill needs of lower paid and lower skilled workers.

Given that organisations tend not to take stock of the extent of any basic skill deficits within their workforce, and that any assessment of the impact of any skill deficit is rarely undertaken, it is perhaps unsurprising that organisations also overlook the need to assess the impact of any skills development they facilitate. This is even more likely to be the case in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces, for as we have already noted, these organisations often fail to see any need for skill development in their staff (and particularly those viewed as having the lowest levels of skills) and often do not view training as having any value.

For this reason, much of the evaluation that exists tends to be anecdotal in nature and mostly lacks any focus on organisational consequences. Often the focus concerns the learners' reactions rather than impacts on performance or productivity. We consider

the literature that deals with the consequences of the development of LLNIT skills in the low-paid, low-skill workplace in the next section.

5.5 Consequences of current practices for the development of LLNIT in the low-paid, low skilled workplace

This section explores the usefulness of LLNIT training for the low-paid, low skilled workplace. While some critics (eg Keep, undated) argue that learning can offer few opportunities for those in low skilled work, case studies provide evidence that points to some, apparently small, changes which can affect how these workers subsequently carry out their roles.

Payne (2004) explores a Finnish example and the extent to which LLNIT learning benefits employees in low-level, low-skilled jobs. He looks at two programmes: one involving the training of kitchen workers, and the other, the training of domestic staff. He points to the lack of autonomy experienced by these employees after learning has taken place and explores the usefulness of this learning. Although he acknowledges that there is limited scope within highly routinised, low skill jobs for expanding workers' task discretion, he points out that low-skill jobs can be redesigned and therefore improved for employees.

However, in keeping with our observation that many organisations fail to consider how they may profit from the skills inculcated during such learning, Payne (ibid.) comments about management attitudes towards these roles, 'What is striking about both projects is that management did not even consider implementing changes in work organisation that could have made better use of employees' skills and capabilities'.

5.5.1 Impact on the learner

Several studies cite outcomes which have a direct and immediate impact on the learner. Levenson (2001) found that linking the basic skills curricula to job requirements provided a strong motivation for employees to participate as they could clearly see how training and learning linked to their job performance. Using examples which were rooted in their everyday activities was more effective that making learning more abstract. In keeping with this, Arakelian & Braddell (2005), in their report of an ESOL programme, commented that 'compared to classroom English, English heard and acquired through authentic experience is…immediately useful…at work, successful language acquisition is directly rewarded: it brings the worker autonomy and allows involvement with others.'

Similar issues were raised in an evaluation of a basic skills programme at Liverpool City Council Leisure Services (The Network, undated). Elsewhere, tutors have found that the benefits of training for staff included increased confidence in expressing learning needs and being able to ask for support (Billet, 2001). Staff also became more

involved in day-to-day issues and attended more workplace meetings. Learners also said that they felt more confident to apply for promotion, having completed training.

Findings from Eraut's (2003) study of mid-career learning of managers and professionals in a variety of sectors illustrate that increased confidence is a common outcome of learning. Although the study does not focus on those in low-skilled work, this issue of increased confidence, as discussed above, is clearly relevant to low-skilled work. Eraut (ibid.) argues that learning 'leads to them developing confidence in their capabilities. Increasing confidence enables them to better manage more challenging work, which, if successfully achieved, increases confidence further'. The issue that arises here is what happens when those in low-skilled work develop and increase their confidence through learning. Keep (2000) points out that some employers may anticipate this, and will therefore see disadvantages to training workers in lower occupational groups. These perceived disadvantages include increased staff turnover, increasing dissatisfaction with boring and menial jobs, and the raising of unrealistic expectations about opportunities for progression.

5.5.2 Impact on the organisation

Some, but not many, evaluations of LLNIT programmes demonstrate the immediate impact of learning on organisational outcomes. As we previously noted, tutors on a LLNIT programme for dustmen found that before the course staff had been collecting from the wrong streets on the wrong day because of literacy problems. This was resolved fairly easily after training (The Network, undated).

Some courses may be set up by employers with the specific aim of overcoming organisational problems. For instance, one of the aims of the Stepping stones project, which provided on-site training in English, maths and computing for Facilities staff in three Oxfordshire hospitals, was to improve recruitment and retention in these departments (The Network, undated)[11]. However, at Liverpool City Council Leisure Services (cited above), an evaluation of the programme revealed improved staff morale and a reduction in absenteeism. Here, then, there was some evidence of business benefits as well as benefits for learners undertaking the basic skills programme.

5.5.3 The wider impacts of LLNIT

Some studies demonstrate the wider impacts of learning on employees, where outcomes are not directly related to work role. This is illustrated in the Newco case study (The Network, undated), which presents the evaluation of a programme

[11] It should be noted that the report does not indicate whether there was any attempt to measure recruitment and retention rates before and after introduction of the programme to assess effectiveness.

teaching LLNIT to staff at a London-based window manufacturer. Although the main aim of the programme was to help people do their jobs more effectively, there was also a focus on general 'life issues' such as reading bank statements and filling in official paperwork, such as passport applications. Several employees in lower skilled roles reported finding an improvement in their home lives after completing the course, such as being able to help children with homework, which they had previously found very difficult.

5.6 The future of learning for the low-skilled workforce

Because those in low-skilled jobs have often not been given the opportunity to learn, it is important to develop a workplace culture which encourages staff in these jobs to develop. Billet (2001) argues that workplaces can become effective sites for the development of knowledge and that employees can be helped to learn in informal ways, such as learning from colleagues, and through observation and listening. These methods, he points out, are consistently reported as key methods through which workers can learn. Workplace learning can be improved in various ways: the development (and implementation) of a work environment which 'invites' individuals to learn, the tailoring of a workplace learning curriculum to particular tasks, and by encouraging participation by those learning and those guiding the learning (CIPD, 2003).

Levenson (2001) looked at company-funded workplace learning programmes in the US. His study revealed that a 'learning centre model' was considered to be particularly effective. There were several common successful features of the programmes he looked at. The first was that basic skills, defined here as reading, writing, numeracy and ESOL, were just one part of the curriculum: other parts included computing skills, supervisory training, and manual handling. Secondly, by offering a diverse array of courses, a wide range of staff attended which created a broader and more committed set of stakeholders among both management and workers. Lastly, Levenson (ibid.) found there was less stigma attached because those with basic skills difficulties were not singled out: since such a range of employees used the centre, confidentiality was better preserved.

Holland et al. (2005) have recently proposed a model of Organisational Communications Analysis (OCA) as a basis for exploring issues in the training of migrant and ethnic minority workers in the labour market and the community. The approach examines individual learning needs, but also structural, emotional, and socio-cultural issues. The emphasis is not to identify what individuals cannot do and are, therefore, in need of, but rather to assume that workplace communication is an 'interaction between – unequal – partners within given, hierarchical structures'. They argue that 'because the intervention is conceived with an understanding of workplace culture, rather than bolted on, it is felt to have a greater and more lasting impact'.

They point to the importance of learners gaining 'ownership' of the intervention and having support and backing of senior staff and line managers.

Because the intervention is concerned with migrant workers, it involves recognising the emotional impact of a range of individual, social and political factors on performance and learning motivation (Illeris 2003; Holland 2004). These include experiences with language (mother tongue, second language and any other language used), with learning, with affiliation, inclusion or exclusion, discrimination, and, in the case of refugees, possibly with violence.

These problems are unlikely to decrease in the near future in low-paid, low-skilled workplaces in the UK – if anything, they will remain high-profile for some time yet. It is therefore timely to reflect on whether the steps currently being taken to address LLNIT skills development are the most appropriate and effective. A further question is likely to concern the cost-effectiveness of current models of LLNIT skill development.

For some regions of the UK these questions are particularly acute. Some regions have significantly higher proportions of their populations without the skills required to help them attain more secure, satisfying and better rewarded jobs. In the region covered by SEEDA, one in five people are economically inactive, (and the figure is one in four for women), around 10 per cent lack qualifications and many have literacy and numeracy problems (Alexander, 2005). Such difficulties present real hurdles to those tasked with responsibility for planning economic development and regeneration in the region. It is partly for these reasons that SEEDA has decided to fund research that considers how best to raise the skill base of workers in the region.

We conclude our analysis of the current literature about the low paid, low skilled workplace and engagement with LLNIT skills development with a summary of our key findings.

6 Conclusions

While reasons of social equity may underpin much activity within the broad area of scope delineated by the term 'LLNIT skills', there are strong economic reasons for such efforts too. Low skill levels are associated with low income, and within the SEEDA region there remains a considerable proportion of the population that have low skill levels. Therefore, addressing these basic skill deficits is a central strand of the region's economic regeneration strategy.

LLNIT skills underpin activities within the home and community as well as facilitating specific workplace actions, including workplace communication. LLNIT skills are seen by some as the essential starting point for human resource practices aimed at moving towards high performance working. Through this philosophy, people management and development processes are linked to the larger government (both national and regional) agenda of social inclusion.

The literature review confirmed that job design is central to the need for LLNIT skills in specific jobs or roles (or, perhaps more accurately, to the eradication of any such need), to the availability of development opportunities and the opportunity to deploy any LLNIT skills the person holds or develops while in post. Job design in turn is dictated in large part by the nature and culture of the workplace. Low paid jobs typically are characterised not just by an absence of the need for LLNIT skills but also the opportunities to deploy them; in turn, this typically leads to a lack of engagement by lower paid employees, with subsequent ramifications for organisational culture and a focus on command and control. A culture of command and control in turn appears to be associated with an absence of appraisal and development systems for lower paid workers. The lack of formal appraisal and assessment systems in turn leads organisations to overlook the value that LLNIT skills may have for their organisation.

In many organisations employing lower-paid workers, therefore, a vicious circle is established, in which managers and supervisors do not consider whether there is any need for skill development in low-paid workers, and the lack of skills in the workforce leads to their being trapped in a low-value, low-cost economic model. This can be

fuelled by employers' failure to recognise the utility and value of such skills (with this being institutionalised through the absence of appraisal and development processes for the low-paid low-skilled group of workers) and, related to this failure to perceive the value of these skills, there is also the reluctance to spend money on their development.

In part, of course, employers' difficulties in recognising, labelling and valuing such skills reflect the broader difficulties in gaining a consensus view of quite what constitutes what is here being called the 'LLNIT' group of skills. The literature that precedes this report documents a series of attempts to identify and characterise the (non-technical and non-task-specific) skills that underpin competent performance. The reporters of these attempts at skill identification all agree that some set of skills underpins competent communication and performance at work; however, the succession of different attempts to develop a model of these skills testifies to the difficulty of doing so.

What appears to be the uniting theme of such attempts (and this most recent review is also included in this comment) is the belief that these skills, though low level, contribute to organisational performance overall. However, what is singularly missing from the literature on this point is any real attempt to identify where and how such skills are used in which jobs or roles, and therefore any real evidence of impact where development is provided. Quite what is gained through attempts to improve workplace literacy, numeracy, IT, language and general communication skills remains as yet unproven. A similar criticism can be made about attempts to demonstrate the value of situated learning compared with off-the-job approaches to development of these skills. In the majority of cases, the evidence still consists of little more than 'trainer's best hunch', and trainers are the least likely to be independent in their evaluations of the success of LLNIT interventions.

This might remain of purely academic interest, were it not for one key fact: where low added-value organisations employing low-paid, low-skilled workers is the predominant economic model in a sector or in a region, and that region or sector is attempting to attain economic growth and increased levels of social inclusion, then this can constitute a significant 'drag' on efforts to increase productivity and growth. If such employers are to be persuaded to consider developing their staff, then firstly, they need to be persuaded of the value of such actions; and secondly, a way of offering staff development more cost-effectively, needs to be offered.

It was for these reasons of course that SEEDA commissioned this review. Therefore, after considering the nature of the low-paid low-skilled workplace in Britain today, the remainder of the review focused on the nature of LLNIT skills development practices for LLNIT skills currently in use and the possible options for developing learning for the low-paid, low-skilled workforce. The intention was to determine whether there was any evidence to support the use of work-based development approaches ('learning through work') to LLNIT skills development over other

approaches. Evidence to support the use of work-based learning could be in terms of efficacy or cost-effectiveness, with cost-effectiveness being defined in terms of either savings in time away from the job, or in terms of the cost of trainer input. At present, there is little in the literature that provides hard evidence either of the detail of practice or unambiguous evaluation of its impact. While this review has started to unpick the answers to some of the research questions, such as the nature of the perceptions that exist within the low-paid and low-skilled workplace and how current demands for LLNIT skills and practices are currently negotiated, others remain unanswered. The starting assumption for the review was that on-the-job learning (learning through work) was worth looking at because people should be using LLNIT skills even in low-value jobs. The questions that follow on from this premise are:

- What LLNIT skills does the low-paid, low-skilled workplace require?
- What skills are low-paid, low-skilled workers actually using in work, and how? and
- What are the consequences of current LLNIT practices (or lack of them) for this workplace – not just for low-paid, low-skilled workers themselves but also for their managers and for the organisations as a whole?

To try to answer these questions, the next stage of the work was to construct an audit tool that could be used to assess the extent to which workplaces in the SEEDA region matched the characteristics of the low-paid, low-skilled workplace identified in the literature review, and identify the types of learning activity that are currently in use, along with an assessment of any further opportunities that might exist within the workplace that could be used to develop LLNIT skills through work. The audit of current learning practice and potential opportunities is reported in the second and companion volume to this report.

7 Bibliography

Alexander P (2005), 'The context - gender and SEEDA', keynote speech given to *Barriers to women in employment* conference, Greenwich University

Ananiadou A, Jenkins A, Wolf A (2003), *The Benefits to Employers Raising Workforce Basic Skills Levels: A review of the literature*, National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Applebaum E, Bernhardt A and Murnane R (2003), *Low-wage America: How Employers Are Re-Shaping Opportunity in the Workplace,* Russell Sage Foundation

Arakelian C, Braddell A (2005), *Bite-size Adventures in the Workplace*, Basic Skills Bulletin, available at: www.basicskillsbulletin.co.uk

Arakelian C (undated), *What happened in the bite size ESOL project*, NB reports the same project as Arakelian and Braddell (2005)

Asplund R (2004), *Company Training and Services with a Focus on Low Skills* Vol 25. No1

Balatti J (undated), 'Learning partnerships in the workplace', in *Learning to manage change: Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium*, Australia: NCVER

Basic Skills Agency (1997), *It doesn't get any better,* Basic Skills Agency

Billet S (2001), 'Learning Through Work: Workplace Affordances and Individual Engagement', *Journal of Workplace Learning,* Vol. 13, No. 5

Bradley S, Parker P, Perisce S, Thatcher J (2000), 'Built in not bolted on', part of *Workplace Communication in Training Packages* project funded by the Workplace English Language and Literacy programme, Australia: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Bryan M, Taylor M (2004), *An Analysis of the Household Characteristics of Minimum Wage Recipients,* Low Pay Commission

Cairney T (2000), *The knowledge based economy: A review of the literature*, NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training

Cale L (2005), 'De-constructing the workplace as a site for constructing knowledge', *Learning Beyond Cognition* Conference, the Danish University of Education, July

Caley L, Reid S (2004), *Key influencing factors of work-related learning*; Research into Leadership Series, NHS Leadership Centre

Callan V J (2003), *Generic skills: Understanding vocational education and training teacher and student attitudes,* Australia: NCVER

CIPD (2002), *Sustaining success in difficult times – research summary*, CIPD

CIPD (2005), *Basic skills in the workplace: opening doors to learning*, CIPD

CIPD (2006), *Smart Work: Public Policy Perspectives; people, productivity and performance*, CIPD

Confederation of British Industry (2003), *Business and Higher Education: Promoting Effective Collaboration*, Confederation of British Industry, viewed February 2006 www.cbi.org.uk/ndbs/positiondoc.nsf/1f08ec61711f29768025672a0055f7a8/e09b036028d4945e80256d0500361f48?OpenDocument

Coulombe S, Tremblay J F, Marchand S (2004), *International Adult Literacy Survey literacy scores, human capital and growth across fourteen OECD countries*, published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

Cully M, Woodland S, O'Reilly A, Dix G (1999), *Britain at Work*, Routledge (cited in Keep, 2000)

Curtis D (2004), 'International perspectives on generic skills', in Gibb J (ed.) *Generic skills in vocational education and training: research readings*, NCVER: Australia

Darville R (1995), 'Literacy Experience, Power' in Campbell M and Manicom A (eds.) *Knowledge, Experience and Ruling Relations,* University of Toronto Press

Dawe S (2004), 'Developing generic skills in training packages', Gibb J (ed) *Generic skills in vocational education and training: research readings*, NCVER: Australia

DfES (2005), *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper*, Department for Education and Skills

DfES (2005), *Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work*, Department for Education and Skills

DfES (2003), *The Skills for Life Survey: A national needs and impact survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills*, prepared by Williams J, Clemens S, Oleinikova K and Tarvin K, Department for Education and Skills

Doyle L, Hughes M (2004), *Learning without lessons: Supporting learning in small businesses*, Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)

Jude C (2003), 'Liberating Learning', presented at *SETT Conference*, as part of the Scottish Learning Festival

Doeringer P B, Piore M J (1971), *Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis*, D C Heath

Employers' Organisation (2004), *Generic Skills Development in Local Government* (progress report)

Eraut M (2000), 'Teachers learning in the workplace', draft of conference paper presented in Greece

Eraut M (undated), Transfer of Knowledge between Education and Workplace Settings, downloaded from Open University, Netherlands, Expertise Development series, January 2006 www.ou.nl/Docs/Expertise/OTEC/Publicaties/els%20boshuizen/deel3.pdf

Esser A (2004), *To what extent does organisational culture act as a barrier to lifelong learning for non-clinical staff in an acute NHS teaching hospital?* Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MSc in Training and Performance Management, CLMS

Falk I (2001), *Sleight of hand: Job myths, literacy and social capital*, Discussion paper D14/2001, CRLRA Discussion Paper Series

Fonda N (1995), *The evolving role of the non-managerial workforce*, the Prospect Centre

Francis A (1986), *New Technology at Work*, Clarendon Press

Frank F (undated), *Workplace Basic Skills – elusive statistics and real change*, draft of a bulletin by the outgoing Executive Director of the Workplace Basic Skills Network

Frank F, Hamilton M (1993), *Not Just a Number: The role of workplace basic skills programmes in the changing workforce*, report to the Leverhulme Trust, CSET

Frank F, Holland C (1996), 'The Politics of Workplace Literacy', Paper prepared for the *Living Literacies* conference, Manchester, May/June (unpublished)

Fuller A, Ashton D, Felstead A, Unwin L, Walters S, Quinn M (2003), *The Impact of Informal Learning at Work on Business Productivity*, Department for Trade and Industry

Grant L, Yeandle S, Buckner L (2005), *Working below potential: women and part-time work*, Working Paper Series no.40, Equal Opportunities Commission

Gray M (2004), 'The Social Construction of the Service Sector: Institutional Structures and Labour Market Outcomes', *Geoforum*, Vol. 35

Hackman J R, Oldham G R (1971), 'Employee Reactions to Job Characteristics', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Monograph, 55 (3)

Hillage J, Loukas G, Newton B and Tamkin P (2005), *Platform for Progression: Employer Training Pilots, Year two evaluation report,* Department for Education and Skills

Holland C, Szablewski-Cavus P, Grühage-Monetti M (2005), *Training for the Integration of Migrant and Ethnic Workers into the Labour Market and The Local Community,* The Adult Education Centre of Varde, downloaded January 2006 http://www.leonardo-project.com/project/TRIM%2021-03-05.pdf

Hughes K, Moore D (1999), *Pedagogical Strategies for Work-Based Learning*, IEE Working Paper No.12

Hughes G, O'Connell P, Williams J (2004), 'Company training and low-skill consumer-service jobs in Ireland', *International Journal of Manpower*, Vol 25. No 1

Illeris K (2006), 'Lifelong learning and the low-skilled', *International Journal of Lifelong Education,* Vol.25, No. 1

IPD/IFTDO (1999), *Workplace learning, culture and performance*

Jackson N (2000), 'Writing up people at work: Investigations of workplace literacy', *UTS Research Centre Vocational Education & Training Working Knowledge: Productive learning at work Conference* proceedings, 10-13 December, University of Technology Sydney New South Wales, Australia, Working Paper 34

Jude C (2005), *Liberating Learning*, draft article for Basic Skills Bulletin

Julian T (2004), 'Employability skills: balancing the equation', in Gibb J (ed) *Generic skills in vocational education and training: research readings*, NCVER: Australia

Karasek R (1979), 'Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job design', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24

Karasek R, Theorell T (1990), *Healthy work: stress, productivity and the reconstruction of working life*, Basic Books

Keep E (2000), *Learning organisations, lifelong learning and the mystery of the vanishing employers*, SKOPE Research Paper No 8

Keep E, Payne J (2002), *What can the UK learn from the Norwegian and Finnish experience of attempts at work re-organisation?,* SKOPE Research Paper no.41

Kelly C, Kelly J (1991), '"Them and us": social psychology and "the new industrial relations"', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 29

Klein N (2000), *No Logo*, Flamingo (cited in Lindsay, 2005)

Levenson A (2001), *Investing in Workers' Basic Skills: Lessons from Company-Funded Workplace-based Programs,* Center for Effective Organizations, Marshall School of Business, University of Southern Carolina, Vol V, No. 1

Lindsay C (2005), '"Mcjobs", and "good jobs" and skills: job seekers' attitudes to low-skilled service work', *Human Resource Management Journal*, Vol 15, Issue 2, pp50-65

Lucchinelli M (2004), *The Similarities and Differences in Workplace Basic Skills In Australia and the UK*, downloaded from 'The Network', January 2006 www.thenetwork.co.uk/documents/casestudies/casestudy-simanddiff-austanduk.pdf

Lucifora C, McKnight A, Salverda W (2005), 'Low-wage Employment in Europe: A Review of the Evidence', *Socio-Economic Review,* Vol 3

Mansfield R and Mathews D (1985), *Job Competence: a description for use in vocational education and training,* Further Education College, Blagdon

McDonnell F, Zutshi H (2005), *Promoting Skills for Life in Health and Social Care,* scoping study draft report on Phase 1 of the UNISON Led Project

McIntyre J (2000), *Working knowledge and work-based learning: research implications*, UTS Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training

Miller L, Stratton N, Hillage J, Jagger N, Silverman M (2005), *Good practice in Assess-train-assess approaches to workforce development*, DfES Research Report

Moser C (1999), *A Fresh Start - improving literacy and numeracy*, Department for Employment and Education (DfEE), CMBS 1 (known as The Moser Report)

National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd (NCVER) for Australia National Training Authority (ANTA) (2003), *Defining generic skills*, Australia: ANTA/NCVER

National centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd (NCVER) for Australia National Training Authority (ANTA) (2003), *What makes for Good Workplace Learning?*, Australia: ANTA/NCVER

Network, the (undated), case studies listed below, downloaded from website January 2006, www.thenetwork.co.uk/casestudies/casestudies.htm

- Asda Offers LLN Training in the Workplace
- Workplace Basic Skills in Greater Merseyside: case study (Liverpool County Council Leisure Services)
- The Context NHS Programme
- Dustmen Brush up on their Skills

- ESOL in the Workplace for Hotel Staff
- Basic Skills training at Newco Products
- Embedding LLN in an NVQ for School Caretakers
- Stepping Stones – Basic skills training in the NHS

Newton B, Hurstfield J, Miller L, Akroyd K, Gifford J (2006), *Age and Training Participation: Unemployed and Inactive Groups*, Department for Work and Pensions: Extending Working Lives Division

Newton B, Hurstfield J, Miller L, Page R, Akroyd K (2006), *Age and Training: What Employers are looking for when recruiting*, Department for Work and Pensions: Extending Working Lives Division & Skills Strategy Team

Newton B, Hurstfield J, Miller L, Bates P (2005), *Training a Mixed Age Workforce: Practical Tips and Guidance*, Department for Work and Pensions: Age Positive

NHSU (2003), *Developing a Learning Culture at Work*, Expert Seminar Event

O'Brien A, Haslam S, Jetten J, Humphrey L, O'Sullivan L, Postmes T (2004), 'Cynicism and Disengagement among Devalued Employee Groups: the Need to ASPIRe', *Career Development International*, Vol.9, No. 1

O'Hagan J (2005), Untitled draft report of the project *Decisions That Count in health and social care: a problem solving approach to making good mathematics/numeracy decisions*

Oxfordshire Skills for Health (2005), *ORH Estates and Facilities Directorate: ORH Facilities Team Appraisal: Summary report (2004-5),* Oxfordshire Skills for Health

Oxfordshire Skills for Health/SEEDA (undated), *On-the-job learning for Facilities staff at ORH* downloaded January 2006, www.thenetwork.co.uk/providertoolkit/documents/vault/casestudy-oxfordshireskillsforhealth.pdf

Page R, Hillage J (2006), *Vocational Education and Training in the UK: strategies to overcome skill gaps in the workforce*, WZB Discussion Paper

Parker S K, Sprigg C A (1999), 'Minimising strain and maximising learning: The role of job demands, job control and proactive personality', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol 84, No 6

Parsons S, Bynner J (1999), *Literacy, Leaving School and Jobs,* The Basic Skills Agency

Payne J (2002), *Basic skills in the workplace*: *A research review*, Learning and Skills Development Agency

Payne J (2004), *Workplace innovation and the role of public policy: evaluating the impact of the Finnish Workplace Development Programme: limits and possibilities*, SKOPE Research Paper No. 46

Payne J (2005), *What progress is Norway making with lifelong learning? A study of the Norwegian competence reform*, Research paper 55

Price R, Miller L, Payne G (2000), 'Re-engineering the soft machine: the impact of developing technology and changing practice on diagnostic radiographer skill requirements', *Health Services Management Research*, Vol 13

Qualification and Curricula Authority (2006), *Functional skills*, downloaded February 2006, www.qca.org.uk/15983.html

QCAL (2000), 'The Enterprise Based Teacher - an alternative approach to language, literacy and numeracy teaching in the workplace' in *Moving On QCAL State Conference Papers*

Rainbird H, Munro A, Holly L, Leisten R (1999), *The Future of Work in the Public Sector: Learning and Workplace Inequality*, Working paper no.2, ESRC Future of Work Programme

Raper P, Ashton D, Felstead A, Storey J (1997), 'Towards the learning organisation? Explaining current trends in training practice in the UK', *International Journal of Training and Development*, Vol 1, No 1, (cited by Keep, 2000)

Russell Sage Foundation, *The Future of Work* research programme, downloaded February 2006, www.russellsage.org/programs/main/futureofwork/view?searchterm=modest%20skills%20and%20educational%20credentials

Salverda W, Bazen S, Gregory M (2001), *The European-American Gap, Wage Inequality, Earnings Mobility and Skills: A Study for France, Germany and the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States*, European Low-wage Employment Research Network

Sommerlad E, Stern E (1999), *Workplace Learning, Culture and Performance*, Institute of Personnel and Development as a joint venture with the International Federation of Training and Development Organisations

Smith A, Oczkowski E, Noble C, Macklin R (2002), *New Management Practices and Enterprise Training*, NCVER

Training for the Integration of Migrants into the Labour Market and the Local Community (TRIM), The Adult Education Centre of Varde, downloaded January 2006 www.leonardo-project.com/project/TRIM%2021-03-05.pdf

Talwar J P (2002), *Fast Food, Fast Track: Immigrants, Big Business and the American Dream*, Westview (cited in Lindsay 2005)

Turner D (2002), *Employability skills development in the United Kingdom*; Australia: NCVER

Virgona C, Waterhouse P, Sefton R, Sanguinetti J (2004), *Making experience work: Displaced workers provide new insights into generic skills*, Generic skills: Research readings, NCVER

Wagner J (1997), 'Firm Size and Job Quality: A Survey of the Evidence from Germany', *Small Business Economics*, Vol 9

Watkins K E, Marsick V J (1993), *Sculpting the learning organisation: art and science of systemic change*, Jossey-Bass (cited in Balatti, undated)

West M A, Borrill C, Dawson J, Scully J, Carter M, Anelay S, Patterson M, Waring J (2002), 'The link between the management of employees and patient mortality in acute hospitals', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 13, 8