UKCES
UK COMMISSION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Employee Demand for Skills: A Review of Evidence and Policy

Evidence Report 3
June 2009

Analysis › Understanding › Insight › Advice

Employee Demand for Skills: A Review of Evidence & Policy

WM ENTERPRISE:

Dr Steve Johnson

Szymon Sawicki

Claire Pearson

EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE, EDINBURGH Nnapier UNIVERSITY:

Dr Colin Lindsay

Dr Ronald W. McQuaid

Dr Matthew Dutton

Report to UK Commission for Employment and Skills

June 2009

Foreword

Launched on 1st April 2008, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a key recommendation in Lord Leitch's 2006 review of skills *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World* Class Skills. The UK Commission aims to raise UK prosperity and opportunity by improving employment and skills. Its ambition is to benefit individuals, employers, government and society by providing independent advice to the highest levels of the UK Government and Devolved Administrations on how improved employment and skills systems can help the UK become a world class leader in productivity, in employment and in having a fair and inclusive society.

Research and policy analysis plays a fundamental role in the work of the UK Commission and is central to its advisory function. In fulfilling this role, the Research and Policy Directorate of the UK Commission is charged with delivering a number of the core activities of the UK Commission and has a crucial role to play in:

- Assessing progress towards making the UK a world-class leader in employment and skills by 2020;
- Advising Ministers on the strategies and policies needed to increase employment, skills and productivity;
- Examining how employment and skills services can be improved to increase employment retention and progression, skills and productivities.
- Promoting employer investment in people and the better use of skills.

We will produce research of the highest quality to provide an authoritative evidence base; we will review best practice and offer policy innovations to the system; we will undertake international benchmarking and analysis and we will draw on panels of experts, in the UK and internationally, to inform our analysis.

Sharing the findings of our research and policy analysis and engaging with our audience is very important to the UK Commission. Our Evidence Reports are our chief means of reporting our detailed analytical work. Our other products include Summaries of these reports; Briefing Papers; Thinkpieces, seminars and a Research and Policy Convention. All our outputs are accessible in the Research and Policy pages at www.ukces.org.uk

This Evidence Report presents important evidence on the motivations and barriers to skill development amongst individuals, with a particular focus on low skilled individuals. It also reviews the success factors of domestic and selected international policy interventions designed to engage individuals in learning. The report thus provides a platform from which to better understand individual motivation and engagement in skill development and what policy interventions might best tackle the problems presented.

We will discuss the results of this report in a series of seminars to be held in the coming months. Working with stakeholders in this way, we will seek to identify policy innovations which might more effectively raise individual engagement in skills development, building on the policy framework presented within this report.

We hope you find the report useful and informative in building the evidence we need to achieve a more prosperous and inclusive society.

Professor Mike Campbell
Director of Research and Policy Directorate

Lesley Giles
Deputy Director and Head of Research

Table of Contents

Table of Graphs and Charts

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the results of a detailed review of evidence and policy relating to the factors that influence the engagement of the individual in skills development. It incorporates a broad range of formal and informal learning activities, delivered in a range of institutional settings and through different media, including work-based, classroom-based, distance learning and community based learning. The review is deliberately broad in its focus, drawing on evidence and policy relating to people in different positions within the labour market - in or out of work, new entrants into employment, younger and older workers, people with and without qualifications and/or with higher and lower skills. However, a key focus for the research was the barriers and factors affecting access to skills development opportunities among lower skilled and lower qualified people. The review was undertaken by WM Enterprise and the Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK Commission).

The evidence review comprised an overview of the available statistical data for the UK and – where available – constituent countries, and a review of studies that have examined the factors that appear to influence the individual's decision as to whether to undertake skills development activities. Building on this evidence review, the research team brought together the findings of studies that have evaluated the impact on individual participation in skills development of a range of policies that have been implemented in the UK and/or constituent countries from 1998 onwards. A limited international policy review was also undertaken, focused on six countries identified in consultation with expert commentators.

Evidence Review

Key points emerging from the evidence review are:

- People with few qualifications, low-skilled people, older workers, part-time workers and those working in small or non-unionised workplaces tend to have lower than average rates of participation in skills development;

- Barriers to individual demand for skills development include financial factors, lack of advice, information or guidance, negative influences from family or peers and a legacy of negative experiences of education. Other barriers identified in the literature include limited awareness of the potential benefits of skills development and perceived poor quality or lack of access to relevant provision;
- Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors appear to influence individuals' investment in skills development; however the existing evidence does not enable a clear ranking of these barriers;
- For people who are in work, employers can play a key role in overcoming barriers to demand for skills development. This suggests that policies to promote the business case for investment in skills would have a positive impact on individual participation in skills development;
- The 'culture of learning' within the workplace appears to play an important role in influencing both employer and employee decisions about investment in skills development;
- Clear progression routes and accreditation can play a role in facilitating continued skills development, particularly for people over the age of 40;
- Evidence suggests that returns to accredited training at the lowest levels of qualification tend to be relatively low. This is likely to influence low-skilled individuals' decisions to invest in skills development;
- Flexible learning provision can promote employee participation in learning. In some cases work-based provision is desired, in others home or community-based provision may be attractive to learners;
- Working in a unionised workplace tends to be associated with a higher probability of skills development. There is evidence that trade unions and trade union representatives can play a key role both in addressing individual barriers and influencing employer attitudes and practices.

Policy Review

The policy review built on the results of the evidence review and examined six broad types of policy intervention:

- Financial support measures
- Information, advice and guidance
- Awareness, motivation and confidence

- Time to learn
- Workplace-based initiatives
- Community-based initiatives

Key findings were as follows:

- There is a considerable volume of evidence on the impact of these types of initiative on the propensity of individual participation in learning; however it is difficult to evaluate their overall net impact and/or compare results between studies;
- International evidence in particular highlights the importance of the wider social, policy and institutional environment in setting the context for specific policy initiatives;
- Financial support appears to be an effective way of stimulating further skills development activity among people who are in work and/or already qualified to level 3 or above. In particular, the necessity to pay back loans acts as an important incentive for beneficiaries to complete their learning programmes;
- There is clear evaluation evidence that Education Maintenance Allowances lead to staying-on rates in full-time education that are higher than would otherwise have occurred. EMA also appears to have positive impacts on parental attitudes to staying-on among young people;
- The evidence suggests that, for most people, financial support in and of itself will be insufficient to stimulate significant increases in skills development activity. Additional support in the form of information, advice and/or guidance is important, particularly for less well-qualified people and/or those with negative experiences of formal education;
- For people who are out of work, have not undertaken skills development for some time and may be ill-informed and/or under-confident about skills development, support appears to be most effective when it is delivered on a one-to-one basis. This may occur either through 'anonymous' mechanisms such as ***learndirect*** or through community-based initiatives;
- For people who are in work, and in particular those with lower skill and qualification levels, support appears to be particularly effective when it occurs at the workplace, for example through Union Learning Representatives or other learning 'champions'. This appears to be particularly beneficial where employers 'buy in' to the business case for skills development and where this is reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of line managers;

- A statutory right to time to undertake skills development is under consideration in the UK, and – while consultation findings have been broadly supportive - there is limited evaluation evidence to judge the likely impact of such a move on individual demand for skills development;
- Finally, policy initiatives need to take account of the differing motivations to undertake skills development that are associated with different groups within the population. In particular, the notion of 'returns to learning, skills or qualifications' needs to be interpreted broadly, incorporating broadly financial/economic considerations and wider notions of self-esteem, health and quality of life;
- In particular, policy needs to address the finding that the financial returns to learning / skills / qualifications appear to be lower and less certain among lower-skilled and lower-qualified groups. This raises the possibility that qualifications reform will be helpful in clarifying the benefits of skills development for individuals and employers, and thereby help to enhance the effectiveness of financial and other support initiatives;
- The report concludes with a policy framework, which highlights the importance of the broader context within which policy interventions are developed and delivered. The framework illustrates the need to align new initiatives with broader and longer-term efforts to change the prevailing culture to develop a more supportive environment for skill development. This encompasses, for example, parental attitudes toward staying on in education and employer practices toward training for lower skilled workers.

1 Background and Approach to Study

1.1 Background

This report presents the findings from a review of evidence on the factors facilitating and impeding individual demand for skill development, and a review of policy initiatives adopted in the UK (encompassing policies implemented in any or all of the four constituent nations of the UK) over the past ten years that have been designed explicitly to address barriers to individual participation in skill development activities. In addition, the study reviewed selected policy initiatives implemented in six countries identified as potentially providing lessons for policy development in the UK. This review was undertaken by WM Enterprise in partnership with the Employment Research Institute (ERI), Edinburgh Napier University for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK Commission). The purpose of the study is to provide a synthesis of existing literature on individual participation in skills development to provide a baseline understanding of the associated issues and to inform further work of the UK Commission.

1.2 Evidence review

This element of the study examined the evidence base on individual learning behaviours, attitudes and motivations. It reviewed existing research on barriers to skills development as understood and experienced by individuals. The objectives of the Empirical Evidence Review were to:

- identify the factors which are evidenced as motivating an individual to participate in skills development or to access job or career enhancing training;
- identify potential extrinsic and intrinsic barriers to participation in or access to learning, exploring how important these different barriers are within different organisational and occupational contexts;
- identify and assess approaches to measuring barriers to participation in or access to learning; discuss methodological weaknesses/limitations; and consider the utility of different approaches in helping us to understand issues around individuals' participation in learning and skills development (across population groups, sectors, according to employment status and/or socio-demographic characteristics);
- draw on international evidence, particularly focusing on countries with similar sectoral and labour market profiles to the UK (and therefore of greatest comparative relevance);

- compare the differing approaches to encouraging skills development across the nations of the UK.

The methodology involved a review of the following groups of literature:

- academic studies and published research on attitudes towards and barriers to learning;
- research outputs and policy documents published by UK governments, UK Commission for Employment and Skills (and previously Sector Skills Development Agency), sector skills bodies, Learning and Skills Council, NIACE, the Scottish enterprise network and other public bodies;
- UK research and policy documents published by other stakeholders, including CBI, specific professional bodies, TUC/trade unions, and other intelligence providers such as the Work Foundation, CIPD and others;
- National Reform Programmes, other national policy documents, EU project reports and other documents reporting on skills issues and solutions in comparable EU nations and regions;
- EU-level research and policy documents published by the European Commission, CEDEFOP, the European Council, UNICE, the European TUC/European Trade Union Institute.

Academic journals searched as part of the evidence review included:

- Journal of Education and Work
- International Journal of Training and Development
- Regional Studies
- Journal of Education Policy
- Industrial and Commercial Training
- Oxford Review of Economic Policy
- Local Economy
- Work Employment and Society

1.3 UK policy review

The main phase of the Policy Review focused on identifying policy initiatives that have operated at the national level (defined as UK-wide and/or within one or more of the constituent nations of the UK) that have the explicit objective of addressing one or more of the barriers to individual participation in learning that were identified through the Evidence Review. The scope includes initiatives aimed at individuals who are in work as well as those who are not in work (including job-seekers, lone parents and those on inactive benefits), although particular attention was paid to initiatives concerned with encouraging the participation in learning of people with low or no qualifications and/or had not participated in skills development activities for some time.

In terms of the demographic characteristics of the target groups for policy initiatives, the review took a broad view. Young people are the target for many policy initiatives, but equally there is a concern with the participation in learning of older people, both in and out of work. A broad view was also taken of 'skills development', ranging from basic or life skills to vocational work-based skills to higher level skills. Skills development may or may not lead to formal qualifications.

The research team consulted with UK Commission and members of the project Advisory Group and undertook extensive searches of official and academic web sites and literature in order to identify policy initiatives that fall into the scope of the study (as described above) and – in particular – those that have been the subject of evaluation or similar studies that appeared likely to provide us with robust evidence of impact.

It is important to recognise that this review concentrates on those policy documents, reviews and evaluations that are available within the public domain, and are published (or referred to) on the web sites or in the documentation produced by the main government departments and agencies. It excludes evaluations that have not been published and does not cover initiatives that have been implemented at the sub-national level.

Documents (in most cases evaluation reports, assessments or reviews) were reviewed using a template in order to ensure consistency and comparability. In brief, the template covered the following:

- Brief description of policy initiative, nature of intervention, target group, geographical coverage, time period;
- Nature of evidence on impact, evaluation methodology used, sample sizes, method of analysis etc
- Summary of evaluation evidence, with a focus on evidence of additionality in terms of participation in skills development and indications of why and how particular initiatives appear to work and for which beneficiary groups;
- Assessment of key lessons learned and implications for policy going forward.

1.4 International policy review

The approach to this aspect of the work sought to identify countries and policy initiatives that most closely match the initiatives reviewed in the UK.

In particular the research team:

- Reviewed relevant OECD, ILO, EU (e.g. CEDEFOP and Mutual Learning Programme) and other data on skills, with a view to drawing up a 'long list' of countries for more detailed review;
- Undertook a 'Delphi-type' study, which involved around 20 experts to ascertain their views on which countries and/or policy initiatives were worthy of further investigation, given the objectives of the study (more details in Appendix B);
- In consultation with the UK Commission, established a short-list of countries for detailed investigation. The countries identified were Australia, Finland, Sweden, Singapore, Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland.;
- Undertook a literature search to identify relevant and useful key policy, research and evaluation documents for each selected country/policy;
- Made email contact with the relevant government departments in order to obtain further information.

It is important to note that the international policy review was relatively small-scale and focused in nature. It is, of course, recognised that the success or otherwise of policy initiatives are influenced significantly by national labour market conditions, policy frameworks/institutions and broader cultural and societal factors, often with strong historical roots. These issues are not addressed in detail in this report; suffice to say that the research was not concerned with potential 'policy borrowing' from other countries. This document focuses on reporting some of the lessons that have been learned in these countries from specific policy initiatives designed – in whole or part - to stimulate individual demand for skills development.

1.5 Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** reviews the wide range of research evidence on the participation of individuals in skills development activities and the factors that facilitate and inhibit this participation;
- **Section 3** presents a review of the lessons learned from evaluations of policy initiatives that have been implemented in the UK over the past 10 years, together with some examples of policies from the six selected countries;
- **Section 4** brings together the findings and presents a suggested framework for policy development;
- **Section 5** sets out some recommendations for future research.

2 Evidence Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the key issues emerging from a review of literature and evidence on individuals' attitudes towards, demand for, and barriers to pursuing skills development activities. The review seeks to specifically identify both **intrinsic**, individual characteristics and **extrinsic** factors that feed into individuals' behaviour and decision making around learning and training. As discussed in greater detail below, intrinsic factors (i.e. related to the individual's attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and motivation) have been the focus of a number of studies. Experiences of and access to skills development are also shaped by extrinsic factors including work and family commitments, workplace issues and employers' attitudes, and the affordability and accessibility of provision.

Previous research offers a variety of models for conceptualising and understanding the barriers to participation in skills development faced by individuals, but most point to a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic issues as being important. For example, in the UK, City and Guilds (2008) has suggested that barriers to learning participation can be conceptualised in terms of issues of:

- motivation (the need to improve ambitions to engage in skills development);
- access (barriers such as lack of childcare, course availability and location);
- finance (the need for funding to ensure that economically disadvantaged groups are not excluded);
- time (the need to target provision at people who have little time to undertake skills development due to family or other pressures, or those who work unusual hours);
- quality (learners need to be sure that their time and investment will result in high quality learning).

Another approach to understanding barriers to skills development suggested by NIACE (2004) involves identifying 'structural and situational' barriers. These barriers include time constraints that may prevent individuals from undertaking skills training; the financial cost of training; the lack of relevant training opportunities near the home and issues over accessing childcare (see Newton et al., 2005).

Table 2.1: Cultural, attitudinal and dispositional barriers to learning

Cultural	• Learning perceived to go against social, gender or family norms
Attitudinal	• Learning perceived as something narrow, formal and assessed • Learning institutions believed to cater exclusively for other age and social groups • Scepticism about the relevance and value of learning
Dispositional	• Lack of confidence • Fear of failure and exposing weaknesses • Belief that one is too old to learn.

Source: Newton et al. (2005: 26)

The **conceptual** basis for studies of access to skills development is often seen as the need to incentivise individuals (and business) to invest in 'human capital'. Human capital theory (see, for example, Becker, 1964) is based on the idea that expenditure on training and education should be seen as an investment (investing in human capital, whether by the individual or an employer, is seen as a choice motivated by the desire to increase productivity and income). The predicted rate of return on investments in human capital is therefore seen as being vital to individuals' and organisations' choices. As Becker (1992: 44) has noted: *"Human capital analysis starts with the assumption that individuals decide on their education, training, medical care, and other additions to knowledge and health by weighing the benefits and costs. Benefits include cultural and other non-monetary gains along with improvement in earnings and occupations, while costs usually depend mainly on the foregone value of the time spent on these investments."* Becker draws a key distinction between general skills (useful to a range of employers) and specific skills (which increase the productivity of the worker in his current employment, but do not improve the employability of workers if they are forced to change jobs). For Becker it is more rational for employers to invest in the most specific skills for their workforce. Human capital theory has attracted criticism because of this apparent economic determinism, with socio-economic outcomes following from rationally chosen 'investments' in skills development. However, a number of empirical studies have supported the thesis that investment in human capital – particularly in terms of education, skills and experience – is

correlated with labour market progression, advancement within organisations and increased productivity. Perhaps as importantly, individuals' investment and participation in human capital/skills development can be seen as key to their effective participation in teamworking with others and so their contribution to business productivity. For Booth and Snower (1996: 1) *"the acquisition of human capital is recognised to be absolutely central to countries' growth performance. When people acquire skills they make each other more productive. The more training you have – on-the-job or off-the-job – the more I can learn from you about doing the job effectively, and the more productively the two of us can interact on production, innovation, distribution and sales"*.

Finally, there are a number of **definitional** issues associated with such a broad-ranging review. The term 'skills development' is used in this study as an overarching term to describe common trends or issues across both work-related training and other, broader forms of adult learning. The studies we review use a number of terms to define distinctive aspects of the skills development process. The Labour Force Survey (now the Annual Population Survey) focuses on work-related (or 'job-related') training[1]. Such specific work-related training is also the focus for research on how employer and workplace factors affect access to skills provision. In some cases, this relates specifically to employer-provided work-related training. For example, the Workplace Employee Relations Survey asks individuals about training received 'either paid for or organised by your employer'.

Other studies are interested in participation in broader 'adult learning', covering both taught and non-taught learning that results in the attainment of skills/knowledge. The Adult Participation in Learning Survey defines learning, as *"practising, studying or reading about something… it can also mean being taught, instructed or coached. This is so you can develop skills, knowledge, abilities or understanding of something"*. This review covers skills development activities in relation to both work-related training and other forms of adult learning. However, given the overall focus for the research, our main interest is in work-related training or other skills development activities of value in the workplace.

[1] Respondents to the Labour Force Survey/Annual Population Survey who are of working age and who are not still at school or on government training programmes which are 'college-based programmes' are asked whether they received any job-related training or education in the last four weeks and the last 13 weeks.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. **Section 2.2** reviews some of the major survey data and academic studies on who has access to skills development opportunities. While relatively few of these studies provide insights into the attitudes of individuals to learning and training, they do offer information on which groups are more likely to be disadvantaged in terms of access – therefore setting the context for the discussion to follow on barriers to skills development (and the facilitating factors that can promote/improve access). **Section 2.3** further explores the evidence base on intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing participation in skills development, bringing together key themes from major survey exercises, qualitative labour market research and the occupational psychology literature. **Section 2.4** then specifically focuses on barriers to participation, with specific consideration of barriers to higher education and further education and additional challenges faced by unemployed people. It reviews major survey evidence on key barriers to skill development faced by individuals in the UK and then considers intrinsic and extrinsic barriers in more detail, with reference to both quantitative and qualitative studies on skills development take-up. The section concludes by briefly reflecting on evidence of good practice in overcoming barriers to participation in the workplace. Finally, **Section 2.5** reflects on the preceding analysis, identifying potential implications for policy.

2.2 Who accesses skills development opportunities?

2.2.1 Key data measuring access to skills development opportunities

There are a number of existing data sources and studies of the characteristics of those undertaking skills development activities. The brief review of major survey data (and key academic analyses of these data), provided below, essentially focuses on a number of recurring themes. What is the extent of take-up of training and other adult learning activities and how does this differ according to location, workplace and individuals' characteristics? And, more specifically, what are the most significant predictors of participation in work-related training?

2.2.2 Evidence from the Annual Population Survey and Adult Participation in Learning Survey

Results from the Annual Population Survey (previously Labour Force Survey) for the period 2005-07 suggest that between 11.2 per cent and 10.4 per cent of respondents within the UK working age population reported receiving job-related training during the previous month. In the nations of Great Britain and for the UK as a whole there is a slight downward trend. Women were generally slightly more likely than men to report having participated in training within the previous four weeks (Figure 2.2). Among the key sectoral trends consistently reported in APS data are the higher proportion of public sector workers who report that they receive job-related training (22 per cent compared to only 10-11 per cent of private sector employees). Finally, lower qualified individuals are significantly less likely than average to participate in training. Figures for 2007 suggest that those reporting themselves to be qualified to National Vocational Qualification/Scottish Vocational Qualification (N/SVQ) Level 4 or equivalent were more than one and a half times more likely to be receiving job-related training than were lower qualified individuals.

The figures for Northern Ireland show greater variation and participation rates here have generally been lower than in England, Scotland or Wales (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Estimates of the numbers receiving job-related training in the four UK nations in 2007 were as follows:

- England: 3,267,400 (estimated working age population: 31,507,300);
- Northern Ireland: 83,000 (estimated working age population: 1,081,700);
- Scotland: 355,300 (estimated working age population: 3,199,400);
- Wales: 196,800 (estimated working age population: 1,785,200).

Figure 2.1: Participation in job-related training in last four weeks (%) – Annual Population Survey

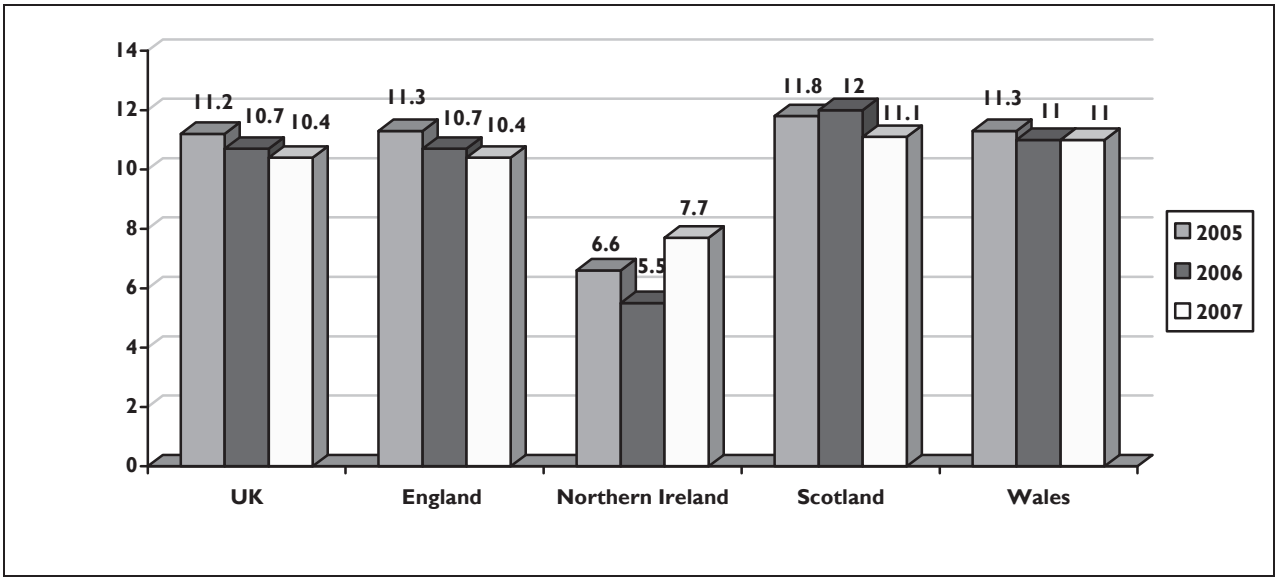
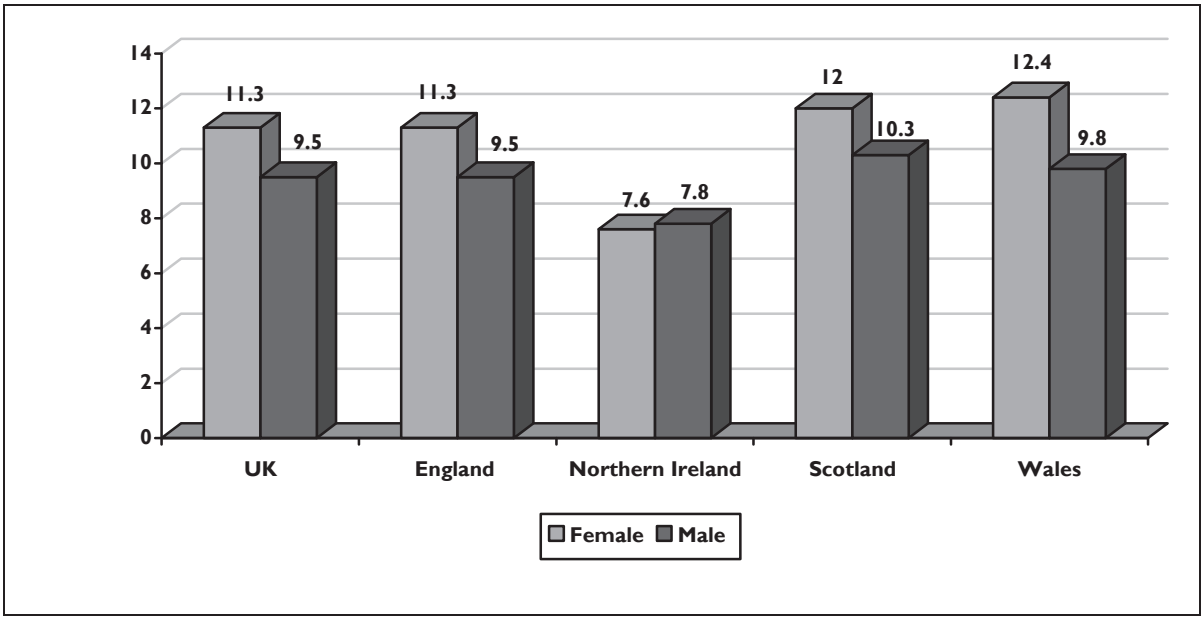


Figure 2.2: Participation in job-related training in last four weeks by gender (%) -2007

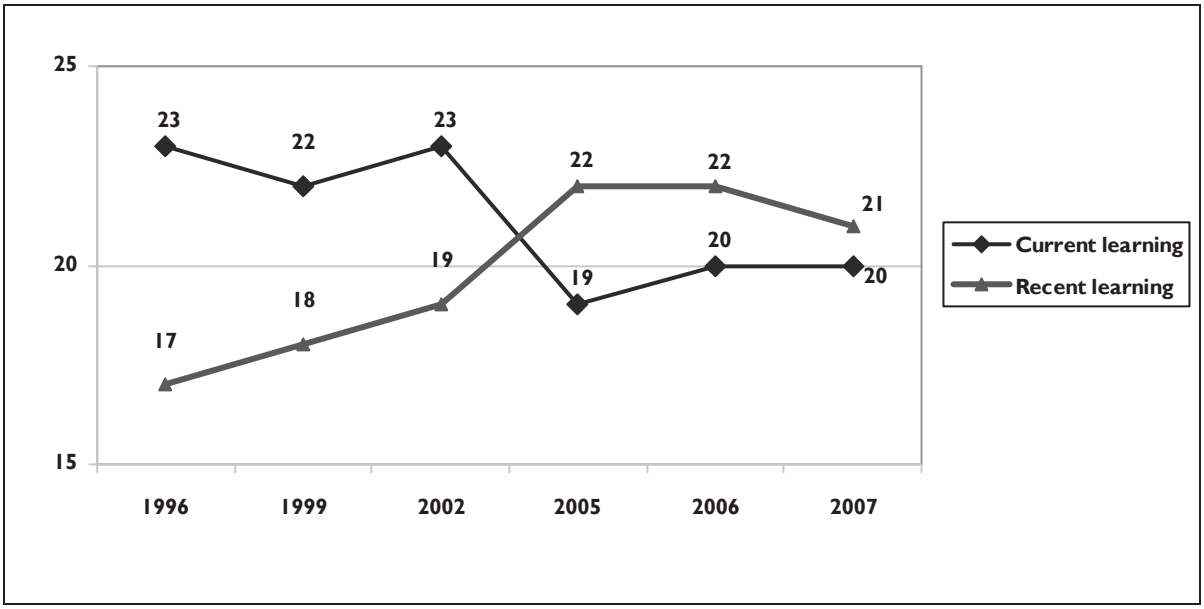


The Adult Participation in Learning Survey conducted UK-wide annually by the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is based on a weighted sample of 5,000 adults aged 17 and over. The survey gathers information on any and all forms of adult learning and skills development. Respondents are asked if they are currently undertaking learning, have done so in the preceding three years (defined as 'recent learning'), before then, or at all since leaving compulsory education.

In 2007, 20 per cent of respondents said that they were involved in learning at the time of the research, and 21 per cent had undertaken learning in the previous three years. A further 25 per cent had been involved in learning but not within the previous three years while 34 per cent said that they had not been involved in learning since leaving full-time education or 'didn't know'. The overall 2007 figure of 41 per cent participating in current or recent learning is slightly lower than that found in 2006, but generally the trend has been relatively stable since 1996 (Figure 2.3).

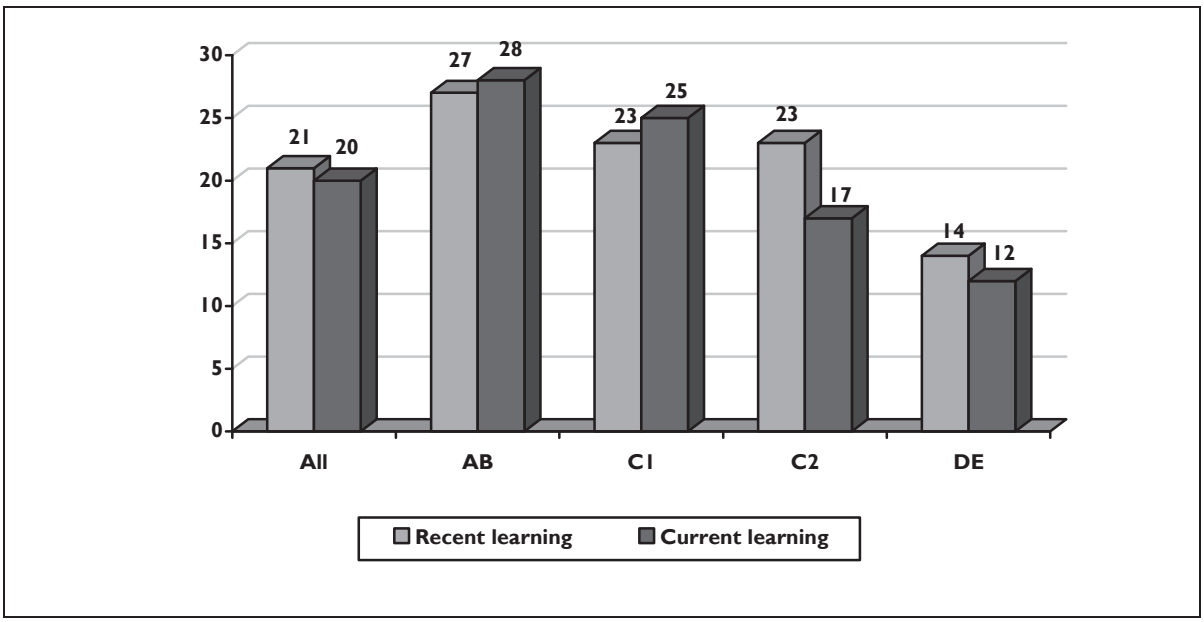
The NIACE survey has consistently shown differences in participation rates according to age, ethnicity, occupation and socio-economic status (see Aldridge and Tuckett, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). For example, the 2007 survey shows that combined current and recent participation rates among the 'AB' socio-economic groups[2] were approximately double that of unskilled workers and people on low incomes ('DE' groups) at 55 per cent and 26 per cent respectively (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.3: Participation in adult learning (%) – NIACE survey 1996-2007



[2] NIACE uses National Readership Survey market research categorisations, which define group AB as taking in 'managerial, administrative or professional' or 'intermediate managerial, administrative or professional' workers; C1 is defined as 'supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional'; C2 'skilled manual workers'; and DE 'semi and unskilled manual workers' and 'casual or lower grade workers' and those who depend on benefits.

Figure 2.4: Participation in adult learning by socio-economic status (%) – NIACE survey 2007



Recent or current learning is also more common among employees (around 48 per cent) than unemployed people seeking work (43 per cent) and economically inactive people (29 per cent). Retired people consistently report the lowest learning participation rates in NIACE surveys (19 per cent in 2007). Similarly, the NIACE data repeatedly show marked differences according to age group, with (for example) 20-24 year-olds more than twice as likely to report engaging in learning compared with those aged between 55 and 64.

There is little evidence of gender differences in participation in overall learning among those responding to the 2007 NIACE survey: 21 per cent of men and 20 per cent of women were currently engaged in learning; a further 20 per cent of men and 22 per cent of women were recent learners. However, there has been considerable variation in NIACE survey data on participation by gender, so that it is not possible to identify clear trends over time. In the 2007 survey, minority ethnic respondents were more than twice as likely to be currently engaged in learning than were white people (37 per cent compared to 18 per cent), but these data are likely to mask wide variations across different ethnic groups and are based on relatively small samples.

2.2.3 Evidence from the National Adult Learning Survey

The National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) - which covers England, Scotland and Wales - reinforces most of the findings reported above. The 2005 survey (Snape et al, 2006) highlights the following key findings:

- 80 per cent of adults had participated in some form of learning (broadly defined to include taught and 'self-directed' learning) during the three years prior to the survey, an increase of 4 percentage points on the 2002 figure;
- Learning participation rates tend to decline with age, although the survey noted strong increases in participation rates between 2002 and 2005 among those aged over 50;
- Learning participation is strongly linked with educational qualifications, with 46 per cent of respondents with no qualifications having undertaken learning in the previous three years;
- However, the survey did detect an increase in learning activity among those with no qualifications, from 29 per cent in 2002 to 46 per cent in 2005;
- Respondents in paid work were the most likely to participate in learning (between 80 and 91 per cent), while between 51 and 60 per cent of economically inactive people (including retired people, those looking after a family and people unable to work due to a disability) had participated in learning;
- Participation in learning is positively associated with household income;
- A third of 'non-learners' would like to have done some form of learning. Incentives that would encourage this group include funding (24 per cent), advice (15 per cent), expectation of increased job chances (12 per cent and learning available at the right time (10 per cent) or place (10 per cent);
- 76 per cent of respondents were aware of ***learndirect*** and 14 per cent had used it.

2.2.4 Some key academic studies on access to skills development

A number of studies have identified the characteristics of those best able to access *work-related training* in particular, although many of these studies refer to the 1980s and early 1990s. For example, Blundell et al. (1996) used UK National Child Development Study data to identify trends in the take-up of work-related training among 2,700 people between 1981 and 1991. They found a significantly increased probability of 'employer provided training' among:

- those leaving school with any qualifications (and the higher the level of qualification, the greater probability of accessing work-related training);
- those reporting having received work-related training prior to 1981;
- those reporting working in professional/management or skilled/non-manual occupations, rather than manual jobs;
- those who reported working in the public sector in 1981;
- trade union members.

Probit models showed that the level of qualification upon leaving school and the level of skill of individuals' occupation had the strongest effect on the probability of receiving training for both men and women.

Arulampalam and Booth (2001) used the same National Child Development Study dataset and found an increased number of training interventions reported by:

- those with higher basic educational attainment;
- those holding qualifications (being qualified to O Level, A Level or Degree were all statistically significant, with the degree of relationship increasing with level of qualification);
- those reporting having received work-related training prior to 1981;
- those reporting working in professional/management, sales or clerical work;
- those reporting certain demographic characteristics – people residing with permanent partners were significantly more likely to take up training, but people with children were less likely to train;
- those employed in larger workplaces.

Multivariate analysis suggests that level of qualification (and especially attainment at A Level and Degree level) had the strongest effect on the incidence of training.

Jenkins et al. (2003) also deployed the UK National Child Development Study dataset and report similar findings, with the incidence of work-related training during cohort members' 30s and early 40s significantly associated with:

- higher basic educational attainment;
- those holding qualifications;
- higher salary earners;

- employee productivity.

Earlier work by Green et al. (1999) used data from the Employers' Manpower and Skills Practices Survey, which was conducted in 1991, alongside Labour Force Survey data, to explore factors associated with workplace training. Regression models found a significantly increased probability of training among:

- those working at larger sites;
- those working at sites where managers reported skills shortages when recruiting;
- those working at sites where men made up a higher proportion of the workforce (significant for manual employees only);
- those working at sites where managers reported facing competition from five or more other local businesses (significant for non-manual employees only);
- those working at sites that were part of larger, multi-site organisations (significant for non-manual employees only);
- those working at unionised workplaces.

This study also found that the dominant skills profile of the workforce mattered. For example, non-manual workers had a higher probability of receiving training in workplaces where non-manual workers were the majority; while manual workers had a higher probability of receiving training in workplaces where they were the majority. The analysis concluded that variables related to the individual's occupation (whether manual or non-manual) and establishment size had the strongest effects on the incidence and intensity of training. At the individual level, level of qualification had the strongest effect.

Harris (1999) conducted a more detailed analysis of a single quarter of Labour Force Survey data and reported a significantly increased probability of 'job-related training' among:

- those working for longer tenures at their current organisation;
- (among women) those without caring responsibilities for children below the age of five;
- trade union members.

This study also found that individuals working for larger employers were more likely to receive work-related training, and that large employers appear more likely to offer training to individuals with characteristics that are usually associated with a lower probability of participation in skills development activities. Probit analysis identified the strongest marginal effects on training participation as being associated with the skill level of individuals' occupations and their industry of employment.

Boheim and Booth (2004) used linked employer-employee data from the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey, and identified a significantly increased probability of training among:

- those working at sites that were part of larger, multi-site organisations (significant for non-manual female employees only, and all manual employees);
- full-time employees;
- those working at unionised workplaces (significant for all manual employees and non-manual male employees).

Arulampalam and Booth (1998) used British Household Panel Survey data to identify relationships between work-related training and workplace/occupation characteristics. Regression modelling found that:

- those on short-term/flexible contracts had a significantly lower probability of receiving training compared to those on permanent contracts;
- part-timers had a significantly lower probability of receiving training compared to full-timers;
- men, white people and people residing with a permanent partner had a significantly higher probability of receiving training;
- those in more skilled occupations were more likely to receive training.

The marginal effect estimates show that the strongest effects over the probability of receiving training are related to variables associated with the skill level of occupations. The strongest effect related to the individual having a professional or managerial occupation.

Analyses of major datasets provide only limited insights into why and how individuals make decisions around taking up skills development activities. However, these and other research findings help us to develop a picture of those employees and individuals who are more or less likely to have access to work-related training and/or other forms of skills development. Table 2.1 summarises common findings on access to work-related training

The academic studies highlighted above have identified a range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors associated with access to work-related training. Given the varying methods and datasets used by the studies described above it is not possible to arrive at a more detailed ranking of different predictors of participation. Nevertheless, this evidence would appear to clearly suggest that individuals being higher-qualified and higher-skilled is a crucial predictor of access to work-related training; i.e. **levels of access appear to be highest among those who are least disadvantaged**.

Table 2.1 summarises these studies, indicating which factors are associated with increased probability to access work-related training.

Table 2.1: Factors associated with increased probability of access to work-related training (some key UK academic studies, 1996-2004)

	Authors and date of publication; dataset; study date						
Factor	Arulampalam/Booth 1998; BHPS 1991-95	Arulampalam/Booth 2001; NCDS 1981-91	Blundell et al. 1996; NCDS 1981-91	Boheim/Booth 2004; WERS 1998	Green et al. 1999; EMSPS/LFS 1991	Harris 1999; LFS 1995	Jenkins et al. 2003; NCDS 2000
Higher levels of qualification		√	√		√		√
Previous work-related training		√	√				
Age 11 literacy attainment		√					√
Higher skilled or paid jobs	√	√	√		√		√
Employee productivity							√
Union member/ recognition			√	√	√	√	
Full-time contract	√			√	√		
Permanent partner	√	√			√		
Larger sites/ organisations		√		√	√	√	
Public sector			√		√		
Employer levels of competition					√		√
Employer skills shortages					√		√

Source: WM Enterprise and Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University

2.3 Factors influencing individual participation in skills development

2.3.1 Introduction

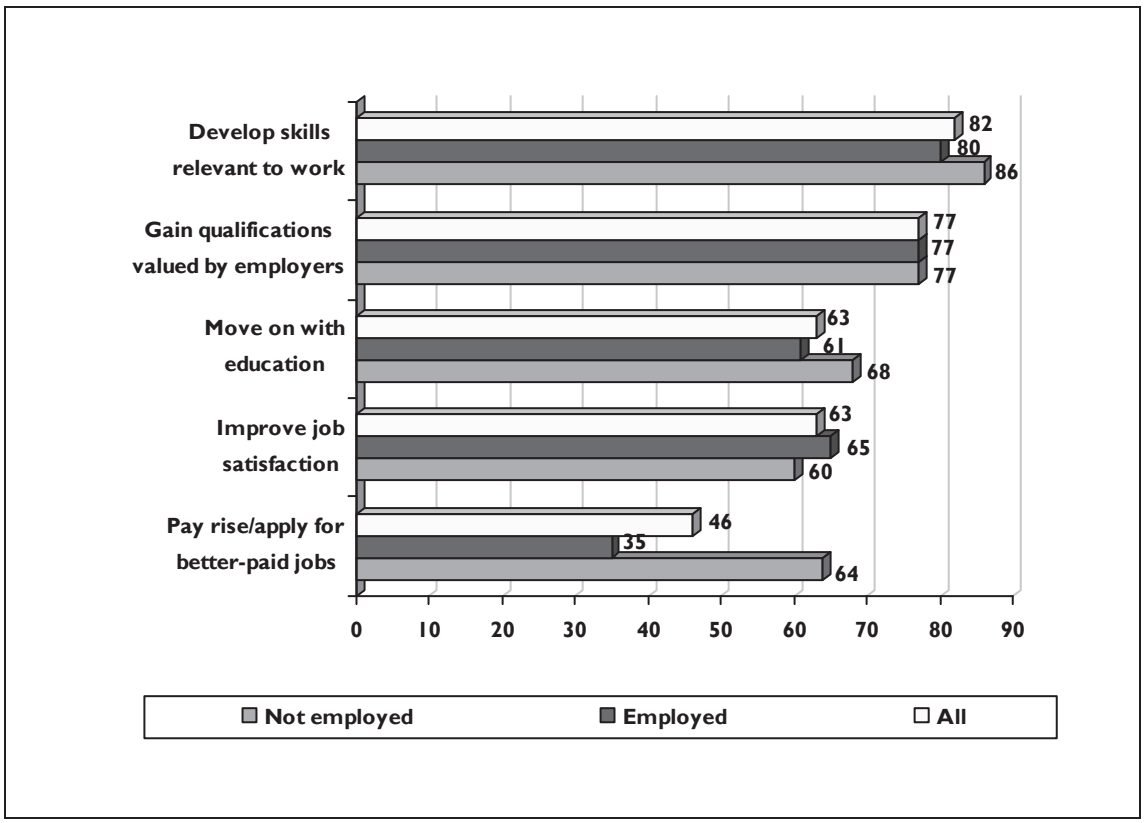
The analyses of major datasets described above provide a useful starting point in developing a picture of those employees and individuals who are more or less likely to have access to work-related training and/or other forms of skills development. A number of potentially important issues highlighted by key studies are now discussed in greater detail, taking in findings on intrinsic factors (such as the individual's motivation to learn, educational attainment, skills, socio-economic status, age, gender and ethnicity) and extrinsic factors (such as household circumstances and workplace issues).

2.3.2 Intrinsic motivating factors

Motivation to undertake skills development – lessons from the labour market literature

Recent UK-wide survey research with more than 2,000 learners for the Scottish Qualifications Authority identified 'developing skills relevant to current work' and 'gaining qualifications valued by employers' as the motivators most often mentioned by those who had recently engaged in, or enrolled in, courses leading to a qualification (IFF, forthcoming). Among the main motivators, the clearest difference between those in and out of work was that getting 'better paid work' was more often a priority for those currently without a job (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Reasons for starting course leading to qualification (%)

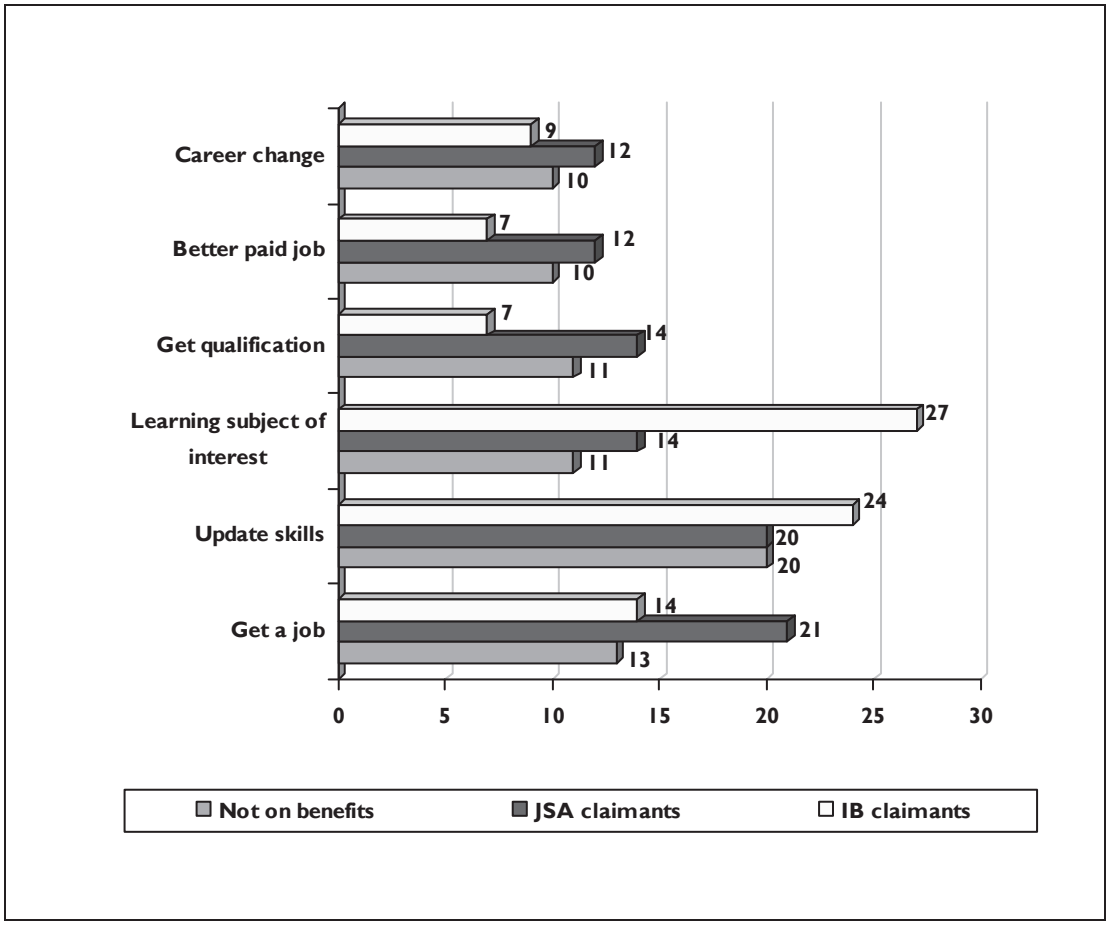


Source: IFF (forthcoming)

Further research on motivation to take up skills development by the LSC (2008g) identified key drivers to take up college provision, with the issues most often mentioned being: the need to upgrade/update skills (89 per cent of respondents); to study a subject of interest (81 per cent); to achieve a qualification (80 per cent); to get a job (73 per cent) or change career (60 per cent); to access further education or training (60 per cent); and to get a better paid job (56 per cent).

When asked which of these barriers was the *most* important, clear differences were apparent across different groups in the labour market. Those claiming incapacity benefits were more likely to prioritise learning about a subject of interest – they were two and a half times more likely to mention this motivating factor than were people not claiming benefits – while the single most important priority most often mentioned by those claiming Job Seeker's Allowance was, understandably, getting a job (see Figure 2.5). An obvious reason for such differences may be that claimants of incapacity benefits may be unlikely to consider themselves ready for the world of work, and so prioritise alternative benefits associated with participation in skills development activities.

Figure 2.6: Main key motivators for groups taking up college learning (%)



Source: LSC (2008g)

The same research reported a number of differences in the aspirations prioritised by specific groups. For example, low income parents who had spent time out of the labour market due to caring responsibilities were more likely to prioritise studying a subject of interest as their key driver for taking up college learning. Age also mattered – 'achieving a qualification' was the key driver for taking up college learning for more than one-fifth of the 20-24 age group, but for less than one in ten of those aged over 45. The importance of 'upgrading/updating skills' as a key driver for taking up learning increased with age.

Previous studies have similarly identified important differences in what motivates different groups of prospective learners. Sargent and Aldridge (2002) sought to differentiate between drivers related to:

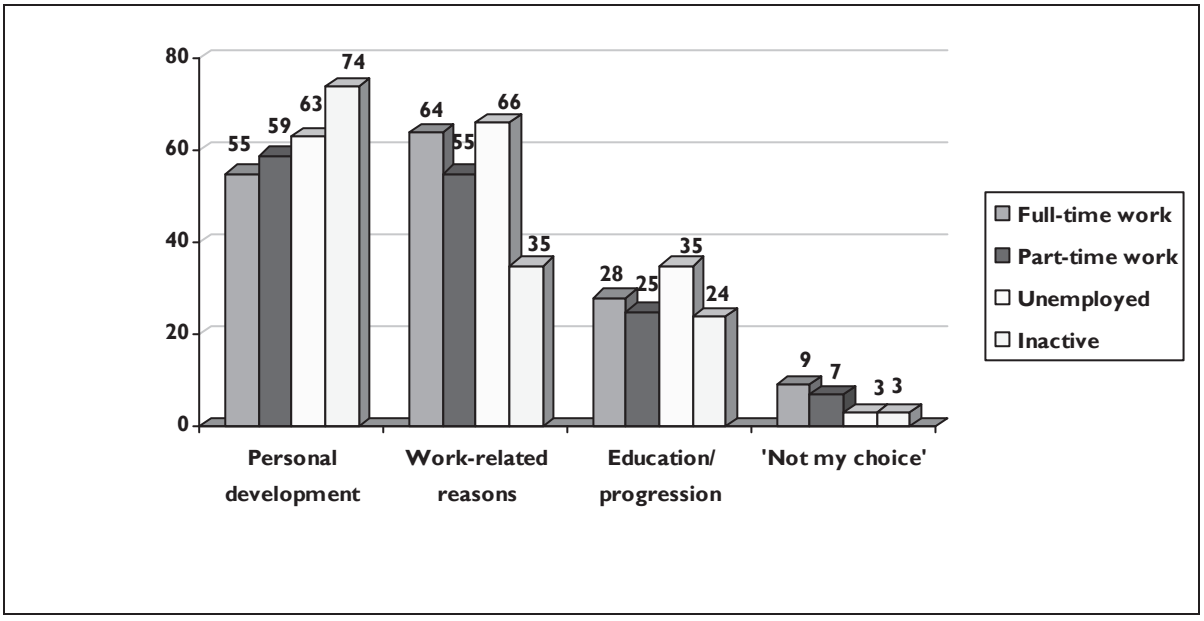
- personal development (such as interest in subject matter; enjoyment in learning; desire to build confidence or knowledge);
- work-related reasons (such as to get a job; change job; gain promotion or pay rise; change type of work; improve job satisfaction);
- education and progression (such as to gain a qualification or access to further learning);

- ‘not my choice’ reasons (a requirement of employers or professional bodies; or a condition of receiving benefits).

In general terms, personal development drivers were more often mentioned by unemployed and economically inactive people. In total, almost three-quarters of economically inactive people named personal development issues as motivating their choice of learning, compared to only 55 per cent of full-time workers. It is worth noting that the extent to which inactive people envisage making a prompt return to work will vary considerably, and may shape issues motivating participation in skills development opportunities.

Conversely, economically inactive people were generally less likely to name work-related reasons for engaging in learning – only 22 per cent of these respondents said that ‘getting a job’ was a reason for learning, compared to 47 per cent of unemployed job seekers. Among those in work, ‘to help in my current job’ was the most often named work-related reason for participating in learning. In total, 64 per cent of full-time workers and 66 per cent of unemployed job seekers named work-related reasons for learning, compared to only 35 per cent of economically inactive people (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7: Reasons for choosing main learning option (%)



Source: Sargent and Aldridge (2002)

Earlier studies have concluded that, for those in work, the benefits sought from engaging in work-related training often tend to be job-focused, around job satisfaction, promotion and earnings (Maguire et al., 1993; Park, 1994).

Tamkin and Hillage's (1997) case study research with employers found that individuals wanted to engage in learning because they believed it would improve their ability to do their job, because it increases the possibility of a more responsible (and better paid) job and because it would maximise both employability and their value to their organisation. However, Taylor and Spencer's (1994) focus group research also identified important 'personal' incentives driving learning participation, including: a desire for personal development, in the form of improved confidence or a sense of achievement; and interest in the subject area.

Hand et al. (1994) used case study research to identify four main 'needs'/drivers of participation in work-related skills development – improving prospects in work; facilitating a change of occupation; facilitating a return to work (especially for women); and escaping unemployment. People's decisions to pursue skills development will depend on the saliency of training provision as a means of addressing these needs and/or risk associated with engagement.

Lessons from the occupational psychology literature

Much of the primary psychological research on motivation to train and learn has focused on the experiences of higher skilled workers, with little research considering the psychological factors affecting decision-making among those less skilled. However, some of the key concepts and findings from psychological studies on motivation are worth considering. Much of the psychological research on motivation to undertake skills development is based on 'expectancy theory'. For example, Noe et al. (1997) suggest that higher levels of motivation and better outcomes can be achieved from work-based training depending on how much employees are attracted to engage in skills development ('valence') based on their belief that training will result in improved skills and knowledge ('expectancy') that can be effectively deployed to achieve positive outcomes such as career development ('instrumentality').

Other psychological studies use the concept of 'learning goal orientation' to describe the psychological characteristics that are most likely to be associated with positive motivation to learn. This describes the attitudes of workers who are interested in developing new knowledge and mastering new challenges, while 'performance goal orientation' describes those who seek to validate their performance by seeking the positive judgement of others.

A number of studies (see, for example, Narayan and Steele-Johnson, 2007; Tziner et al., 2007) have found a statistically significant association between learning goal orientation and positive attitudes towards work-based training. It is argued that employers can promote such attitudes by explaining the value of, and reason for, requiring staff to undertake work-related training. It appears that this concept can be effectively applied to studies of motivation to learn among low-medium skilled workers. Measures of self-efficacy (the individual's belief that he/she can successfully complete a task such as work-related training) have consistently been identified as significant indicators of motivation to undertake skills development in numerous studies, although most again focus on higher skilled individuals (Lee and Klein, 2002; Chiaburu and Lindsay, 2008)

Psychological studies of motivation to engage in skills development also prioritise the work environment and other extrinsic factors as being potentially crucial factors shaping behaviour. Birdi et al. (1997) found significant impacts associated with demographic characteristics (age, gender), educational attainment, 'affective factors' such as motivation and the work environment (and especially the support provided by management) in the take-up of skills development activities. They also found that the perceived support of colleagues and supervisors significantly affects motivation to engage in work-based training. Noe and Wilk (1993) also found that 'situational constraints' (the work environment and, for example, the limits it places on the information, time, space and resources available in relation to training) and organisational factors (the structure of the organisation and the individual's place within it) significantly affected levels of motivation to learn in the healthcare, finance and manufacturing sectors. Similarly, Battistelli (2008) examines the effect of 'job involvement', job characteristics and perceptions of support for training within the organisation on motivation to train among a sample of 382 employees in Italy. Motivation to acquire new skills were found to be significantly related to higher scores in relation to psychological characteristics associated with innovation, challenging job characteristics and support from within the organisation.

Research on the link between self-efficacy and motivation and take-up of skills development opportunities may be particularly relevant, given the increasing interest in self-efficacy as a factor in labour market exclusion. For example, James (2007) argues that self-efficacy plays an important role in explaining the personal barriers to progression faced by some unemployed and inactive people, in relation to basic beliefs (for example, the belief that 'I will never work'); job matching (the belief that 'I'll never find someone who will employ me'); and presentation (the belief that 'they'll look at me and say no').

2.3.3 Educational attainment

A review of the EU Labour Force Survey for the OECD (2005: 23)

'…*confirms that education and adult learning are complementary. Those who are more educated receive more training and participate in employment that requires the use of higher skills, and therefore receive more opportunities to continuously update their skills*.'

This study found that in the UK – as in several other EU states – those with 'low' levels of educational attainment were significantly less likely to engage in adult learning compared to those with 'medium' attainment, who were in turn significantly less likely to engage in learning compared to the 'high' qualified.

An ONS (2004: 18) review noted that '*those with highest qualifications in the workplace were more likely to receive job-related training than those with lower or no qualifications*.' For example, those with degree level qualifications are approximately five times more likely to have received in-work training than those with no qualifications.

Park (1994), drawing on survey work with more than 1,400 individuals in the early 1990s, similarly found that achieving qualifications at school was associated with being a 'learner' in adult life – for example, those who left school with A Levels were more than twice as likely to be classified as 'learners' than 'non-learners'.

Sabates et al. (2007) have also used UK National Child Development Study data to show that among lower qualified adults early school attainment was also a predictor of adult educational progression towards Level 2 qualifications. Other studies have found that staying on in education is an important predictor of subsequent learning. For example, analysis of the National Adult Learning Survey has shown that adults who delayed leaving until they were at least 21 were approximately twice as likely to be adult learners as those who left school at the earliest opportunity (Fitzgerald et al., 2002).

A number of studies have found a significant association between individuals' level of qualification and the take-up of voluntary training opportunities at work – higher qualified workers appear to be more motivated to pursue work-related training (see Birdi et al., 1997). Earlier studies in the UK identified a relationship between negative experiences at school and low levels of motivation and take-up of skills development as an adult. Park (1994) found that almost half of 'non-learners' (those not currently or recently engaging in 'learning relevant to a job or getting a job') agreed with the statement *'I couldn't wait to leave full-time education', compared to just over one-third of 'learners'*.

Taylor and Spencer's (1994) qualitative research found that previous experiences of a school system that 'streamed' pupils into different classes according to ability had left some with negative attitudes towards learning – they argue that even among older adult learners, perceived barriers can often be traced back to negative attitudes to learning formed at school, while fear of 'failing exams' was a major disincentive for some disadvantaged young people. Ball et al.'s (1999) research with young people in disadvantaged urban areas similarly found that some specifically sought low-skilled jobs with few progression routes – these young people's 'educational inheritances' had resulted in negative attitudes to learning, so that the promise of 'no more learning' in the workplace was actually valued by some. Crowder and Pupynin (1993) also point to the importance of prior experience in shaping motivation. Low-skilled employees can sometimes see little scope for development in their field of work and therefore can see training as 'getting in the way' of their work, while those with no experience of training are less likely to envisage themselves taking up skills development activities. As suggested in Section 2.4.3 below, the same issues have been identified as barriers to participation in formal HE and FE sector learning. For example, it has been argued that non-traditional learners considering HE participation can encounter 'dispositional barriers' related to previous negative experiences at school and perceptions that they do not 'fit' in HE environments (Forsyth and Furlong, 2003; HEA/IAS, 2006).

2.3.4 Labour market status

There is clear evidence that adults in work are more likely to participate in skills development than unemployed or economically inactive people (Fitzgerald et al., 2002; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). Previous research for the OECD by O'Connell (1999) noted that workers are generally significantly more likely to have access to skills development opportunities than unemployed people, who are in turn significantly more likely to engage in skills development than economically inactive groups.

However, a recent review of EU Labour Force Survey evidence for the OECD (2005) suggests that the exclusion of some unemployed and inactive groups from skills development opportunities may to some extent reflect aspects of the UK welfare and training systems. The report notes that adult learning is as high or higher among unemployed people as those in work in countries such as Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Sweden (though not the UK).

Finally, within the workforce, there is some evidence that part-time workers in the UK can be less likely to have access to work-related training (Arulampalam and Booth, 1998; Boheim and Booth, 2004; Almeida-Santos and Mumford, 2005), although more recent ONS Adult Population Survey data suggest that there is increasingly little difference in 'current' work-related training participation between full-time and part-time workers.

2.3.5 Skills and socio-economic status

It is clear from the research evidence that professionals and non-manual workers are more likely than unskilled or 'other' workers to have recently participated in adult learning (see, for example, Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). A DfES (2005) analysis of Labour Force Survey data identified a higher probability of receiving training among those in professional, associate professional and personal service occupations, with those in plant/machine operative and elementary occupations least likely to receive training. Hughes et al.'s (2004) survey of more than 1,000 firms in Ireland also found a greater probability of training for staff within organisations where the majority of all employees were higher skilled.

Length of tenure/seniority within specific organisations may also make a difference – Harris (1999) identified a higher probability of training among (especially male) staff with longer employment tenures. An analysis of Workplace Employee Relations Survey data similarly concluded that those with longer tenures and on permanent, full-time contracts were more likely to have participated in work-related training during the previous year (Almeida-Santos and Mumford, 2005). Finally, there is evidence that higher earners are more likely to have access to skills development opportunities in the workplace (Jenkins et al., 2003; Park, 1994).

2.3.6 Age

An OECD study (2005) concludes that evidence consistently points to a decline in participation rates with age. In general terms, reviewing data across OECD countries, "the learning participation rate among 25 to 34 year olds is often more than twice as high as the national average, while participation of cohorts between 55 and 64 is often below half… of the national average" (OECD, 2005: 23). The same research identified a significant decline in adult learning rates according to age in the UK. Similar age-related differences have been noted in UK research (Harris, 1999; Fitzgerald et al., 2002; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2006; Newton, 2006; Macleod and Lambe, 2007; O'Leary and Oakley, 2008).

A number of international studies have specifically reflected on the relationship between ageing and motivation to engage in skills development. Birdi et al. (1997) find a negative association between age and motivation/take-up of both occupational-specific and more general work-related training. Maurer's (2001) longitudinal psychological study found similar negative age effects on the take-up of non-mandatory training, as do Colquitt et al. (2000). Renaud et al.'s (2004) study of the take-up of voluntary work-related training in the French finance sector (taking in 1,900 staff from junior assistants to senior managers) found that older workers were significantly less motivated to undertake, and less likely to pursue, work-related training. Again drawing on French data, Fournier (2003) notes that access to skills development activities declines rapidly with age for lower skilled workers in particular.

2.3.7 Gender and ethnicity

Evidence on gender gaps is less clear. Repeated research exercises on all forms of adult learning for NIACE have found few significant differences between the genders, although recent evidence has suggested that women are slightly more likely than men to participate in learning (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2007). Recent Annual Population Survey data appear to confirm these trends in relation to access to work-related training. (Note should be taken of the evidence cited in Section 2.2.4 that those with childcare responsibilities can be less likely to access skills development opportunities – general trends in increased female participation may mask the fact that mothers, especially of young children, may be more disadvantaged than other women and men). However, analyses of major UK survey datasets have suggested that men are significantly more likely to receive *work-related training* during the 1980s and 1990s (Blundell et al., 1996; Arulampalam and Booth, 1998). It has been suggested that these changes may reflect women's increasing participation in the labour market and the shift towards service employment, which is characterised both by higher training rates and high levels of female employment (Page and Hillage, 2006). The manner in which some major studies have identified part-time working as reducing opportunities for skills development (Boheim and Booth, 2004; Almeida-Santos and Mumford, 2005) may also suggest that women with caring responsibilities (who are more likely to work part-time) may face additional barriers to accessing training.

The evidence on the relationship between ethnicity and learning motivation/participation is also more limited, due to a lack of detailed survey data. Aldridge et al. (2006) found that while the participation of black and minority ethnic groups as a whole is within a single percentage point of the UK average, women from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds have much lower rates of participation than all other groups. An earlier review of Labour Force Survey data by NIACE similarly found that, while minority ethnic employees were slightly more likely to report receiving job-related training in the previous four weeks, there were significant differences between groups – for example, 22 per cent of 'Black/Black British' employees had received training compared to only 15 per cent of 'Asian/Asian British' employees (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2003).

Newton et al. (2005) found that adults aged 24 and under from a minority ethnic group were significantly less likely to receive training, but that this pattern was reversed for those aged 25 to 44. Finally, Almeida-Santos and Mumford (2005) found that being 'non-white' was significantly *negatively* associated with having received training in the previous year. The evidence points to a complex relationship between ethnicity, employment and access to skills development – there is a case to be made for further research in this area.

2.3.8 Household circumstances

The support of a partner (possibly implying a sharing of earning and/or childcare responsibilities) has emerged as an indicator of access to work-related training in some studies UK datasets (Arulampalam and Booth, 1998; Green et al., 1999). Furthermore, a small number of studies have sought to identify more complex relationships between family life and progress in adult learning. For example, Gorard et al. (2001) use retrospective survey data to suggest that parents' educational attainment and occupation are predictors of later participation in adult learning. However, as Sabates et al. (2007) note, the size of the effect was not clear, as well as the relative importance of each background factor. They found that, while early school attainment was the strongest indicator of progress, *'parents' expectations that the individual would stay on in education'* is also a significant predictor of future attainment.

2.3.9 Employer context

The type of employer that individuals work for often shapes their attitudes towards, and access to, skills development opportunities. At the most basic level, there is evidence that those working for larger employers (Green et al., 1999; Arulampalam and Booth, 2001; Boheim and Booth, 2004; Hughes et al., 2004) and/or in workplaces that are part of a larger multi-site organisation (Boheim and Booth, 2004; Almeida-Santos and Mumford, 2005) are more likely to have access to skills development opportunities. An OECD (2005) analysis of EU Continuing Vocational Training Survey data confirms that 'firm size matters'. In the UK – as in other EU countries highlighted by the study – enterprises with more than 250 employees were most likely to have provided training during the previous year, while those with less than 50 staff were least likely to train.

Spilsbury's (2003) review of National Employer Skills Survey data appears to confirm these trends – he notes that the largest employers (with more than 500 staff) were almost twice as likely to have provided *some* training compared to micro-enterprises (with less than 5 staff). It is worth noting that differences in *reported* skills development activities across firms according to size may to some extent reflect levels of formalisation. Larger organisations are more likely to have formalised HR and training functions, which means that they are also more likely to fully report the delivery of provision for staff. Smaller organisations with more informal approaches to skills development may be less likely to fully map and report their activities. Nevertheless, there are also likely to be genuine drivers explaining differences in according to employer size. Given that returns on training investment can be uncertain, it is understandable that larger employers are more likely to take a risk on training – these employers may be able to tap economies of scale that reduce the unit cost of training provision (Harris, 1999; Cabinet Office, 2001). As Page and Hillage (2006: 26-7) note:

> *For large firms to train more than small ones is perhaps not surprising for several reasons. First, the collection of information about the training required and the definition of a training plan linked to business objectives involve fixed costs and scale economies. Second, the barriers to training, such as the costs of staff time out of the workplace, may be felt most acutely by small firms and hence disproportionately affect their propensity to train. Third, small firms might have fewer opportunities to reap the benefits of training through internal relocation of workers. Large firms are also more likely to have IiP accreditation, which may also be a contributory factor to the extent of workforce training.*

There is also clear evidence that public sector employees may have greater opportunities for work-related training (see Green et al., 1999; Murphy et al. 2007). Spilsbury (2003) suggests that *employer* training rates are higher in the public administration, transport and 'other service' industries, while Kitching and Blackburn's (2002) survey of SMEs similarly found that employers in business services and 'other services' were more likely than average to offer work-related training.

The pressures and skills demands of employers are also likely to help to provide the context for individuals' access to work-related training. Green et al. (1999) identify significant relationships between skill shortages reported by employers and their greater investment in training their current workforce. They also identify a positive relationship between the provision of work-related training for employees and the presence of a larger number of local competitors for private sector firms, as did Hughes et al. (2004) for the Republic of Ireland.

Business cycle dynamics can also influence the extent to which employers encourage and/or support their staff to participate in skills development activities. Kitching and Blackburn (2002), focusing on *employers' motivation to train*, categorise SMEs in terms of 'low trainers' (who train only as a last resort), 'tactical trainers' (training in response to necessity) and 'strategic trainers' (who develop positive, proactive training strategies). Survey evidence suggests that employees are significantly more likely to receive work-related training in tactical and strategic trainers, which tend to be larger, younger SMEs that have recently introduced new products or new forms of work organisation.

2.3.10 The role of trade unions

There is a relatively clear consensus that the presence of trade unions has a positive impact on access to skills development within the workplace. As noted above, Green et al. (1999) found that being in a unionised workplace increased the probability of receiving *some* training for manual workers by 17 per cent and for non-manual workers by 7 per cent. 'Training intensity' (the number of days training received per worker) was also significantly higher in unionised workplaces. Boheim and Booth's (2004) similarly identified an increased training probability for those working at unionised workplaces (significant for all manual employees and non-manual male employees).

Arulampalam and Booth (1998) found that union members had a significantly higher probability of receiving training. However, the same authors' analysis of longitudinal data from the UK National Child Development Survey (Arulampalam and Booth, 2001) found no significant association between trade union membership and access to training. Booth et al. (2003) demonstrated that workers in unionised workplaces were significantly more likely to have access to training. Blundell et al. (1996) found a significantly higher rate of access to work-related training among trade union members. Harris (1999) supports this conclusion, as do Almeida-Santos and Mumford (2005).

2.3.11 Overview

In conclusion, the discussion above highlights the many valuable sources of data that can help us to gain an insight into levels of engagement in adult learning and work-related training, and the extent to which intrinsic and extrinsic factors impact on access to skill development. There appears to be a relatively consistent body of evidence to suggest that higher qualified people, those in higher skilled jobs, younger workers, and those in work are more likely to have access to skills development opportunities. Research also appears to suggest that extrinsic factors relating to size of workplace, sector and union presence may influence access to skills development.

However, in order to identify implications for policy it is necessary to explore not just patterns of (and differences in) participation in skills development opportunities, but also the causes behind these patterns. The following section seeks to specifically identify evidence on intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to participation in skills development, and how these interact.

2.4 Barriers to individual engagement in skill development

2.4.1 Introduction

To better understand attitudes and motivation to participation in skills development it is important to differentiate between factors affecting the take-up of skills provision for those in work and those not in work. For those in work, barriers to participation in skills training may reflect particular organisational cultures, policies, opportunities and resources. For unemployed people, non-engagement in training programmes may be linked to existing low levels of education, cost considerations (and concerns over the possible effects of undertaking training on benefits provision), while training may in turn be undertaken as a condition of benefits. Most of the following discussion draws on research covering those in work (or, in the case of some major survey exercises, both those in work and unemployed/inactive). A brief discussion then focuses on specific issues faced by unemployed and inactive people.

2.4.2 Barriers to undertaking skills development – evidence from major surveys

Snape et al.'s (2004) review of the 'Pathways in Adult Learning Survey', commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, supports the argument that intrinsic factors are an important component of barriers to the acquisition of new skills. The most frequently reported barriers to learning tended to relate to intrinsic factors, of which the most frequently cited reasons were: a preference to spend time doing other things (43 per cent); a perception that they were too old to learn (35 per cent); not being interested in learning (29 per cent); insufficient knowledge about local learning opportunities (23 per cent); nervousness about returning to the classroom (22 per cent). Among those who were categorised as non-learners, benefit claimants were significantly over-represented. Unsurprisingly, the income level of this group was lower than for those groups who were engaged in training: 58 per cent of non-learners described their household income as below £11,000, compared with 13 per cent of individuals who had frequently undertaken training in the previous 5 years.

Sargent and Aldridge's (2002) analysis of the NIACE Adult Learning Survey identified some of the same issues. Among those who did not consider themselves 'very likely to learn', the barriers most often reported were: lack of interest (25 per cent of all respondents); work or other time pressures (20 per cent, rising to 36 per cent of full-time employees); the perception of being too old (13 per cent, rising to 30 per cent of retired respondents); and the perception that *'I have no need to learn anymore'* (9 per cent).

A CEDEFOP (2004) study also found that a lack of interest was the main reason for non-participation in the UK. Of those identifying other obstacles to lifelong learning, 'time-related obstacles' were the main barrier, followed by 'family-related obstacles', 'job-related obstacles' and the perception of being too old.

Box 1 describes some more recent findings from the pilot EU-wide Adult Education Survey for 2005-2008, which again points to the importance of extrinsic factors (and especially work and family time conflicts) to understanding barriers to participation. The headline findings from the UK are that the main barriers to participation identified by respondents focus on the conflict between training and pressures of work; and limits of time due to work and family responsibilities. As noted below, the lowest qualified individuals also appear to face more and more severe barriers to learning, ranging from health and age-related barriers to accessibility/distance issues.

Box 1 The Eurostat Adult Education Survey – some emerging findings

- The Adult Education Survey is a survey of adults either employed or seeking employment. The survey was conducted during 2005-2007. Eighteen EU countries participated in the survey.
- For the UK: 26 per cent of individuals were classified as 'respondents who already participate and did not want to participate more' (compared to 21 per cent for the total sample); 23 per cent were 'respondents who already participated but wanted to participate more' (compared to 14 per cent for the total sample); 26 per cent were 'respondents who did not participate and did not want to participate' (compared to 48 per cent for the total sample); and 25 per cent were 'respondents who did not participate but wanted to participate' (compared to 12 per cent for the total sample).
- Data for the UK highlight some important differences in attitudes compared with the other four largest EU economies (France, Germany, Italy and Spain). For example, the proportion of UK respondents who had already participated in training but wanted to participate in more training was 2 to 4 times greater than in the other large economies (23 per cent of UK respondents vs. 6-9 per cent among other large economies respondents and 14 per cent for the total sample). The proportion of respondents who did not participate in training and did not want to participate in the future was half the level of the large economies (26 per cent of UK respondents vs. 50-60 per cent for the other large economies and 48 per cent for the total sample).
- Respondents who did not participate in learning/training but wanted to participate were offered nine categorical reasons to describe the barriers that they faced (respondents were able to choose more than one). The barriers identified by UK respondents were:

– training conflicted with the work schedule (44 per cent);
– respondent did not have time because of family responsibilities (42 per cent);
– training was too expensive/respondent could not afford (37 per cent);
– no training offered at the reachable distance (26 per cent);
– respondent not confident about 'going back to something that is like school' (24 per cent);
– lack of employer's support (23 per cent);
– did not have the prerequisites for admittance (21 per cent);
– health or age (17 per cent).

– Approximately 56 per cent of UK respondents said that they faced an 'other' barrier to participation (three times the average for the total sample identifying 'other' barriers).

- UK respondents with low levels of educational attainment tended to report more, and more severe, barriers to participation. Of the nine named categories of barriers to participation, seven were cited by more than one-third of 'low qualified' respondents, four barriers were cited by more than one-third of 'medium qualified' respondents; and three were cited by more than one-third of 'high qualified' respondents. Lower skilled respondents were significantly more likely to cite the cost of participation, 'not having the prerequisites for attendance', and problems of accessibility/distance as barriers to participation.

2.4.3 Barriers to participation in Higher and Further Education

It is a matter of some debate whether Higher Education (HE) should be considered to be a form of 'skills development'. It is not intended to contribute to this debate at this point; simply to note that an understanding of the factors that influence an individual's decision as to whether to enter HE may throw some light on the wider issues under consideration in this paper.

Statistics published by DIUS (2008) suggest that the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate[3] (HEIPR) for 2006-07 was 40 per cent, down slightly from the 2005-06 figure of 42 per cent. This decline interrupts a steady upwards trend from 1999-2000. Participation rates among women (45 per cent in 2006-07) are significantly higher than those for men (35 per cent).

Recent studies (for example Bekradnia and Bailey, 2008) have highlighted recent trends towards increasing participation rates in HE, which are likely to increase in the medium term, given demographic and other trends. Widening Participation continues to be a key issue in the face of evidence that participation in HE varies significantly by factors such as social class and geography (ESRC, 2008)

[3] HEIPR roughly equates to the probability that a seventeen year old will participate in HE by the age of 30

A similar model to that presented in Table 2.2 has been discussed in relation to barriers to participation in **HE sector learning** (HEA/IAS, 2006). This research defines the potential problems faced by non-traditional HE learners in terms of:

- **situational** barriers: including the cost of participation, a lack of time (due to work, family or other pressures) and distance from the learning/training centre;
- **institutional** barriers: over-complex admission procedures, the timing of courses (which can exclude some people with work or caring responsibilities), and the possibility that the institution has insufficient flexibility regarding admissions and course structure;
- **dispositional** barriers: including the possibility that an individual may lack the motivation and attitude to participate in learning, the perception on the part of the individual that the learning opportunities are unsuitable, and the possibility that a previous encounter with education was poor may inform an individual's current approach to engagement in post-compulsory education.

Several other studies have focused on the role of dispositional barriers to HE participation. It has long been recognised that participation in post-compulsory education is influenced by the socio-economic background of the individual (Bynner, 1992; Marsh and Blackburn, 1992). More recent findings have reaffirmed the importance of socio-economic factors as an influence on the likelihood of engagement in HE and FE. Sargent (2000) describes how the determinants of participation may have long-term antecedents rooted in family, locality and history. Similarly, Forsyth and Furlong's (2003) survey research on the variation in *completion* of HE suggests that students from less affluent socio-economic groups are disadvantaged by a number of factors, including: a lack of funds may cause individuals to make choices in HE that do not always reflect their intentions; and young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds may also lack a familiarity with HE environments (and so feel more isolated).

From an EU wide perspective there is evidence of similar long-term barriers (European Group For Research on Equity in Educational Systems 2003). These barriers need to be considered alongside institutional factors that can deter participation among non-traditional learners. Hudson's (2005) research on participation in HE suggests several potential institutional barriers to engagement including: traditional assessment procedures acting as a deterrent to those whose previous experience in education may have created a poor image of education; staff at the educational institutions having concerns that the inclusion of students reporting lower educational attainment/levels of qualification may lower standards; and broader organisational resistance to change.

Previous reviews of barriers to participation in the **college sector** have highlighted 'the entrenched attitudinal and cultural barriers to learning amongst those who have not, historically, participated in learning' that can feed into a lack of motivation (Education and Employment Committee, 1999). It has been suggested that the absence of a learning culture among family and peers can reinforce the attitude among some potential participants that 'learning is not for me'.

A House of Commons report into barriers to FE participation also noted extrinsic barriers faced by particular groups – for example, women with children were more likely to report childcare, course location and timing as particular difficulties, while unemployed people reported problems with potential loss of benefits, cost and transport (Education and Employment Committee, 1999).

Cloonan and Turner's (2000) review of barriers to participation in the Scottish college sector highlighted similar problems around basic skills gaps, a related lack of confidence and pressures around balancing work and/or family responsibilities with learning. Research conducted in the early 1990s in Scotland particularly focused on familiar attitudinal barriers to engaging with college sector services, including: a 'residual fear of institutions' by lower skilled people with 'personal histories of unhappy experiences' in formal education (Scottish Office Education Department, 1992).

Research in Scotland has also noted that accessibility issues shape many people's experiences of the college sector. Raab and Davidson (1999) suggest that one in ten of the Scottish population live more than 30 minutes by car from a college. Given the weakness of public transport provision in some rural areas of Scotland, it is likely that those without access to car will face problems accessing college provision, at least in person – a number of Scottish colleges have made considerable progress in offering on-line and distance learning options. In response to these barriers, Scottish policy makers have emphasised the need to provide flexible means of support to accommodate the changing nature of the student population (Scottish Executive, 2000).

2.4.4 Intrinsic motivational barriers

UK studies have identified motivational barriers to the take-up of work-related training. Park (1994) found few clear differences in how those engaged and not engaged in skills development viewed the importance of, or responsibility for, training and learning. However, one clear difference was that those classified as 'non-learners' were significantly more likely than 'learners' to agree with the statement that they lacked the *'motivation to learn on my own at home'*.

Taylor and Spencer's (1994) qualitative research with individuals also identified issues of motivation as barriers to progression – in particular, a lack of motivation was linked to age and the perceived lack of benefits that would accrue from spending time training. Hand et al. (1994) suggest that for those failing to complete skills development activities, de-motivation can be central to problems, resulting from: a lack of confidence in one's ability to learn or achieve the end goal and to learn 'formally' and/or the influence of other less-motivated learners.

More recent studies have also linked a lack of motivation to pursue skills development at work with a lack of confidence (often reflecting previous negative experiences of learning and/or basic skills gaps). Ball et al.'s (1999) research with disadvantaged young people suggests that the 'educational inheritance' of problems at school has left some with negative attitudes to learning that can undermine levels of motivation and so act as a barrier to taking up work-related training. Stuart and Perrett's (2006) research with older redundant steel workers found that negative attitudes formed at school retained considerable power – lower qualified workers described a sense of apprehension at returning to 'classroom' learning and those expressing such views were often less motivated to participate in new forms of learning/training. Another reason for non-participation may lie in the common belief that learning is best achieved informally at home or in the workplace, feeding into a suspicion towards more formalised activities (Pont, 2004).

Newton et al. (2005: 2) argue that for unemployed and economically inactive people *"one of the greatest barriers (to engagement in training opportunities) is individuals' own concept of their skills and abilities. Older adults may feel threatened by the thought of trying to attain basic skills that they have survived without. The social stigma attached to the lack of basic skills can render people too embarrassed to admit they need such training"*. McBride et al.'s (2006) evaluation of the NHS skills escalator project similarly identified a number of individual barriers encountered by lower skilled NHS staff, including a lack of confidence in their ability to learn; embarrassment associated with low levels of literacy; apathy and a questioning of the benefits of skills development, especially among older staff.

These findings share a degree of commonality with lessons from the occupational psychology literature, discussed above. There is evidence that motivation to participate in skills development may be related to individuals' self-efficacy and expectancy that the costs and risk associated with activity will be balanced by benefits; so where these positive beliefs around skills development are absent individuals may be less likely to be motivated to pursue learning or training. Effective interventions therefore need to be targeted at promoting individuals' self-efficacy and motivation to learn. Challenges for this agenda include the suggestion that older workers and those who consider themselves to be fully skilled *for their current occupation* may be more difficult to engage.

According to Tamkin and Hillage (1997), the key 'restraining factor' for some workers may be life stage: the individual can not see how training and development would help when they were already competent in their job and did not wish to change their employment – 'if the job is not changing, then further development seems meaningless'. On the other hand, there is also evidence that lower skilled workers are more likely to prioritise skills development of immediate value to their current job role (Munro et al., 2000; Fuller and Unwin, 2006).

Finally, there is some evidence that the lower skilled workers are less confident in articulating and pursuing *personal* benefits that can accrue from work-related training and learning. For example, Fuller and Unwin (2006) found that the lowest skilled staff, who had fewer opportunities to pursue off-the-job and/or off-site learning, were more likely to characterise the benefits of training in terms of organisational efficiency, while higher skilled staff more often highlighted personal or career aspirations. Munro et al's (2000) case study research in the British NHS similarly suggests that lower skilled workers placed much importance on training that was directly relevant to the workplace. As noted by Tamkin and Hillage (1997), encouraging all individuals to understand and identify the personal benefits that can accrue from skills development may be a key step in promoting commitment to learning.

2.4.5 Extrinsic factors affecting engagement in skills development

Cost, time and work-life pressures

A CEDEFOP study (2004) found that learners thought that the best way to reduce barriers and incentivise learning lies in practical measures to ensure that provision meets the individual's needs, through the provision of more flexible working hours and more tailored, individualised modes of study. OECD (2003a, 2003b) research has similarly pointed to time and pressure of work constraints as key barriers to lifelong learning alongside a lack of employer support and a lack of appropriate provision (with the latter being less significant). *"The data suggest that under-investment in adult learning is due to demand-side reasons rather than supply constraints"* (OECD, 2005: 29).

Park (1994) found that those who were interested but considered themselves unlikely to take up skills development opportunities in the next 2-3 years, most often cited children or family responsibilities as a barrier, followed by cost and problems in getting time off. Among those expressing a 'lack of motivation' to take up skills development, the main barriers were domestic; or personal/work-related. Taylor and Spencer's (1994) qualitative research also found barriers to participation in relation to: time (and especially problems getting time off work); cost; family responsibilities; and gaps in content, accessibility (especially in rural areas) and flexibility of provision.

There i*s* also clear evidence (see above) that those in lower socio-economic groups, lower skilled workers and those without work are significantly less likely to have access to work-related training and/or other forms of adult learning. It is likely that these data reflect how the cost of participation in skills development activities (and the manner in which part or all of that cost can fall on the individual) remains as a practical barrier and an underlying factor affecting individuals' levels of motivation.

Lack of employer resources or support

Employers provide the context and set the agenda for (as well as funding and sometimes delivering) much work-related training and skills development for UK employees. As noted above, the extent to which employers promote a 'culture of learning' within the workplace can be important in shaping employees' attitudes to skills development activities. Park (1994) found that those classified as 'learners' were significantly more likely than 'non-learners' to agree with the statement 'my employer encourages me to learn as much as I can about my job and how to do my job better'. Taylor and Spencer's (1994) parallel qualitative work noted how learners valued encouragement and support from employers (including allowing time off, proactively suggesting training options, and offering financial support).

Hogarth et al. (*forthcoming*) reflect on Skills for Business Network survey research on the barriers to providing training reported by employers. Responses suggest that employers perceived disruption to work activities and associated lost productivity and financial cost as being key barriers to training. There was evidence of some employers' concerns that trained staff would leave or be poached or would demand salary increases, but more respondents suggested that they lacked knowledge of the provision available. Almost two-fifths thought that there was a lack of appropriate (external) training provision, but almost as many employers reported reluctance/lack of motivation among staff as a barrier to providing training.

As noted above, normal work pressures (such as time pressures and workload / productivity targets) are also likely to shape employers' and managers' willingness to support individual skills development. At the individual level, workplace factors such as the urgency of work tasks (and their complexity) may affect the availability of work-related training and individuals' level of motivation (Eraut et al., 2005).

A number of studies of work-related training for lower skilled staff in the NHS have highlighted the important role played by managers (and the work organisation as a whole) in creating the conditions for learning in the workplace (Munro et al., 2000; Rainbird et al., 2004; McBride et al., 2006). Munro et al. (2000) also note important organisational barriers to skills development, including:

- *crucially*, problems negotiating time off to train, especially for front-line staff, and especially if training is off-site;
- the danger that attempts to foster a learning environment are undermined by other changes to the employment relationship (for example, need for flexibility, which may conflict with attempts to promote evening or weekend learning);

- unequal access due to the specific views of line managers (who may, for example, view investing in training for older workers as an inefficient use of resources);
- concerns among learners and managers regarding the value of N/SVQ-oriented training (which Munro et al. (2000) argue was sometimes seen by managers as a means of promoting the integration of low skilled workers, rather than as an effective mechanism for delivering skills).

More generally, forthcoming research for UK Commission has argued that a number of management-related factors can limit access to skills development. Hogarth et al. (*forthcoming*) suggest that a lack of recognition among managers of the need for skills development can throw up barriers, as can a more general lack of management capacity. Eraut and Hirch (2007) similarly highlight the role of the manager in supporting skills development, noting that in many organisations and job roles, decision-making on work-related training is increasingly devolved to the line manager level. They suggest that a lack of expert knowledge on learning/training issues among line managers may affect access to skills development opportunities for staff. Eraut and Hirch (2007) argue that managers need to understand that providing an appropriate level of challenge is important for developing confidence and job performance; and that their support and feedback will be critically important for workplace learning (and commitment to learn) in order to meet challenges. They therefore argue for appropriate management learning, so that managers are confident in preparing challenging tasks for their staff and are supportive in facilitating learning and training in response.

Conflicting priorities in the workplace

McBride et al. (2006) identified a number of barriers to skills development faced by lower skilled NHS staff, including: managers' conflicting priorities and limited resources to find cover for staff undertaking skills development activities; the time and distance associated with getting to training centres (especially in rural areas); a lack of consistent information about opportunities; and in some cases the sense that managers had 'rationed' information about opportunities to favoured staff.

There is clearly potential for tension between employers' priorities for skills development and the concept of lifelong learning to deliver sustainable and transferable skills (OECD, 2003a). A recent study for DEMOS (O'Leary and Oakley, 2008) argues for new forms of funding work-related training (by strengthening individual 'learning budgets') that empower and entitle the individual to pursue appropriate skills development opportunities. A number of studies have also pointed to the need for workplace learning to be seen as a partnership process involving employers and employees (and potentially trade unions), with all relevant stakeholders working together to shape skills development activities (Munro and Rainbird, 2004).

There is some evidence that where employers impose compulsory work-related training without fully explaining the purpose and so gaining the buy-in of staff, the result can be de-motivating for individuals (Hicks and Klimoshi, 1987). It may also be important that sensitive issues around gaps in skills (for example, in relation to literacy and numeracy) are addressed in partnership with unions and staff, so that lower skilled individuals do not feel that their basic skills are 'under scrutiny' or being used as a basis to assess their work-readiness (Hoddinott, 2004).

Form, format, location and content of skills development activities

Problems with fitting individuals to opportunities (and their form, location and format) can clearly represent an important barrier. Case studies of best practice emphasise the benefits of providing work-related training and other forms of adult learning in appropriate locations and in flexible and accessible formats, such as distance learning and e-learning (McBride et al., 2006). Where these resources are not in place, key stakeholders and employers are likely to find greater difficulty in engaging non-traditional learners. Where skills development provision is delivered in formal educational settings, it is important that facilities are seen as accessible and user-friendly for non-traditional learners. Research with college sector providers in the 1990s identified an 'image problem' among some non-traditional adult learners, who viewed the college sector as defined by large, functional buildings, basic facilities and 'crowds of young people' (Tremlett et al., 1995). As noted above, there remain concerns that certain 'institutional' and 'situational' barriers (around cost, distance and the formalised structure of learning provision) can continue to block entry into HE and FE by non-traditional learners (HEA/IAS, 2006) – potentially important barriers for those who already lack familiarity with formal higher learning environments (Forsyth and Furlong, 2003).

More profound problems around accessibility can clearly impact on the ability of rural workers/learners to take up skills development opportunities. Problems faced by people in remote rural communities in accessing the same range of skills development services as those in urban centres have been consistently highlighted by research on work-related training (see, for example, Bennett and Errington, 1990; Henderson, 2005). Section 2.4.3 above highlights evidence that issues around rurality, transport and the accessibility of FE and HE provision remain a concern for policy makers (despite clear recent progress in delivering outreach services and distance/on-line learning).

Content and quality also matter – as Tamkin and Hillage (1997), Rainbird et al. (2004) and Fuller and Unwin (2006) note, there is only likely to be buy-in from individuals and managers where skills development provision is of clear practical value and adequate quality. McBride et al.'s (2006) research in the NHS notes the importance of issues of quality. Their research identifies a number of good practice features but also highlights some concerns regarding the consistency and quality of provision, including the consequences of tutor absence and frustration among some individuals over repetition of learning in what should have been progressive training programmes (see also Fuller and Unwin, 2006).

It is clear that these extrinsic factors cannot be separated from individuals' perceptions and motivations around work-related training and adult learning. While some barriers – such as those related to family and caring roles – will require a range of policy responses, the commitment of employers to promoting skills is clearly likely to be key to overcoming many problems. Where employers are not committed to skills development, this may severely impact on the opportunities for work-related training and workplace learning for employees (Tamkin and Hillage, 1997). It is for this reason that convincing employers of the benefits of supporting and encouraging skills development remains central to policy advice on how to promote more (and more equal) access to opportunities among the working age population (O'Leary and Oakley, 2008).

Work organisation and job roles

We must, however, remember that work-organisational factors cannot be separated from individuals' perceptions and motivations around work-related training and adult learning. We have seen above that psychological studies have shown that the support of management and work environment factors (such as having the time and space to engage in work-based learning) can significantly impact of levels of motivation to engage in skills development (Birdi et al., 1997). Other studies have suggested that specific occupational factors such as task autonomy (Spreitzer et al., 2005) and the individual's sense of engagement with their work tasks (Battistelli, 2008) can also affect motivation and attitudes. For Eraut and Hirch (2007), it makes little sense to discuss confidence and motivation to take up workplace learning without reference to job content (i.e. that individuals feel challenged by their work and confident in addressing those challenges, potentially through new learning). Eraut et al. (2000) similarly argue that the allocation and structuring of work has been shown to be key to individuals' motivation to engage in skills development. They suggest that attitudes to skills development will be affected by the level of 'challenge' in the individual's work (reflecting issues of task autonomy and job design); the extent to which work is individualised or collaborative; and the individual's opportunities for observing and working alongside people with different/greater expertise.

Within this context, it is finally important to note that gaining the buy-in of individuals will depend on them believing that learning and/or training will lead to them being more autonomous or doing their job better (see, for example, the survey evidence presented by Park (1994) and others). Where work-related training is so narrow and task-specific so as to not contribute to greater autonomy, or where it is used to further control staff autonomy, then levels of motivation will suffer.

2.4.6 Additional challenges for unemployed and economically inactive individuals

The link between low levels of engagement with learning and training activity and benefit claiming has been recognised in the literature as a distinct feature of barriers to participation for unemployed and inactive people (OECD, 2005; Aldridge and Tuckett, 2006). Research for NIACE on 'motivating unemployed people to take-up learning' highlighted that individuals can face a combination of 'situational' barriers (such as restrictions on their ability to pursue opportunities as a result of the benefits rules) and 'dispositional and psychological' factors – in this latter case, job seekers often reported a reluctance to engage in skills development because they did not believe that it would lead to a job (McGivney, 1992). More specifically, the concerns raised above regarding the link between low levels of confidence and self-efficacy and gaps in basic skills – and how these personal barriers impact on motivation towards and participation in learning – have been identified as of particular relevance to unemployed and inactive groups (Newton et al., 2005; James, 2007).

Basic skills (defined in terms of literacy and numeracy) form one of the fundamental building blocks facilitating other forms of learning, and there is strong evidence to suggest that literacy and numeracy problems are linked with long-term or repeated spells of non-employment (Machin et al., 2001; Sanderson, 2006; Carpenter, 2007). Reviewing Scottish longitudinal and new survey data, Parsons and Brynner (2008) note that more than one-third of the adult population have gaps in literacy likely to impact on employment opportunities, and that those with the lowest attainment are more likely to experience repeated or long periods of unemployment or without stable work.

However, the specific challenges faced by unemployed people and economically inactive cannot be seen as solely the product of individual skill gaps – the intrinsic-extrinsic model is relevant in exploring the opportunities and barriers faced by those out of work. For example, Stuart and Perrett (2006) present evidence from research on responses to redundancy in the steel sector. They found that the vast majority of individuals demonstrated high levels of motivation, but that many also described intrinsic barriers to re-training. Among those who had previously achieved few academic qualifications, there was often a sense of apprehension and fear at the prospect of returning to learning. It was also suggested that those who had previous experience of redundancy, job changing or re-training tended to be more proactive in preparing for post-redundancy learning.

In relation to access to, and the uptake of learning/training, being unemployed carries with it practical and structural barriers (Newton et al., 2005). An individual may choose not to participate in training opportunities if the cost of travelling to the location of the learning/training is prohibitive. Furthermore those in receipt of benefits with children may find the cost of childcare prohibitive if attending training activities requires travel from home. Long-term unemployed and economically inactive people are also more likely to experience ill-health, a factor which may undermine personal motivation to engage in training activities (Newton et al., 2005).

In terms of motivating factors, returning to work is likely to be central to unemployed people's thinking on skills development activities, but for economically inactive groups the issues may be more complex. Recent research on motivation to take up skills development by the LSC (2008) identified 'getting a job' as the key driver for taking up college sector learning among unemployed job seekers, while those claiming incapacity benefits more often mentioned learning new skills/personal interest as a key driver. The same research indicates that changes in health and caring roles appear to be key triggers for both unemployed and inactive people to return to learning or training.

For unemployed people, skills development activities that are undertaken are also often linked to the compulsory requirements (or 'conditionality') attached to benefit claims. Taylor and Spencer's (1994) qualitative work with job seekers in the early 1990s noted that many saw skills development activities as route back to work; but also noted the important 'incentive' represented by the threatened loss of benefits. Hand et al.'s (1994) qualitative research during the same period also identified a number of 'force majeure' reasons for unemployed people failing to engage in/complete skills development activities, including: availability for work rules; pressure to accept appropriate job offers; withdrawal of other funding or support (for example with fees, childcare or transport); restrictions around what type of training is supported.

Some evaluations of active labour market programmes such as the New Deal appear to point to more positive experiences for many unemployed people participating in training (Millar, 2000; Walker and Wiseman, 2003). Recent policies have also sought to address barriers to participation associated with the benefits system – lone parents with younger children and those on incapacity-related benefits have been able to train full-time for some time without losing these benefits, and the government is gradually introducing changes that mean that the '16 hour rule' will no longer be a barrier to training for some job seekers (DWP, 2008).

Regarding economically inactive groups, highly specific personal barriers can combine with extrinsic/systemic factors to create barriers to participation. Smith et al. (2008) identify a number of barriers affecting lone parents' motivation to learn, but particularly an intense 'commitment to care' and belief that their children are best cared for at home. Concerns over the quality, accessibility, availability and affordability of childcare at appropriate times were also of fundamental importance.

Furthermore, as noted above, practical issues, for example around travel, can influence unemployed people's choice of skills development activity. Recent research for the LSC (2008) asked job seekers why they selected particular college sector courses – while more than four-fifths said that the content of courses was important and two-thirds thought the learning important for jobs being targeted, more than half also named proximity to home as an important factor.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that unemployed and economically inactive groups will face different barriers, which need to be separated out to some extent. As noted above, the benefits regulations and job seeking requirements faced by the claimant unemployed may act as substantial extrinsic factors limiting their participation in skills development. This may be less the case for those claiming Employment and Support Allowance (i.e. incapacity benefits), but some of these individuals may face important health or other barriers and are less likely to see work-related training in particular as an immediate priority if they do not envisage a prompt return to work. There may be a need for further research on the range of barriers and issues faced by claimants of different working age benefits.

2.4.7 Overcoming barriers to skills development

This section reviews the research literature that discusses potential means of overcoming identified barriers to skills development. Given that it is very difficult for policy to influence intrinsic factors, it is not surprising that this literature focuses almost exclusively on means of addressing extrinsic barriers to skills development.

The role of employers

As noted above, employers provide the context that helps to shape employees' attitudes towards, and access to, skills development. Tamkin and Hillage (1997) argue that employers provided skills development opportunities for one or more of three main reasons: *vision* – a belief in the value of development as an investment in people, making them more able and the organisation a better place to work; *utility* – training creating greater efficiency and effectiveness; and *culture* – the positive impact of learning on loyalty, commitment, self esteem and motivation. The authors argue for policy measures to promote these multiple benefits as part of a business case for investment in skills to employers. The report also highlight the practical barriers reported by employers – the cost of providing/buying work-related training for staff and the impact of allowing time off to train – and note that support to help (especially smaller) employers and individuals to overcome these barriers will be necessary if differences in access to skills development are to be addressed.

Promoting a culture of learning in the workplace

We have seen above that the extent to which, and methods by which, employers promote a 'culture of learning' within the workplace may be important to the effective engagement of lower skilled workers. In some ways, the learning culture within workplaces is likely to reflect broader issues of work organisation and culture. Spreitzer et al. (2005) argue that motivation to learn among employees will be a function of levels of task autonomy within job roles, information sharing across the organisation, and levels of trust between management and staff. Almeida-Santos and Mumford (2005) suggest that employees are more likely to receive training within organisations with strong and widespread teamworking structures; and where 'quality circles' are regularly used to bring together staff and management to discuss improvements to work organisation.

Fuller et al. (2005) use the concept of 'communities of practice' to identify innovative practice in the delivery of skills development through Modern Apprenticeships in the steel sector. Their case studies in three companies identify the most effective transfer of skills where learners see themselves as 'legitimate peripheral participants', supported to engage in multiple internal communities of practice. In short, the best apprenticeship provision offered a mix of on-the-job, off-the-job and off-site activities and ensured that learners were embedded in more than one learning context, in all cases learning alongside appropriately skilled, experienced staff.

Other foundations of good practice have been identified in studies of skills development programmes in the NHS (Munro at al., 2000; Rainbird et al., 2004; McBride et al., 2006) – these studies point to the importance of developing a culture where staff do not feel that they are letting down colleagues by taking time off to train; and where there are clear links between work-based training and practical benefits in job performance/satisfaction.

Progression routes, formalised learning and accreditation

Fuller and Unwin (2006) identified a number of key success factors in facilitating continuing skills development for people over 40. In the best cases there was a clear internal labour market with progression routes linked to the attainment of NVQs. Research in the health sector has also highlighted the value of processes of accreditation in the delivery of work-related training for lower skilled staff – studies of skills development programmes for lower skilled workers in the NHS have suggested that processes of accreditation can be important in providing a focus for work-related training and learning, and securing the buy-in of individuals and their managers (McBride et al., 2006). Rainbird et al. (2004) suggest that work-related training undertaken by support workers and cleaning staff in the NHS relied heavily upon informal learning in order to operationalise new skills, but that accreditation was important in creating a sense of empowerment and heightened status among learners.

Finally, Park (1994) found that those who reported formalised procedures at work for discussing skills development with managers were significantly more likely to fall into the ‘learner’ group of respondents. Employed ‘learners’ were also twice as likely as employed ‘non-learners’ to have agreed a written training plan with their employer.

Returns to learning and training

However, accredited training must be useful and sufficiently credible so as to lead to progression in the labour market. There is evidence that achieving the lowest level vocational qualifications offers little return in terms of increased remuneration or career development (Dearden et al., 2000). Keep (2009) provides a valuable tour d'horizon of the research on returns on training investment. He cites evidence that wage returns on training investment rises with the level of qualification attained and that returns to academic qualification tend to be higher than those for vocational awards (Vignoles and Powdthavee, 2006); and that – as noted above – the wage premium associated with vocational qualifications at Level 2 or below is non-existent (see also Dickerson and Vignoles, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2007). Keep (2009) also highlights evidence that returns to vocational qualifications (even at the same level of qualification) can vary significantly depending on subject, sector or learning pathway (Jenkins et al., 2007) – noting, for example, that MacIntosh (2004) has found that vocational qualifications achieved through apprenticeships tend to offer a higher rate of return than those gained through other pathways. Where there is no reward associated with participation in vocational learning, it is unsurprising that both individuals and employers are reluctant to commit time and effort.

Flexible learning

The availability of learning in flexible locations, forms and formats may also promote employee participation. McBride et al. (2006) argue that delivering training off-site helped to overcome some of the confidence and fear issues experienced by lower skilled workers, and that developing appropriate provision (such as locally relevant basic skills training) and formats (such as e-learning for people facing time and distance barriers to learning) was also important. More generally, successful outcomes depended on the flexibility and local availability of provision. Learners often noted how the combination of work plus family plus learning commitments was challenging, so that courses needed to combine flexible distance and workplace learning if they were to be effective.

The role of the line manager

When it comes to promoting skills development for lower skilled workers, a number of studies have pointed the important role of line managers in facilitating progress. McBride et al. (2006) found that the support of line managers and middle managers was crucial to the successful engagement of non-traditional learners. The best line managers encouraged the take up of skills development opportunities and then mentored and supported learners throughout the process.

The role of trade unions

Finally, as we have seen above, there is some evidence that working in a unionised workplace increases the probability of receiving work-related training (Arulampalam and Booth, 1998; Green et al., 1999; Boheim and Booth, 2004). There is also more direct evidence of the positive role that trade unions can play in promoting employee engagement in skills development activities. To this end, the growing importance of workplace learning to the role of trade unions is demonstrated by the creation of 'union learning representatives'[4] (ULRs). ULRs are appointed from existing unionised workplaces. Their purpose is to help increase workplace training by working in partnership with employers (Hoque and Bacon, 2008). By 2008, the TUC estimated that there were 22,000 trained and accredited ULRs across workplaces in the UK.

This partnership-based approach represents a divergence from traditional conceptions of union activity that have focused on collective bargaining – however, as Munro and Rainbird (2004) note, many unions have aggressively pursued the learning agenda as a means of supporting progression for members. A review of several articles on the role of trade unions in workplace learning suggests that while trade union involvement can have a positive impact on employer-employee engagement on training, there remain questions over total impact in creating additional workplace training opportunities (Heyes and Stewart, 1998). For example, although the use of ULRs is relatively commonplace, they have sometimes faced difficulties when introducing a new learning agenda where managers have been resistant (Wallis et al., 2005).

The ability of ULRs to introduce workplace training has, to a considerable extent, hinged on the willingness of managers to create a learning culture within the workplace. Nevertheless, there are several ways in which trade unions have demonstrated a capacity to promote workplace learning. In addition to the role of ULRs discussed above, trade unions can create learning and skills development opportunities for their members through: providing free or subsidised access to training; negotiating with employers to secure paid leave for employees to participate in training; and working to improve access to training opportunities for those employee groups who have not previously participated (Munro and Rainbird, 2000, 2004).

[4] Studies of the impact of Union Learning Representatives and the Union Learning Fund are reviewed in Section 2 of this report.

2.5 Evidence review: key points and implications for policy

There is clear evidence that access to skills development opportunities differs across groups, and that those with few qualifications and the low-skilled, older workers and part-timers, and those working in small and non-unionised enterprises may particularly struggle to engage with learning and training. The evidence is that skills development provision is often accessed by many of the most able, rather than those most in need, who are in fact often least likely to have access to opportunities. Both research and policy initiatives on promoting workplace learning therefore need to acknowledge the barriers faced by more disadvantaged individuals and consider issues around boosting buy-in among these potential learners and promoting participation among under-represented groups. Indeed, many of the academic studies in this area appear to confirm that higher levels of qualification and occupational skills held by individuals are the strongest predictors of access to work-related training.

While much of the literature focuses on social and psychological influences on individuals' participation in skills development, there is also clear evidence of the very real practical barriers faced by many lower skilled people, in particular the cost of learning/training. It may also be that cost is a hidden factor in other studies. Where lower skilled workers have identified a lack of employer (financial) support as a barrier to learning/training, this may reflect that such individuals are unable to fund their own training and therefore assume that employer support will be necessary if they are to proceed.

It is also clear that unemployed and inactive people will rarely be able to fund their own skills development activities. As noted above, recent studies calling for a strengthening of individual 'learning budget' models (O'Leary and Oakley, 2008) that ensure that resources for work-related training rest with the individual may be timely, but it is also important that such approaches are targeted to assist those who would otherwise miss out on opportunities for skills development.

Our review of evidence also points to the importance of skills development provision that is useful for the individual and relevant for the workplace. Major surveys have consistently found that career progression and accessing better paid jobs are key motivators for people (including lower-skilled workers) participating in learning and training. Yet there is evidence that undertaking lower level vocational training offers few immediate returns to the individual in terms of higher wages. If this remains the case, there may be little rational incentive for lower-skilled workers to participate in such forms of training. Of course, entry-level adult learning may act as a first step towards further skills development activities that carry a higher wage premium, but there is a need to ensure that such progression routes are clearly articulated, and that even the most basic skills provision is clearly linked to improved job performance and/or opportunities for progression. In the more immediate term, it is also essential that the qualifications system offers vocational awards that can deliver a wage premium for successful training completers.

Finally, it is important to note that **intrinsic and extrinsic factors will often be inter-related**. Research has identified links between extrinsic factors such as the availability of 'space' for work-based training within organisations and aspects of job design, and individuals' motivation and take-up of learning opportunities. There are also clear links between individuals' level of motivation and extrinsic factors such as time pressures around balancing work and family life.

We have also noted that there is a danger that intrinsic barriers faced by lower skilled individuals (such as basic skills gaps and negative attitudes towards learning as a result of 'educational inheritances') can combine with extrinsic features (such as a lack of appropriate and flexible adult learning provision) to exacerbate the exclusion experienced by some disadvantaged individuals. And it is likely that individuals' level of awareness and motivation to learn/train (intrinsic factors) will be similarly shaped by extrinsic factors (such as support and encouragement from employers and the effectiveness of awareness-raising policies). Despite these clear examples of inter-connectedness, skills surveys often report intrinsic and extrinsic factors in a list format, with little reference to how they relate to and reinforce each other. As we argue in Section 5.6 below, it is important that future research focuses on the *relationship* between intrinsic and extrinsic factors in skills development.

3 Policy Review

3.1 Background

The policy review builds on the classification of barriers to individual demand for skills development developed through the Evidence Review, illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Towards a framework for exploring barriers to skills development

Intrinsic	• Social barriers: learning perceived to go against social, gender or family norms; learning seen as territory of other age and social groups • Lack of knowledge: of what's available; or resulting in belief that learning is formal, classroom-based and involves formal assessment • Lack of awareness of need to/benefits in engaging in skills development • Lack of confidence and/or self efficacy (belief in own ability to learn/succeed) • Lack of expectancy that engaging will result in desired outcomes (due to doubts about the relevance and value of learning) • Fear of failure due to 'educational inheritance' from previous experiences • Perception that too old to learn • Perception that 'fully skilled'/no need for further skills development • Gaps in basic skills or other foundations skills facilitating learning • Lack of motivation due to other personal or family priorities
Extrinsic	• Lack of time due to work/family pressures (and lack of training at appropriate times/locations and other services, e.g. childcare, to address these barriers) • Cost/lack of financial support from employers or other sources • Lack of provision of appropriate quality, relevance and content • Employer unwilling/unable to resource training or time off to train • Lack of physical/virtual space or resources for work-related training • Lack of work culture that encourages skills development and deployment • Lack of job autonomy/ownership so that skills can be effectively deployed • Lack of formal systems for progression/rewarding skills development • Inappropriate allocation of skills development opportunities by management • Lack of support/advocacy from: trade unions; peers; management

Building on Table 3.1, it is possible to classify policy initiatives into five broad types, as illustrated in Table 3.2. Each of these can be related to 'market failures' that may justify government intervention to stimulate individual investment in skills development activities. For example, from a societal perspective, it might be desirable to address the persistently low levels of investment in skills exhibited by some groups within the population, as discussed in chapter 2. Policies may also be targeted on different groups within the population deemed to be in particular need of support, broadly reflecting the groups highlighted by research as facing particular constraints or barriers that justify policy intervention to address. It is also important to note in this context that the policy environment in relation to skills differs between the four nations of the UK.

The rest of the chapter goes on to review the effectiveness of these policies (where evidence allows and identifies some common themes of effective interventions).

Table 3.2: Barriers to skills development and policy responses

Barriers to learning	Broad policy response	Skills and Employment Policies identified (UK, national & international)	Target groups
Extrinsic • Cost / lack of financial support	Financial support	• Individual Learning Account (EN, SC, WA, NL, SE) • Career Development Loans • Education Maintenance Allowance • Adult Learning Grant • Special Education Grants (SE)	• All potential learners • In work • Young people • Adults • Unemployed
Intrinsic • Lack of knowledge	Information, advice, guidance	• Ufi / learndirect • IAG (England, Wales) • All Age Guidance Service (Scotland) • Programme on Ageing Workers (FI)	• All • All • All • Older people
Intrinsic • Social barriers, personal/family priorities • Lack of awareness, confidence, expectancy re benefits of learning • Fear of failure, 'Too old', 'no need for further skills' • Gaps in basic skills **Extrinsic** • Quality of provision	Awareness, motivation, confidence	• Connexions Card (England) • Skills for Life (England) • Skills Coaching Trials / Skills Passports (New Deal for Skills) • Learning Agreements (England) • Aimhigher (England) • Skills for Work (Ireland) • Training awards* • Qualifications reform*	• Young people • Less well educated • Unemployed • Young people • Young people • Unemployed • All • All

Barriers to learning	Broad policy response	Skills and Employment Policies identified (UK, national & international)	Target groups
Extrinsic • Lack of time / timing of training opportunities • Employer unwilling to resource time off	Time to learn	• Time Off for Study or Training – consultation/feasibility studies (UK) • Paid Learning Leave pilot (Ireland) • Educational leave (SE, Norway)	• In work • In work • In work
Extrinsic • Lack of space/resources for work-based learning • Work culture • Job autonomy / ownership • Lack of formal systems • Management allocation of skills development opportunities • Lack of support from unions, peers, managers	Workplace-based initiatives	• Union Learning Fund / Representatives • Train to Gain (England) • Employer Training Pilots (EN) • Learning Worker Pilots (Wales) • Workplace Innovation Fund (NI) • Training Support Scheme (IE) • NOSTE (Finland) • Encouragement for employer training through public procurement*	• In work / unionised • In work • In work • In work • In work • In work • In work (low skilled) • In work
Extrinsic • Access to training provision • Childcare or family-related responsibilities • Health issues	Others	• Care to Learn • Adult & Community Learning Fund • Learning Challenge Fund (Wales) • Regional Support Centres • Learning Community Account pilots (Wales) • Learner Support Funds • Return to Learning (Ireland)	• Young parents • Adults • Adults • Adults • Adults • Adults • Adults

Note: the Evidence Review suggests that these types of policy intervention may play a role in stimulating individual demand for skills development, but the Policy Review found no evidence of their effectiveness in this regard.

Key to countries

EN	England	**SE**	Sweden
SC	Scotland	**FI**	Finland
WA	Wales	**IE**	Republic of Ireland
NI	Northern Ireland		
NL	Netherlands		

3.2 Financial support for skills development

Our review identified several different policy interventions that have been implemented with the explicit objective of helping individuals to overcome financial barriers to skills development. Financial support policies may be designed to influence the individual's ability to invest directly in skills development through course fees and/or indirectly through assisting with living costs that might otherwise have been met through full or part time working. There is – in principle – a clear 'market failure' justification for such policies, given the uncertainty attached to investment in skills development and the fact that the (economic and non-economic) returns are likely to accrue not just to the individual, but to employers and to society more generally[5].

Each of these initiatives is reviewed briefly below, focusing on the available evidence of impact on individuals' propensity to invest in skills development measured in terms of a range of indicators including participation rates in formal, informal and/or certificated learning activities, attainment of qualifications and more qualitative indicators such as attitudes towards skills, learning and/or qualifications.

3.2.1 Individual Learning Accounts

Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) were launched across the UK in 2000 to encourage take-up and participation in learning and promotion of lifelong learning. While the details of the scheme varied between countries, the basic premise was that participants were eligible to receive a grant towards the costs of learning programmes, with the potential for individual and/or employer contributions to the accounts. As a result of a small number of providers abusing the programme, it was suspended in November 2001, one consequence being that evaluation evidence is limited to a report on the early views of customers and providers. This indicated that deadweight levels appear to be high, with over 40 per cent of respondents stating that they would have paid for their course in the absence of ILA.

Subsequent to this suspension ILA programmes have run in Wales and Scotland, with specific characteristics designed to address priorities in these countries (for example in Wales, the programme was focused initially on those with Level 2 qualifications or below). Key findings from review and evaluation documents are:

- Early take-up of the ILA Wales programme was below expectations and reached only a very small proportion (0.2 per cent) of people with qualifications at Level 2 or below in its first year;

[5] See Keep (2006) for an examination of the 'market failure' argument in relation to skills policies

- There is some evidence of additionality, however half of the Wales programme's participants felt that they would have learned regardless of the ILA;
- Opening up the Wales programme to those qualified to Level 3 helped to boost participation rates and achievement of qualifications;
- The 2007 evaluation report states that the programme has been successful in engaging 'hard-to-reach' groups and/or those with few qualifications, although people who had previously done some learning were over-represented in the beneficiary population;
- However, the evaluation research identified that learners still faced a range of barriers to the take-up of further learning, including lack of time, cost and family commitments;
- Lack of awareness of the ILA programme also inhibited take-up;
- Evaluation of the ILA programme in Scotland focused on the views and learning providers and intermediary agencies and highlighted the need to ensure that the needs of learners with disabilities, mental health needs, learning difficulties and migrants.

In summary, evaluations of ILA programmes in Wales and Scotland suggest a fairly modest impact on stimulating individual demand for skills development. It is clear from the evidence that considerable barriers remain, particularly for those without qualifications or without recent experience of learning, which – for most participants – are not addressed solely by providing a financial incentive.

3.2.2 Career Development Loans

The Career Development Loan (CDL) scheme has run in England, Scotland and Wales since 1988 and supports the administration of bank loans between £300 and £8000 to fund work-related learning. Repayment of interest is subsidised by the LSC and up to 2008 there have been approximately 15,000 successful loans totalling around £70m per annum. The LSC published several reports from a two-year evaluation study, with the main findings of relevance to this review being:

- The requirement to repay the loan is a strong incentive for learners to complete their learning programmes;
- Some stakeholders were concerned that the non-targeted nature of the programme meant that CDL was not well suited to focusing on priority skill areas or priority learner groups;

- There is some evidence of additionality, derived from a survey of over 10,000 CDL learners, over half of whom said that they would not have undertaken their course without CDL;
- On balance, the scheme does not attract 'hard-to-reach' groups: the profile of CDL learners suggests an over-representation of young white males with relatively high qualifications;
- Despite this, participants were not – on average – highly paid when they took up CDL and there is some evidence that CDL-supported learning helped participants to attain higher qualifications, new jobs, promotion and/or higher salaries.

In summary, CDL appears to be effective in helping predominantly young, relatively highly-qualified but low-paid individuals to gain higher level qualifications to support labour market advancement. A particularly strong factor in the success and longevity of the scheme appears to be the incentive to learners provided by the requirement to repay the loan in the same way as with a conventional bank loan.

3.2.3 Education Maintenance Allowance

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme was rolled out across the UK in 2004-05. It is essentially a means-tested cash allowance (between £5 and £30 per week) for young people who stay on in post-16 education and learning.

The LSC commissioned an evaluation of the national roll-out of EMA, and a number of other reports have been published, including an evaluation of a pilot scheme in Scotland. The LSC evaluation report presented the following key findings:

- EMA has resulted in an increase in the number of young people staying on in education post 16 (the evaluation of the Scotland pilot in East Ayrshire suggests an increase of 7 percentage points);
- There is some evidence that increases in staying on rates are highest for lower income families and areas;
- However there is some suggestion from survey respondents of limited additionality, for example, only 6 per cent stated that they would not have continued learning without EMA;
- Survey evidence suggests that EMA has played a role in influencing parental attitudes to post-16 learning, with around two-thirds of respondents stating that their parents supported their decision to stay on in education as a direct result of EMA;

- The main impact of EMA appears to be that fewer young people feel that they need to do part-time work in order to support themselves through their studies;
- Importantly, a condition of receiving EMA is that students are obliged to attend lessons. The evaluation evidence suggests that this has been effective in increasing attendance, although there is limited/no evidence as to whether this affects completion or attainment of qualifications.

In summary, EMA appears to have had a broadly positive impact on the decision of young people to continue in learning post-16. In addition to the financial incentive – and in particular bonuses linked to attendance and/or attainment – there is some evidence that EMA is helping to address barriers related to family circumstances, through helping to positively influence parents' attitudes towards post-16 learning.

3.2.4 Adult Learning Grant

The Adult Learning Grant (ALG) pilot began in September 2003 in ten areas across England. The ALG aimed to support more adults in learning through the offer of a means-tested monetary allowance. The allowance (up to £30 per week) was paid during term time and had strict eligibility criteria. For example, it was available to those earning up to £19,000 or up to £30,000 if living with a partner in paid employment. It was specifically targeted at full-time learners, predicated on the belief that learners could study full-time and work part-time. It was also targeted at learners aged 19-30 studying for their first full-time Level 2 or Level 3 qualification.

An evaluation of the pilots, undertaken by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (2004, 2005) drew on evidence from project information, interviews and a survey of 1281 individuals who had applied for an ALG and 938 non-applicants. Key findings in terms of the initiative's impact on individual participation in skills development were:

- ALG appears to have had limited impact in terms of 'pure' additionality. Only 13 per cent of survey respondents said that they would not have undertaken their course without ALG;
- However, there is evidence that ALG enabled a considerable proportion of learners (43 per cent of those surveyed) to study full time rather than part time;
- The evaluation suggests that some learners were studying at a higher level than they otherwise would have done, as a consequence of ALG;
- ALG appear to have helped to encourage retention: 20 per cent of recipients said that they probably or definitely would have dropped out without ALG;

- In terms of motivations to learn, 88 per cent of respondents said that they were following a course for work-related reasons: 56 per cent were in work whilst learning, albeit in most cases on relatively low incomes.

On balance, the evaluation evidence suggests that ALG had a modest impact on individuals' decision to participate in learning; however there is evidence that the existence of this type of financial support encourages learners to study full rather than part time, at a higher level that they might otherwise have done and with greater likelihood of completion.

3.2.5 International policies

Financial support for learners - in the form of grants, subsidies or loans – features among the policies of a number of the six countries that we examined as part of our international review of policy evidence. As noted above – and as emphasised by EIM / SEOR (2005) in their review for the European Commission - robust evidence of impact is difficult to find for many of these initiatives; however it is still useful to reflect on the experiences of other countries in relation to this important policy area:

- The **Netherlands** experimented with an Individual Learner Account programme between 2001 and 2003. Essentially the initiative comprised a grant (450 euros) provided by central government to around 3000 individuals employed in around 100 participating companies. A review of the pilots (Janssen, 2008) found that employees reported a range of motivations for participating, primarily related to personal development (61 per cent) and improved performance in the workplace (39 per cent). Mixed messages were received from participants regarding the benefits of 'self-management' of the accounts, suggesting the need to link such financial support initiatives with information, advice and guidance.

  On balance, the review – which included comparative analysis with non-participants in ILA - concluded that the ILA pilot had helped to motivate employees to participate in training through reducing resistance to training. However, the scheme was felt to be too bureaucratic and did not entail a sufficiently strong role for employers in determining training activities. Very few participants were interested in 'saving for learning'.

- In 2002, the government in **Sweden** considered the introduction of an ILA scheme based around the provision of tax incentives to employers and employees for regular saving towards training (similar to an ISA), but eventually rejected the idea primarily because of difficulties in obtaining 'buy-in' from the main social partners (Schuetze (2007). For example, unions representing low-paid workers felt that this group would not be able to afford to save the amounts required, and there were criticisms of the complexity of the proposed scheme. It should be noted, however, that Sweden has a long history of substantial state funding and subsidisation of training, and this may have influenced the opinions of the social partners.
- In 1997 the **Swedish** Government introduced the Adult Education Initiative (AEI) as part of its active labour market policies. One of the key developments under AEI was the introduction of special education grants (UBS), which were equal to unemployment insurance of the individual. These grants were introduced with the explicit aim of recruiting those most in need of education and to reduce the barriers faced (personal as well as financial) in seeking further studies. The UBS was open to people aged 25-55 and specifically targeted unemployed people, but was also open to those at risk of unemployment.

  The available evaluations of the UBS (Stenberg, 2002; 2003; EIM Business and Policy Research and SEOR, 2005) have tended to focus on understanding the impact of the programme in terms of employment, the impact on wages and the mobility of people in the workforce. The only indication of impact on encouraging uptake of training is that 51 per cent of AEI participants who had enrolled in 1997 were still in education in 1999 compared to 19 per cent of Labour Market Training (another training programme available at the time to unemployed people). Overall, up to 2001, more than 357,000 people had pursued adult education by means of the UBS grant. This initiative is interesting despite lack of evidence of additionality:

  - It is an example of an initiative targeted specifically at unemployed people;
  - It raises interesting questions about the efficacy of offering grants for learning that are equal to, but instead of unemployment benefits. Full-time students could receive support ranging from €763 and €1740 a month, which was to cover living expenses and additional learning costs and not training fees (virtually all state and state-subsidised education in Sweden is free).
- In Finland, employees are entitled to subsidised payment for adult studies based on how long a person has worked. This provides payments for the equivalent of 9.6 days of training for every year worked. In addition, relatively generous training allowances are available for unemployed and other disadvantaged people.

While this is **not intended to be a comprehensive review of international policy evidence**, and evaluation evidence is very limited, it is clear that the Scandinavian countries in particular have a history of providing relatively generous and primarily grant-based funding for individuals to pursue training or learning programmes, primarily based on personal choice[6]. Comparative reviews (e.g. OECD, 2007) consistently place these countries near the top of international league tables of learning participation and/or achievement. While it cannot be stated unequivocally that financial support has been a major factor in achieving these results, it seems clear that it has made an important contribution.

3.3 Information, advice and guidance

It is clear from the evidence review that lack of, limited access to or inadequate provision of information, advice and/or guidance may act as a barrier to demand for skills development among some groups of 'non-learners'. This relates clearly to 'market failure' arguments that emphasise the considerable fixed costs associated with the acquisition of relevant information by individuals and the consequent role of the state in helping individuals to make informed decisions about skills development. This section reviews some of the key national initiatives that have provided evaluation evidence to enable us to make some judgements about the nature and strength of this set of barriers and the effectiveness of different approaches to addressing them.

3.3.1 Learndirect / University for Industry

The University for Industry (Ufi) was established across the UK in 1998 with the objectives of widening participation, improving adult skills and reducing skills gaps in the labour market. Its operations are carried out using the brand name learndirect, and the service provides information, advice and guidance through telephone and web-based facilities and supports/endorses the provision of learning programmes in a wide range of locations and organisations.

A number of studies have assessed the effectiveness and impact of learndirect and/or its constituent activities. The most recent evaluation study, carried out by the University of Wolverhampton (Ufi and QIA, 2008) – based primarily on consultation with learndirect centres and tutors - raises the following key issues in relation to individual participation, highlighting the links between IAG and awareness, motivation and confidence:

[6] Many of the policies reviewed in this section were operational in the late 1990s and early 2000s. More recent policies have tended to place more emphasis on employer need.

- Support throughout the learner's 'journey' – through face-to-face, telephone and email contact – is important in ensuring that learners pursue their programmes;
- The 'private' nature of learning through learndirect helps to remove the fear of failure that inhibits participation by some groups of learners;
- Tutor support is an important means of boosting the confidence of inexperienced learners;
- There is evidence that many non-traditional learners go on to further learning – often funding it themselves – following completion of a learndirect programme.

Several earlier studies (Ufi, 2003a; b; c) provide evidence to support the view that learndirect has been successful in addressing at least some of the barriers highlighted in our Evidence Review:

- Surveys of learners suggests that many are new learners who are quite far removed from any employment-related destination;
- learndirect is strong on attracting individuals to learning, and on widening participation, but the evidence of impact on employability is limited and relatively few learners complete the full 'journey' and attain a full qualification;
- There is clear evidence of positive impact of learndirect on the attitudes of non-traditional learners towards learning;
- Learner satisfaction surveys endorse the above views and suggest some degree of additionality, for example between 25 and 45 per cent of learners stated that they would not have undertaken learning without learndirect;
- There is some evidence of positive impact of learndirect on learner motivation, for example 60 per cent of survey respondents said that their self-confidence had improved following participation in a learning programme.

There are variations in the evaluation results that probably relate to differences in time period and methodology. For example, a 2003 study by IES suggests that the majority of people benefiting from the advice line were 'warm' in the sense that they were already engaged and fairly committed to learning, and that the advice line played an important role in translating awareness into participation.

Nonetheless, it is clear from the evidence that learndirect has had an impact particularly in relation to attracting non-traditional learners into learning. This clearly relates in part to improved access to information, but also appears to be important in addressing issues of lack of confidence, fear of failure and embarrassment that inhibit many people from pursuing more traditional routes into learning. On the other hand, despite evidence of some employer contribution to learning for some people, there is limited evidence that learndirect has helped to increase the rate of attainment of qualifications or to help people to acquire work-related skills.

3.3.2 Information, Advice and Guidance

A number of evaluations have been undertaken into the effectiveness of information, advice and guidance services at various different spatial levels and over a range of time periods (for example George Street Research, 2007; MTL, 2003; 2006). While these studies have tended not to focus on the impact of IAG on individual demand for skills development per se, a number of important lessons emerge:

- There is mixed awareness and usage of IAG services among learners in general;
- A potential strength of IAG is that it can be made accessible to a broad range of learners – evidence suggests that users from a range of socio-cultural and learning background can feel comfortable using such services;
- There is limited robust evidence on the added value of IAG in terms of encouraging individual demand for skills development, primarily due to the broad objectives of IAG and the difficulties of isolating the learning aspects;
- There is some evidence of a positive relationship between attitudes to learning and the extent of in-depth and ongoing support/advice/guidance: one-off interventions based on the provision of information appear to have limited impact; emphasis is placed on IAG as part of a wider process;
- Different groups of learners and potential learners express different needs for IAG services, linked to their perceived barriers (e.g. language, finance, childcare), suggesting the need for a flexible response, with face-to-face contact where appropriate; and
- The existence of one clear channel or point of access (preferably a telephone helpline), pro-activity on the part of intermediaries and/or effective publicity campaigns are all factors that learners feel would help to improve the accessibility and impact of IAG services.

In summary, it is difficult to isolate the impact of IAG activities specifically on the demand for skills development among different population groups. The evaluation evidence suggests that national programmes or networks have a relatively small impact upon a relatively large number of people. In other words, IAG appears to play primarily a supporting role in helping people to choose the most appropriate learning options, particularly where it is feasible to provide intensive face-to-face support over a period of time, as opposed to one-off provision of information, by telephone or online.

3.3.3 All Age Guidance Service

All Age Guidance (AAG) services were established in Scotland in 2000, with funding of around £9m, to provide a single source (as opposed to multiple sources, as was the case previously) of information in the form of *Careers Scotland*[7], advice and guidance on careers, training and education in each region for people of all ages. While careers guidance represents a major element of the service, this review focuses primarily on the impact of the service on individual participation in training or education.

The evaluation study, undertaken by SQW (2005), covered the period 2002-2004 and comprised a survey of 559 AAG participants, with a follow-up surveys and face to face interviews with 36 of these participants. A six-monthly omnibus survey of the Scottish population was also undertaken.

The survey evidence suggests a significantly increased interest among the Scottish population for advice or guidance abut careers, training or learning opportunities. 44 per cent of respondents had started a course within 9 months of the baseline survey and an estimated 17,500 AAG clients started and/or completed a training or education course, of which over 13,000 had been *'influenced by the information advice and guidance provided through the AAG projects'*. (p1)

AAG support is shown to have had a *'disproportionately large effect on older people (45+) and single parents in enhancing their skills, confidence and employment prospects'* (p1). Overall, the evaluation concludes that there is evidence of more people making more informed decisions and that *'Careers Scotland has played a major part in raising awareness of advice or guidance about careers'* (p4).

Key issues in terms of increasing the impact on individual demand include the need to build the generic skills of clients, look at the time that careers advisers are able to give and the confidence this can instil in clients.

[7] Note that in 2008 Careers Scotland was incorporated into a new body, Skills Development Scotland

The findings of this study reinforce those of other research and evaluation studies (e.g. SUfI) that highlight the key role that independent information, advice and guidance can play in influencing the individual's decision as to whether and how to take up learning opportunities. The 'additionality' estimates appear to be impressive (around 75 per cent of people starting courses). However, they are based purely on answers given by survey respondents to questions asking whether AAG had an 'influence' on their decision to take up learning. Nonetheless this study provides valuable evidence to support the role that can be played (in conjunction with other initiatives) by a comprehensive information, advice and guidance service, as envisaged in the Leitch Report and currently being rolled out in England in the form of the Adult Advancement and Careers Service (AACS).

3.3.4 International policies

The countries studied for our international policy review all have various forms of information, advice and guidance systems. In most cases they appear to play a supporting role in terms of encouraging participation in learning, but very few studies focus on the impact on individuals' demand for skills development. One example from Finland serves to illustrate a targeted initiative to provide IAG (along with other services) to older workers.

FNPAW – National Programme on Ageing Workers (Finland)

FNPAW was introduced in 1998 as a result of a policy decision made by the Council of State. The initial funding for the programme was €4.2m and was granted to the different ministries responsible for the programme. The reason behind the programme was a rapid increase at the time in unemployment amongst individuals aged 55-64 and it was decided that early retirement was not an effective long-term strategy. The programme ran from 1998 to 2002. The main aims were to promote the employment of those aged over 45 and reduce exclusion and premature retirement through a) the promotion of practical learning; b) the development of the links between health, education and working life. The premise of the programme is based on the three related concepts of work ability, employability and employment.

The main instruments of FNPAW were: 1. research and development projects that were then used to inform delivery; 2. education and training; and 3. provision of information. In particular the delivery of information was to be provided through a new internet information and advisory service (Opintolousi) covering the whole of the Finnish education system.

The evaluations of the programme (EIM Business and Policy Research and SEOR, 2005; Arnkil et al, 2002) have tended to focus on issues relating to the extent to which it raised awareness of the fact that Finland is one of the first countries to face major issues relating to

an ageing workforce. However, the analysis also highlighted some key issues:

- Many older workers face a 'training gap' as many have only compulsory education, and that problems involving functional literacy and computer literacy (which may limit the usefulness for some groups of an internet-based service) are widespread in this group;
- The programme had a significant effect on boosting the supply of training for older people in Finland;
- A key success factor for the programme (noted as good practice) was the fact that financial support for training and the education of older employees was combined with a broad ('awakening') programme of the labour market to raise awareness of the problems faced by this group.

3.4 Awareness, motivation and confidence

The evidence review notes that key factors influencing individuals' decisions to 'demand'' skills development include awareness of the potential benefits of skills development ('expectancy') and of the available options (linked closely to IAG); motivation to participate, which may be affected by personal, social or employment circumstances; and confidence in their ability to undertake the learning, which again may be shaped by personal circumstances and experiences, including apprehension about perceived stigma that might be attached to certain types of learning. A number of policy initiatives have been introduced with the broad objective of increasing awareness, motivation and confidence, typically among targeted groups of non-learners. Evidence about the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives is reviewed in this section.

3.4.1 Connexions Card

The Connexions Card initiative was launched in 2001 as a seven-year programme aimed specifically at 16-19 year-olds in England. As well as aiming to address financial barriers to learning, the programme has an explicit aim to motivate young people to fulfil their potential, thus improving their life and career choices.

An evaluation undertaken by York Consulting (2005) found no significant evidence of any direct impact of the initiative on the attitudes of learners of attendance on learning programmes. Indeed the project appears to be more accessible to those individuals who continue their education beyond school leaving age, and for 'high achievers', but has been less successful in reaching hard-to-reach and NEET young people and those in need of 'more choices and more chances' (i.e. at risk of experiencing long periods not in employment, education or training).

3.4.2 Skills Coaching Trials / Skills Passports

The Skills Coaching service is aimed at adults claiming Jobseekers Allowance or inactive benefits for whom lack of skills is a barrier to gaining employment. Eligible candidates are referred to the service by Jobcentre Plus advisors, and receive advice and guidance regarding the types of training activities that would help them to improve their employability. It is part of the New Deal for Skills (NDfS) programme and entails an initial review, a Skills diagnostic assessment leading to a Skills Development Plan. Skills Coaches then seek to broker appropriate provision through local learning providers.

A synthesis of the available quantitative and qualitative evidence, published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) highlights the difficulties involved in assessing the demand for Skills Coaching, mainly due to limitations with the available data, based on referrals made by Jobcentre Plus advisors. Nonetheless, the available evidence suggests that only around half of the individuals that are referred to the service actually take it up, with overall take-up being lower than initially anticipated. There is also some evidence that those with additional barriers (e.g. lone parents, people with disabilities) are quickest to exit the service. Only 7 per cent of participants gained qualifications, in most cases at a low level.

3.4.3 Learning Agreements

This initiative emerged from the 2005 budget, when it was announced that there would be two new schemes for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and young people in jobs without training (JWT). It is believed that there are 100,000 NEET in England and nearly 85,000 JWT. Sixty million pounds was allocated over 2 years to Activity Agreement Pilots to support and encourage disengaged 16-17 year olds back into learning. Eighty million pounds over 2 years was allocated to Learning Agreement Pilots (LAP) for 16-17 year old JWT to increase access to training opportunities. AA and LAPs were initially piloted in 12 areas of England from April 2006 for a two year period.

Learning Agreements were a joint initiative between Connexions and the local LSC piloted in eight areas of England between April 2006 and March 2008. The pilots varied in terms of their focus (NEET, JWT or both) and in terms of the specific services and incentives provided. Learning Agreements were drawn up between the young person, a personal advisor from Connexions and the employer and set out the accredited training that the young person would undertake. The pilots were extended for a further 16 months in April 2008.

An evaluation led by the Institute for Employment Studies (2009), which entailed visits to the pilot areas, interviews with a range of project managers and other local stakeholders and a survey of employers and learners, suggests the following in relation to the role of LAP in stimulating demand for skills development among young people who are NEET or in Jobs Without Training:

- Take-up of the initiative was relatively low, at around 7 per cent of the eligible target group, reflecting difficulties associated with identifying, contacting and encouraging such individuals to participate;
- It is estimated that LAP resulted in levels of formal learning that were 32 per cent higher among participating young people than they otherwise would have been[8];
- Financial incentives were an important factor encouraging young people to participate; the highest participation rates were in pilot areas that offered bonus payments to individuals;
- Wage compensation for employers of JWT young people was also found to have a positive impact on learning activity for those who participated, but did not appear to increase overall take-up rates;
- Despite the fact that they had been identified as being in JWT, many young people in employment did not want to take part in LAP, in some cases because they were happy with the training they currently received;
- Employers stated that there were supportive of LAP, but 31 per cent of trainees felt that their employer had given them little or no support;
- Qualitative evidence highlights the key role played by advisers in terms of engaging young people, brokering provision and providing learner support;
- There is some evidence that participation in LAP helped some participants to have a more positive view of training, but there is limited direct evidence of longer-term impacts on attainment.

[8] The additionality was estimated on the basis that 61% of LAP learners went on to study towards a qualification in the 12 months after involvement, compared to 30% of non-LAP learners. With rounding, this equated to an additional impact of 32%.

This pilot highlights a number of issues associated with policy initiatives designed to stimulate demand for skills development among young people who tend to have had negative experiences at school and are in a position where they are not currently learning, whether in a job or not. In particular it suggests that contacting and raising awareness among this group is challenging and potentially resource-intensive; that advice and support can have a positive impact on those young people that do come forward, particularly if accompanied by financial incentives and – where relevant – support from employers.

3.4.4 Skills for Life

The Skills for Life programme was designed to improve literacy, numeracy and language skills of adults[9]. As part of the programme, literacy, numeracy and ESOL training was provided free of charge to those without literacy or numeracy qualifications at level 2. As such, it represents one of the entry points for non-traditional learners to take a new interest in learning opportunities.

Several studies and evaluations of SfL have been undertaken (Meadows and Metcalf, 2005; 2007; CRG, 2002) and the following key points emerge in relation to individual demand for skills development:

- Participants and providers tend to emphasise the personal and social outcomes that occur as a result of participating in learning, including more positive attitudes to learning, increased confidence and self-esteem;
- Learner and potential learner perceptions of the benefits of learning are important determinants of the decision to participate and/or progress; there is some evidence from a comparative study with a control group (Meadows and Metcalf, 2005) that SfL learners may over-estimate the net benefits of participation in the programme.
- For those who participate in SfL programmes, there is evidence of progression onto higher-level learning, although those who progress are not necessarily the least qualified;
- It is difficult to assess the precise impacts of SfL, given the diversity of participants and of potential outcomes in terms of participation, attainment, progression and/or employment;
- The evidence suggests the need for a full understanding of the family, personal and social factors shaping low-skilled individuals' experiences of and attitudes to learning, and the associated need for tailored provision for specific groups.

[9] The initiative also covered 16-17 year old young people who had left full-time education, but the evaluation evidence focuses mainly on adults.

This evaluation evidence highlights clearly the complexities involved with the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives aimed at increasing participation in learning among people with low levels of basic skills. This group is highly heterogeneous and exhibit differing perceptions of the barriers to and benefits from participation in learning. It is clear that observed benefits from learning – at least in the short to medium term - are primarily personal and/or social, with employment and economic outcomes occurring over relatively long periods of time.

3.4.5 Aimhigher

The Aimhigher programme was initially introduced by DfES in 2001 with the aim of raising the aspirations of and increasing the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in England entering Higher Education (HE). The programme is aimed at young people between the ages of 13 and 19 and comprises various interventions at education institutions including, for example, visits to HE institutions. While Aimhigher is primarily an 'awareness, motivation and confidence' initiative, there is a financial support element through 'Opportunity Bursaries' of £2,000 per student over the course of 3 years to support some groups of students through their studies.

It is clear that Aimhigher has succeeded in targeting groups and areas that are less likely on average to participate in HE. For example, the schools that participated have higher than average proportions of students entitled to free school meals, a smaller than average proportion speaking English as a first language and a lower than average proportion of high-performing schools.

Evaluation reports (for example, DfES, 2005d; Morris and Rutt, 2006) confirm that the main barriers to take-up of HE among disadvantaged groups/areas are lack of family experience of university and financial concerns. To date the evaluation has been unable to identify robust evidence that the programme has been successful in raising young people's aspirations to enter HE or in influencing young people's attitudes towards pre or post-16 education. Statistical evidence suggests that the programme has not had any discernable impact on intention to participate in HE, although qualitative findings suggest that visits to HE institutions did seem to have a positive impact on decisions to go to university. The Opportunities Bursary appears to have been influential in decreasing concern about the cost of HE; 85 per cent of survey respondents felt less worried about finance when they were in receipt of the bursary. Of those in receipt of the bursary, one third stated that this enabled them to avoid having to get a part-time job whilst studying.

A longitudinal analysis of pupils participating in Aimhigher (Morris and Rutt, 2006) elaborates on the above conclusions, presenting qualitative evidence that some young people change their minds about considering HE as a result of activities such as visits to universities. However, the report points out that it is difficult to obtain the data that would be required in order to undertake a robust evaluation of impact. Detailed studies of seven case study areas (EKOS, 2007) further support the finding that stakeholders and participants are generally positive about Aimhigher, particularly the more intensive (expensive) elements, but robust quantitative evidence is difficult to identify at this stage (the evaluation studies are ongoing).

In summary, although to date there is no statistically significant evidence that the Aimhigher programme interventions have had any effect on the aspirations of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter HE, the qualitative evidence suggests some impacts on awareness, motivation and confidence that may feed through to measureable impacts in future years. It is clear, however, that the factors influencing young people's aspirations are complex and varied, and initiatives such as Aimhigher need to be considered in the context of wider issues such as labour market developments, university fee levels and the broader system of financial support for students.

3.4.6 International policies

As with information, advice and guidance, our review of international policy evidence suggests that the types of awareness and motivation programmes typified by Aimhigher do not appear to play a particularly significant role in the learning policies of the six countries that form the core of our review. The following example, which shows many similarities to Skills for Life, comes from the Republic of Ireland.

Skills for Work (Rep. of Ireland)

In 2005, the Irish Government allocated €2m for a Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF). This fund had the aim of developing initiatives to provide opportunities for employees to improve their literacy and numeracy skills through fully funded workplace training. The fund was delivered through the Skills for Work initiative and was aimed at employees with basic skills needs who have not completed their education beyond Junior Certificate level. The total amount spent on the initiative to date is €7m. SFW was piloted from May 2005 to November 2007 through National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) and the Belfast Unemployment Centre. Skills for Work appears to share many characteristics with Skills for Life in England.

The programme has been evaluated, but the report has not yet been published. However,

some details about the evaluation are published in the Irish Labour Market Review (2008). Overall in 2006, 1,600 participants took part in courses and that figure rose to 2,000 in 2007. Particular attention has been drawn to the fact that the model of delivery is different to the traditional model of adult education provision in Ireland:

- It is largely delivered on-site and so is brought to participants;
- The process is mediated by brokers that straddle the vocational training/education divide, thereby ensuring content has value to both the employer and the employee;
- The model is based on active collaboration between organisations working across the education/training divide.

3.5 Time to learn

The evidence review clearly identifies time constraints as a key potential barrier to employed people in particular undertaking learning activities. While the UK has never implemented policies to give employees in general the statutory right to time off to undertake education or training, the issue has been under consideration from some time. This section reviews the UK evidence about the potential impact of such a move, and considers the evidence from other countries that have 'time to train' policies.

3.5.1 Time to Study or Train

With the exception of the right for 16-17 year old employees with qualifications below level 2 to request time to train from their employers[10], this right has not been implemented in the UK. However, it has been the subject of intensive study and debate, and is an element of skills policies in many countries, including some that are included in our international policy review. For this reason, it is useful to consider the evidence generated in the context of consultation exercises undertaken by DIUS, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government. Key points are:

- Apprehension about approaching employers, lack of awareness of rights to time off, lack of knowledge about training that might be appropriate and lack of confidence might all inhibit the take up of a legal right to request time for study or training;
- However, there is some evidence to suggest that the implementation of such an initiative would be helpful in encouraging employers to invest in training, thereby improving the self-confidence of workers and potentially improving productivity and competitiveness;

[10] No evaluation has been undertaken of the impact of this right on the demand for training among this group of young people

- A small number of respondents in the three countries thought that legislation was not an appropriate way to encourage employers to give employees time to train;
- The proposal was that, in England, 'Time to Train' proposal would be introduced alongside Skills Accounts and the new Adult Advancement and Careers Service, thus addressing a number of barriers within a linked or integrated system;
- In particular, it was considered that 'Time to Train' would be helpful in helping low-skilled workers to improve their skills, thus contributing to improved productivity and competitiveness;
- The National Adult Learners Survey suggests that there would be some demand for 'Time to Train', with 13 per cent of non-learners expressing an interest – in principle – in requesting time off to train;
- Forty per cent of non-learners would like to learn, and 9 per cent of these felt that inability to get time off from work was their main barrier to learning.

Clearly, it is not possible to assess the impact of time to learn programmes, in the UK at least. However, it is clear from this brief review of consultation evidence that there is potential for such a programme to have some impact, particularly if implemented in conjunction with initiatives to address non time-related barriers including awareness, information, guidance and the attitudes and practices of some employers.

3.5.2 International policies

The Scandinavian countries in particular have policies that incorporate relatively clear and well-established legislative requirements for employees to be allowed time off work to pursue learning activities. For example, in **Norway**, employees who have been working for at least three years and with the same employer have the right to full-time or part-time unpaid leave for up to three years to participate in formal study or training. Employers have the right to refuse such requests for a number of reasons and the evidence suggests that very few people (estimated at around one per cent of eligible employees) actually exercise this right.

In **Sweden**, employees have had the right to paid and unpaid educational leave under the Educational Leave Act (1975). Participants must have been employed for the last six months or at least a total of 12 months in the two years at the employer in question. The conditions for participation are that the studies (accredited and non-accredited) must be planned and follow a curriculum. The act does not lay down any specific rules concerning employment benefits during the educational leave. This is arranged between the employee and employer or through an application to a study assistance programme once the educational leave has been awarded.

The duration of educational leave is unlimited by law, but the participant loses their entitlement if they do not pass the examinations in the normal time or if they earn too much money (more than SEK 92250 over a period of 40 weeks) during their studies. Employers have the right to refuse to accept the leave for up to six months from the time of the application by the employee. According to a study by Gould (2003), only about 1 per cent of employees exercise the right to study leave.

Paid Learning Leave (Rep. of Ireland)

Similar to the situation in the UK, the issue of providing employees with the right to ask for time off for training is also being explored in Ireland. The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) has highlighted that a lack of time to train has a particularly strong effect on individuals with low basic skills. NALA has, therefore, proposed that paid learning leave is introduced alongside tailored workplace basic education similar to that delivered through the Skills for Work Programme. NALA believe that this kind of provision would impact on upwards of 2,000 participants per year and provide participants from SMEs with an entitlement of 200 hours paid leave annually. NALA has also proposed that compensation should be paid to employers by the government for this leave.

A small pilot Paid Learning Scheme took place in two locations in 2007/8, providing funding for an employee to receive up to 100 hours paid learning leave with FAS reimbursing the employer to the extent of the national minimum wage. The level of take-up was low as - despite general agreement with the principles of the initiative - employers tended to be unwilling to participate. The low up-take has made it difficult to judge the efficacy of the programme, even though the employees involved believed that it had had a positive impact in terms of providing opportunities to learn, to increase their confidence and communication skills and to meet new people. At the same time, the view presented in the Irish Labour Market Review (2008) is that further research and testing is required in order to judge the use of paid learning leave as a strand of a comprehensive suite of measures to upskill the workforce.

3.6 Workplace-based initiatives

The majority of 'non-learners' are in employment, and the research evidence points to a wide range of primarily 'extrinsic' factors that may militate against some groups within the workforce expressing a demand for skills development. These include the nature of an individual's employer (size, sector etc), employer attitudes and practices towards training, workplace culture, peer pressure and extent of unionisation. This section reviews a number of policy initiatives that have been expressly designed to increase participation in learning among employees, primarily through attempting to influence and/or incentivise employers to change their practices, for example in relation to the funding of training or the provision of time off for employees to train[11].

3.6.1 Union Learning Fund / Union Learning Representatives

This set of initiatives combines workplace-based approaches to encourage employees to develop their skills with financial support for unions and learners through distinct programmes run in each of the four nations. TUC figures suggests that over 200,000 learners were supported by unions and union learning representatives during 2008 and in total over 22,000 union learning representatives have been trained and accredited.

Reviews and analyses (Wood and Moore, 2002; Shaw et al, 2006; Unionlearn with the TUC, 2006; 2008;) have focused primarily on the views and experiences of Union Learning Representatives (ULR)[12], although there have been some surveys of learners and a robust evaluation study is planned for this year. Key points emerging from studies conducted to date are:

- There is some evidence that ULRs are having an increasing influence on learning at the workplace, although this is constrained by the time and resources made available to them by employers, which varies;
- ULRs are more likely to report a positive influence on training levels where: they are valued by managers; they spend more than five hours per week on ULR activity; employers consult or negotiate with union representatives when deciding training matters; ULRs are responsible for no more than 200 employees; they are in workplaces with a learning centre; and they have been involved in a ULF project.
- However, the majority of ULRs do not report these features, suggesting scope for improvements that should lead to increased take-up of training in the workplace;

[11] Note that the parallel 'Collective Measures' project investigates in more the issue of policies to encourage employers to undertake more training (Cox et al, *forthcoming*)

[12] Note that this set of initiatives has also been reviewed in the context of the 'Collective Measures' study

- There is a strong sector bias in the impact of ULR/ULF, reflecting the pattern of trade union membership and representation, with almost half of ULRs being found in central/local government or manufacturing;
- Access to paid time off, related to perceived lack of employer support, is one of the key barriers to workers taking up learning opportunities that potential learners raised in discussion with ULRs;
- ULRs feel that they play a key role in relation to equal opportunities for training and also in identifying barriers for people with conditions such as dyslexia, which workers may feel uncomfortable about discussing with employers;
- ULRs are an important source of information, advice and guidance on training in the workplace and over half are involved in conducting learning needs assessments;
- ULRs believe that the amount of workplace training has increased as a result of their activities, particularly in relation to non-traditional learners;
- There is some evidence that the existence of ULRs has helped to change the learning culture among some employers. Indeed, a recent study for the TUC found that many managers report a positive impact of ULRs on workplace training.

Further evidence, particularly if based on responses from individual learners and employers as well as ULRs, would help to clarify the role of ULRs in addressing the barriers to learning that exist in many workplaces and among some groups of employees. The evidence to date, however, is interesting in highlighting the potential role of workplace representatives as ‘champions’ of learning, as independent and supportive providers of advice and guidance to individuals and as ‘honest brokers’ with employers. On the assumption that future evaluations provide evidence of positive impact on employee demand for skills development, a key policy question would be how to replicate the benefits of this approach in the majority of workplaces that do not have trade union representation, perhaps based on the ‘dialogue’ approach advocated in a recent paper by the CBI, TUC and BERR (2008).

3.6.2 Employer Training Pilots

The Employer Training Pilots (ETP) were established in England in September 2002 to test the effectiveness of an offer of free or subsidised training to employees without a level 2 qualification, wage compensation to employers for allowing employees time off to train, plus access to information, advice and guidance. The pilots ran for between one and three years in a number of local areas.

An evaluation of the pilots, undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and MORI (Hillage *et al*, 2006) comprised two broad elements:

- a quantitative assessment through surveys of employers and employees in pilot and control areas, and analysis of other data such as the Labour Force Survey;
- a more qualitative 'process' evaluation involving a range of data collection methods.

Key findings emerging from this study in relation to individual demand for skills development are:

- The pilots attracted a range of learners in terms of prior experience of learning, with most having left school at or before the age of 16, but between one-fifth and one-third already qualified to level 2 or above;
- Most (around two-thirds) of the learners interviewed in surveys said that they would not have undergone the training if they had not been involved in the pilot;
- Eight out of ten learners stated that they had learnt something new from ETP-supported training, and many felt more inclined to undertake further training;
- However, multivariate analysis comparing pilot areas with control areas could find evidence of only a small but positive effect of ETP on the take-up of training among eligible employees;
- Evidence from employer surveys suggests that much of the training supported by ETP would have been done anyway (e.g. to meet legislative or regulatory requirements), although not necessarily to the same standards or level;
- There is some evidence of a substitution effect, both between firms (providers switching to ETP-eligible employers) and within firms (other training declining as ETP employees are allowed time off).

The ETP evaluation is significant in that it attempts to go beyond 'self-reporting' as a basis for estimating the additionality effects of the initiative, using multivariate techniques and comparison with control groups to provide a more robust estimate. This suggests that additionality estimates based on self-reporting by learners are likely to be on the high side, yet the evaluation concludes that there is *'still a large unmet potential demand for qualifications-based training among low-skilled employees …'* (xviii)

Furthermore, the evaluation suggests that more needs to be done to facilitate engagement with 'harder to reach' employers and highlights the barriers of cost and time that appear to have been only partly addressed by ETP. The fact that satisfaction ratings among employers and employees are high, and that many ETP learners are inclined to undertake further learning, are seen as positive signs for the potential impact of initiatives of this type.

3.6.3 Train to Gain

This initiative, which operates in England and followed on from the Employer Training Pilots, is primarily concerned with stimulating employer demand for skills development, but has been included in this review due to the fact that the national evaluation of Train to Gain (T2G) incorporates a survey of learners, the first wave of which was completed in 2008. This survey concentrated primarily on satisfaction levels, as well as considering the demographic characteristics of learners and their motivations for getting involved in T2G supported learning. Initial findings suggests that the T2G learners are older on average than employees in general and that the desire the gain higher qualifications and progress at work were the main motivations for getting involved in the programme, with 69 per cent of participants stating that they hoped to pursue further qualifications in future. Interestingly, 23 per cent of respondents stated that they had no choice about participating in learning, with the lead being taken by the employer.

3.6.4 Learning Worker Pilot (Wales)

The Learning Worker Project (LWP) was a £2m pilot project funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and ELWa (Education and Learning Wales), which provided free training up to level 3 for almost 1800 workers employed across 300 organisations in the Llanelli area. A wide range of course were covered including NVQ Construction and Civil Engineering, EMTA Performing Manufacturing Operations, LGV driving, NVQ Care and leadership programmes. LWP is broadly equivalent to the Employer Training Pilots (ETP) that ran in England.

The evaluation report (Arad Consulting, 2005) suggests that at least one third of learners had not previously participated in learning since leaving full-time education, mainly due to lack of time. LWP addressed the time constraint primarily by bringing learning to the workplace ('keeping the learning outside of the classroom') and enabling many people to undertake learning within working hours. LWP supported the creation of on-site learning suites in some cases.

LWP also removed cost barriers facing employers, according to the evaluation, and helped to significantly increase the participation of hard-to-reach workers. Costs were seen by learners as being less of a barrier.

The report concludes that '*the programme has generated relatively low displacement and deadweight and has encouraged a significant amount of new learning participation'* (Executive Summary, p4). For example only 23 per cent of individual respondents stated that they had planned to undertake training prior to being offered the opportunity via LWP. This level of additionality appears to be higher than that observed for the Employer Training Pilots in England; it is not clear whether this relates to differences in policy design or in evaluation methods, or both.

The potential sustainability effects of such an initiative are illustrated by the finding that almost two thirds of participants were considering further training at the time of the study, although the report points out that this figure may change once the learning ceases to be free. Better job performance, increased job satisfaction and increased confidence (particularly at level 1) were cited by respondents as benefits of their participation in LWP.

While both employers and employees were felt to benefit from LWP, employers in particular felt that the balance of benefit was in favour of the individual worker. On balance, the evaluators felt that the pilot represented good value for money, while noting that it would be necessary to undertake follow-up studies in order to assess the sustainability of benefits.

The results of this study suggest, that, although the policy is primarily targeted at employers, the provision of free training is likely to stimulate some demand among employees, including those who have not recently participated in learning. Delivering the learning in the workplace, and working with employers to enable workers to undertake training in work hours all seem to contribute towards addressing some of the more commonly-cited barriers to learning among people in work. A key question, however, relates to the viability of extending such an initiative beyond a focused geographical area and the potential for it to be sustained following the end of the subsidy.

3.6.5 Workplace Innovation Fund (Northern Ireland)

This pilot programme comprised seven projects (with typical funding of £30,000) across Northern Ireland focusing on 'essential skills'. The aim was to promote the provision of small scale capacity building projects for workplace or other basic skills providers by – among other things – increasing demand and participation from individual learners and from their employers.

The evaluation, undertaken by Schemata Ltd (2003), entailed desk research, face-to-face and telephone interviews with project representatives, employers, union representatives and learners. The findings are primarily qualitative in nature and include the following:

- 299 learners participated in the programme, 'but many more were touched by it in a variety of ways'. There is no indication of the extent of additionality;
- The vast majority (92 per cent) of participants competed their course, with an estimated investment per learner of around £650;
- A long lead-in time is required in order to fully establish initiatives of this nature;
- Flexibility regarding the timing (time of year and time of day) and nature of provision is important;
- Brokers and learning champions/buddies played an important role;
- Learners appear to appreciate the opportunity to learn (at least partly) in work time and with their work mates, and many were willing to match the time contributed by employers;
- There is, for many, a stigma attached to Essential Skills learning, and this needs to be addressed sensitively;
- Learners who had the opportunity to utilise specialist information, advice and guidance valued it greatly.

The Workplace Innovation Fund highlights what can be achieved on the basis of small-scale localised pilots; however it is not clear whether and how these types of projects can be scaled up in order to make a substantial quantitative difference to individual demand for skills in the workplace and wider community.

3.6.6 International policies

Our review of relevant policies in six selected countries revealed the existence of a range of initiatives that operate primarily or exclusively through stimulating training in the workplace, in most cases engaging employers in the process:

- The NOSTE programme in **Finland** is concerned primarily with encouraging and supporting older workers to take up training (see Box)
- Also in **Finland**, 'Exchange Training' involves an unemployed worker taking the place of an employee who takes time off to undertake off-the-job training, which is similar to 'job rotation' schemes that are in operation in a number of countries such as France and Denmark;
- The Group Training Organisations in **Australia** bring together primarily small employers in local areas to share the costs (direct and indirect) associated with training. Research suggests that the GTOs are particularly effective in assisting SMEs to take on apprenticeships, thereby indirectly acting to boost individual participation in skills development;
- In **Sweden**, the Adult Vocational Education and Training Programme (KY) was designed primarily to stimulate employees to participate in higher-level skills programmes (mainly in universities) for which there is demonstrable demand in the labour market;
- Finally the Training Support Scheme in **Ireland** was presented as a good practice example in an extensive review of employer training policies conducted by EIM and SEOR (2005) on behalf of the European Commission (see Box).

Once again it should be emphasised that the limited and variable evaluation evidence precludes definitive conclusions. However, it seems clear from this overview that, for people in employment, it is imperative that initiatives to stimulate individual demand for skills development take account of and address the workplace circumstances in which employees find themselves. While it does not appear to be absolutely essential for supported training to be directly relevant to the participant's work role, this would appear to be an important factor influencing the attitudes of employers towards key facilitating factors, notably time off, contribution to costs and workplace facilities for learning.

Programme for Increasing Educational Standards of Adults - NOSTE (Finland)

NOSTE is aimed at adults who lack basic vocational education and was launched in 2003 by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and other social partners. The programme finished in 2007. NOSTE was targeted at working adults aged between 30 and 59 with no post-compulsory qualification. The target group consisted of approximately 350,000 people and the programme aimed to reach about 10 per cent of them. The programme included a number of targets around employability, but also targeted the improvement of adults' chances of entering ordinary publicly financed VET and to increase the intake of adults on VET programmes.

The NOSTE programme was delivered through 60 network projects, varying in size and composition. Key features included:

- The programme was cost free, which was identified as one of the key factors which led to NOSTE attracting high numbers of participants. The number of participants tripled from 2003 to 2007, with around 16,000 adults starting NOSTE training by the beginning of Jan 2007. The cost issue was also very attractive to employers.
- Outreach was not simply used as a marketing and recruitment tool, but as a means of helping people to define their own learning needs. Specific funding for outreach meant better opportunities to visit workplaces and share information about study possibilities with employers and employees.
- Research on the effectiveness of the outreach activities emphasised the significance of personal contact, particularly as it often requires more time, motivation and encouragement on the part of older adults to get them to engage.
- The programme tackled one of the main barriers to learning, particularly amongst older workers - the lack of adequate learning skills.

Training Support Scheme (Ireland)

Started in 1990 and discontinued in 2003, the Training Support Scheme (TSS) was established by the Training and Employment Authority (FAS) to encourage and promote training in SMEs. The broad objective of the TSS was to improve the skills of existing employees at all levels from operative to management. This was to assist companies to improve their skills base in order to improve efficiency and enhance employability, adaptability and mobility of workers. The scheme was open to firms engaged in the manufacturing industry, internationally traded services and distribution. Initially, the rate of subsidy for firms with less than 50 employees was up to a maximum of 80 per cent of training costs and 50 per cent for larger companies.

This initiative was targeted at employers, and companies were required to develop a business development and training plan based on a review of the company's activities and an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses in relation to markets, finance, production and human resources prior to taking part. The impact of the programme was:

1991 – 17,232 employees in 1,204 companies received training (£4.75m)

1992 – 22,459 employees in 1,369 companies (£5.63m)

A later study (O'Connell and Lyons, 1995) gave some insights into the impact this initiative had had on training. Over 60 per cent of the smaller firms surveyed stated that they would have engaged in either no training or in less training than they actually conducted in 1992 without TSS. However, this study also highlighted the 'deadweight' of subsidy in that it was shown that it had little effect on the training plans of larger companies. Some of the key determinants of success were highlighted as:

- Demand-led structure – whereby firms identified their training needs and received grant aid to purchase that training on the market;
- The linking of training to a development and business plan; and
- The focus on smaller companies.

However, key bottle necks to the initiative included:

- Weak awareness of the need for training amongst managers (an integral part of the TSS process);
- High administrative costs; and
- The fact that the training received was often short in duration, which led to the suggestion that it did not meet the objectives of the programme.

3.7 Community-based and other types of initiative

For individuals who are not in employment or training, including 'NEET' young people, job-seekers, people on inactive benefits, lone parents, older people and other disadvantaged or 'hard to reach' groups, the local community is likely to be the primary focus of learning and related activity. This section presents evidence about the impact of a heterogeneous range of initiatives that have the common objective of addressing the many barriers to learning that face these groups of individuals, as clearly illustrated by the evidence review.

3.7.1 Care to Learn

This programme operates in England and is essentially concerned with removing childcare as a barrier to learning, particularly among young people. Evaluation evidence (DfES, 2005c; IES, 2006) suggests that Care to Learn is having a positive impact on the lives of young people and their children and is helping young people to gain qualifications. As well as the provision of childcare – which was felt to be adequate but some felt that additional funding was needed – the programme attempts to address inspirational and motivational barriers by providing ongoing support and advice.

3.7.2 Adult & Community Learning Fund

The Adult and Community Learning Fund (ACLG) was introduced in England in 1998. The purpose of the ACLG was to engage new types of learner in education and training. As part of this programme a series of small grants were distributed between 1998 and 2002: 'Small' grants were one-off payments of up to £10,000 aimed at the delivery of new learning opportunities; 'Major' grants over more than one year of up to £50,000 a year for the development and delivery of new learning opportunities; and 'Planning' grants, a one-off payment of up to £10,000 designed to lead to further application for small and major grants.

The evaluation of ACLG (CM International, 2005) suggests that the programme has been successful in engaging more individuals – and in particular non-traditional learners - in lifelong learning. Evidence of progression beyond the programme is limited as the evaluation took place before the end of the initiative. In general, ACLG projects were effective in raising aspirations; for some respondents (re) engagement with learning heightened their enthusiasm for further learning in the future. Assessment and accreditation were seen as effective ways of maintaining the motivation to learn. Projects were felt to be responsive to learner needs. Learners tended to be 'turned off' any aspect of the projects that were similar to the formal education system, which to some seemed daunting.

Person-to-person recruitment and support was highlighted as key to the success of ACLG projects, and 'inspiration' was an important factor that attracted many individuals to the programme.

While quantitative evidence is limited, the qualitative findings suggest that community-based initiatives of this type can have some success in addressing key barriers to participation in learning, particularly those associated with negative experiences of learning in the past.

3.7.3 Learning Challenge Fund (Wales)

The Learning Challenge Fund (LCF) was a £7.6m programme to boost learning opportunities through 'genuine innovation and long-term vision'. 17 projects had been funded at the time of the evaluation, which is estimated to have directly benefitted some 8400 learners.

The evaluation (Shared Intelligence, 2006) comprises a series of 'mini-evaluations' of the 17 projects. The precise methodology is not specified in the report and does not appear to entail surveys of or consultation with learners.

The evaluation identified around 8,400 learners who had benefitted directly from LCF projects, although no estimates of additionality are reported. Project-level evaluations revealed mixed success in relation to Objective 4 of the programme – Improving Access and Widening Participation. The report presents some examples of activities that have improved access and/or widened participation, for example, the Camarthenshire Basic Skills Strategy entailed delivering learning in the workplace and/or other locations 'where the learners were'. Work with communities to overcome adverse perceptions of learning was a feature of other LCF projects. The fact that LCF learning did not have to be accredited was seen as a key feature of improving access and widening participation – potential learners were attracted by the fact that they did not have to 'take exams'.

This is a relatively 'light touch' evaluation that does not attempt to estimate additionality and is largely qualitative in nature. It does highlight the need for innovation and flexibility in provision, particularly for 'hard to reach' groups. It also emphasises the potential benefits of working with communities, reducing the emphasis on formal qualifications and 'taking learning to where the learners are'.

3.7.4 Regional Support Centres

This is a two-year pilot exercise launched in 2006 and operated by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). It provides 'strategic support' (information, advice and training) to Voluntary and community providers of learning in England and Wales, to develop e-strategies to support learners and provide support for the management and use of electronic resources for teaching and learning.

An early evaluation (CM International, 2007) of the pilot initiative in Wales provides *'an indication of progress achieved to date (year 1), rather than a full end of term evaluation'*. The methodology entails document and secondary data review and consultation with key stakeholders.

The report suggests that the pilot to date has contributed to the decisions of 'several' local authorities to purchase new e-learning equipment, through awareness raising activities. The research did not explore impacts on individuals and their propensity to engage in learning activities.

The evaluation evidence is limited, but the study does raise the issue of the potential for e-learning to encourage individual demand for learning, particularly in remote communities that find it hard to access learning opportunities in colleges or other fixed locations.

3.7.5 Learning Community Account pilots (Wales)

The LCA pilots were set up to 'support disadvantaged communities to develop and engage in learning activities with the intention of engaged and upskilling excluded individuals'. Five pilot projects were established (described in the evaluation report).

The evaluation used a 'mixed method triangulation' approach based on document review, key informant interviews, site visits and interviews with project staff and learners. In practice it appears that qualitative findings dominate.

The evaluation (BMG, 2008) finds that the LCA pilots have encouraged participation in learning by excluded individuals (although no figures are provided). This was particularly the case for projects linked to existing programmes and the evaluators ascribe the positive results to 'the commitment, enthusiasm and skills of the staff working on the LCA pilot' and 'considerable creativity used to meet the needs of individual learners'. (p3). Having said this, only one of the five pilot projects met its target for learner engagement.

The report highlights a range of barriers to learning experienced by the groups targeted by LCA. These include negative educational experiences, poor social skills, low confidence / self-esteem, drug/alcohol issues, family difficulties, learning difficulties, long periods of worklessness and 'complex and chaotic lifestyles'.

Interestingly, in contrast to some other evaluation findings, this report suggests that rewarding and accrediting learning can act as a motivational factor for learners.

The evaluation suggests additionality levels of 100 per cent in that '*all learners involved in the evaluation state that they would not have engaged in learning without the LCA pilot'* (p4). It also emphasises 'soft' outcomes such as self-confidence and social/communication skills.

This evaluation is primarily qualitative and does not state the number of learners consulted. It highlights the potential for achieving high levels of additionality in terms of encouraging excluded individuals to participate in some forms of learning that are tailored to meet their needs. However it also highlights the challenges associated with achieving significant 'distance travelled' with these groups towards active labour market participation. High levels of one-to-one interaction and sustained work with communities over a long period appear to be required in order to achieve 'hard' qualification and/or employment outcomes.

3.7.6 Learner Support Funds

Learner Support Funds (LSF) are aimed at those students in England who are disadvantaged and at the most risk of leaving their course. LSF encompasses a residential support scheme, improvements to transport services, Care to Learn, and EMA. During the academic year 2002/03, 275,000 students were receiving General Learner Support or Hardship Fund, 43,000 were receiving childcare support, 6,700 were receiving residential bursaries. The support is specifically for learners over the age of 16 predominantly studying at Level 3.

Respondents to a survey conducted as part of the evaluation stated that the information available to them regarding LSF was useful; older students found face-to-face contact with advisors and written information most useful, and younger students found contact with advisors at school/college and Connexions staff useful for them. Awareness of LSF before entering FE was varied, with younger students being aware of EMA and older more likely to be aware of childcare.

Overall students were positive about LSF; most felt with the support they received helped them to complete their course; 62 per cent of older students felt the support helped "a lot" compared with 40 per cent of younger students. Despite the support, one in three considered leaving the course early. In terms of attracting learners into FE, 65 per cent of the older students felt LSF was very important, compared to 35 per cent of younger students.

The evaluation evidence suggests, therefore, that financial incentives offered under the LSF have contributed towards increased participation and (particularly) retention levels in FE.

3.7.7 International policies

Most countries included in the international policy review recognise the importance and significance of supporting initiatives at the local and community levels, particularly in relation to encouraging and supporting non-traditional learners and/or people with significant disadvantages to take up learning opportunities, in many cases for the first time since leaving formal education.

Return to Learning Initiative (Rep. of Ireland)

The Return to Learning Initiative was developed and piloted in five areas in 2000-1. The goal was to provide workplace literacy courses for the employees of Local Authorities. The initiative was developed by the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group and NALA, and was delivered in collaboration with the Vocational Education Committees in the five Local Authority Areas. Take-up of the Initiative exceeded both expectations and the targets set at the planning stage of the initiative. It was originally anticipated that 19 Return to Learning groups would be formed. In the end, 25 groups were established, which attracted 140 participants, 120 of whom went on to complete the course.

The evaluation of the pilot (Conboy, 2002), highlights - on the basis of mainly qualitative data - that the initiative had a positive impact on the target group of learners. In particular, feedback from participants highlighted: an increase in self-confidence, literacy skills development, greater familiarity with computers and some development of IT skills, a positive influence of participation on their home and family lives, a re-awakening of interesting in learning and a desire to continue to learn.

The report also contains several key insights into what worked and for whom in terms of this initiative:

- The majority of the participants in the initiative were male and tended to have a background of relatively low educational achievement;

- The participants found it important that they were working with a tutor rather than a teacher, as they felt that the playing field was more even and that the learning experience could be undertaken in a relaxed environment;
- The report raised issues around the negative responses of colleagues, but that the negative comments were replaced by compliments; and
- The participants had felt that they were largely supported by their immediate superiors to attend the course during work-time.

3.8 Policy Review: key points

Key points emerging from an initial consideration of the evidence presented in this chapter are as follows:

3.8.1 Effectiveness of financial support initiatives

The financial incentives reviewed for this study appear to play two main roles:

a. attracting people into training, often in conjunction with learndirect and Skills Coaching/Skills Passports, where the existence of funding has been shown to have this effect; and

b. supporting individuals to complete their learning and gain qualifications. For example, in relation to Career Development Loans, the existence of the financial support and the way it was provided was key to learners finishing.

The evidence so far suggests that financial incentives *per se* are most effective in relation to people who are already committed to learning, in many cases are well-qualified, but face barriers to further learning that are primarily (but not exclusively) financial. The evidence regarding the impact on non-traditional learners (in or out of work) is much less convincing, given the extensive range of other barriers typically faced by this type of individual.

This all suggests that devising new financial incentives on its own will be not be an appropriate response. Ensuring that financial incentives are coupled with initial and ongoing advice, guidance and motivational support appears to be a much more appropriate route in relation to encouraging 'non-learners' to demand skills development. The example of the EMA – with evidence that the financial support influences parental attitudes – is encouraging in this regard.

Finally, it is clearly important to structure the financial support in such a way as to provide an incentive for ongoing participation in learning and/or achievement of qualifications. This is done in different ways in CDL and EMA, and the lessons from these initiatives might be usefully applied to future finance-focused programmes.

3.8.2 Importance of additional support

Following on from the above point, it is clear from the evidence reviewed so far that a great deal of support is required by people who are far from the labour market, with no or low qualifications and/or with backgrounds that predispose them to be unenthusiastic or nervous about participating in learning. This may be provided in different ways for different groups of people, as illustrated by Care to Learn and Union Learning Representatives, and the general point is that financial support, information provision, guidance or awareness-raising all appear to be helpful on their own, but it is the interaction of these things that is vital to stimulate demand among disaffected learners.

3.8.3 Support in the workplace

A large number of potential new learners are currently in employment and are constrained by a range of barriers including awareness, motivation, finance, time and family constraints. The evidence review highlighted the key role played by employers in encouraging or constraining skills development among employees, suggesting that an important role for policy is likely to be in relation to influencing the attitudes and practices of some employers, and facilitating dialogues between employers and employees on skills development issues.

The ULF/ULR example illustrates the key role that workplace representatives can play in this process, and evaluations of learndirect emphasise the importance of the perceived independence and anonymity of advisers in reducing any embarrassment or perceived stigma felt by potential learners. Two key issues here are the need to provide firmer evidence of the impact of ULRs on individual decisions (and on employer behaviour) and the need to design policies that capture the benefits of the independence and 'honest broker' roles of ULRs in workplaces without union representation. ULRs, and potentially other types of workplace learning representative, appear to have great potential as sources of intelligence regarding barriers to learning among employees, as well as providing a mechanism for addressing some of these barriers.

3.8.4 Importance of one-to-one relationships with learners

A number of the initiatives reviewed highlighted the role of one-to-one relationships or personalised learning in attracting and retaining learners:

a. A number of the initiatives that are focused on workers with low/no qualifications, highlight the importance of personal relationships with tutors, with the learner provided with a point of contact, e.g. learndirect; and

b. One of the critical success factors for learndirect has been the amount of time spent on personalising the programme at the point of entry.

Such one-to-one support is likely to be expensive in resource terms. Policy initiatives that incorporate this element will need to demonstrate that they are focused on groups of people who need this support in order to acquire skills and qualifications that will ultimately lead to them entering employment and/or progressing in the labour market.

3.8.5 Understanding motivation to learn

A key finding from this review of policy evidence is that work and career-related issues are only one of a range of factors that motivate individuals to think about undertaking learning for the first time or continuing learning at a higher level. Among some groups, issues of self-esteem, health and quality of life may be cited as motivating factors, which may ultimately lead to improved employability and employment opportunities. An important exception to this is CDL, which appears to attract learners motivated by career progression.

Of central significance here is the notion of 'returns to learning, skills and/or qualifications'. The evidence review emphasises the need to consider these 'returns' in a broader context than simply economic benefits (e.g. through increased wages, chances of obtaining a job or a better job). However, it will be important to set policy initiatives in the context of what is known about returns for learning for different groups. Given that research suggests that these returns are lower and perhaps more uncertain for those at the low skill/income end of the spectrum, this poses a challenge for policy.

One possible avenue for exploration relates to qualification reform. It may be argued that a clearer qualification system that has the confidence of employers and learners - and which allows the accumulation of units as well as full qualifications and has a clearly defined progression route – may improve the level of, and certainty regarding, the returns to learning for lower-skilled groups.

3.8.6 Identifying and measuring impact

It is clear from our policy review so far that the evidence of impact of individual schemes is varied and, in particular, the perspective of the learner and the employer is often not given due weight. Furthermore, robust evaluations that attempt to identify additionality, displacement, multiplier and related effects are the exception rather than the rule. One key issue is that a range of indicators and measures of success are used, the most common of which relate to:

- Numbers or proportions of individuals taking up learning;
- Ongoing learning and/or completion of learning programmes;
- Achievement of formal qualifications;
- Intention to study further (or actually taking up further study);
- Labour market outcomes such as job entry, promotion or increased salary.

Clearly, all of these measures provide some indication of the take-up of learning activities, but the use of such a varied group of indicators makes it difficult to compare the impact of different types of policy intervention. The difficulties involved in undertaking 'robust' evaluations of labour market programmes are acknowledged. However, it would be helpful if all evaluation studies were to at least address the fundamental issue of additionality in a structured way, primarily drawing on the perspectives of the learner, triangulated with other evidence (from MI data, providers, employers etc.).

A potentially useful model for categorising the employment impact of initiatives aimed at individuals is provided by the Institute for Employment Studies in their evaluation of UfI/learndirect. Impacts can be broken down into:

i. **'Stepping-in'** – the positive impact that programmes such as ILAs and Care to Learn, have had on attracting individuals who have previously had little access to and/or not taken up learning opportunities, i.e. have been successful in attracting 'new' or 'inexperienced' learners;

ii. **'Stepping-up'** – the positive impact of initiatives in terms of the learners completing their learner journey and gaining qualifications. For example, learndirect has been highlighted as an initiative which is successful in attracting learners, but has had mixed results in terms of completion rates; and

iii. **'Stepping-on'** – the success of initiatives in terms of enabling learners to gain higher level qualifications or to gain a better paid job because of the training undertaken, such as CDLs.

As noted above, however, employment prospects and/or the desire to increase earnings are only part of a range of factors that motivate individuals to invest in skills development activities, particularly in the case of less-skilled and less-qualified people. Evaluation frameworks and evaluation studies need to take account of issues relating to self-esteem and the pleasure that individuals derive from learning itself, in addition to more instrumental considerations of economic returns to skills in the form of employment and earnings.

4 Towards a Policy Framework

Figure 4.1 presents an embryonic framework for assessing and developing policy initiatives to stimulate demand for skills development among different groups within the population. Important pre-requisites for the policy development process are:

- A thorough understanding of the **'market failures'** that lead to a level of investment in skills development by individuals that is sub-optimal from the point of view of the economy and society as a whole. Issues of market failure in training have been covered in a number of other reviews (e.g. Keep, 2006; EIM/SEOR, 2005) and will not be repeated here.
- Following on from a consideration of 'market failure', it is useful to establish **'logic models'** that describe how individual policy initiatives are intended to achieve the desired outputs, outcomes and longer-term impacts. These models are also useful tools to identify exogenous factors that are likely to affect the achievement of stated objectives, to explore the perspectives of different stakeholders and to agree indicators that can be used to evaluate impact. Once again, there is an extensive literature on logic models and their use in the evaluation process (see for example SQW & PA Consulting, 2006) and this will not be explored further in this report.
- It is important to systematically review and appraise the existing **research evidence** (and re-appraise past evidence) in the context of stated policy objectives. Our report presents such a review, looking at the evidence from a particular perspective – that policy to increase individual investment in skills development needs to be based primarily on an understanding of the motivations of different people to engage (or not) in skills development, the barriers faced by those who wish to engage and the means by which such barriers might be addressed in different circumstances. Our evidence review confirms that a considerable evidence base does exist of which policy-makers should make more use. However, research does not always present results in forms that are most useful to policy-makers and a number of gaps have been identified that warrant further study, notably around developing appropriate conceptual, methodological and empirical tools to bring together intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing the decision-making processes of different groups of individuals.

- Understanding the impact and effectiveness of current and previous **policy initiatives** that have – in whole or part – attempted to stimulate individual demand for skills development, is an important component of the policy development process. Our review identified many initiatives – across the UK and in our six target countries – and a structured review of these policies has yielded important insights into what types of policies work, for whom and under what circumstances. Crucially, our attempts to address the key question of why certain types of initiative appear to work better than others were hampered by limited robust and thorough evaluation evidence. This issue also frustrated our attempts to compare different types of policy over time and/or spatially.
- Following on from the above, a key component of any framework to design appropriate policy responses should be a consistent and broadly comparable approach to **evaluation**. It is appreciated that evaluation of skills and employment initiatives is fraught with conceptual and practical problems which mean that it is difficult to achieve 'Green Book' (HM Treasury, 2003) standards in all cases. However, it would be appropriate for UK Commission and partners to consider the establishment of a broad framework for evaluation that stakeholders agree to follow in order to ensure at least some degree of compatibility and comparability between evaluation studies. This may entail the adoption or adaptation of existing frameworks - for example the Impact Evaluation Framework utilised by the Regional Development Agencies (SQW/PA, 2006) – or there may be a case for a bespoke framework to be established. In either case, we suggest that UK Commission should encourage stakeholders to ensure that evaluation studies at least address the issue of measuring 'additionality' in a clear and systematic way, consider key issues such as substitution and displacement and address 'value for money' in relation to impacts, not just unit costs. Finally, evaluations that take a long-term view, and incorporate tracking of beneficiaries over time, should be encouraged.

Notwithstanding our comments about the difficulties of comparing the impact of policies that may have different objectives, different target groups, varied levels of funding, operate within different policy and institutional environments and have been evaluated in different ways, our policy review provides useful insights into the effectiveness of different types of policies for different target groups. Figure 4.1 presents an overview of these findings, which should help to guide future work to develop appropriate policy responses. Key points are:

- The wider **economic, societal and strategic policy context** appears to play a key role in setting the framework for policies, in particular influencing the underlying culture, attitudes and behaviour of individuals across society. Clearly it is not easy to influence these factors – which can be embedded in societies over long periods of time – in the short term;
- These embedded cultural and societal factors may also influence the wider **institutional framework** within which policies are developed and delivered. Clearly these institutional structures can be – and often are – subject to change, typically in the medium term. On the other hand there is evidence – for example from the Scandinavian countries – that long term stability in institutional structures can play an important role in the success of lifelong learning policies;
- **Communication**, engagement and understanding of the broad purpose of policies (e.g. the importance of investment in skills) and the detail of policy delivery (e.g. where to go for information and advice) appears to play an important role, although this is difficult to isolate and quantify;
- An appropriate infrastructure for provision of **information, advice and guidance** also emerges as a key 'enabling factor' for effective policy delivery. This typically takes the form of a national system, but some evidence suggests that individuals and employers experience confusion when faced with a number of different organisations. On the other hand, many individuals – particularly those facing particular challenges – appreciate variability and responsiveness in provision.

- The nature and activities of **delivery organisations** - mainly colleges, but also private training providers, voluntary and community groups and employers themselves – appear to play an important enabling or facilitating role in ensuring that demand for skills development that is stimulated through policy intervention can be turned into effective learning activities that meet the needs of the learner and/or their employer. The evidence is not clear-cut. Flexible and work-based learning suits some people whereas others prefer classroom-based accredited learning and still others benefit most from community-based provision. The ability to respond flexibly, underpinned by appropriate methods of financing provision, seems to be the key here.

While all of the above factors have been shown to contribute towards the success of policies and initiatives designed to stimulate individual demand for skills development, the evidence suggests that – in and of themselves – they are unlikely to lead to a significant increase in participation in learning by those who have not done so in the past (or at least for a considerable length of time). Financial support for individuals, efforts to stimulate learning in the workplace and community-based initiatives appear to have the potential – if designed appropriately and flexibly enough to meet the needs of particular groups – to play an important role in stimulating individual demand for skills development. In summary (Figure 4.1):

- **Financial incentives** appear to be most effective for people who already have skills/qualifications, want to develop them further and have a good idea of what they would like to do in terms of learning. This is particularly true of the Career Development Loan, but also of Individual Learning Accounts, which have had mixed success. In relation to young people, the Education Maintenance Allowance appears to have helped to increase staying-on rates, particularly among disadvantaged groups, but its long-term impact on learning is not clear as yet. Bonus schemes and other incentives for continued participation and attainment would appear to be useful and effective, and it will be important for any new or revised programme to balance the desirability of targeting specific groups with the administrative complexity that is often associated with targeted schemes.

- Policies to stimulate **learning (and/or encourage dialogue about learning) in the workplace** are relatively common in the UK and internationally and it is difficult to generalise about their success. Clearly the attitudes and practices of the employer are important to the success of such programmes, as are the financial incentives (see above) that are available for employers and/or employees. There is some suggestion of high levels of deadweight and substitution for some such schemes, as they may simply support training that would have been done in any case, undertaken by workers who would have undertaken training in any case. Targeting 'hard to reach' employers (typically SMEs) and/or less well-trained employees is a key challenge. **Union Learning Representative**s have been shown to help with the latter although limited unionisation in small businesses restricts their effectiveness across the whole workforce. Finally, the issue of **time off for learning** is often raised in this context, with limited evidence that a statutory right would have the desired effect, but some suggestions that agreements with employers to match the time put in by employees may be effective.
- Finally, people who are not employed (Jobseekers, NEET young people, lone parents, people on 'inactive benefits, older (semi)retired people) tend to look towards the **community** level when considering learning, and exhibit a wide range of motivations for learning and preferences for learning activity. For example, jobseekers tend to emphasise employment-related objectives and may participate in compulsory or (quasi-compulsory) formal programmes, which typically but not exclusively tend to be delivered at the community level. Others may be more motivated by personal development and 'learning for its own sake' and still others may experience considerable difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Evaluations of community-based programmes aimed at such groups tend to emphasise the 'soft' nature of benefits (confidence, self-esteem) and the long-term process through which most learners go. This often necessitates high levels of individual support, flexible provision and appropriate funding to support individuals (e.g. with childcare or transport costs) and providers.

Figure 4.1: Individual Demand for Skills Development – Outline Policy Framework

Economic, societal and strategic context
e.g. broader societal attitudes to education and lifelong learning; public and private sector investment in learning and/or training; clear and broadly accepted policy frameworks

Institutional framework for skills development
e.g. well-established and well-functioning government and quasi-government institutions concerned with learning; active 'civil society' – employer, trade union, community institutions

Communication, engagement and understanding
e.g. well-functioning and well-received publicity campaigns by government and other organisations (e.g. employer, trade unions) regarding the benefits of learning

Information, Advice and Guidance
Independent, accessible national service; flexibility to meet needs of different groups; aimed at employers, employees, young people and adults not in work; delivered through different channels

Delivery organisations
Range of organisations with the capacity, capability and flexibility to deliver learning for a diverse group of individuals and organisations, necessitating different delivery methods

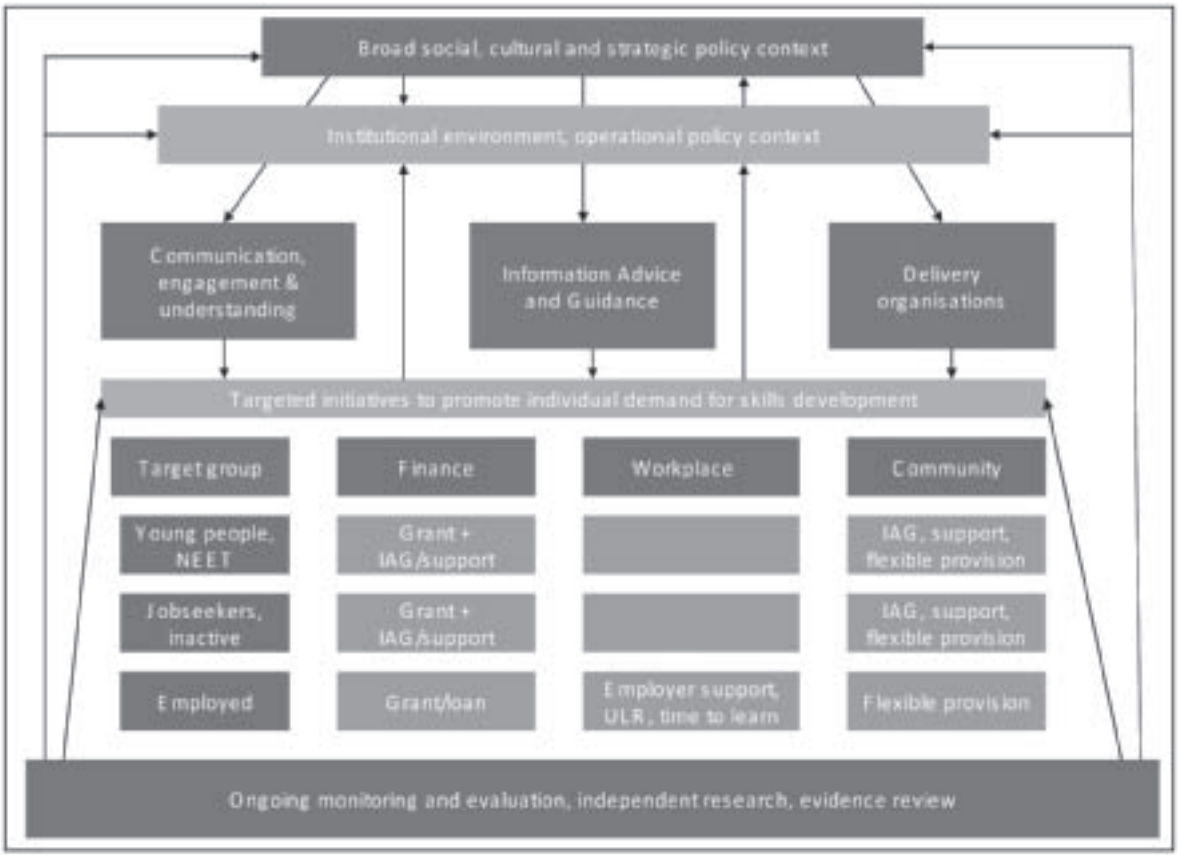
Targeted initiatives, e.g.			
Target group	**Finance**	**Workplace**	**Community**
School students	Grant + IAG		IAG
NEET young people	Grant + support		IAG + provision
Job seekers	Grant + support		IAG + provision + support
Inactive	Grant + support		IAG + provision + support
Low-skilled in work	Grant / loan	Employer support, ULR, Time off	
Skilled in work	Loan	Employer support, ULR, Time off	

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation
Formative and summative, incorporating robust additionality and vfm calculations, longitudinal studies (where feasible) and clear and open dissemination

Ongoing evidence review
Monitoring of research findings (UK and international) using a 'policy lens', to inform policy development, identify new issues, target groups etc

Figure 4.2 illustrates how the different elements of Figure 4.1 relate to each other, emphasising the importance of continual monitoring, evaluation, independent research and review to ensuring appropriate policy responses at the strategic, operation and project levels.

Figure 4.2: Outline Policy Framework – key inter-relationships



This model suggests that it is important to understand the broader cultural and policy context within which individual policy initiatives are operating, and to align new initiatives as far as possible with broader – and longer-term – efforts to change the prevailing culture to develop a more supportive environment for those who wish to develop their own skills. This encompasses, for example, parental attitudes to staying on in education and employer attitudes and practices towards training for lower-skilled workers.

It is clear from both the Evidence Review and the Policy Review that there are a wide range of barriers and constraints in operation that appear to result in some groups of individuals investing less that might be desirable from society's point of view in the development of their own skills. Policy interventions need to address these barriers, with a particular focus on those facing the greatest barriers and/or in greatest need of skills development in order to improve their labour market position. Clearly policy makers need to make judgements about the ratio between the costs (which can be significant in the case of those facing the greatest barriers) and the benefits (which in some cases appear to be uncertain) of investing public resources in initiatives of the type reviewed in this report.

5 Future Research Priorities

This final section of the report highlights a number of priorities for further research that will help policy makers to more fully understand the factors affecting the willingness of different groups of individuals to invest in their own skills development, and the types of policy intervention that might facilitate, encourage and support such investment.

5.1 Further analysis of existing data sets

Firstly, it would be helpful to gain a fuller understanding of factors affecting trends in participation in both work-related training and other forms of adult learning. One area for further study may concern the variations in barriers to individual participation across UK nations and regions. Existing analyses have been limited and have produced variable results. Another area for renewed, more detailed analysis may be the changing position of individuals accessing skills development according to gender and/or ethnicity.

There may be value in revisiting Annual Population Survey (APS) data and the findings of the most recent cycle of the National Child Development Survey to renew and expand the evidence base on the individual and extrinsic factors associated with different levels of engagement in skills development activity. Together with an updated analysis of the most recent Workplace Employee Relations Survey, this will yield important new insights, particularly given changes in levels of labour market participation among women and the rapid increase in access to HE and FE level learning since the 1990s.

5.2 Motivation for skills development among different groups

The existing evidence suggests that lower skilled (and other) individuals are motivated to engage in skills development by a desire to extend or change their work roles, gain progression and access better (and better paid) work. But these motivating drivers differ somewhat across groups, so that (for example) older workers may be less motivated by accessing promotion, and may instead particularly value improving their performance at work. There is also some evidence to suggest that unemployed people will be driven by other aims (mainly finding work) as will economically inactive groups (who, in some cases, appear to be more likely to value the content of learning in itself as a means of personal development). An important future area for research and policy would therefore

appear to focus on how best to communicate the explicit link between skills development opportunities and the range of work-related (employment, earnings) and/or wider personal benefits (such as self-esteem or the perceived intrinsic value of learning itself) sought by individuals. We know that different individuals and groups will have different drivers, motivators and aims in participating in work-related training and/or other forms of adult learning. So we need to gather evidence on how best to communicate that these aims are achievable through participation in specific learning or training activities.

However, there appears to be a substantial gap in the research, in that few studies have explored how lower skilled workers make judgements around the potential return to engaging in specific skills development opportunities. Clearly, as noted above, individuals may compare the costs (in time, energy/effort, finance) of participation against the benefits that may accrue and the likelihood that these benefits will return improvements in their labour market position. But the evidence base on how lower skilled people arrive at these judgements is weak; in particular little is known about the role of qualifications and the potential returns to qualifications in relation to the decisions of lower skilled people. There may be value in further research in this area, perhaps drawing on some of the methods deployed in occupational psychology studies, which have measured how self efficacy and expectancy around sought benefits affect motivation to learn.

Indeed, while terminology often differs between the occupational psychology and labour market-oriented studies of motivation to engage in skills development, the issues are largely the same – namely the extent to which individuals believe that they will be able to effectively engage in learning, their expectancy that learning activities will deliver new skills, and the extent to which they believe that developing such skills will result in valued outcomes. It is clear that those seeking to promote or deliver skills development activities need to be able to demonstrate the link between learning or training and the outcomes and goals valued by individuals; but we need more (and more in-depth) research on how lower skilled individuals make judgements and assess the costs, risks and potential benefits associated with specific activities.

5.3 Quantification of skills development decisions: stated preference

There have also been few attempts to *quantify* lower skilled individuals' choices around skills development (rather than merely listing motivators and barriers). Our review of academic studies has enabled us to identify that the strongest effects are associated with certain predictors of participation in work-related training, it is more difficult to arrive at coherent 'ranking' and valuation of different barriers and facilitators. Innovative methodologies may be required to address this problem. O'Keefe et al.'s (2006) research has demonstrated that choice experiment methods can successfully be used to identify the values (both positive and negative) that influence workers' decisions to participate in work-related training. Choice experiments (or 'stated preference' models) have also been used by researchers in the Netherlands to explore the motives and learning preferences of a broader range of employees (OECD, 2004). Similar methodologies have been used to explore other aspects of employment relations, including employers' recruitment decisions (McQuaid et al., 2007).

The deployment of such stated preference approaches remains rare. Yet such experimental approaches may be helpful in further exploring the decision making of lower skilled individuals around participation – such methods can allow us to disaggregate the decision to participate in a proposed skills development activity into the underlying preferences of the individual, which can then be quantified and potentially monetise. Instead of trying to explain the choice not to participate by externally observable characteristics, such methods can make it possible to examine how the internal preferences of the individual influence behaviour.

Crucially, stated preference experiments may help us to arrive at a ranking of intrinsic and extrinsic elements (including employer-related factors) that would need to be in place in order for an individual with given characteristics to choose to participate. At best, stated preference models can even help us to monetise hypothetical decisions around taking up training. Such experimental methods need to be deployed with considerable care, with results informed by further survey work (to control for both individual and workplace characteristics). The potential for using stated preference methods to further explore lower-skilled people's decision-making on participation in skills development should be considered by UK Commission and partners.

5.4 Extrinsic factors: the role of employers

There is a degree of consensus in the literature about the importance of extrinsic factors in shaping individual workers' positive attitudes to skills development – recurring themes included the role of managers and trade unions in encouraging and facilitating engagement; the practical approaches to embedding a culture of learning within organisations; and the need for flexible provision that delivers relevant skills in accessible locations and appropriate formats. At a most basic level, there is agreement that employers need to buy into the benefits of skills development and therefore facilitate workplace learning for lower skilled staff. Again, it is therefore important that we further develop the evidence base on how best to communicate the benefits of investing in skills and gain the buy-in of employers.

Accordingly, the need to continue to promote the business case for investing in skills development to employers, while also empowering (and supporting) individual learners, is a crucial lesson emerging from this evidence review. Smaller workplaces and those that are outside the public sector and/or have no trade union presence appear least likely to provide an environment conducive to skills development activities, perhaps suggesting that these employers should provide a target for future campaigns or policies to support training at work. In forthcoming research for UK Commission, Cox et al. (*forthcoming*) have explored the potential for policies to promote joint-training or group training initiatives (i.e. incentivising employers working in similar sectors or sharing similar skills needs to work together to fund and support training). There may be value in further research to investigate the potential value of, and demand for, such approaches. Further research to measure the impact of trade unions' support for learning in the workplace, and on how to best build upon good practice on union learning activities, would be of value.

It is also important that we gain a more detailed understanding of what work-related training looks like. We have seen above that survey data appear to suggest that working in service occupations and sectors increases the likelihood of receiving work-related training. Yet qualitative research has suggested that training in certain areas of the service sector can focus on basic personal attributes such as communication and generic 'employability' skills. Lindsay (2005) argues that there is a danger that *'although highly transferable at certain levels of the service sector, such skills carry little broader status… are rarely formalised in training that offers structured career progression… and attract virtually no wage premium*'. For some other analysts *'this is skill as a rhetorical device that carries no material benefits'* (Grugulis et al, 2004: 12).

Indeed, it has been suggested that the lack (or low quality) of skills development opportunities in certain occupations and sectors reflects an increasing process of polarisation, whereby the low skill equilibrium in some areas of the economy means that there is little incentive for employers or individuals to invest in work-related training (Grugulis, 2003; Hogarth et al. *forthcoming*).

5.5 Legacy of early educational experiences

Turning to barriers to participation from the individual's perspective, a recurring theme relates to the legacy of negative experiences at school. There may be scope for further in-depth research exploring these issues, and how employers and key stakeholders can best challenge negative attitudes through innovative provision. Recurring themes in relation to extrinsic barriers focused on work and family pressures. However, there may again be a need for further research into exactly how work and caring responsibilities combine to limit opportunity (and possibly undermine motivation), and what combination of policies is required to address these issues.

Research appears to suggest that there are specific gaps in the evidence regarding unemployed and inactive people's demand for skills development. There is some evidence that these groups can face particular difficulties in relation to the compulsory requirements and restrictions of the benefits system and active labour market programmes. Those excluded from the labour market for longer periods may also be more likely to experience intrinsic barriers around self efficacy and low levels of confidence and basic skills gaps. There would appear to be a case to be made for detailed research on unemployed and inactive people's preferences around skills development, how these attitudes have been informed and developed, and the extent to which benefits and training policies restrict or facilitate skills development among these particularly vulnerable groups.

5.6 Integrated analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers

Finally, and crucially, the **link between intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to participation is important**. A small number of studies have specifically sought to explore the connection between work and occupational contexts and motivation to participate in skills development activities, but too many major surveys present intrinsic and extrinsic barriers/facilitators as an unconnected list. Yet we know that workplace factors and the approaches of managers shape individuals' level of motivation; and we know that the format and location for training has the potential to influence the attitudes of people considering re-engaging in learning or training.

There is a clear need to carefully consider how work, occupations and (for those not in work) the benefits system interact to shape motivation and attitudes towards learning and training among lower skilled individuals. Considering the fullest possible range of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers and facilitators (and how they are inter-related) should be a priority for future research in this area.

Table 3.1 presents the main intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that have been identified through the research reviewed in this report. Future policy decisions in this key area would benefit greatly from further development of this framework to produce a clear evidence-based ranking of these barriers for different groups, and further development of our understanding of how these barriers interact to influence individuals' decisions regarding investment in skills development.

APPENDIX A – Bibliography

Aldridge, F., Dutton, Y. and Tuckett, A. (2006) In the spotlight: NIACE briefing on participation in adult learning by ethnic minorities, Leicester: NIACE.

Aldridge, F. and Tuckett, A. (2003) Light and shade: a NIACE briefing on participation in adult learning by ethnic minorities, Leicester: NIACE.

Aldridge, F. and Tuckett, A. (2004) Business as usual? The NIACE survey on adult participation, Leicester: NIACE.

Aldridge, F. and Tuckett, A. (2005) Better news this time? The NIACE survey on adult participation in learning, Leicester: NIACE.

Aldridge, F. and Tuckett, A. (2006) Green shoots? The NIACE survey on adult participation in learning, Leicester: NIACE.

Aldridge, F. and Tuckett, A. (2007) The road to nowhere? The NIACE survey on adult participation in learning, Leicester: NIACE.

Almeida-Santos, F. and Mumford, K. (2005) Employee training and wage compression in Britain, The Manchester School, 73 (3): 321-342.

Arad Consulting (2005) Learning Worker Project Evaluation: Final Report, Report to ELWa, April 2005

Armistead, C and Shaw, N., (2003) Evaluation of the Scottish Learning Fund Year One (2000-2001), York Consulting for Scottish Executive Social Research, 2003.

Arulampalam, W. and Booth, A. (1998) Training and labour market flexibility: Is there a trade-off?, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 36 (4): 521–536.

Arulampalam, W. and Booth, A. (2001) Learning and earning: do multiple training events pay? A decade of evidence from a cohort of young British men, Economica, 68 (271): 379-400.

Arnkil, R., Hietikko, M., Mattila, K., Nieminen, J., Rissanen, P., Spangar, T., (2002) The National Programme on Ageing Workers Evaluation, Reports of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2002:5

Atkinson, J. and Williams, M. (2003) Employer perspectives on the recruitment, retention and advancement of low-pay, low-status employees, London: Government Chief Social Researcher's Office.

Ball S., Macrae, S. and Maguire, M. (1999) Young lives, diverse choices and imagined futures in an education and training market, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 3 (3): 195-224.

Bassanini, A., Booth, A., Brunello, G., De Paola, M. and Leuven, E. (2005) Workplace training in Europe, IZA Discussion Paper 1640, Bonn: IZA.

Battistelli, A. (2008) The influence of organizational context on training motivation, Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society, 4 (1): 199-209.

Becker, G.S. (1964) Human capital, New York: Columbia University Press.

Becker, G.S. (1992) The economic way of looking at life, Nobel Lecture, December 9, 1992

Bennett, R. and Errington, A. (1990) Meeting the training needs of rural England, Planning Practice and Research, 5 (1): 11-16.

Bhattacharyya, G., Ison, L. and Blair, M. (2003) Minority ethnic attainment and participation in education and training: the evidence, Research Topic Paper RTP01-03, London: Department for Education and Skills.

Birdi, K., Allan, C., and Warr, P. (1997) Correlates and perceived outcomes of four types of employee development activity, Journal of Applied Psychology, 82 (6): 845-857.

Blundell, R., Dearden, L. and Meghir, C. (1996) The determinants and effects of work-related training in Britain, London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

BMG Research (2008) Evaluation of the Learning Community Account pilots, Report to WAG DELLS, July 2008

BMRB Social Research (2007) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland: learners and unconverted enquiries surveys, January – November 2006, Scottish Executive Social Research, Findings 53/2007

Boheim, R. and Booth, A. (2004) Trade union presence and employer-provided training in Britain, Industrial Relations, 43 (3): 520-545.

Booth, A., Francesconi, M. and Zoega, G. (2003) Unions, work-related training and wages: evidence for British men, Industrial and Labour Relations Review, 57 (1): 520-545.

Booth, A. and Snower, D. (1996) Acquiring skills, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P. and Hesketh, A. (2004) The mismanagement of talent: employability and jobs in the knowledge economy, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bysshe, S and Parsons, D. The HOST Consultancy (1999) An Evaluation of Learning Direct, DfEE Research Brief No. 132, August 1999.

Cabinet Office (2001) In demand: adult skills in the 21st century, London: Cabinet Office.

Carpenter, H. (2007) Repeat Jobseeker's Allowance spells, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No 394, Sheffield: Department for Work and Pensions.

Cedefop (2004) Lifelong learning: citizens' views, Luxembourg: CEDEFOP.

Cedefop Panorama Series 130, Luxembourg, 2006.

Cedefop (2008) Innovative learning measures for older workers, Cedefop Panorama Series, 159, Luxembourg.

Cedefop (2009) Panorama: Individual Learning Accounts, Cedefop Panorama Series 163, Luxembourg.

Cedefop (no date) Educational leave schemes throughout Europe; Finland, http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/library/educationalleave/country/fi.asp.

Cedefop (no date) Educational leave schemes throughout Europe; Sweden, http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/library/educationalleave/country/sw.asp

Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh (2002) Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA): Evaluation of the East Ayrshire pilot, Scottish Executive Social Research, Research Findings 6/2002

Centre for Research in Social Policy and National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (2004) A Qualitative Investigation into the First Year (Pilot) Implementation of the Adult Learning Grant, DfES Research Brief RBX12-04, Nov 2004.

Chiaburu, D. and Lindsay, D. (2008) Perspectives in research: Can do or will do? The importance of self-efficacy and instrumentality for training transfer, Human Resource Development International, 11 (2): 199-206.

City and Guilds (2008) Briefing note: addressing barriers to learning, London: City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development.

Cloonan, M. and Turner, E. (2000) The past, present and future of Further Education in Scotland: a research based guide to the literature for practitioners, Glasgow: Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning.

CM International (2007) An evaluation of the Regional Support Centre for Adult and Community Learning, Report to WAG DELLS, December 2007

Collins, T. (2008) Vocational training for people at the margin of the labour market: The Individual Learner Plan – a new approach, http://pdf.mutual-learning-employment.net/pdf/IE08/Discussion_paper_IE08.pdf

Colquitt, J., Le Pine, J. and Noe, R.A. (2000) Toward an integration theory of training motivation, Journal of Applied Psychology, 85 (6): 678-707.

Conboy, P. (2002) The Returning to Learning Initiative: A Local Authority Workplace Pilot Project supported by the Department of Education and Science, LANPAG and NALA, Evaluation Report and Implementation Guidelines, Jan 2002.

Cox, A., Sumption, F., Hillage, J. and Sloan, J. (*forthcoming*) Collective measures study: policy review, London: UKCES.

CRG (2002) Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills 'What Works' – Early Findings from the Pathfinder Projects, for DfES, 2002

Crowder, M. and Pupynin, K. (1993) The motivation to train, Sheffield: Employment Department.

Dearden, L, McIntosh, S.,, Myck, M. and Vignoles, A. (2000) The returns to academic, vocational and basic skills in Britain, London: Department for Education and Employment.

DfEE (2000) Time off for Study or Training: Preliminary Evaluation of the Employment Right.

DfES (2003) Learner Support Funds: Second Evaluation. Final Report

DfES (2004) Employability: the forward agenda, Sheffield: Department for Education and Skills.

DfES (2005a) Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work, London: Department for Education and Skills.

DfES (2005b) A Summary of the Evaluation Evidence on the Adult Learning Grant, 2005.

DfES (2005c) Care to Learn Interim Report 2004

DfES (2005d) Evaluation of Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge Interim Report 2005

DfES (2005e) National Evaluation of Connexions Card: Final Report.

DIUS (2009a) Time to Train – Consulting on a new right to request time to train for employees in England, June 2008.

DIUS (2009b) Time to Train – Initial Impact Assessment of the Right to Request Time to Train, 16 June 2008.

DWP (2006) Evaluation of Skills Coaching Trials and Skills Passports: A Synthesis of Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence.

DWP (2008) No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility, London: Department for Work and Pensions.

Education and Employment Committee (House of Commons) (1999) Access for all? A survey of post-16 participation, London: Stationery Office.

EIM Business and Policy Research and SEOR (2005) Final Report Lifelong Learning: Volume 1 Main Policy Instruments - Policy Instruments to Foster Training of the Employed, Rotterdam, Jan 2005.

EIM Business and Policy Research and SEOR (2005) Final Report Lifelong Learning: Volume 2 Summary Report - Policy Instruments to Foster Training of the Employed, Rotterdam, Jan 2005.

EKOS Consulting (2007) Aimhigher Area Studies - Final report to HEFCE, Apr 2007

FAS (2004) The Vocational Education and Training System in Ireland: Short Description, Cedefop Panorama Series 83, Luxembourg, 2004.

FAS (2008) Irish Labour Market Review 2008, Dublin.

FAS (2008) Overview Paper on the Individual Learner Plan for Community Employment Participants. An Innovation in identifying, recording and reporting on individual learner activities & preparation for progression. Official Paper, http://pdf.mutual-learning-employment.net/pdf/IE08/Official_paper_IE08.pdf

Findlay, P., Stewart, R., Dutton, E., and Warhurst, C. (2006) Evaluation of the Scottish Learning Fund (SULF), SCER Research Report 9, Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde for Scottish Executive Social Research, 2006.

Finn, D. (2003) The 'employment first' welfare state: lessons from the New Deal for Young People, Social Policy and Administration, 37 (7): 709–724.

Fitzgerald, R., Taylor, R. and La Valle, I. (2002) National Adult Learning Survey 2002, London: Department for Education and Skills.

Folkbildingsradet (2005) Folkbildningens Framsyn Folkbildning of the future, its role and objectives.

Folkbildingsradet (no date) Facts on folkbildning in Sweden: A brief overview.

Fournier C. (2003) Développer la formation des 'seniors'? Deux questions préliminaires, Formation Emploi, 81 (1): 37-50.

Fuller, A., Hodkinson, H., Hodkinson, P. and Unwin, L. (2005) Learning as peripheral participation in communities of practice: a reassessment of key concepts in workplace learning, British Educational Research Journal, 31 (1): 49-68.

Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2006) Older workers' learning in changing workplace contexts: barriers and opportunities, in Tikkanen, T. and Nyham, B. (eds.) Promoting lifelong learning for older workers: an international overview, Luxembourg: CEDEFOP, pp. 257-270.

George Street Research (2007) Evaluation of Information Advice and Guidance: perceptions of learners, potential learners and intermediary groups; Scottish Executive Social Research, Research Findings 55/2007

Goldstein, I. L. (2002) Training in organizations, Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole.

Gorard, S., Rees, G. and Fevre, R. (2001) Lifelong learning trajectories: some voices of those in transit, International Journal of Lifelong Education, 20 (3): 169–187.

Gould, A (2003) Study Leave in Sweden, Studies in the Education of Adults, v35 n1 p68-84 Spr 2003

Government Offices of Sweden (2007) Adult Education in Sweden, factsheet Ministry of Education and Research U07.007, April 2007

Green, F., Machin, S. and Wilkinson, D. (1999) Trade unions and training practices in British workplaces, Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 52 (2): 179-195.

Grinyer, J. (2006) Literacy, Numeracy and the Labour Market: Further Analysis of the Skills for Life Survey, DfES, Research Brief RB712, Jan 2006

Grugulis, I. (2003) Putting skills to work: learning and employment at the start of the century, Human Resource Management Journal, 13 (2): 3-12.

Grugulis, I., Warhurst, C. and Keep, E. (2004) What's happening to "skill"?', in Warhurst, C., Grugulis, I. and Keep, E. (eds.) The skills that matter, Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 1-18.

Hand, A., Gambles, J. and Cooper, E. (1994) Individual commitment to learning: individuals' decision making about 'lifetime learning', Sheffield: Employment Department.

Harris, R. (1999) The determinants of work-related training in Britain in 1995 and the implications of employer size, Applied Economics, 31 (4): 451-463.

HEA/IAS (University of York/Higher Education Academy/Institute for Access Studies) (2006) Review of widening participation research: addressing the barriers to participation in higher education, Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England

Henderson, R. (2005) Education, training and rural living: young people in Ryedale, Education + Training, 47 (3): 183-201.

Heyes, J., and Stuart, M. (1998) Bargaining for skills: Trade unions and training at the workplace, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 36 (3): 459-467.

Hicks, W.D. and Klimoski, R.J. (1987) Entry into training programs and its effects on training outcomes: a field experiment, Academy of Management Journal, 30 (3): 542-552.

Hillage, J., Johnson, C., Maguire, S., Perry, J., Purdon, S., and Finch, S. (2009) Learning Agreement Pilots Evaluations – Synthesis Report, Research Report DCSF-RR071, Jan 2009.

Hoddinott, S. (2004) The assessment of workers' basic skills: a critique based on evidence from the United States, Canada and England, in Rainbird, H., Fuller, A. and Munro, A. (eds.) Workplace learning in context, London: Routledge, pp. 89-106.

Hogarth, T., Gambin, L., Bosworth, D. and Wilson, R.A. (*forthcoming*) Collective measures study: empirical review, London: UKCES.

Hoque, K., Bacon, N., (2008) Trade unions, union learning representatives and employer-provided training in Britain, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 46 (4): 702-731.

Hughes, G., O'Connell, P. and Williams, J. (2004) Company training and low-skill consumer service jobs in Ireland, International Journal of Manpower, 25 (1): 17-35.

IES (2005) Learner Support Funds: Second Evaluation. Final Report

IES (2006) Impact of Care to Learn Interim: Tracking the Destinations of those Young Parents Funded in 2004/2005. Final report

IFF (*forthcoming*) Valuing vocational qualifications, Edinburgh: Scottish Qualifications Authority.

IFS for LSC (2007) The Impact of the EMA Pilots on Participation and Attainment in Post-Compulsory Education.

IPSOS MORI for LSC (2008) Evaluation of Extension of Education Maintenance Allowance to Entry-to-Employment and Programme Led Apprenticeships

James, R. (2007) Job capability match, adviser skills and the five self-efficacy barriers to employment, Journal of Occupational Psychology, Employment and Disability, 9 (1): 32-40.

Janssen, T. (no date) Is the Individual Learning Account suitable for low educated, people?www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/upload/etvnews/news/3098-att1-1-toon_janssen.pdf

Jenkins, A., Vignoles, A., Wolf, A. and Galindo-Rueda, F. (2003) The determinants and labour market effects of lifelong learning, Applied Economics, 35 (16): 1711-1721.

Keep, E. (2009) Internal and External incentives to Engage in Education and Training - A Framework for Analysing the Forces Acting on Individuals? Draft paper for SKOPE. http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/resources/INTERNAL%20AND%20EXTERNAL%20INCENTIVESfinal.doc

Keating, J (2007) Matching supply of and demand for skills: International perspectives, accessed http://www.socsci.flinders.edu.au/nils/publications/Reports/NCVER_DMS_43287-v7-Program_5_2.pdf

Kitching, J. and Blackburn, R. (2002) The nature of training and motivation to train in small firms, London: DfES.

Kuckulenz, A. (2007) Studies On Continuing Vocational Training In Germany: An Empirical Assessment, Heidelberg: Zew Economic Studies.

Kyrö, M. (2006) The Vocational Education and Training System in Finland: Short Description,

Lindsay, C. (2005) Good jobs, McJobs and skills: job seekers' attitudes to low-skilled service work, Human Resource Management Journal, 15 (2): 50-65.

Learning and Skills Council (2004) What is Meant by Work-Based Learning? An Evaluation of all Work-Based Learning Activities in the LSC London Area.

Learning and Skills Council (2007) Evaluation of the EMA National Roll-out

Learning and Skills Council (2008a) Evaluation of the Career Development Loans Programme: Analysis of Management Information Reporting, January 2008; Coventry.

Learning and Skills Council (2008b) Evaluation of the Career Development Loans Scheme: CDL Learner Survey, January 2008; Coventry.

Learning and Skills Council (2008c) Evaluation of the Career Development Loans Scheme: Executive Summary, January 2008; Coventry.

Learning and Skills Council (2008d) Evaluation of the Career Development Loans Scheme: The View of Career Development Loan Providers, January 2008; Coventry.

Learning and Skills Council (2008e) Evaluation of the Impact of the Learner Involvement Strategy

Learning and Skills Council (2008f) Train to Gain Learner Evaluation: Report from Wave 1 Research

Learning and Skills Council (2008g) The impact of learning on employability, London: LSC.

Lee S. and Klein, H. (2002) Relationships between conscientiousness, self-efficacy, self-deception, and learning over time, Journal of Applied Psychology, 87 (6): 1175-1182.

Machin, S., McIntosh, S., Vignoles, A. and Viitanen, T. (2001) Basic skills, soft skills and labour market outcomes: secondary analysis of the National Child Development Study, DfEE Research Report No. 250, London: Department for Education and Employment.

Macleod, F. and Lambe, P. (2007) Patterns and trends in part-time adult education participation in relation to UK nation, class, place of participation, gender, age and disability, 1998-2003, International Journal of Lifelong Education, 26 (4): 399-418

Maes, M. (2004) The Vocational Education and Training System in the Netherlands Short Description, Cedefop Panorama Series 96, Luxembourg, 2004.

Maguire, M., Maguire, S. and Felstead, A. (1993) Factors influencing individual commitment to lifetime learning: a literature review, Sheffield: Employment Department.

Maurer, T.J. (2001) Career-relevant learning and development, worker age and beliefs about self-efficacy for development, Journal of Management, 27 (2): 123-140.

McBride, A., Cox, A., Mustchin, S., Carroll, M., Hyde, P., Antonacopoulou, E., Walshe, K. and Woolnough, H. (2006) Developing skills in the NHS, Manchester: University of Manchester.

McCracken, M. (2006) “Towards a typology of managerial barriers to learning”, Journal of Management Development Vol 24 No 6, pp559-575.

McGivney, S. (1992) Motivating unemployed adults to undertake education and training, Leicester: NIACE.

McNair, S. (2008) Demography and lifelong learning, London: Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning.

McQuaid R.W., Dutton, M. and Bergmann, A. (2007) Small and medium sized businesses and disadvantaged parents: overcoming training, recruitment and retention barriers, Report to the ESF at: www.napier.ac.uk/randkt/rktcentres/eri/projects/Pages/SMEs.aspx

Meadows, P. and Metcalf, H. (NIESR) (2005) Literacy, Evaluation of the Impact of Skills for Life Learning: Report on Sweep 2, DfES Research Report No. 701, 2005.

Meadows, P. and Metcalf, H. (NIESR) (2007) Evaluation of the Impact of Skills for Life Learning: Longitudinal Survey of Learners, Wave 3, DCSF Research Report No. 824, 2007

Metcalf, H. (1994) Individual commitment to learning: employers’ attitudes, Sheffield: Employment Department.

Ministry of Labour (2001) An Overview of Vocational Development Services 2001, Ministry of Labour, Finland

Ministry of Labour (2004) Annual Report 2004, Ministry of Labour, Finland

Morris, M., and Rutt, S. (2006) Evaluation of Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge Longitudinal Pupil Analysis Report, DfES Research Brief No. RB814, Nov 2006.

MTL (2003), The Impact of Adult Information and Advice Services, Milburn, Trinnaman, La Court for the LSC, 2003.

MTL (2006), The Impact of Adult Information and Advice Services National Analysis 2005-06, Milburn, Trinnaman, La Court for the LSC, 2006.

Mumford, A. (1988) Learning to learn and management self-development, in Pedler, M., Burgoyne, J., and Boydell, T. (eds.) Applying self-development in organisations, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.

Munro, A., Holly, L and Rainbird, H. (2000) My ladies aren't interested in learning: managers, supervisors and the social context of learning, International Review of Education, 46 (5): 515-528.

Munro, A., and Rainbird, H. (2000) The New unionism and the new bargaining agenda: UNISON–employer partnerships on workplace learning in Britain, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 38 (2): 223-240.

Munro, A. and Rainbird, H. (2004) Opening doors as well as banging on tables: an assessment of UNISON/employer partnerships on learning in the UK public sector, Industrial Relations Journal, 35 (5): 419-433.

Murphy, P., Latreille, P., Jones, M. and Blackaby, D. (2007) Assessing the size of the public sector training premium: who gets it and what's it worth?, London: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

Myers, K. and De Brouker, P. (2003) Too many left behind: Canada's adult education and training system, Toronto: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

National Foundation for Educational Research (2008) Evaluation of Skills for Work Pilot Courses, Scottish Government, Education Information and Analytical Services Division; Insight 40

Narayan, A. and Steele-Johnson, D. (2007) Relationships between prior experience of training, gender, goal orientation and training attitudes, International Journal of Training and Development, 11 (3): 166-180.

Newton, B. (2006) Training an age diverse workforce, Industrial and Commercial Training, 38 (2): 93-97.

Newton, B., Hurstfield, J., Miller, L., Akroyd, K. and Gifford, J. (2005) Training participation by age amongst unemployed and inactive people, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 291, London: DWP.

NIACE (2004) Adult learning at a glance: the UK context, facts and figures, Leicester: NIACE.

Noe, R.A. (1996) Is career management related to employee development and performance? Journal of Organizational Behavior, 17: 119–133.

Noe, R. A., Wilk, S. A., Mullen, E. J. and Wanek, J. E. (1997) Employee development, in Ford, J., Kozlowski, S., Kraiger, K., Salas, E. and Teachout, M. (eds.), Improving training effectiveness in work organizations Hillsdale: Erlbaum, pp. 153–189.

Noe, R.A. and Wilk, S.L. (1993) Investigation of the factors that influence employee participation in development activities, Journal of Applied Psychology, 78 (2): 291-302.

O'Connell, P., Lyons, M (1995) Enterprise related training and state policy in Ireland: The training support scheme, ESRI, 1995.

O'Connell, P. (1999) Adults in training: an international comparison of continuing education and training, Paris: OECD.

OECD (2003a) Beyond rhetoric: adult learning policies and practices, Paris: OECD.

OECD (2003b) Employment outlook, Paris: OECD.

OECD (2005) Education and training policy promoting adult learning, Paris: OECD.

OECD (2007) PISA 2006 Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World, OECD.

Ofsted (2008) The Impact of Train to Gain on Skills in Employment

O'Keefe, S., Crase, L. and Dollery, B. (2006) Workplace training: does reality match the theory? An analysis of public sector employees' training decisions, Working Paper Series in Economics No. 2006-6, Armidale: University of New England.

O'Leary, D. and Oakley, K. (2008) The skills paradox, London: DEMOS.

ONS (2004) Focus on social inequalities: education, training and skills, London: ONS.

Page, R. and Hillage, J. (2006) Vocational education and training in the UK, Berlin: WZB/Social Science Research Center.

Park, A. (1994) Individual commitment to learning: individuals' attitudes, report on the quantitative survey, Sheffield: Employment Department.

Parsons, S. and Brynner, J. (2008) New light on literacy and numeracy in Scotland, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Pollard, E., Tyrers, C., Tuohy, S., Cowling, M (2007), Assessing the Net Added Value of Adult Advice and Guidance, DfES Research Brief, RB No. RB825, Feb 2007.

Pont, B. (2004) Improving access to and participation in adult learning in OECD countries, European Journal of Education, 39 (1): 31-45.

Raab, G. and Davidson, K. (1999) Distribution of Further Education provision in Scotland, Edinburgh: Napier University Applied Statistics Group.

Rainbird, H., Munro, A. and Holly, L. (2004) The employee relationship and workplace learning, in Rainbird, H., Fuller, A. and Munro, A. (eds.) Workplace learning in context, London: Routledge, pp. 38-53.

Regeringskansleit (2004) Sweden's Action Plan for Employment 2004, Stockholm, 2004.

Renaud, S., Lakhdari, M. and Morin, L. (2004) The determinants of participation in non-mandatory training, Relations Industrielles 59 (4): 724-740.

Sabates, R., Feinstein, L. and Skaliotis, E. (2007) Who achieves Level 2 qualifications during adulthood? Evidence from the NCDS, British Journal of Educational Studies 55 (4):390-408

Sanderson, I. (2006) Worklessness in deprived neighbourhoods: a review of evidence, London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Sargent, N. and Aldridge, F. (2002) Adult learning and social division – a persistent pattern: the full NIACE survey on adult participation in learning, Leicester: NIACE.

Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde (2006) Evaluation of the Scottish Union Learning Fund (SULF) 2000-2005, Scottish Executive Social Research, 2006.

Scottish Executive (2000) The learning nation: helping students, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Scottish Government Social Research (2007) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts Scotland- Learning Providers and Intermediary Agencies.

Scottish Office Education Department (1992) The education of adults in Scotland: a report by HM Inspectors of Schools, Edinburgh: Scottish Office.

Shared Intelligence (2006) Evaluation of Learning Challenge Fund, Report WAG DELLS, August 2006

Shaw, N., Armistead, Rodger, J., and Hopwood, V. (York Consulting) (2002) Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund Year 4, DfES Research Brief No. 378, Oct 2002.

Shaw, N., Starks, L., Hopwood, V., O'Neil, L., Wilton, M., Laxton, C., and Serr, A (York Consulting Ltd) (2006) Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund (2001-2005), DCSF Research Brief RB789, 2006.

Shaw, N., Starks, L., Hopwood, V., O'Neil;. L., Wilton, M., Laxton, C., and Serr, A (York Consulting Ltd) (2006) Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund (2001-2005), DCSF Research Report RR789, 2006.

Sloman, M. and Borsattino, T. (2007) Barriers to progress in learning, Development and Learning in Organizations, 21 (2): 14-16

Smith, F., Wainwright, E., Marandet, E. and Buckingham, S. (2008) A New Deal for Lone Parents? Training lone parents for work in West London, Area, 40 (2): 237-244.

Snape, D., Bell, A. and Jones, A. (2004) Pathways in Adult Learning Survey, Department for Education and Skills Research Report RR559, London: Department for Education and Skills.

Spilsbury, D. (2003) Learning and training at work, Department for Education and Skills Research Report RR399, London: Department for Education and Skills.

Spreitzer, G., Sutcliffe, K., Dutton, J., Sonenshein, S. and Grant, A. (2005) A socially embedded model of thriving at work, Organization Science, 16 (5): 537-549.

SQW for DfES (2002) Individual Learning Accounts: A Consultation Exercise on the New ILA Schemes.

SQW Ltd with FMR Research Ltd (2007) Evaluation of the Scottish University for Industry Scottish Executive Social Research, 2007

SQW Ltd. (2005) Evaluation of the All Age Guidance Projects, Scottish Executive Social Research, Research Findings, 24/2005

SQW/NOP for DfES (2002) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts- Community Projects

Stenberg, A (2002) Comprehensive Education for the Unemployed - Evaluating the Effects on Unemployment of the Adult Education Initiative in Sweden, Umea Economic Studies 579, Umea University, Department of Economics, revised 07 May 2003.

Stenberg, A., (2003) The Adult Education Initiative in Sweden –Second Year Effects on Wage Earnings and the Influence on Branch Mobility, Umea Economic Studies 608, Umea University, Department of Economics.

Stuart, M. and Perrett, R. (2006) Learning in a restructured industrial environment: older workers displaced from the British steel sector, in Tikkanen, T. and Nyham, B. (eds.) Promoting lifelong learning for older workers: an international overview, Luxembourg: CEDEFOP, pp. 224-239.

Stuart, R. (1984) Maximising managers' day to day learning, in Cox, C. and Beck, J. (eds.) Management development: advances in practice and theory, London: Wiley.

SWA (1999) Evaluation of Early Individual Learning Account Development Activity

Tamkin, P., Hillage, J., Dewson, S., and Sinclair, A. (2003) New Learners, New Learning: A Strategic Evaluation of Ufi, Institute of Employment Studies, Research Report No. 440, June 2003.

Tamkin, P. and Hillage, J. (1997) Individual commitment to learning: motivation and reward, London: Department for Education and Employment.

Taylor, S. and Spencer, L. (1994) Individual commitment to learning: individuals' attitudes, report on the qualitative phase, Sheffield: Employment Department.

Tremlett, N. and Park, A. (1995) Individual commitment to learning: comparative findings from the surveys of individuals', employers' and providers' attitudes, Sheffield: Department for Education and Employment.

Tremlett, N., Thomas, A. and Taylor, S. (1995) Individual commitment to learning: providers' attitudes, Sheffield: Employment Department.

Tziner, A., Fisher, M., Senior, T. and Weisberg, J. (2007) Effects of trainee characteristics on training effectiveness, International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 15 (2): 167-174.

Ufi (2002) Are Learndirect Learners Satisfied?: Research Summary, Ufi, November 2002.

Ufi (2003a) Learndirect learning – its impact on the learning journey: Research summary, Ufi, June 2003.

Ufi (2003b) Ufi/learndirect: A Strategic Evaluation: Evidence of impact of Ufi/learndirect on individual learners, on employers and on the learning market in general – Research summary, Ufi.

Ufi (2003c) Understanding the Adult Learner Market: Segmenting the market according to attitudes to learning, Ufi, September 2003.

Ufi and QIA (2008) An Evaluation of Learndirect Learning: Research Summary, Ufi Limited, Sheffield.

Unionlearn (2009) The Union Role in Negotiating Continuing Vocational Training in the UK; A Partnership Model – Presentation by Bert Clough, Research and Strategy Manager, Unionlearn, 9 Feb 2009.

Unionlearn with the TUC (2006) Making a Real Difference - Union Learning Reps: A Survey, Unionlearn, London, October 2006.

Unionlearn with the TUC (2008) Opening Doors to Learning – Union Learning Representative Survey Report 2008, Unionlearn, London, May 2008.

van Elk, K. (2005) Lifelong Learning and Employer Provided Training, accessed http://pdf.mutual-learning-employment.net/pdf/thematic%20reviews%2005/september%2005/Koos%20van%20Elk_EN.pdf

Walker, R. and Wiseman, M. (2003) Making welfare work: UK activation policies under New Labour, International Social Security Review, 56 (1): 3–29.

Wallis, E., Stuart, M., and Greenwood, I. (2005) 'Learners of the workplace unite': An empirical examination of the UK trade union learning representative initiative, Work, Employment and Society, 19 (2): pp. 283-304.

Welsh Assembly Government, DfTE (2005) Individual Learning Accounts Wales: Report of Strategic Review Group.

Welsh Assembly Government (2007) Individual Learning Account Wales: Fourth Main Evaluation Report.

Wood, H. and Moore, S. (2005) An evaluation of the UK Union Learning Fund – its impact on unions and employers, London: Working Lives Research Institute.

York Consulting (2002) Evaluation of Individual Learning Accounts – follow-up survey: Scotland, Final Report to Scottish Executive, 2002

York Consulting Ltd (2007) Aimhigher Resource Costs: A Case Study Approach – Final Report, DfES Research Report No. RR841, 2007.

APPENDIX B: 'DELPHI' STUDY – BRIEF SUMMARY

Background

A 'Delphi-type' consultation was undertaken during December 2008 and early January 2009, with the aim of eliciting the views of a cross-section of expert commentators on the countries which it would be most valuable to study in the context of the policy review that is being undertaken as part of the *Employee Demand* study.

An email was sent to 13 experts identified through consultation with the UK Commission project steering group and members of the UK Commission's expert panel. Selected members of the expert panel were also contacted by the UK Commission researchers.

Respondents were asked to comment briefly on three questions:

1. Which two or three countries outside the UK do you feel have had most success over the past ten years or so in encouraging working age individuals to participate in skills development? We are particularly interested in policies that have focused on lower-skilled individuals, in and out of employment.
2. In each case, please explain briefly to what extent you feel that public policies have helped to achieve this?
3. Which specific policy initiative(s) - or combinations of policies - do you feel have been particularly successful in encouraging individuals to participate in skills development in these countries?

Response

Eight completed responses were received. Two further respondents said that they were too busy to respond within the deadline, but promised to provide a response in due course. On the basis of the eight completed responses, the following countries were mentioned as being worthy of further investigation in the context of this study:

- Australia (4 mentions)
- Finland (3 mentions)
- Singapore (2 mentions)
- Sweden (2 mentions)
- Ireland (2 mentions)

- Netherlands (2 mentions)

The following countries were mentioned once each:

- Switzerland
- Denmark
- Taiwan
- Korea
- USA

The Delphi study is not a representative sample or poll; however the fact that these countries have been mentioned by several acknowledged experts means that this is a useful list from which to draw the group of countries for further investigation during the policy review phase of the project.

Specific comments provided by respondents about some of these countries are presented below:

Australia

In Australia, public policies have played a major part in encouraging people to participate. Policies have been many-pronged involving investment in the formal VET system, incentives for employers, advertising campaigns, funding of intermediary bodies, and VET in schools programs. Specific policy initiatives include:

- Expansion of the apprenticeships and traineeship system including employer incentives for funding and demand-led funding for the training component of the apprenticeships and expansion of eligibility for apprenticeships and traineeships to part-time workers, 'existing worker' and mature-aged people.
- (Minor) direct financial assistance for apprentices.
- Funding for Group Training Organisations (through 'JGTP' program) which assist people into and during apprenticeships and traineeships, including a particular emphasis on disadvantaged groups
- Other intermediary organisations such as 'Australian Apprenticeship Centres', and co-location (in some cases) of such organisations with other services such as Job Network providers so that clients don't have to navigate too many organisations.
- The new Productivity Places Program with an emphasis on lower-skilled people who are not employed and training through employment for lower-skilled people.

- Other State and national government direct funding of training from time to time in areas of skill need etc.
- WELL program (workplace English language and literacy).
- Enterprise registered training organisations – as per new 2008 development in UK- which provide qualifications for their own workers.
- Government-funded media campaigns re apprenticeships and more generally re skills developments.
- High profile events such as the National Training Awards and contributing State events.
- VET in schools programs which encourage young people to commence the ladder of VET qualifications while at school, sometimes (but by no means always) via a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship.
- Investment in the Adult and Community Education sector which provides a gentle access point for many unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups.
- Special attention to equity groups such as indigenous people, refugees etc.
- Direct funding of VET research through NCVER, which often produces very useful data on this issue.
- Transparent system of national qualifications, all available on the web at www.ntis.gov.au
- A deliberately limited number of other web sites providing targeted and accessible information for employers, apprentices etc.
- Willingness to adapt policies when they are shown not to work.

Finland

Finland has achieved considerable success in the area of active ageing policies. The reforms that impacted active ageing policies has consisted of several programmes, such as the National Working Life Development Programme, the National Programme for Ageing workers and the National Well-Being at Work Programme. The policies and implementation have focused on the recruitment and retention of older workers in the workplace despite health related problems and outdated qualifications by improving job satisfaction and well being at work. Various programmes, such as NOSTE, VETO, and TYKES support participation and learning through development projects and financial benefits.

The success of the reform policies has been the national-level strategy and the tripartite cooperation and commitment between labour market players. Programs typically have inter-ministerial advisory boards, which support implementation and continuation of national development programmes. In addition, a pension reform that focuses on rising the retirement age has been carried out in 2005.

The NOSTE programme (skills development for low-educated adults) has been most successful. It is mainly focuses on working adults aged between 30 and 59 without a post-compulsory qualification. The target group is 350.000 and the programme aims to reach 10 per cent of that number. The programme is organised as a larger network of institutions, but the final form of the network is decided locally. As a result, there are around 60 NOSTE network projects. The main activities of the networks are training outreach services, training/studies alongside work and regional cooperation between education and training providers, including guidance and support services. The success of the programme has been its cost-free nature, which has proved instrumental in increasing employers' interest in training their personnel. Since the beginning of the programme in 2003, participation has almost tripled.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there has been considerable success in stimulating the discussion on working at old age. A platform entitled 'Grey works' (GrijsWerkt) has been launched three years ago to initiate the debate on extending working lives. The idea is that enabling longer working lives needs to be supported by stimulating debate, but that actions and policies are to be designed by labour market players themselves.

The debate has been successfully started. In its final report, the platform mentions that *a movement* has been created. In order to put things into practice, a number of recommendations have been presented. These recommendations refer to the fact that the perspective of age aware personnel policies should not only deal with ageing workers, but with all age groups, that there is too much early labour market exit, that retention policies are not specific enough, that age discrimination persists, that there is too much (sometimes contradictory) regulation, that early exit often remains too profitable at an individual level, that not enough monitoring takes place, that the right to work after 65 is not firmly legally established, that ageing workers are not valued sufficiently and that public sector can play a key role by setting an example.

The strengths of the platform is that it comes to usable recommendations for all parties involved. It features integrated approaches to stimulating competence development for ageing workers by motivating individuals to engage in training, by showing social partners the merits of competence development and by stimulating the government in facilitating longer worker lives. The platform has also received considerable attention in the media, establishing itself as a true brand name.

Evidence Reports present detailed findings of the research and policy analysis generated by the Research and Policy Directorate of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. The Reports contribute to the accumulation of knowledge and intelligence on a range of skills and employment issues through the publication of reviews and synthesis of existing evidence or through new, primary research. The Evidence Reports are accompanied by Executive Summaries, presenting the key findings of the main Evidence Report. These and other outputs in the Research and Policy Analysis series can be accessed on the UK Commission's website at **www.ukces.org.uk**

Produced by WM Enterprise and Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University for the UK Commission for Employment and Skills

To obtain copies of this document, contact:

UKCES
3 Callflex Business Park
Golden Smithies Lane
Wath-upon-Dearne
South Yorkshire
S63 7ER
T +44 (0)1709 774 800
F +44 (0)1709 774 801

UKCES
28-30 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W OTT
T +44 (0)207 881 8900
F +44 (0)207 259 1290

Email: communications@ukces.org.uk
www.ukces.org.uk

ISBN: 978-1-906597-12-2