

The Experience of Other Regions

Two other similar studies have been carried out into the construction training and skills needs of regional construction industries:

Bridging the Gap – An analysis of construction training and skills needs in the West Midlands

The CITB and Advantage West Midlands (the RDA for the West Midlands) commissioned this analysis with funding from the West Midlands Skills Development Fund. The analysis is based on a combination of desk research and primary research, undertaken between March and May 2001. The purpose of the report was to highlight current and potential mismatches in the construction training and labour markets in the region and to make recommendations for improvement.

The key findings of the analysis were grouped under the areas of skills shortages, training provision and training issues. These included, among others:

- ❑ The ageing workforce.
- ❑ Shortages of labour due to competition, lack of interest and poor technical skills leading to increased labour costs, losses of efficiency and restrictions on growth.
- ❑ The need for strategies to address higher salaries, poaching workers and up-skilling the existing workforce.
- ❑ The increasing trend of targeting over 18 year olds in addition to post 16 school leavers.
- ❑ A recognition that the only practical way to plan training provision is on a regional basis (and on a national basis for specialist trades).
- ❑ Difficulties in the available data to inform planning for training across the region.
- ❑ The variability in training provision across the region. The main providers are FE colleges and the main trades are carpentry, brickwork and painting and decorating. Some trades have no provision in the region such as scaffolding, plastering and wall tiling. Many courses are under threat of closure.
- ❑ The mismatch between demand and supply of craft trainees.
- ❑ Criticism of the NVQ and associated funding frameworks.
- ❑ Problems in recruiting instructors in colleges and other training providers.
- ❑ Problems in the industry gaining access to schools.

Key recommendations from the report include:

- ❑ Communicating labour market information and guidance to SME's more effectively.
- ❑ Partnering with Connexions to produce high quality promotional campaigns.
- ❑ Use of curriculum centres.
- ❑ Introducing more flexible employment terms.
- ❑ Improving the image and culture of the industry through liP, the SBS and Business Link.
- ❑ Educating employers and clients and reducing the number of initiatives and surveys within the region.

- Providing a mobile CSCS test centre and developing OSAT into a regional network with assessors across the region.

Another Brick in the Wall – A study of construction training in the East of England

This project's brief was to provide construction labour market and training planning data to be used by stakeholders and decision-makers to develop construction education and training provision in the East of England Region. The project was completed in April 2002 and was a follow up to a previous Bridging the Gap report published in December 1999.

The key findings of the project were:

- There is an insufficient replacement rate of construction workers to meet the CITB's forecasts for 2002-2006.
- A significant increase in new entrant numbers is required from both traditional and non-traditional sources, insufficient capacity of training provision within the region to meet the targets and the need to reduce drop-out rates amongst trainees.
- There is generally limited provision in many specialist skill areas or no provision at all within the region.
- The increasingly specialised nature of some occupations require a regional approach to the future planning of training provision.
- OSAT will become increasingly important but will require careful monitoring to ensure quality standards are maintained.
- Government and the LSC are concerned about the quality and effectiveness of training provision and the need to improve completion rates.

Key recommendations and conclusions from the report include:

- The construction industry in the East of England is likely to experience increased skill shortages with detrimental effects on the development of the region's infrastructure and the achievement of economic and social objectives.
- Partnership is recommended between the industry stakeholders to ensure the construction industry efficiently and effectively delivers the required infrastructure to achieve the region's economic and social objectives.
- A regional forum should be established to assist the building of such a partnership. The aim of the forum should be to plan, action, monitor and improve the construction labour market and education and training provision to meet the region's existing and future construction requirements.