

## 3.7 The Marine Sector

### Executive summary

This section summarises the main findings for the Marine sector that are detailed in the following chapter. For reference, it highlights the source of each finding. It should be noted that the summary only contains the most significant findings and recommendations. Additional issues and further detail are given in the chapter.

#### Sector overview: Sub-sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2

- ❖ For the purposes of this research, the Marine sector has been defined in the broadest terms – covering marine technologies, port operations, fishing, defence related operations, commercial shipping and more.
- ❖ The sector has a long history in the South West, with a strong tradition of innovation and development.
- ❖ Despite set backs in recent years, the sector is still a significant employer with 10,000 marine technology employees in 2001 and an estimated further 10,000 employees in the other sub-sectors of the industry. (N.B. A recent Plymouth University study, using a much wider definition, has put the total figure at over 30,000).
- ❖ The significance of the sector varies markedly between different parts of the region with Devon and Cornwall being particularly important accounting for over seven out of ten of all Marine employees in the region.
- ❖ It is estimated that the sector contributes c.£600m to the South West GDP.
- ❖ The sector is dominated by a small number of large employers, although small businesses form the backbone of the industry.
- ❖ The future prospects of the sector are closely linked to diversification and specialisation, with new opportunities opening to those with a strong skills base and at the cutting edge of technology.

#### Sector skills needs: Sub-section 3.7.3

- ❖ Two overarching skills demands need to be overcome if the sector is to flourish in the future. These are a shortage of both:
  - Managerial and engineering skills; and
  - Technical and IT skills.
- ❖ Within the Marine technologies sub-sector, there are particular concerns about the quantity and quality of engineering training as well as the availability of support skills such as:
  - Customer-relationship management;
  - Team-working; and
  - Communication, etc.
- ❖ These are gaps that the NVQ system ought to be well placed to fill.
- ❖ The sector thus faces a mixture of skills gaps: both for skills specific to the sector and also more generic skills gaps.
- ❖ These gaps exist at all levels within the sector.

#### Marine Skills Action Plans and project developments: Sub-section 3.7.4

- ❖ Various initiatives are already underway, both in the region and elsewhere, to tackle the gaps identified.
- ❖ Marine South West has a skills development programme and Action Plan to increase the business competitiveness of the sector.

- ❖ In terms of NVQ progression routes, the Plan includes remedial actions to;
  - Develop qualifications and career structures; and
  - Increase levels of available training provision.
- ❖ LSC Devon and Cornwall have also approved a CoVE initiative at Plymouth College of FE in Advanced Engineering Technology.
- ❖ LSC Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole are producing a strategy and training plans specifically for the sector.
- ❖ Work by Plymouth University on a Workforce Development Strategy noted that “NVQs are not well respected” in the industry. The report also noted that while advanced technology skills are needed, many of the core engineering skills are also in short supply.
- ❖ In 2001-02 there were over 200 work-based learners on NVQs/MAs related to the sector: an insufficient total to meet the demand from labour replacement or productivity gains.
- ❖ Thus NVQ provision and progression opportunities in the region are limited;
  - By the numbers of learners;
  - Geography;
  - Qualification level; and
  - Course type.

#### **Gaps in NVQ Provision: Sub-section 3.7.6**

#### **NVQ Provision in the South West for the Marine Sector: Sub-section 3.7.5**

- ❖ Thirteen NVQs were identified on the Qualification Curriculum Authority’s Framework as being specifically relevant to the sector.
- ❖ These were primarily at levels 2 or 3, offering only limited opportunities for progression. There were no relevant NVQs at either level 1 or 5.
- ❖ Only seven of the thirteen were provided in the region in 2001-02. Nearly all of these were at level 3.
- ❖ All NVQ provision in 2001-02 was work-based. That is there was no HE/FE provision of NVQs at all (although N.B. several of the work-based NVQs were administered by FE colleges, notably Plymouth College of FE).
- ❖ Reflecting the location of the industry, this provision was concentrated in Devon and Cornwall (at Devonport Royal Dockyard or Falmouth Docks), with the only other provision being in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole (at Poole Port).
- ❖ The most significant gap relates to the number of learners on marine–relevant NVQ courses. Considerably more learners will be needed to enable the sector to maintain its current skills base. Substantially more will be essential if it is to actually grow and develop.
- ❖ The clustering of NVQ provision in the South West broadly reflects the location of the industry in the region. However, the lack of provision in areas outside the clusters is a gap.
- ❖ The lack of opportunity to progress through the NVQ levels represents another significant gap that will hinder the recruitment and retention of high quality personnel.
- ❖ In this respect though, it is worth noting that many in the industry do not perceive NVQs as being the source of managers or professionals able to lead the sector into “*new levels of quality and efficiency*”. The perception is that these individuals will come from connected industries or HE with associated qualifications.
- ❖ In terms of course subjects, the clearest gaps are in:
  - Engineering and IT; and
  - Other support skills
- ❖ Furthermore, in the existing courses there are concerns that the NVQs provided do not have enough depth or up-to-date content to fully justify the costs faced by employers when sending their staff on them.

### **Validation exercise with employers and stakeholders:** Sub-section 3.7.7

- ❖ The findings reported above were “validated” with a range of key employers and stakeholders drawn from across the South West.
- ❖ This was done by means of a series of consultations and interviews. These involved the presentation of the main findings to the respondents. The findings were checked against the respondents own experiences and situations to check for omissions and anomalies.
- ❖ The employers and stakeholders were then asked to consider means of addressing the identified issues and gaps in NVQ provision and progression.
- ❖ The validation exercise thus served a dual purpose:
  - Confirming the main findings and the issues associated with them; and
  - Producing a set of recommendations designed to address the key issues identified.

### **Key recommendations for NVQ provision and progression within the Marine sector:** Sub-section 3.7.8

On this basis, the validation exercise produced a series of recommendations substantiated by the research findings and endorsed by the employers/stakeholders.

#### **Key recommendations:**

- ❖ Increased overall NVQ provision;
- ❖ Improved/advanced course coverage;
- ❖ Increased opportunities for progression;
- ❖ Increased flexibility of provision to encourage employers; and
- ❖ Ease of NVQ administration.

### **Fit of recommendations with Action and Workforce Development Plans:**

- ❖ The recommendations dovetail with the following issues and actions in the Marine South West Action Plan;
  - Rebuilding and maintaining the UK maritime skills base;
  - Developing qualifications and career structures; and
  - Improving training provision.
- ❖ They also contribute to one of the overall objectives of the Marine sector strategy;
  - To ensure that training provision for businesses is demand led.
- ❖ In the broadest sense they also dovetail with the objectives and actions of the Government’s National Skills Strategy;
  - Reforming the qualification framework;
  - Raising further effectiveness of the FE colleges and training providers;
  - Increasing ambition in the demand for skills; and
  - Placing employers needs for skills centre stage.

### 3.7.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the Marine sector in the South West, providing a discussion of definitional issues and a brief examination of the economic characteristics and prospects for the sector. The chapter then examines the reported need for training and skills in the sector, based on the available research and data, before reviewing the relevant key studies, workforce development plans and sector strategy documents. The focus of these sections of the chapter is again on identifying the potential significance and role of NVQs in meeting the identified needs and gaps.

The chapter then maps out current NVQ provision in the South West in terms of levels and types of provision divided between “on-site” provision (work-based) and provision in colleges (FE/HE). This map is then compared with the identified needs in order to distinguish any gaps in regional workforce training provision. These gaps and needs were also “validated” with key employers, partners and stakeholders in the sector in the region and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the recommendations emerging from the validation exercise.

### 3.7.2 Overview of the Marine Sector in the South West

The South West is often described as being the maritime region of the UK, as it has more than 700 miles of coastline bounded by the English Channel, Atlantic Ocean and the Bristol Channel. The number of ports and the fact that all parts of the region are within 50 miles of the coast give an indication of its strong links with the sea. Historically, the maritime nature of the South West has been reflected in the Marine industry being a core sector for the region – built upon its strong nautical history and long tradition of maritime innovation and development. However, the sector has been through a period of decline and needs to raise quality and competitiveness in order to overcome market changes.

#### 3.7.2.1 Definition of the Marine Sector

Precise work on researching the Marine Sector is slightly hindered by the absence of an agreed definition of the exact coverage of the sector. Indeed, the Bostock “*Supply and Demand for Skills*” report notes that the Marine industry as a whole is an especially difficult sector to define<sup>1</sup>. It indicates that different studies have approached the sector in various ways and that a definition could include a range of activities under the broad “marine” heading;

- *Marine technologies* – manufacture and repair of boats/ships and their components inc. engines, electronic systems, ancillary equipment; and inc. the installation of equipment.
- *Port operations* - operation of commercial ports, harbours, and leisure marinas.
- *Sea fishing* – the commercial fish-catching sector.
- *Defence-related* – operations including dockyards, training and gunnery establishments.
- Coastal and off-shore production of *oil and gas*.
- *Navigation and rescue services* – beacons, coastguard, lifeboat, etc.
- *Seaside tourism activities* – lifeguard services, pleasure and fishing boats; waterborne recreational activities
- *Commercial shipping and ferry services* – on-board activities in transport of goods/people.

<sup>1</sup> *Mapping Supply and Demand for Skills and 'The Information Gateway'*  
Bostock Marketing Group, May 2002, p.99

The South West Skills & Learning Intelligence Module (SLIM) takes a slightly different approach to the definitional issue, describing the Marine sector as “*being defined by its market*”<sup>2</sup>. That is, the definition includes any industry that is involved in the supply chain of Marine related products and activities. This consists of those companies involved in all forms of marine construction, engineering and consultancy, as well as the design and manufacture of technologies used in the marine industry such as navigation equipment. It also includes service elements such as brokerage and marine activity providers.

The RDA, in its series of papers on priority sectors, states that the Marine “industry comprises firms engaged in all forms of marine construction, engineering and consultancy. This includes the design, manufacture and repair of all types of vessels and offshore platforms. It also includes other marine technologies such as the design and manufacture of navigation equipment, marine related research and development, marine consultants and offshore engineers. The marine technologies sector is essentially an advanced engineering sector”<sup>3</sup>.

This research has adopted a broad approach, encompassing each of the three definitions above, to ensure that all NVQs of potential relevance to the sector are included<sup>4</sup>. However, it is worth noting that this approach does, as mentioned by the RDA definition above, produce some possibility of overlap with the Advanced Engineering sector, covered elsewhere in this report. Where this is the case, this chapter makes reference to the fact.

### 3.7.2.2 Economic characteristics and prospects for the Marine Sector

Although the Marine sector is often portrayed as having suffering a sharp decline in recent years and consequently being a relatively small employer, it is still an important sector in the South West. It offers specialist skills with particular strengths in building boats and ships together with associated repair activities. Furthermore, the view that it is a sector “*in decline*” is rooted in the perception that it is essentially an advanced engineering sector.

In terms of employment, the SWRDA Priority working paper reported that the sector employed a total of 9,900 in 1997<sup>5</sup>. However, this total was based on the sector being a *marine technologies sector*. On this basis, the latest NOMIS figures indicate that the sector has stabilised and accounted for more than 10,000 employees in the region in 2001<sup>6</sup>. Although this figure represented less than 1% of total employment in the region, it was twice the national average across Great Britain as a whole.

Using the wider definition of the section, the number of marine employees and businesses in the South West are considerably higher. The 2001 Beer, Ingram and Bryant research indicates that there were approximately 1,400 marine industry businesses with a workforce of around 20,000 employees<sup>7</sup>. This figure is borne out by using estimates from NOMIS, but unfortunately it is not possible to verify precisely because of overlap with other business classifications. More recent research by Beer et al, using a much broader definition, puts the figure at over 30,000<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> [www.swslim.org.uk/sectors\\_marine.asp](http://www.swslim.org.uk/sectors_marine.asp)

<sup>3</sup> *The Marine Technologies Sector in the South West* Priority Sector Working Paper No. 9 South West of England Regional Development Agency, November 2000, p.1

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of tourism related “Marine” NVQs, which are covered in chapter 3.9.

<sup>5</sup> *Mapping Supply and Demand for Skills*, p.101, Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *Annual Business Inquiry Employee Analysis, 2001* [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk) The total figure quoted is derived from summing building & repair of ships/boats (9,574), sea and coastal water transport (697) and inland water transport (93).

<sup>7</sup> *Marine South West and the SW RDA Research Exercise to Maximise the Competitive Position of the Marine Sector Through the Development of Centres of Expertise in the South West Region* Beer, J., Ingram, P., Bryant, L. Social Research and Regeneration Unit, University of Plymouth, 2001

<sup>8</sup> *Skills Needs of the Marine & Maritime Sector in the South West of England – Final report* Beer, J., Meethan, K., Grant, J. & Mair, A. Social Research and Regeneration Unit and Marine Science and Technology, University of Plymouth, July 2003.

It is important to note that the significance of the sector as an employer varies markedly between different parts of the region. In two of the six LSC sub-regional areas – Devon & Cornwall and Bournemouth/Dorset/Poole – the sector is particularly important, providing significant levels of employment. The 2001 Beer, Bryant and Ingram research identified seven clusters in the region – three in Devon (Plymouth, Torbay and the South Hams), two in Cornwall (Falmouth/Penryn and Penzance/Newlyn) plus ones in Bristol and Poole<sup>9</sup>.

Devon accounts for approaching three-fifths of all marine technology jobs in the region, followed by Poole, Cornwall and Gloucestershire in order of size, as shown in the table below. The significance of Plymouth is such that it has its own Marine Sector Development Strategy<sup>10</sup> and Workforce Development Programme<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 3.7.1 Concentration of Marine Technology Employment in the South West**

Area	Percentage of regional employment %
Devon	61
Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole	13
Cornwall	10
Gloucestershire	8
Somerset	3
Bristol area	1
Swindon area	1
All other areas	3

Source: Adapted from Beer, Bryant, Knight, 2002 Ibid and NOMIS

The Marine technologies part of the sector contributes around £300 million to South West regional output. Because of the definitional issues, little precise evidence is available on the value of the contribution of the broader sector to the South West economy, though it is estimated to be of the order of more than £600m. Nine major enterprises dominate the sector, each having 200 or more employees. However, small businesses form the backbone of the sector, with those having less than 10 employees accounting for over eight out of ten employers.

On this basis the sector is clearly susceptible to the success of a relatively small number of businesses. The largest of the employers is directly linked to UK defence and is therefore prey to changes in political and strategic decisions affecting expenditure on defence. The decline in defence related activity is likely to continue in the future, although this has been slowed by some recent contract wins. Four other major employers are primarily dependent upon the leisure market. Consequently, the sector is in a relatively exposed position, given fluctuations in the political arena and the weaknesses of the local supply chain, in the face of lower cost competition from overseas suppliers<sup>12</sup>.

Indeed, the most recently available evidence from LSC Devon and Cornwall's employers' survey 2001 indicates that marine businesses within the sub-region are cautious about the future. Just over one in five (22%) reported a slight increase in profits in the previous 12 months, while over two fifths remained the same (44%). When asked about the next 12 months there was generally a positive outlook with only a small number of businesses predicting a fall<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> *Marine South West etc.* Beer, J., Ingram, P., Bryant, L. Ibid

<sup>10</sup> *Plymouth Marine Sector Development Strategy*  
South West Regional Development Agency, 2001

<sup>11</sup> *Plymouth Travel to Work Area Sectoral Workforce Development Programme: Key Sector: Marine and Maritime*  
Beer, J., Bryant, L., Knight, A. Social Research and Regeneration Unit, University of Plymouth, June 2002

<sup>12</sup> *Mapping Supply and Demand for Skills*, p.101, Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *LSC Devon & Cornwall Employer Survey 2001*, as cited in Beer, Bryant Knight, Ibid.

The SWRDA paper on the sector states that overall the future economic prospects for the (marine technologies) sector are likely to continue to decline, although there are opportunities<sup>14</sup>:

- Employment opportunities in the traditional marine engineering sector are likely to continue to decline as the industry loses out to competition from lower cost locations elsewhere in the world;
- Diversification and specialisation will continue in the industry and ship building is likely to remain depressed; and
- New opportunities may arise in the offshore industry and in the use of new materials and technology where a strong skills base will provide a competitive advantage.

The paper then concludes that skills issues are important and that Sector Development Priorities should be implemented through the Marine Sector Group. The sector needs to adapt by focusing on raising quality and competitiveness and clearly training will play a central role in this.

### 3.7.3 Marine Sector Skills Needs

Before assessing the existing Marine Sector Workforce Development Plan and Skills Sector Action Plan it is worthwhile briefly assessing the skills needs in the sector. The Bostock report contained a breakdown of the skills demand, supply, mismatch and issues in the Marine sector and the rest of this sub-section is drawn directly from that report<sup>15</sup>:

#### 3.7.3.1 Skills demand and issues in the Marine sector

In relation to the skills demands being faced by the sector, the Bostock report identifies two overarching needs;

1. for managerial and professional engineering skills to lead the industry into new levels of quality and efficiency; and
2. for technical and IT skills to simultaneously improve productivity and quality at craft and technician levels.

The second of these needs is such that the NVQ/Modern Apprenticeship framework should be providing qualified apprentices to meet the demand. However, the relatively small size of the sector and its consequent vulnerability to a single large "event" make it very difficult to identify clear future employment trends and hence the precise levels of skills needs. The report presents summary trends for the two parts of the sector separately - marine technologies first and then ports.

#### ***Marine technologies***

In respect of marine technologies, the single largest influence on demand is cited as being the amount of work commissioned at Devonport Dockyard whilst for other major operators in the sub-sector, the sterling exchange rate and the continued growth of the leisure industry are important factors. If these factors remain stable then it is likely that productivity gains and labour replacement needs will be the main determinants of demand in this sub-sector.

<sup>14</sup> *Marine Technologies* SWRDA Working Paper No. 9, p.2, Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> *Mapping Supply and Demand for Skills*, pp.99-109, Ibid.

The close relationship between the marine technologies sub-sector and the advanced engineering (AEA) sector means that the skill needs of the marine sub-sector will follow the requirements of the larger AEA sector. That is, the key areas for growing skills demands will be among more senior staff with demand for;

- Design and technical skills as hand skills are increasingly supplemented by CAD/CNC approaches and as routine operations are automatised; and
- Multi-skilling and flexibility will be concomitant requirements.

The Bostock report then summarises the key skills issues faced by the sub-sector as being;

1. Concerns about the volume and quality of engineering training in FE/HE;
2. Concerns that the underpinning of engineering by good maths and science teaching in schools is weaker than it should be;
3. Concerns that the industry has a poor image amongst young people and that guidance services do not promote the industry with sufficient vigour; and
4. Concerns that the industry needs a wide range of support skills in management, customer relationship management, teamworking and teambuilding, openness to learning, communications, and so on, which are too often absent.

The report mentions that some of these trends were also identified in a local survey of the sub-sector in the South West. This research found that apprenticeship training was limited in the marine engineering companies surveyed, management training schemes were almost non-existent, and managers expressed concerns about the poor basic skills of some young recruits.

Both the first and fourth of the key issues highlighted above have particular resonance for the current research. They are explored further in section 5 of this chapter that details both the volume and range of the current work-based provision of marine-related engineering NVQ/MA courses.

### ***Port operations***

In the ports sub-sector, the Bostock report found that growing ro-ro traffic and the stability/growth of freight traffic combined with significant future labour replacement demand indicated that the sub-sector would experience a modest growth in employment. This would lead to growing skills demands for:

- Organisational/analytical skills;
- Ability to contribute to a complete logistics service;
- Knowledge of estate management and property development;
- Marketing and PR skills;
- Customer awareness;
- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- HR expertise;
- Coastal sciences;
- Engineering skills; and
- IT skills and e-commerce expertise.

The skills issues facing the sub-sector were reported as being;

- An ageing workforce leading to significant recruitment needs from retirement soon. However, health and safety factors make the recruitment of 16-21 year olds difficult (insurance restrictions often being a factor);
- The industry has a largely male occupational structure;
- Young workers are often deterred by the long hours and shift patterns required by port operations, which are due to the irregular arrival times of vessels;
- Modern Apprenticeships have not been widely used (mainly because the Advanced MA, Level 3 qualification, cannot realistically be achieved in ports before age 25).
- Graduate apprenticeship schemes involve low numbers and have retention problems.

Because the port sector is small in employment terms and has a stable workforce it does not face severe pressure on skills supply at the present time. However, this situation may weaken over time as retirement rates increase.

### 3.7.3.2 Skill needs in the Marine sector

The Bostock report contains a ‘training needs’ map for the industry listing a series of skills needs for staff at three levels in the sector:

**Table 3.7.2 Skills needs in the Marine sector**

	Management	Supervisors	Operatives
Communication skills	✓		
Negotiating skills	✓		
Presentation skills		✓	
Man management	✓		
IT	✓	✓	✓
Motivation skills		✓	
Leadership skills		✓	
Team working		✓	
Report writing		✓	
Health & Safety		✓	✓
Lift truck attachment			✓
Computerised stock control			✓
Attitudes and temperament			✓

Source: Bostock 2002, Ibid

On this basis the marine industry – defined as comprising marine technologies and port operations in the South West region – faces a mixture of skills needs;

#### **Marine technologies**

In addition to the broader engineering-related issues faced by the sector, such as issues specifically affecting entry to the industry, the existing workforce, and management, some specific *marine* issues are also of concern in this sub-sector:

- Industry management skills are critical to the industry, particularly in the management of large projects and also within SMEs. However, management training is relatively infrequent. A focus on *management skills* in planning would be appropriate;
- National and regional studies point to weaknesses in apprenticeship training in the sector – the absence of employer provision of apprenticeship placements;

the poor quality of entry attracted to placements, limited academic and training provision; and high costs especially given significant retention problems subsequently. A particular problem is that marine courses are concentrated in particular locations. The development of specific City and Guilds marine modules and the development of open and distance learning are believed to be important for the industry;

- Upskilling of the existing workforce to respond to new technological demands and to requirements for flexibility and multi-skilling is a critical requirement. It is also important that upskilling should extend down the supply chains. The development of standard training packages relevant to core skills is a key aspect in this area;
- There is concern not just about marine-specific skills but also about generic skills – HR management, marketing and sales, finance and accounting, IT skills – particularly at managerial and supervisor levels. Means by which these skills are developed in the industry may also be given some attention in the form of action planning for the sector;
- Because of the dispersed nature of the industry and its overall small size, there is a view that *cluster* development, assisted by outside organisations, is important to generate aggregate ‘weight’ for the industry and to bring together otherwise isolated businesses in joint strategic development. In some respects such ‘clusters’ need to be national in scale (in improving industry qualifications, designing training modules, and so on) but regional cluster/supply chain initiatives will add value to national approaches and allow local and regional needs to be articulated.

### ***Port operations***

A range of broad skills needs are identified for this sub-sector:

- *Making the industry more responsive to its operating environment:*  
Changes in skills demand due to structural industry changes need to be identified in advance, so that funding streams are fully exploited, and so that effective partnership arrangements are in place to maximise intelligence and avoid duplication of provision;
- *Workforce development:*  
Improving management training, IT skills, basic skills and new skill requirements using distance learning where appropriate, increasing access to training, and developing industry qualification frameworks;
- *Diversity, recruitment and retention:*  
Encouraging better links with schools and colleges, developing Modern Apprenticeship and graduate apprenticeship programmes, working with guidance services, improving man-management style in favour of better communications, encouraging female employment and equal opportunities;
- *Improving career paths:*  
Conclude the development of National Occupational Standards, identify and develop more qualifications - linked career pathways in the sector, expand the range of relevant NVQs, develop relevant qualification structures for managers and supervisors, encourage skills assessment and transferability of skills – in order to avoid ‘job stagnation’ in the industry and to create a more rewarding, dynamic career structure; and
- *Assisting SMEs in meeting the training costs burden:*  
Improve partnership to defray training costs, encourage flexible training, develop the exchange of training personnel between companies, identify external funding schemes.

### 3.7.4 Workforce Development and Skills Action Plans relevant to the Marine Sector

The following sub-section reviews the various workforce development and skills action plans that have been produced covering the Marine sector. This includes those produced by the sector itself, the local LSCs and other existing sub-regional plans by local academics, etc. The section focuses on the actions identified in these plans for addressing the training and skills needs of the sector, highlighting the role of NVQs as seen as playing in meeting these needs.

#### 3.7.4.1 The Marine Sector Strategy and Skills Action Plan – Marine SW

Marine South West is the project formed in order to increase the business competitiveness of marine sector companies in the South West region. It is funded by a group of public sector bodies including the RDA, Prosper (now LSC Devon & Cornwall), South West Tourism, EMTA (now SEMTA) and British Marine Industries Federation. Marine South West hosted their second marine sector conference in December 2000. The conference was designed to gather the views of the industry and the action points arising from the day were distilled into a strategy. The resulting Marine Sector Strategy<sup>16</sup> aims to continue to assist and develop the marine businesses in the region:

*"To assist companies to maximize the competitive advantage of the Marine Industry as part of the South West Economy. The driver for this will be an increase in the availability of information to enhance business competitiveness."*

The strategy has five key elements, the first of which covers skills, training, education and life-long learning. This has a three-fold set of objectives for the sector;

- The provision of quick, flexible support for training and development;
- To ensure that training provision for business is demand-led; and
- To build on the success of the package already in place.

Under this element, the project has sponsored a region-wide skills development programme aimed at addressing the problems marine businesses face with training. In addition to this programme, the industry skills and training bodies, MNTB, EMTA and Seafish, have been worked with Marine South West in the development of a Sector Skills Action Plan. This Action Plan identifies eight key issues and a series of associated remedial actions;

1. Rebuilding and maintaining the UK maritime skills base;
2. Improving and developing the image of the industry;
3. Adding value to the existing and future workforce;
4. Developing qualifications and career structures in shore-based ship management activities;
5. Recruitment & Retention: in the Marine and Commercial Sea Fishing sub-sector;
6. Availability of Training Provision;
7. Commercial Sea Fishing: Base studies of industry required to assess economic impact of this industry on the region; and
8. Commercial Sea Fishing: There are qualifications and a career structure but it is difficult to encourage take up by employers with no funds available to pursue this.

<sup>16</sup> [www.marine-south-west.org.uk/about/about3.htm](http://www.marine-south-west.org.uk/about/about3.htm)

Issues 4 and 6 are the most relevant to this study and the associated remedial actions identified in the Skills Plan are repeated below;

#### **Actions for Developing Qualifications and Career Structures**

- SSCs to identify career paths and promotion opportunities, work with partners to promote CPD and management development, investigate graduate apprenticeships and foundation degrees;
- The industry, colleges and MNTB will move this forwards with the QCA, SQA and MCA – Maritime and Coastguard Agency; and
- Port Skills and Safety Ltd will take forward various initiatives, including Graduate Apprenticeships and the establishing of career pathways. Close liaison will be maintained with various colleges and universities in the South West.

#### **Actions for improving availability of Training Provision**

- Improved co-ordination and communication between providers and employers;
- Comparison of information with Western Seafish re; the Commercial Sea Fishing subsector.

Although the Plan contains no specific reference to NVQ provision and progression routes, its references to career development and pathways will encompass these areas.

### **3.7.4.2 Relevant LSC Strategies, Workforce Development Plans and Programmes**

The relevant strategic documents and plans of the six LSCs in the region were reviewed for evidence of future programme provision relating to the Marine Sector. Given the geographic spread of the sector within the region, it was anticipated that only the LSCs with significant maritime ports within their boundaries would make reference to the sector.

#### **Devon and Cornwall LSC**

The Devon and Cornwall LSC has produced several key documents either directly concerning workforce development in the two counties or providing a strategic overview<sup>17</sup>. The Annual Plan makes reference to the Marine sector as being a “*sector in flux and requiring high skills levels to benefit from emerging opportunities*”. The Needs Analysis indicates that under their CoVe initiative, the LSC have approved a proposal from Plymouth College of Further Education covering Advanced Engineering Technology, specifically in the field of Advanced Programme Logic Controller (PLC) control and monitoring systems. The college has already delivered a number of programmes to the workforce in the sector, including marine technology employees. The Strategic Plan refers to the Marine sector as being one of the RDAs established regional sectors.

#### **Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole LSC**

The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole LSC has also produced several key documents either directly concerning workforce development in the two counties or providing a strategic overview<sup>18</sup>. The Business Plan identified that 24 marine SMEs would be engaged by March 2003 and 16 marine training plans produced, with 30 employees engaged. However, contact with the LSC in May 2003 indicated that a strategy for the sector was in the process of being formulated and that negotiations with a local provider over specific training delivery were still on going.

<sup>17</sup> Needs Analysis in Devon & Cornwall 2003, Priorities for Workforce Development 2002, Annual Plan 2003-04, Local Strategic Plan 2002-2005, Workforce Development Strategy to 2005 (Draft) LSC Devon and Cornwall

<sup>18</sup> Learning and Skills Needs Assessment for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole 2002, Business Plan 2002-03, Strategic Plan 2002-05, Annual Plan 2003-04 LSC Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole

### West of England LSC

The West of England LSC has produced two potentially relevant documents<sup>19</sup>. As with the Devon and Cornwall LSC, the WoE Annual Plan 2003-04 refers to the Marine sector as a “*sector in flux requiring high skills levels to benefit from emerging opportunities*”. The Area Action Plan makes no direct reference to the Sector.

### Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire/Swindon LSCs

No references to the Marine sector were found in the documents for these three LSCs<sup>20</sup>.

Overall the LSC plans and strategies contained only a few specific references to the Marine sector, both in terms of the strategic development of the sector or in the provision of individual programmes/training targets tailored to the needs of the sector. This was the case even in most of those geographic areas where the sector is most significant. However, the references to the CoVE made in the Devon and Cornwall documents and the on going negotiations in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole indicate that some progress is being made.

### 3.7.4.3 Other Significant Sub-Regional Workforce Development Research

#### Plymouth Travel to Work Area Sectoral Workforce Development Programme: Key Sector: Marine and Maritime<sup>21</sup>

The University of Plymouth study referred to above identifies the medium to long-term skills needs for the Marine and Maritime sector in the travel-to-work area of Plymouth. The study highlights several key findings in relation to the provision of training for the Sector in the future. Setting the scene, the report found that;

*“...(Skills) issues for the (Marine sector in the Plymouth area), include the number of small firms and the geographical situation, which limits the occupational catchment area, especially for those with higher level skills. In this case the training provided locally and the extent to which local firms can be supported by networks and general educational and training facilities are crucial...”* (p.ii).

One of the most significant findings of the report is shown as a “future skills grid”, which divides the marine sector into a fourfold framework. The grid (overleaf) highlights the importance of the application and development of new and emerging technologies to the future success of the sector.

Clearly many of the needs shown in the grid are generic in nature and not specific to the sector. Nonetheless, comparing the nature of the specific needs with the current content of the NVQ framework appears to demonstrate that there may well be a mismatch between provision and supply. Although many of the skill needs will be in emerging and developing technologies, the needs of the “core” engineering and manufacturing Marine work should not be discounted: “...many marine and maritime businesses ... will thus require many of the future skills envisaged for the advanced engineering sector...” the report notes (p.v). Further to this, the report also mentions that NVQs are “*not well respected in the marine industry*” (p.66) and that it is hoped that more employers will be encouraged to take up engineering NVQs by making them more occupationally specific to the sector (p.67).

<sup>19</sup> Annual Plan 2003-04, Bristol Area Inspection Plan 2002-2007 LSC West of England

<sup>20</sup> Business Plan 2002-03, LSC Somerset Annual Plan 2003-04, LSC Wiltshire & Swindon Strategic Plan 2002-05, Annual Plan 2003-04, LSC Gloucestershire

<sup>21</sup> Plymouth Travel to Work Area Sectoral Workforce Development Programme, June 2002, Ibid

**Future Skills Grid: Marine and Maritime Sector<sup>22</sup>**

<b>Engineering and Manufacturing Related</b>	
Flexibility, multi-skilling, problem solving, communication, customer handling, team working, design, marketing, project management, logistics and high level technical skills	
<b>Resource Based Industries</b>	<b>Design and Construction</b>
Flexibility, specialisation, multi-skilling, ICT skills, problem solving, marketing, project management, logistics and high-level technical skills	Flexibility, multi-skilling, ICT skills (in coastal zone protection and development activities), problem solving, communication, customer handling, team working, design, marketing, project management, logistics and high-level technical skills
<b>Operations and Shipping</b>	<b>Equipment and Service Providers</b>
Flexibility, specialisation, multi-skilling, ICT skills, problem solving, marketing, project management, logistics and high-level technical skills	Flexibility, specialisation, multi-skilling, customer relations, strategic relationship management, communication skills, problem solving, marketing, knowledge of product markets, project management, logistics and high-level technical skills

It is also worth noting that the report references the Devon & Cornwall LSC employer survey (p.26) that found that half of the marine and maritime employers in the Plymouth travel to work area had experienced difficulties with recruitment in the last 12 months. Furthermore the survey found that a lack of suitable employees is regarded as a significant barrier to business development, with skill shortages reported in technical and craft related occupations, such as boat building, marine engineers and riggers. It was felt that the problem was exacerbated by the fact the those sub-sectors that experienced the most difficulty in recruitment were often those were “long periods of time are needed for trainees and students to acquire the necessary skills” (p.27).

<sup>22</sup> Plymouth Travel to Work Area Sectoral Workforce Development Programme, June 2002, Ibid, p.iv

**3.7.5 NVQ Provision in the South West for the Marine Sector**

**3.7.5.1 A map of accredited NVQs specifically relevant to the Marine Sector**

Table 3.7.3 below lists the thirteen NVQs specifically relevant to the Marine Sector, based on those identified in the Qualification Curriculum Authority’s Framework of 738 accredited and available NVQs on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 and the LSC’s central database of work-based learning provided for individual learners 2001-2002.

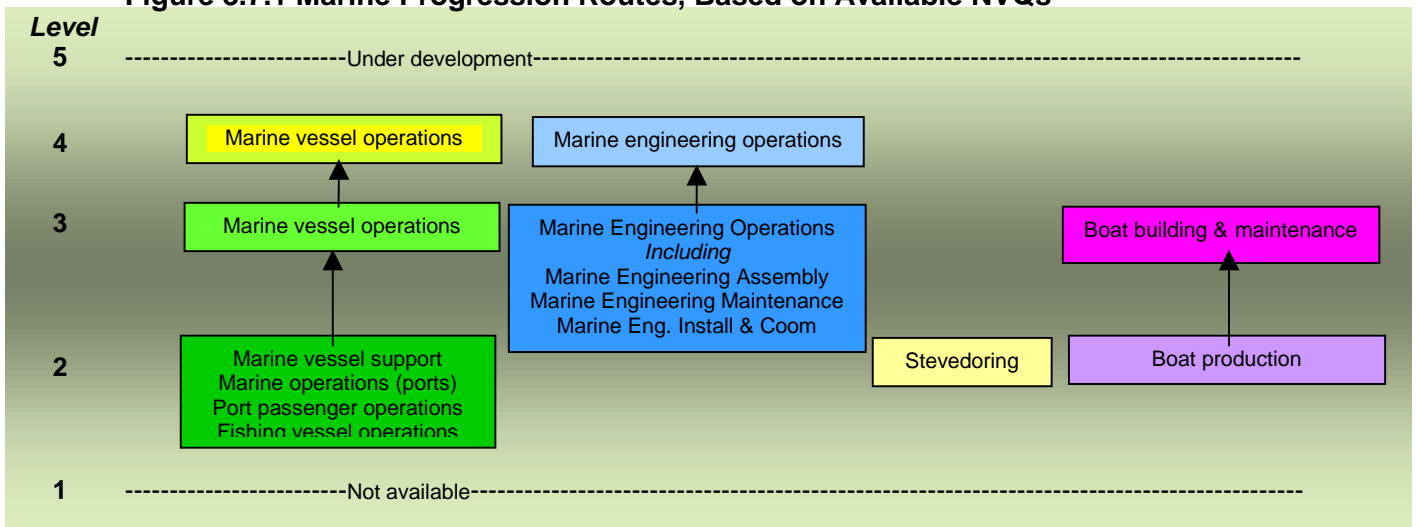
**Table 3.7.3 NVQs specifically relevant to the Marine Sector**

Title	NVQ equivalent level
Boat building and maintenance	3
Boat production/repair	2
Marine Engineering Assembly	3
Marine Engineering Maintenance	3
Marine Engineering Production	3
Marine Engineering Installation & Commissioning	3
Marine Engineering Operations	4
Marine vessel support	2
Marine vessel operations	3
Marine vessel operations	4
Marine operations (ports)	2
Port passenger operations	2
Fishing vessel operations	2
Stevedoring	2

Source: [www.qca.org.uk/nq/subjects/framework\\_listing.asp](http://www.qca.org.uk/nq/subjects/framework_listing.asp)

The table illustrates that progression opportunities within the available NVQ qualifications are limited to progression from level 2 to 4<sup>23</sup>. There are no qualifications at level 1 and level 5 is still being negotiated<sup>24</sup>. As is shown in the figure below, the bulk of the qualifications are at level 3. Having said this however, the types of courses that are available do appear to offer a broad spread of the necessary skills, with most offering the opportunity to progress to at least one higher level.

**Figure 3.7.1 Marine Progression Routes, Based on Available NVQs**



<sup>23</sup> It is recognised that there are other, non-NVQ qualifications that offer opportunities for progress.

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that the Merchant Navy Training Board has tried to get an NVQ level 5 accepted by the awarding authority as the equivalent of "Captain" in the Merchant Navy. However, the QCA have so far declined to recognise the award.

### 3.7.5.2 Work-based NVQ provision specific to the Marine Sector in the South West

Table 3.7.4 below contains details of the extent of work-based NVQ provision specific to the Marine Sector in the South West. It shows the number of learners who were;

- Started and finished<sup>25</sup> work-based learning in the year up to June 2002;
- Registered on the NVQ/MA shown;
- Resident in a postcode of the relevant South West LSC area or, if not resident in a South West postcode, registered with the South West LSC shown.

Reflecting the significance of the marine industry in the Plymouth and Poole areas, the first point to note about the table concerns the concentration of provision in just two of the six South West LSC areas – Devon & Cornwall LSC and Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole LSC. In the areas of the other four LSCs in the South West, there is no recorded work-based provision for the Marine sector. Although this geographic pattern is not unexpected, it was anticipated that there might have been some provision in LSC West of England area, encompassing the port of Bristol or in the LSC Gloucestershire area. Both of these two regions have significant Marine sector workforces.

The table also shows that there were just over 200 work-based learners in the South West on NVQ/MAs related to the Marine sector in 2001-2002. As mentioned in section 2, the sector employs between 10,000 and 20,000 people depending upon the definition used. On the basis of the lower figure of 10,000, a total of 200 qualified apprentices represents only 2% of the workforce. Using the higher figure of 20,000 employees, this proportion decreases to just 1%. Even allowing for the stability of the workforce referred to in the Bostock report it seems unlikely that this level of provision will meet the demand caused by either labour replacement needs or productivity gains. Discussion of whether this level will meet the needs and requirements of the sector follows in section 6 of this chapter.

In addition to the geographic concentration and apparently low levels of provision in the region, the next significant point concerns the level of provision. The table illustrates that the majority of existing work-based provision in both of the LSC areas takes the form of an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship working toward a Level 3 NVQ. There are few “stand-alone” NVQs or Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (Level 2 NVQ). As such, virtually all work-based provision in the South West is at NVQ equivalent level 3, with little at level 2 and none at levels 1, 4 or 5.

Furthermore, of the 13 courses specifically relevant to the marine sector listed in Table 3.7.3, it can be seen that only seven were actually provided (at any level) in the work place in the South West in 2001-2002. Those that were not provided in the work place were;

- |                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| • Marine vessel support     | level 2 |
| • Marine vessel operations  | level 3 |
| • Marine vessel operations  | level 4 |
| • Marine operations (ports) | level 2 |
| • Port passenger operations | level 2 |
| • Stevedoring               | level 2 |

Among the seven available work-based courses, the most commonly provided course was Marine Engineering Production, which was most often provided by either Devonport Royal Dockyard (DML), Plymouth College of Further Education, ITE Ltd or A&P Falmouth (Ltd).

<sup>25</sup> That is, the learner completed that part of their course which ran in the year up to June 2002, i.e. they did not leave before the end of the course.

**Table 3.7.4 South West NVQ/MA Work-Based Marine Sector provision: Number of learners 01-02**

Course Title/LSC	LSC Devon & Cornwall						LSC Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole						Total
	FMA (2)	AMA (3)	1	2	3	4	FMA (2)	AMA (3)	1	2	3	4	
NVQ Levels													-
Boat building and maintenance	-	36	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	-	-	-	55
Boat production/repair	-	-	-	5	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	6
Marine Engineering Assembly	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Marine Engineering Maintenance	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	10
Marine Engineering Production	-	95	-	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	112
Marine Engineering Installation & Commissioning	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	20
Fishing vessel operations	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
<b>Total learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>211</b>

Key: 1, 2, 3 & 4 = NVQ level 1, 2, 3 & 4 level qualifications  
FMA (2) = Foundation Modern Apprenticeship at NVQ level 2  
AMA (3) = Advanced Modern Apprenticeship at NVQ level 3

Source: LSC Central Work-Based Learning (WBL) Interim Individualised Learner Data 2001-2002

Thus in summary, it can be reported that work-based NVQ progression opportunities within the South West Marine sector are limited by three factors;

- Geography;
- Qualification level; and
- Course type.

### 3.7.5.3 FE/HE NVQ provision specific to the Marine Sector in the South West

Perhaps not surprisingly, the analysis of the LSC central database of FE/HE provision revealed that there were no learners who were;

- Registered for the academic year 2001-2002;
- Registered on an NVQ/MA specific to the Marine sector;
- Registered with a FE/HE college situated in the South West.

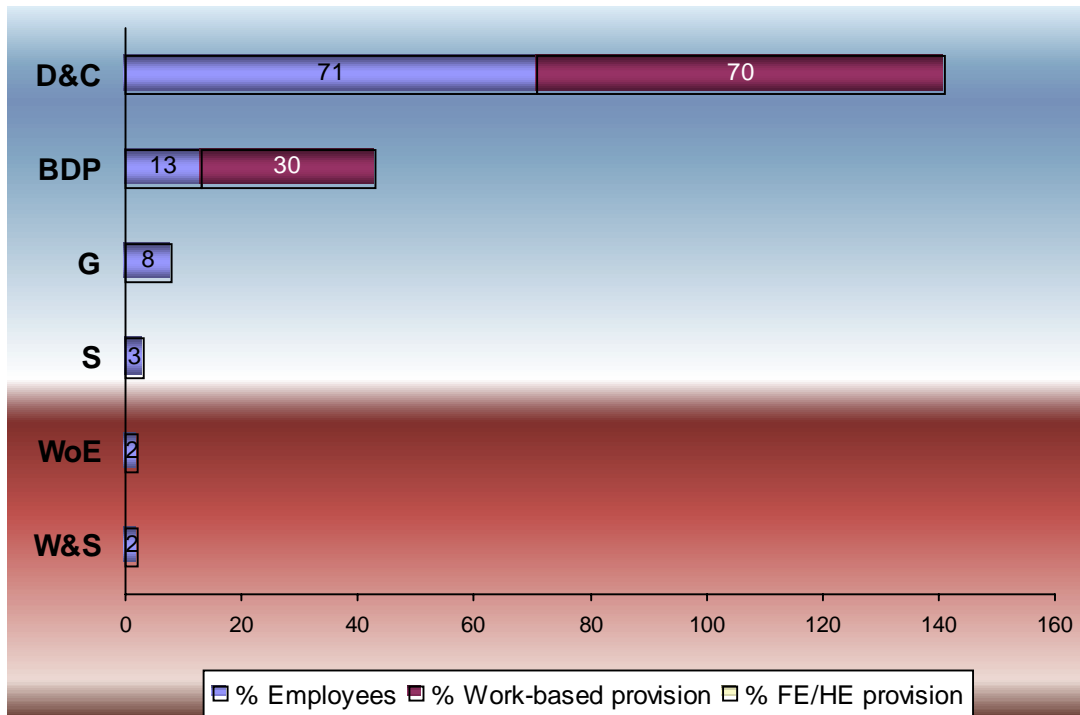
This finding reflects the unique nature and requirements of the Marine sector, whereby much of the work needs facilities that cannot readily be provided by a college – such as docks, lifting gear, etc. It should also be noted that several of the work-based courses reported in the previous section are actually run by FE colleges

In relation to NVQ provision for the Marine sector in the UK as a whole it is worth noting that there are thirteen Nautical Colleges recognised by the Maritime and Coastguard Authority. None of these are situated in the South West – there are five in Scotland, two in N.Ireland and one each in Lancashire, Liverpool, Lowestoft, South Shields, Gravesend and Warsash. Although most offer distance-learning options on at least some courses, it is clear that the geographic remoteness of the region must act as a barrier to learning.

### 3.7.6 Gaps in Provision of NVQ Training

At a geographic level, it is possible to compare the amounts of NVQ training in the South West on the basis of the location of the provision with the location of the employees in the region. In order to minimise barriers to taking up training, it is clear that the more closely aligned these two are the better. Figure 3.7.2 below illustrates the findings discussed earlier and demonstrates that, on a proportional basis, the amount of provision in Devon and Cornwall matches the level of marine employees in the two counties. However, there was no provision in Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire and Swindon or the West of England LLSC areas.

**Figure 3.7.2 Sub-regional % distribution of Marine employees and NVQ provision**



In order to best identify further gaps in NVQ provision, it is also useful to revisit the literature review listing the skills issues and needs being confronted by the sector. This allows us to pinpoint the skills issues relevant to NVQ provision and hence to assess whether there are any gaps between what is actually being provided and what is needed. For the sector as a whole, the Bostock report listed two overarching needs:

- *for managerial and professional engineering skills to lead the industry into new levels of quality and efficiency; and*
- *for technical and IT skills to simultaneously improve productivity and quality at craft and technician levels.*

In relation to the first of these needs, it is clear from employers in the sector that the NVQ/MA framework system (both work-based and from FE/HE colleges) is not currently expected to deliver “high” level managerial and professional skills. When these skills were in demand the need was being met by people qualified with either HNDs or degrees. Furthermore, with only two currently available NVQ/MAs at level 4 and none yet agreed at level 5, the current framework is clearly unlikely to produce sufficient numbers of staff to “lead the industry into new levels of quality and efficiency”. Thus many sector employers feel that staff of this nature will come from other connected industries or with other associated qualifications, rather than the specifically Marine related NVQ/MA route. This issue is discussed further in section 3.7.7 of this chapter.

In terms of the second need, “*technical and IT skills to improve productivity and quality*”, it appears from the map of courses that there is a reasonable spread of NVQ provision for marine-related technical skills. However, the depth of coverage of this provision is very likely to be insufficient to meet the needs of the employers. Similarly the currently available NVQ/MA courses do not contain sufficient IT training to improve productivity. Again this is discussed further in the following section.

#### ***Marine technologies sub-sector: issues and needs***

Moving onto the sub-sectors, in marine technologies the Bostock report noted two specific issues of relevance to NVQ provision;

- Concerns about the volume and quality of engineering training in FE/HE; and
- Concerns that the industry needs a wide range of support skills in management, customer relationship management, teamworking and teambuilding, openness to learning, communications, and so on, which are too often absent.

The significance of the first of these points is emphasised by the data from the LSC Central Office on FE/HE provision, which showed that there was no provision of NVQ training in FE/HE colleges in the South West in 2001-2002. This must be of major concern to the industry and needs to be addressed.

Concerning the second point, these are principally generic skills for which NVQs are available, but not ones specific to the sector. If they are to help meet the gaps and shortfalls within the sector, these existing NVQs will need to have their course contents amended and improved to be more specific to the requirements and needs of employers in the marine sector.

The Bostock report identified a specific skills need relating to NVQ/MA provision in terms of weaknesses in apprenticeship training in the sector, both the numbers and quality of learners. This is an additional gap which the needs to be addressed by the recommendations arising from the research.

#### ***Port operations sub-sector: issues and needs***

Within the ports sub-sector, the Bostock report identified the issue that;

- Modern Apprenticeships have not been widely used (mainly because the Advanced MA, Level 3 qualification, cannot realistically be achieved in ports before age 25).

This finding is somewhat at odds with the pattern of work-based learning provision shown in Table 3.7.4, which demonstrates that 254 learners in 2001-2002 were undertaking an MA and that the bulk of the provision is at Level 3 (229 out of the 254). This apparent contradiction also needs to be explored further with both employers and providers as it may be that providers are offering far more places than are being taken and that employers prefer either to send their staff on other (non) NVQ/MA training or are not training them at all.

The Bostock report also identified several skills needs pertinent to NVQ provision in the sub-sector, including workforce development, “diversity, recruitment and retention” and improving career paths. Each of these will, to a lesser or greater extent, be addressed by the Skills Action Plan for the Sector.

### 3.7.7 Validation exercise with Marine employers and stakeholders

The validation exercise involved consultations and interviews with a range of employers and stakeholders drawn from across the breadth of the South West Marine industry. It is important to note that that exercise was designed as a “check” on the main findings of the earlier parts of the research on which recommendations were to be based. That is, the main findings were presented to key employers and stakeholders to test whether they were consistent with the employers and stakeholders own experiences. Thus the validation exercise was not intended to be a sample survey of the population as a whole, but rather as a litmus test of opinion among the key partners.

The first finding from the validation exercise confirmed that provision was too low in overall numbers to meet future demand within the sector and not industry specific enough in content. For the employers who did value current NVQ provision and who were concerned by the low levels of learners there was recognition that current provision needed to both increase substantially and to improve its content in term of it up-to-dateness and industry specificity.

In this context there was particular concern that the level of provision of staff with advanced marine engineering skills would not be sufficient. There were already marked shortages in this area which were already holding back the growth of individual businesses in the sector.

However, some employers and stakeholders did not necessarily see the problems of number and content as being a major issue, because, for them, NVQs were not central to the future of the sector. For this group, other skills and sources of training were perceived as being more important to the future of their business. However it is clear from their comments that the perceived failings of the NVQ system had led them to this view;

- “*Experience at having done the job*” was cited by many as being the most important skill; and related to this
- The necessary training has to be supplied internally in order to meet the needs and requirements of the employers (Comments included: “*colleges couldn’t supply the relevant skills we needed through the NVQ, so had to do it ourselves internally*” and “*NVQs don’t do into enough depth, we’ve had to add our own programmes*”).

There were also specific criticisms of the NVQ courses offered presently. These took the form of complaints that students who achieved an NVQ were left with “*very superficial knowledge*”, as the college/training provider had failed to give them sufficient hands-on applied experience. Thus when placed in a working situation they knew the theory but had little idea about how to make it work in practice.

This led onto the “image” of NVQs again, being often derided (a polite comment was that “*NVQs don’t have good reputation*”). However, there was an acceptance that part of the hostility to NVQs was down to a lack of knowledge among some employers about what the NVQ framework actually had to offer. There was also no recognition that employers might be able to input to the process to help with the improvement and quality of provision.

In this light, the consultees were all agreed that measures to improve the image and reputation of the NVQ system among Marine employers would be central to increasing the overall numbers of work-based learners progressing through the system. Two factors were identified as being central to a positive development in this respect: improved ease of administration and increased flexibility of provision.

### 3.7.8 Recommendations for NVQ provision and progression within the Marine Sector

The following section has two parts:

1. The detail of recommendations addressing the issues identified by the study;
2. The “fit” of these recommendations with the strategic documents reviewed earlier in the chapter.

#### 3.7.8.1 Detail of recommendations

The mapping and research work, combined with the validation exercise, identified five sets of recommendations to help improve NVQ provision and progression for the Marine sector in the South West;

- **Increased overall provision**

There needs to be a marked increase in the numbers of learners obtaining all Marine-relevant NVQs. This is true for both the numbers of work-based and FE/HE learners, and the situation is particularly acute for employers seeking staff with NVQs covering the following occupations;

- Shipwrights;
- Marine engineers;
- Craftsmen across the board: mechanical, electrical and construction; and
- Painters, joiners, high quality furniture skills allied to Marine sector.

- **Improved/advanced course coverage**

The existing available NVQs are seen as being too basic or out-of-date. The course content needs to contain greater depth and more up-to-date skills training, particularly in the following areas;

- Engineering<sup>26</sup> – needs more than basic engineering qualifications re: computerised diagnostics, air conditioning, hydraulic systems: not provided for in currently available NVQs;
- IT – currently no “Marine IT” NVQ available, only generic IT qualifications which aren’t that suitable;
- Fitting – new qualification needed for Marine fitters;
- Boat-building – seen as being far too traditional (“*years out of date*”, “*now irrelevant*”) to meet customer demands; and
- General perception that all available Marine NVQ courses contain too many sections not strictly relevant to the requirements of the Marine sector.

- **Increased opportunities for progression**

The existing available NVQs do not always offer opportunities for progression beyond the basic levels. More level 4 and 5 qualifications are required to fill these gaps, not just for management roles.

- **Increased flexibility of NVQ provision to encourage employers**

Employers need to be able to access NVQs through both more;

- On-site, work-based training; and
- College based training, but tailored to the employers needs.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the industry Sector Skills Council, SEMTA, have already established a working party to update the Marine Engineering NVQ Level 3. However, this will not commence work until next April with its inaugural meeting in London. It will aim to move the old course content more towards the installation and application side of engineering.

- **Ease of NVQ administration**

In order to encourage and increase the use of NVQs among Marine employers, it will be very important that the existing administrative system is markedly simplified. At present it is very off-putting, with employers perceiving it as being;

- Inordinately time consuming with too much detail required at the assessment stage;
- Too cumbersome because of the amount of paper work;
- Too costly because of the amount of time taken to complete them, in terms of the length of absence from work; and
- Too slow because of a lack of suitable assessors/verifiers.

Consequently it is recommended that the NVQ system;

- Reduce the level of detail at the assessment stage;
- Reduce paperwork overall;
- Increase the flexibility of provision in terms of length of absence from work;
- Increase the number of verifiers/assessors to speed up the process.

### 3.7.8.2 Fit of recommendations with Workforce Development Plans and Skills Action Plans

Most of the recommendations listed in the previous section can be mapped directly onto the South West Marine Sector Skills Action Plan assessed in section 3.7.4.

- **Increased overall NVQ provision**

This recommendation dovetails with the Skills Action Plan, issue 1: “rebuilding and maintaining the UK maritime skills base” and issue 6 “improving training provision”.

- **Improved/advanced course coverage**

This recommendation dovetails with the Skills Action Plan, issue 4: “developing qualifications and career structures” and issue 6 “improving training provision”.

- **Increased opportunities for progression**

This recommendation dovetails with the Skills Action Plan, issue 4: “developing qualifications and career structures”.

Each of these three recommendations will also contribute to the Skills Action Plan, issue 3: “adding value to the existing and future workforce” and issue 5: “recruitment and retention”.

The issue of convincing more employers that NVQs are a worthwhile training avenue for their staff is closely related to the issues addressed by the three recommendations above, namely the improvement in the numbers and quality of NVQ learners. The remaining recommendations focus on the issue of improving the “image” of NVQs among employers to encourage demand and, as such, do not dovetail so precisely with the issues identified by the Action Plan which are specifically orientated towards workforce development and skills improvement. However, they do contribute directly to the overall objectives of the Marine sector strategy: “to ensure that training provision for business is demand led”.

In the broadest sense, all five recommendations also dovetail with objectives and actions from the Government’s National Skills Strategy;

- Reforming the qualification framework;
- Raising further effectiveness of the FE colleges and training providers;
- Increasing ambition in the demand for skills; and
- Placing employers needs for skills centre stage.