

HITZARGIAK – Languages illuminating each other

Measuring the Gaelic Labour Market: Current and Future Potential

GENERAL INFORMATION

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DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

1	Description of the practices	The primary aim of the research study “Measuring the Gaelic Labour Market: Current and Future Potential” was to provide a baseline position in relation to the use and demand for Gaelic language skills within the labour market in Scotland.
2	Brief description of the practices	<p>Defining the ‘Gaelic labour market’</p> <p>It was important at the outset of the research to adopt a working definition of the ‘Gaelic labour market’. A ‘labour market’ is essentially an abstract analytical concept used to understand patterns of labour market participation and demand pertaining to economic activity. Traditionally a labour market involves a geographical dimension; however, the concept can also be applied to flows of skills and skill-sets required for types of economic activity. In the context of this study, a Gaelic labour market arises when employers pay for Gaelic-speaking, reading and/or writing labour services.</p> <p>These are specialised skills and the market demand for these human skills is fragmented, with a wide geographic distribution and not pertaining to one kind of economic activity or economic sector. For this research study the concept of the ‘Gaelic labour market’ has been defined as, “the market for which knowledge of the Gaelic language is a condition of employment”. This market includes labour employed in organisations – commonly referred to as ‘Gaelic-essential/desirable’ employment - as well as labour that provides Gaelic language services on a self-employed and/or on a contract basis.</p>
3	Precedents (reasons, needs...)	This was the first in-depth research into the Gaelic Labour Market in Scotland.

<p>4</p>	<p>Objectives</p>	<p>The research objectives were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and quantify the current Gaelic labour market by agreed geographic area, occupation, industry, level of Gaelic skills required, and entry level for post and salary range. • Identify the extent of the use of Gaelic skills in the workplace, and identify reasons why organisations do or do not formally identify Gaelic language skills as necessary. • To consider and assess current drivers for any growth in the Gaelic labour market including legislation. <p>The methodology employed for the research:</p> <p>The research processes adopted for this study presented a number of methodological challenges that were out with the norm of labour market studies typically conducted in Scotland. Principally, these concerns focused on the absence of any data collected by official sources on Gaelic labour market activity and the sparsity of research on labour market issues commissioned in relation to Gaelic language development activity. Gaelic employment also represents a very small percentage of all employment in Scotland and the research process needed to be configured appropriately to ensure that this baseline study could capture the detail of the present state of the Gaelic labour market in Scotland.</p> <p>An extensive database of 220 organisations was compiled that included organisations that (a) were known to have existing Gaelic essential designated posts; (b) were known to have a demand for Gaelic language skills and (c) might have a demand for Gaelic language skills now or in the near future. The contact database was finalized through consultations with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comunn na Gàidhlig and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.</p> <p>A postal survey of the contact group formed the main data collection element of stage 1 of the research. The number of contacts in the database was maximized to ensure comprehensive coverage of organisations with Gaelic essential designated posts.</p> <p>The survey questionnaire was posted to the 220 contacts on the database. A Hecla Freepost address return envelope was provided in the mail-out to encourage organisations and individuals to return the completed questionnaires by the cut-off date of the end March 2008. A copy of the questionnaire was also made available on the Hecla website.</p> <p>Responses were gradually provided over time and by the beginning of June 2008 the research team was in possession of 88 useable questionnaires. This represents a 40% response rate. For a postal survey this is a high response rate on which to base robust research conclusions. In addition, a breakdown of the survey returns indicates an 81% response rate from organisations known to have Gaelic essential posts. As such the research team are confident that most of the Gaelic essential posts in Scotland have been accounted for in the survey responses generated by the research process conducted during stage 1.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Collaborating entities and their working areas</p>	<p>The following public bodies commissioned the research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlands and Islands Enterprise • Skills Development Scotland • Bòrd na Gàidhlig

6	Implementation period	Research was undertaken in 2008
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FILE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

7	Expansion (number of influenced people, internal and external expansion...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government • Local Authorities • Highlands and Islands Enterprise • Skills Development Scotland • Bòrd na Gàidhlig
8	Results	<p>Conclusions from the research:</p> <p>Official data sources would seem to suggest that the use of Gaelic across different domains is at a low point. For example, whilst the Western Isles has 60% of all school pupils in Scotland (653) who claim Gaelic as the first language of the home this equates only to some 373 pupils, which is less than 10% of all pupils in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s area of remit. Additionally, on average only around 200 school pupils leave school with a Gaelic qualification at Level 6 and around 60-80 people graduate each year from Scottish universities with a qualification that has a Celtic studies or Gaelic component. There are therefore very low numbers of young people entering the labour market with anything like the language skills required to be able to perform a job to a high standard through the medium of Gaelic. Therefore, there is the need to create a step-change in the numbers of young people entering the labour market with the requisite Gaelic language skills to meet the emerging demand for Gaelic essential jobs. However, the census data also indicates that there is potential opportunity to consider how the existing economically active workforce that can speak, read or write Gaelic can be encouraged to take up employment posts where use of Gaelic is a major or a minor requirement of the job specification.</p> <p>At the 2001 Census the economically active population allocated to an industry of employment in Scotland that claimed they could speak, read and write Gaelic was 13,978 individuals. This equates to 15% of the total number of individuals who claimed an understanding of Gaelic at this time. Of these people in employment, some 35% were employed in professional and/or associate professional occupational categories with 12% employed in the skilled trades categories. Those employed in the skilled trades occupational categories were predominately located in the areas of Highland, Argyll and the Western Isles with the professional occupational categories mostly located in the main urban regions of Glasgow and Edinburgh. Such a clear geographical split in relation to occupational categories of employment would suggest specific skills development policies being targeted at the different regional locations.</p> <p>In broad terms, the responses from the survey appear to confirm many of the structural support issues raised through the Galloway research. This raises a series of important questions in relation to how Gaelic language revitalization activities have been configured and implemented over the last 10 years or so. It would appear that basic language support structures within the main Gaelic communities have not been put in place to the degree required to enable the revitalization of Gaelic to achieve a level of sustainability. As such there needs to be a greater emphasis brought to bear on the achievement of specific language outputs and outcomes in relation to expenditures on Gaelic language development activities.</p>



The total number of Gaelic essential jobs that currently exist as identified by the responses to the survey is 695. This is a 56% increase on the Gaelic essential posts identified by Galloway in 1990. If we include the 40 Gaelic essential posts we estimate exist within organisations not responding to the survey, but which we know employ staff in such designated posts, the total number of Gaelic essential designated employment in Scotland is in the region of 735 posts. There has clearly been a substantial increase in the number of people employed in posts requiring a competence in Gaelic. Demand is driven primarily by the education sector, the expansion of the media sector and public administration posts. However, beyond these main economic sectors there are also people likely to be employed in Gaelic essential posts in other sectors although these jobs are not necessarily recorded by surveys or other forms of data collection. The main message is that there is emerging demand for Gaelic essential posts across a number of economic sectors providing a wider range of opportunities for people that are looking to enter this particular section of the Scottish labour market.

A particular skills shortage relates to the provision of translation services at all levels. At present there is a high dependency on a limited but highly competent pool of people to supply such services. An increase in demand for translation services is certain as more public bodies start to produce Gaelic language plans. However, a more strategic and coordinated approach is required with some degree of synergy across public bodies to ensure Gaelic is not compromised by a lack of suitable translation service provision. The Gaelic translation service should also be linked to a quality assurance process so that the highest standards of service delivery are achieved and maintained across the public and private sectors.

Consideration should also be given to establishing a Gaelic language services procurement unit under the auspices of Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Supply constraints in the delivery of Gaelic services imply the need to ensure a high level management system to enable an effective and efficient use of public resources. The procurement unit would help support the management and coordination of supply and demand delivery mechanisms associated with Gaelic language related public sector contracts. Such a unit would monitor efficiency and effectiveness issues in the delivery of such service contracts including the achievement of value for money parameters associated with the management and deployment of Gaelic language support resources.

The demand trend for Gaelic language based posts is on the increase although it is not clear at this stage whether the labour market is able to supply the number of individuals required with sufficient competency in the Gaelic language. Coupled with the issue of managing demand, is the wage premium that appears to be attached to Gaelic public sector jobs which could in some circumstances make it difficult for the private sector to compete. If private sector firms are to be encouraged to produce Gaelic goods and services then some form of supply partnership/procurement agreement needs to be developed between the public and private sectors to enable the Gaelic labour market to grow in such a way that Gaelic essential designated posts are not solely in the domain of the public sector.

The study has also pointed to evidence which suggests that people employed in the 'Gaelic labour market' don't necessarily see themselves as operating in a 'Gaelic labour market', particularly in sub-occupations that arise because of a Gaelic language specialism, such as (Gaelic) teaching or (Gaelic) broadcasting in which other 'technical' skills are transferable to English-medium occupations.

The labour force needs, therefore, to recognise that Gaelic skills can engender flexibility in a profession, and that Gaelic is a transferable skill of relevance to an expanding range of occupational sectors.

The findings generated by the survey responses and the consultations indicate that there are a number of major challenges needing to be addressed in relation to the configuration of public policy that supports the development and expansion of Gaelic language related employment opportunities across the labour market in Scotland. This will require significant efforts on the part of Bòrd na Gàidhlig to set up and manage effective partnerships with other public bodies and organisations that are generally funded from the public purse. Marketing and promotion of employment opportunities along with addressing information asymmetry issues within the labour market for Gaelic jobs also need to be tackled effectively by public policy support. There is also the need to include the private sector in the future development of the Gaelic language. Perhaps this is where the greatest challenge exists, which if overcome, will undoubtedly reap huge rewards for the language and for Gaelic culture in general.

**9 Documentation,
reference material**

Copies of the research reports are available online at the following locations:

- <https://www.researchonline.org.uk/sds/search/go.do%3Bjsessionid=3D3B0352E2D8F4E55671099A1744262F?action=addToReadingList&ref=B23582&docFlag=true>
- <https://www.researchonline.org.uk/sds/search/go.do%3Bjsessionid=14FC20890C687B59B90036A5C9BB2EAB?action=document&ref=B23583>