

RESEARCH ABSTRACT

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THE PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING GENERAL NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (GNVQ) INTERMEDIATE LEVEL IN 1997

The report presents the final outcomes from the three yearly project stages of monitoring the progression and destinations of the 364 graduates of the GNVQ Intermediate in 1997 who responded to the questionnaire sent via participating schools and colleges in Northern Ireland.

The overall aim of the project was to inform future policy on the development of programmes for students achieving a GNVQ Intermediate qualification in order to prepare them for study at GNVQ Advanced and NVQ levels 2 or 3. The major objective of the project, in monitoring and identifying progression patterns, was to focus particularly on routes to vocational education or training over the three year period and to identify the characteristics, including additional studies, of Intermediate programmes which enabled students to achieve success in GNVQ Advanced and Jobskills mainstream programmes. The three-year period of monitoring enabled the project to examine destinations beyond GNVQ Advanced and Jobskills including employment, higher education and continuance in any form of education or training (lifelong learning) as measures of successful outcomes. The report provides a detailed account and analysis of these patterns at each of the three survey stages in December 1997, 1998 and 1999 including a total of 121 statistical tables.

The sample was calculated to be 25% of the overall population of the total 1,453 GNVQ Intermediate graduates in Northern Ireland as identified in 1997 by DENI statistics. It was judged to be representative when characteristics were compared with both the National GNVQ Survey (FEDA 1997) and profiles identified in reports from the DENI Education and Training Inspectorate. In the second year of the survey 292 (80.2% of the sample) people responded while 286 (78.6% of the sample) did so in the third and final year.

Key characteristics of the sample are detailed below:

- 98.6% of respondents were aged 19 or under
- 60.9% were female. This is higher than those identified in other on-course surveys but the sample was of completers/graduates.
- The gender profile was traditional across vocational areas (i.e. females undertaking Health & Social Care and males studying Construction Manufacturing and Engineering)
- The sample was representative of the distribution of the population across all areas of Northern Ireland
- “Business” programmes were the predominant of GNVQ Intermediate.
- BTEC (Edexcel) was the predominant awarding body involved with 63% at Intermediate level
- Levels of award (Pass, Merits, Distinction) at GNVQ Intermediate were higher in our sample than national surveys but this was consistent with results in Northern Ireland
- GCSE grades achieved before entry to GNVQ Intermediate programmes were generally higher than in national surveys. This is probably explained because our sample was of graduates rather than on-course students.
- Other qualifications obtained before entry to and during the GNVQ Intermediate programme were predominantly Information Technology/Business applications (e.g. word/text processing, typing, shorthand).
- A wide range of GNVQ Intermediate Optional/Additional Units (59 identified) across the three awarding bodies had been taken.

The key features of the post-GNVQ Intermediate destinations of respondents in the first year were:

- 65% progressed to some form of full-time education;
- 44% went on to GNVQ Advanced programmes;
- 15% went to a Job Skills programme;
- 10% entered employment;
- 6% became unemployed;
- the gender distribution across the destination categories generally reflected the overall 62% female sample with the exception that proportionally more males went on to the Job Skills programme; and

- the relationship between level of award at GNVQ Intermediate and destination was generally established (e.g. 85% of those taking GNVQ Advanced obtained a merit or above at Intermediate level).

Key features of the destinations of respondents in the second year were:

- 78 (26.7%) respondents changed destination between years one and two
- In the second survey a total of 67 arrived in the “employment” destination category; i.e. 22.9% of the total 292 respondents. This was the most significant change since the first survey
- Respondents who were employed or those undertaking a GNVQ Advanced programme were most likely to have the same destination in the first and second years. Other destination categories were more likely to involve change because they were more likely to have a one-year duration (e.g., courses/programmes in NVQ F/T, F/T education and Job Skills).
- Relatively small numbers of respondents became unemployed in the second year.
- Only 2 respondents changed to take the “New Deal” programme. This was interesting at this stage of our research given that 21 respondents were now unemployed; the take up of New Deal was dependent on the qualifying period of unemployment.

The final survey concentrated on two themes: the qualifications gained since completing the GNVQ Intermediate course in 1997 and the present position as final destination for the project. The new destination of “ Higher education “ was introduced, as this was the first possible year for the cohort to enter.

Key features of year three destinations were:

- over half of the year three respondents were employed:
 - 49.3% full-time
 - 8.7% part-time
- 29.7% of respondents were participating in full-time education or training:
 - 22.4 % had entered higher education
 - 4.2 % were in full-time education other than HE ;
 - 3.1 % were in full-time NVQ courses ;
 - 9.8 % were unemployed ;
 - 1.7 % were in the New Deal Programme ;

- the route to Higher Education through GNVQ Advanced and other FT Education programmes is clear: 45% of the year two GNVQ Advanced respondents had progressed to HE compared with 29% of those in other full-time education
- of the 30 previously on the Job Skills Programme none became unemployed with the vast majority progressing to full-time employment, education and training ;
- 10 (50%) of those previously unemployed became employed while 8 (40%) remained unemployed ;
- the 2 respondents previously on New Deal became unemployed
- a total of 15 respondents, represented across all Year 3 destinations had applied for a higher education course for a Year 2000 start
- notably, a total of 237 (82.9%) were still participating in some form of education and training at the time of the final survey.

A total of 133 (46.5%) of the 286 year three respondents obtained a Level 3 qualification (ie, GNVQ Advanced, NVQ3 or National Diploma). Qualifications gained since GNVQ Intermediate course in 1999 are summarised below:

QUALIFICATIONS GAINED SINCE YEAR ONE		
QUALIFICATION	NUMBER ACHIEVING	%
GNVQ Advanced	93	29.3
NVQ2	57	18.0
GCSE English Resit	44	13.9
GCSE Math Resit	38	12.0
Other Vocational Qualifications	30	9.5
NVQ3	20	6.3
National Diplomas / Certificates	20	6.3
GCE A Levels	7	2.2
Other GCSEs	5	1.6
Other Qualifications	3	0.9
TOTAL	317	100.0
NB: The total exceeds the year three sample size because some respondents gained more than one qualification		

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS RELATING TO PROGRESSION AND DESTINATIONS

The report provides a detailed analysis including statistical tables which consider the following factors:

- All GCSE grades on entry to the GNVQ Intermediate course
- GCSE grades in English and Maths on entry to the GNVQ Intermediate course
- Additional studies while undertaking GNVQ Intermediate course related to progression including GCSE Maths and English resits and number of Additional/Optional units ;
- Features of the GNVQ Intermediate course determining success in GNVQ Advanced ;
- GNVQ Advanced with GCSE Resits in Maths and English related to final destination
- Gender and final survey destination ; and,
- Location in Northern Ireland and final survey destination.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of GNVQ / NVQ level 2 programmes is confirmed as providing another chance to participate in education or training to those 16-19 year olds who might otherwise have become disaffected and withdrawn. Despite most (78.6%) of the cohort entering the GNVQ Intermediate programme with fewer than four GCSE grades at A-C, 133 (36.5%) obtained a Level 3 qualification and 82.9 % of the final year cohort were continuing with some form of education or training.

It is, therefore, of particular interest that 70.3% of those entering Higher education (HE) in 1999 had fewer than four GCSE A-C grades in 1996 and that others may, as shown in the report, successfully enter HE in the year 2000. While the survey did not seek to determine those who had previously failed the 11-plus examination prior to entry to the GNVQ Intermediate programme, it can be assumed that, because of the pattern of provision for GNVQs in Northern Ireland, the cohort would consist largely of 11-plus examination failures.

The grade obtained in GCSE Maths prior to the commencement of the GNVQ Intermediate programme appears to be loosely related to “success”. Of significance is that 96% of those unemployed started with a D-F grade compared to 67% of those who entered HE.

The GCSE English grades of respondents were less indicative of “success”, but as with the Maths grade distribution in the Year 3 destinations, those unemployed had a

significantly higher percentage of GCSE English D-F grades on entry to GNVQ Intermediate in 1996.

For the purposes of determining the significance, if any, of additional studies to successful progression it was necessary to monitor and profile GCSE Maths and English Resit grades obtained and also the number of Optional / Additional Units undertaken with GNVQ Intermediate and relate these to the destinations in each of the 3 years. The following trends are noted:

- Those obtaining GCSE Maths/English A-C grades are more represented in progression to GNVQ Advanced, other Full-Time Education and NVQ programmes than in other destinations in both years 1 and 2.
- Those obtaining GCSE Maths/English A-C grades were more likely to progress to HE in the final year of the survey.
- Information regarding the number of Optional/Additional units was difficult to assess as respondents' memories of the units appeared to be patchy. No significant relationship could be discerned.

Within the limitations of the sample of GCSE resits, there appears to be a direct relationship between the levels of success in GNVQ Advanced and the grades obtained both in English and Maths resits taken as additional studies with GNVQ Intermediate.

There appears to be a direct relationship between levels of award obtained in the GNVQ Intermediate course and those then obtained in the GNVQ Advanced course.

In the third year survey, the percentage of females within HE, NVQ FT and FT Education is lower in proportion to the overall sample ; this is accounted for by the proportionally more females in PT employment (76%) and Unemployment (75%). However, it is noted that several respondents in these categories are continuing with some form of education and training.

In the first survey it was determined that the sample was geographically representative from across Northern Ireland. The following geographic trends emerged in year 3:

- Derry had the highest percentage of respondents which entered HE. Despite being the largest group, Belfast had less than 10% entering HE.
- Perhaps as a consequence, Belfast has the highest percentage in both FT Employment and in Unemployment.

This document is a summary of the full research report, and as such any views it contains are not necessarily those of DEL.

Full Report

Copies of the report entitled 'THE PROGRESSION OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING GENERAL NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (GNVQ) INTERMEDIATE LEVEL IN 1997', by DTZ Pieda Consulting in association with Trewen Associates is available from Department for Employment and Learning priced £5.

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