

Participation Rates in Further and Higher Education

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Executive Summary

Introduction

- I. The aim of this study is to investigate cross community participation and geodemographic disparities in the take up of further and higher education within the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area. Prior to this study, there has been a dearth of empirical knowledge in relation to participation rates across communities and between geodemographic localities. However, there now exists a record of the current state of disparities in participation in further education colleges and universities, across the BELB area.

Aims of current study

- II. The aims of the current study are to assess pupils' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, further education and university and also to identify and assess factors and entities which influence the formation of these attitudes, with a view to determining the effects on participation rates in further and higher education. The specific objectives are:
 - III. To establish the extent of geodemographic disparity in access to further and higher education across schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area.
 - IV. To identify zones of geodemographic disparity in relation to non-progression.
 - V. To discover reasons for pupils' intentions and aspirations in respect of progression to further and higher education.
 - VI. To highlight cultural, social and economic factors affecting male and female pupils in relation to participation in further and higher education.
 - VII. To provide empirical evidence to enhance the delivery of educational services through informing policy-makers, college managers, careers teachers/advisors and practitioners.

- VIII. To provide recommendations aimed at alleviating geodemographic disparity and enhancing the life chances of pupils.
- IX. To assess and develop relevant indicators with the potential for measuring/ mapping change in attitudes to and perceptions of participation in FHE on a longitudinal basis.

Methodology

- X. The approach taken has been one of assessing the attitudes of a large sample of Year 12 pupils from a representative cross section of schools in relation to further education (FE) and university, from the points of view of the pupils themselves, their parents and their careers teachers. A variety of quantitative and qualitative methods have been utilised, specifically; a questionnaire survey of pupils, interviews with careers teachers, focus group discussions with pupils and interviews with parents. The analysis involves both bivariate and multivariate statistics, carried out on the data, following from the identification of pupils' aspirational choice, i.e. 'None', 'FE only', 'University only' and 'Both'. Aspirational choice was explored in terms of the following key variables: Biographical variables, school variables, extent of influence of important others, pupils' attitudes to education, pupil activity and geographical location. In addition, pertinent variables highlighted in the above categories are considered in a multinomial logistic regression model - which aims to identify profiling variables (predictors) underlying pupils aspirational choice.

Results

- XI. There are four identifying groups in terms of aspirational choice: 'None', 'FE only', 'University only' and 'Both'. Exploration of the data in terms of a number of key variables, as mentioned in the paragraph above, revealed key characteristics associated with each group. The findings for the 'None' group in particular, may contribute to increased knowledge about who non-progressors are, what attitudes they have formed about education and their own ability, who influences their future choices, and the types of schools they are likely to attend. For example: a non-progressor is likely to be a Protestant male who: lives close to his school; attends a secondary school with low rates of

progression and performance and is less likely to have parental or teacher discussions about progression; feels alienated in terms of ability and getting on with others; is less likely to view education as the most important thing in his life right now (but does not view education as being unimportant); wants to go out to work as soon as possible and states his parents want him to go out to work in the near future; does less than one hour homework per night; believe teachers expect less than one hour homework per night; is less involved in school activities; is less likely to have a career in mind; has no access to the internet; does not want to progress even though family have been to further or higher education; does not want to progress even though he has friends at further education or university; but does not want to progress even though he has friends intending to go to further or higher education.

- XII. A number of significant religious and gender differences in participation rates have emerged. A greater number of Protestants than expected choose 'None' 'FE only' or 'Both', while Catholics are more likely to select 'University only'. Male pupils are more likely than female pupils to express an intention not to progress, while females tend to select 'Both', 'FE only' or 'University only'. Furthermore, Protestant males in secondary schools are more likely to select 'None' as compared with Catholic males, and Protestant females in secondary schools tend to select 'None' or 'FE only', while Catholic females indicate a preference for either 'Both' or 'University only'.
- XIII. A more positive attitude to education and educational ability is expressed by pupils who either select to go to 'Both' further education college or university or 'University only' than pupils in the 'FE only' or 'None' groups. In addition, pupils who want to progress are more likely to report having parental or teacher discussions about post-16 opportunities and access a greater variety of sources of information when making a career choice.
- XIV. Two significant trends regarding geodemographic disparities in relation to non-progression to FE college and university were identified. Firstly, the closer one lives to their school, the more likely they were to select 'None' or 'FE only' as their post-16 intention. Secondly, the further a

pupil lives from their school, the greater the likelihood they will choose 'University only' or 'Both'.

- XV. This study also reveals that, in a number of cases, there is room for improvement in school/FE college relationships, particularly on issues such as school visits. It was found that amongst those who had been visited by a representative of an FE college, there was a 50/50 chance of an interest in progression being expressed by Year 12 pupils.
- XVI. In many schools, the administrative burden placed upon careers teachers appeared to be excessive and constituted a barrier to effective careers teaching. Areas such as work experience placement and maintaining effective working relationships with further and higher education institutions were, hence, found by careers teachers to be difficult to manage.
- XVII. One unexpected outcome of this research has been to highlight the need for improvements in relationships between grammar schools and further education colleges; in grammar schools, it would seem that there is little or no consideration given to the possibility of pupils progressing to FE college.
- XVIII. There is also a need for parental education concerning the merits of further education college. While parents' opinions of their local FE college were overwhelmingly positive, when asked whether or not they would like their children to attend these colleges, most parents demurred, stereotyping FE college as a site solely for the learning of 'trades'.
- XIX. Cultural factors influence progression in numerous ways. Most significantly, there seems to be a 'fear' factor surrounding a number of locations within which further educational institutions are currently sited.

Conclusions

- XX. The characteristics of non-progressing pupils, that is those pupils who do not aspire to progressing to either further or higher education are described in the following section. This is a summary view of the pupils who would require targeting if progression is to be enhanced across the

educational sector, offering equality of opportunity to all pupils. While the focus is on male pupils, it is important not to lose sight of the possibility that the higher progression rate of girls to further education may mask the preparation of girls for low skill and low paid employment in service sectors, nor the finding that Protestant females living with both parents are more likely not to aspire to progression than Catholic females living with both parents.

- XXI. One clear characteristic of these young people is their physical location which marks them so distinctly that indices of closeness to their school facilitates prediction of their aspirations. Given the apparent paradox that closeness to the point of delivery of the educational service is predictive of educational non progression it is important to consider the possibilities offered in this context. Since these pupils are locked within communities where educational aspirations may be limited and where the spatial closeness of peers leads to reinforcement of community values, it is important that the strengths of this community ethos are probed.
- XXII. Within the communities, mothers appear to be the main source of career advice; this may be indicative of the decline of the traditional male 'breadwinner' occupations. Furthermore, membership of a lone parent family may not be disadvantageous if the pupil has contact with the other parent and if the mother is informing the pupil. The values and peer relationships that bind the pupils to their community may be accessible in terms of offering progression on the terms of the community, that is through recognition of learning on New Deal, provision of vocational courses (perhaps collaboratively with colleges) and informing pupils of the newer forms of progression, that is through different NVQ levels, foundation degrees, flexible study and accreditation of work based learning.
- XXIII. Through recognising 'male' attitudes in relation to the credibility of the workplace as an acceptable destination for early leavers while challenging the view that work should be separate from learning, there are opportunities for addressing male non progressors to consider these options. This view is predicated on the assumption that educational institutions are capable of responding to these challenges

also by providing the environments that enable different forms of progression to be valued.

- XXIV. Clearly there is a social and economic context within which these pupils exist and this is bounded by circumstances that are not amenable to change through the educational service. There is, however, emerging evidence that some pupils in the most difficult circumstances now have aspirations that are not consonant with the expectations of their teachers, given the community patterns of underachievement. These pupils have begun a process that may lead to the raising of community expectations.
- XXV. The information presented below is a summary of the key findings identified from the analysis of data, which might help characterize pupils not progressing to either further or higher education. In addition to a number of biographical, school and geodemographic variables, attitudinal items and influencing factors were utilized, to aid the identification of progressing and non-progressing pupils in the current sample. The results are presented below against the variables selected for analysis and refer to the general findings for pupils who did not state they wanted to progress in the pupil questionnaire.

Gender: male

Religion: Protestant

Location: live close to their school

Postcode: BT13, BT14 or BT15

School type: secondary level

Progression rate of school: low

Performance rate of school: low

FSM level of school: high

Information discussed: less likely to report having parental or teacher discussions about progression

Sources of information: accessed fewer sources of information when making a decision about progression

Attitudes to education: feel alienated in terms of their ability and getting on with others (more for males than females), are less likely to view education as the most important thing in their life right now, want to go out to work as soon as possible and state their parents want them to go out to work in the near future

Homework: less than one hour per night

Expectations of homework by teachers: less than one hour per night

School activities: less involved in school activities (males more than females)

Career choice: less likely to have a career in mind

Internet access: no access

Influence of family: family have been to further or higher education but do not want to progress (more males than females)

Influence of friends: have friends at further education or university but do not want to progress (more males than females)

Aspirational choice of friends: have friends intending to go to further or higher education, but do not want to progress (males more than females)

XXVI. While the restriction of this study to the Greater Belfast area and to Year 12 pupils alone precludes making definitive conclusions, it can be demonstrated how community affiliation and geodemographic factors can impact on the educational environment, resulting in disparities in pupils' intentions to progress to further education and university. The recommendations, which follow, are directed at targeting the non progressing group in their communities and suggesting the provision of support designed to encourage progression.

Recommendations

Re-imaging FE college

- I. Further education colleges need to begin to embark upon a substantial re-imaging process. In light of the fact that many pupils tend to view the FE sector as a destination of last resort, colleges need to be presented to pupils as broad-based progression-orientated institutions. Awareness of the full range of courses and qualifications available at further education colleges, particularly the new foundation degrees, needs to be greatly widened for pupils and their parents alike; likewise, the value of these courses, and the higher educational pathways proceeding from qualifications obtained at FE college and through vocational courses at school level should be emphasized.

FE and Proximity

Low Proximity Pupils and Progression to FE college

- II. It is unlikely that the majority of pupils in the low proximity group, typically grammar school attendees, are oriented towards FE college as a realistic educational option given the popularity of A levels at school as a progression pathway. It would seem, however, judging from a number of careers teachers' accounts, that there is still a small but substantial number of pupils, perhaps those not predisposed towards A levels, who would benefit from progression to FE. Equally, progression of these students may assist in addressing the persistent deficits in graduates with technical and scientific skills. FE colleges and grammar schools should, therefore collaborate in assisting pupils to make informed choices regarding progression.

High (close) Proximity Pupils and Progression to FE College

- III. In regard to engaging non-progressing pupils, who live in close proximity to their school, in further education, the cultural constitution of these areas needs to be considered, specifically, the established pathway of movement into 'local and immediate employment' (section 4.7). Pupils and parents should be given opportunities to become more aware of the long-term consequences of such short-term thinking, in

terms of future economic and social marginalisation. The relative acceptance of the importance of education by the members of this group strongly suggests that intervention strategies may have positive results. Specifically, these schools should be targeted for development of appropriate curricula (e.g. Vocational A levels and preparatory courses) that offer progression.

- IV. Those who choose immediate progression to the employment market are likely to do so via New Deal, Modern Apprenticeship or JOBSKILLS. As these pupils will be required to undertake National Vocational Qualifications, there should be provision for bridging programmes so that there can be recognition of achievement of vocational and work-based learning for progression to higher education. This may be achieved through a variety of routes and the new foundation degree programmes should offer opportunities for flexible access through full time, part time and flexible learning modalities. These pathways have the potential to offer progression through working with the preferences of the pupils in relation to remaining in communities and entering the world of work.

FE and Religion

- V. Although the religious picture is somewhat obscured by the influence of gender and proximity, it can be seen that in a number of specific communities, Protestant males are less inclined towards progressing (section 4.3). It is clear, therefore, in terms of marketing further education, this group obviously requires particular targeting and the provision of pathways to progression should be configured to ensure that unnecessary barriers are removed. This may be achieved through the development of compacts between schools and universities or colleges, that is, the formulation of an agreement whereby the higher education institutions contract to accept pupils who meet certain conditions. Such a policy may be in accordance with equality policies if the courses targeted are those in the science and technology domains where there are currently deficits in student applications and pupils from both communities are included. In addition this policy would help to address the skills and knowledge deficits experienced by 'high tech' businesses.

FE and Gender

- VI. More attention needs to be focused upon why female pupils are more predisposed towards FE (pull factors) and what repels male pupils from attending (push factors). While the progression aspirations of girls may be perceived as positive, it is important, in the context of equality of opportunity that these choices are monitored, as the outcome may be the ghettoisation of girls into traditional feminine service areas, offering limited progression to higher education or high tech skills areas.

School and FE college

- VII. Schools, including grammar schools - should be encouraged to maintain a close working relationship with further education colleges in order to maximise participation. FE college policies on informing schools should be reconsidered. Apart from visiting schools and providing careers teachers with adequate supplies of information, e.g. prospectuses, thought should be given to the presentation of appropriate role models to school pupils, for example, persons from similar cultures who have progressed.

Careers Teachers

Administrative support

- VIII. Careers teachers should receive adequate administrative support to enable them to be free to concentrate on their work with pupils.

Links with T&EA

- IX. Where required, careers teachers should be provided with adequate support from the T&EA as the rapid changes in administration structures in recent years may have weakened linkages.

Advice provision

- X. Teachers need to be thoroughly briefed regarding both the full range of courses available at FE colleges, and the pathways from school to further and higher education via vocational and access courses.

Equally teachers need to be aware of the personal and social issues surrounding progression and this should include knowledge of the financial implications of attending further education college.

FE and Parents

School and community involvement

- XI. Schools – particularly those in close proximity areas - need to penetrate their local communities with the progression to FE college and university message.

Parental influence

- XII. Parents should be made aware of what is on offer – not only in their immediate localities but throughout the entire greater Belfast area – and the long term benefits – particularly in terms of employment - of continuing education after GCSEs or the equivalent vocational awards. The complexity of the findings in relation to family structure suggests that the quality of the family advice provided to pupils is likely to be as important as the type of family. It is, therefore, the case that information on progression should be specifically targeted at pupils who wish to go directly to employment rather than at pupils from particular family types.
- XIII. Parents who collaborate in their children’s educational disenfranchisement through facilitating truancy and enabling participation in ‘black economy’ employment also need to be made aware of the potential damage they are doing to their children’s future life chances.

FE and Culture

FE College and Sectarian Location

- XIV. FE colleges need to be aware that pupils are acutely sensitive to the location of college sites - and the areas through which they have to travel to reach them - in terms of their position within particular communities in the Greater Belfast area. A possible remedy would be

to ensure that there is transportation available which avoids potentially contentious areas.

Future Provision

- XV. The perceived community identity of a site needs to be taken into account in positioning future provision, so as not to create single community institutions or courses.

Support

- XVI. Since there were indications that that the home and community environments were not always conducive to study, several options including a study room at school and provision of a mentor to assist with revision were considered by informants to be positive forms of support. These options should be explored, with the caveat that pupils sometimes thought that study rooms in schools could become distracting if the learning process was not appropriately managed.
- XVII. There is evidence that strong aspirations towards university progression are appearing in girls' schools where there is currently relatively low achievement and, hence, limited opportunity to progress. This suggests that a programme of support, incorporating role models, demonstrating how girls can progress to technical and scientific areas through alternatives to traditional A levels could be productive.
- XVIII. Since the typical non-progressing male will have expressed difficulties in relation to interpersonal relationships in school, it is proposed that identification of pupils with such difficulties and the provision of social skills support would enhance the probability of reducing alienation with the process of schooling and enhance the possibility for progression.
- XIX. Initiatives to make internet access available to non -progressing pupils, either at home or at school or in the community, should be considered.

Regulation

- XX. Since there are clear indications that pupils are developing awareness of the possibilities for progression but have not always achieved at the

appropriate level, serious consideration should be given to a revision of the age-related regulations governing entry to access courses and the possibility of offering these courses in schools in the communities.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 One of the most important decisions facing pupils in Northern Ireland is whether or not to continue with education after finishing their GCSEs. While many pupils choose to stay on at school for A levels, before proceeding to university, there are many others who find this option unattractive or unavailable at their current schools. The further education system is, therefore, an important service in terms of creating opportunities for students with different interests and abilities.
- 1.2 Progression to FE college also opens up possibilities for the pursuit of careers that may not have been available through the schooling system and may not have been traditional to particular communities or gender roles. Moreover, with the advent of incorporation, the FE sector is entering a new era where colleges have greater autonomy and responsibilities. The introduction of governmental policies such as New TSN, aimed at identifying and targeting the most disadvantaged people and areas in our society, makes this an opportune time to investigate how such a substantial community resource can offer the best service to all sections in society.
- 1.3 Although colleges in Northern Ireland attract students from all sections of the community, it would be naïve to assume that these institutions are free of religious or political connotations. Consequently, there may be a knock-on effect for colleges upon the size and boundaries of their travel-to-college catchment areas. Armstrong notes considerable variation in participation rates between wards, particularly between urban and rural areas, and while it remains only an inference, it seems that participation rates in Belfast are lower in working class areas such as the Shankill (1997: 14).
- 1.4 With regard to the problem of addressing some of the barriers to educational progression, and indeed to the nature of progression itself¹, varying views are expressed by different researchers. Some authors, typically those working from within the system, favour an expansion of

¹ McGivney notes that “progression” can mean a number of things: personal progression, social progression, economic progression and educational progression, all as a result of participation in learning (1999: 7).

provision (Gallagher et al, 1996). Others advocate measures to ensure economic and social inclusion (Armstrong, 1997) or a complete change in the structures, and ways of thinking about, education (Morris & McMahon, 1998). These researchers also make reference to the setting up of special access arrangements, with a view to overcoming barriers, citing the Higher Education Liaison Project (HELP) in Londonderry, set up by the University of Ulster and the North West Institute of Further Education, as a model of good practice.

- 1.5 It has been noted that, in Northern Ireland the universities have the highest proportion of students from the manual social classes in the UK (Osborne, 2001); this may be due, however, to the larger proportion of the population categorised within this category, and also to the extent to which students from middle class backgrounds attend universities in GB or ROI. There are gender differences in terms of progression and achievement and females predominantly remain within the education cycle for longer (Field and Spence, 1999). It has also been noted that, in comparison with England, a relatively high proportion of Vocational Qualifications (VQs) are gained at further education colleges rather than in the workplace (T&EA, 1996); this finding tends to emphasise the importance of access to colleges for career progression. Participation rates in further education, for 16 and 17 year olds however, have only increased slightly in the last decade (from 27.0% to 27.8% between 1991/2 and 1999/2000 (Compendium of Northern Ireland Education Statistics – 1987/88 To 1999/2000) suggesting that the role of the colleges in offering opportunities for career and educational progression may not be fully recognised. The relative dearth of information in the public domain regarding participation of the two communities in further and higher education suggests that there is a case for making this information more fully available. Osborne (2001) has, however, pointed to the different profiles of Catholic and Protestant entrants to the N.I. universities in terms of the higher proportion of Catholic entrants (43%) from manual backgrounds compared with Protestant entrants (27%), citing (ibid:55) "Survey evidence collected during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s".
- 1.6 To date, however, there have been relatively few studies of third level education in Northern Ireland. An overview by Armstrong (1997) provides some contextualisation of participation (or non-participation) in

FE in Northern Ireland, taking into account the gender, religious and socio-economic background of young people on the verge of entering post-compulsory full-time education. Determining influences include the depressive impact of high levels of unemployment and the performance in and of schools themselves.

- 1.7 The study highlights that progression is related to a combination of factors which include: where one lives and the school one attends - in addition to religion, gender and socio-economic status - amounting to a "cultural" explanation of differential participation rates. Geographical location would also seem to interact with religion. Educational participation tends to be slightly higher amongst young Catholics, although only in some areas of Northern Ireland, while in general urban areas, such as Belfast and Londonderry, consistently have the lowest rates of educational participation (Armstrong, 1997: 13). Armstrong also notes that having parents employed in non-manual occupations has a positive "attitudinal" effect upon participation (Armstrong, 1997: iv).
- 1.8 Armstrong's study also considers the influence of gender and religion on educational participation. His basic findings were that female students were more likely to progress, as were Catholics, although the differences in participation by gender are significantly greater than the differences by religion. In attempting to explain why, in particular, Catholic females educationally progress, Armstrong utilises a "discouraged worker" explanation. In the face of difficulties in securing employment, it is argued that these students feel that they need "extra" qualifications in order to compete effectively in the labour market (1997: 21-23). The impact of parental economic activity on progression is also felt to be significant, although indirectly, in terms of influence on GCSE performance.
- 1.9 Furthermore, because there also seems to be a transfer of relatively poor educational standards between successive generations, suggesting a cyclical conception of non-participation, Morris and McMahon argue that socio-economic status is "strongly determinant of educational opportunity and success". Citing a study by the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, they identify unemployment

and poverty as "the greatest barriers to learning and the major causes of educational disadvantage, north and south" (1998: 69).

Rationale for current study

- 1.10 The need to address these issues is recognised in the current research, and particularly within the context of New Targeting Social Need (NTSN) and its focus on social inclusion. At all stages of the current project, the "cultural" dimension of cross-community disparity in further and higher education participation in both communities is explored (cf. Cairns et al, 2000).

Description of current study

- 1.11 The current study involves assessing the attitudes of a large sample of Year 12 pupils from a representative cross section of schools in relation to further education (FE) and university, from the points of view of the pupils themselves, their parents and their careers teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative measures were used, which combined pupil questionnaires, teacher interviews, parent interviews and pupil focus groups.

Pilot study

- 1.12 The current research is based on a pilot study which was carried out by Cairns et al (2000) to facilitate the construction and testing of research instruments and to provide further information relating to the context of pupil choice in respect of progression to further and higher education. The subject groups of the pilot study consisted of pupils currently involved in deciding upon their educational future, i.e. 15 and 16 year olds, and significant others who were influential in determining their futures, i.e. parents and careers teachers. Respondents were located in four secondary schools representing the Controlled and Maintained sectors.

The Belfast Education and Library Board

- 1.13 The Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area was chosen as the sampling base in the current study primarily because of its high

density of population thus enabling the participation of a wide cross section of schools of different management types and drawing from different communities. There are a total of thirty-nine schools in the Board spread across North, South, East and West Belfast, with one located in the Newtownabbey area, comprising of one comprehensive, seventeen grammar and twenty-one secondary schools. A breakdown of the schools' FSM levels, progression and performance rates is available in Appendix 1. The pupils in the BELB area are served by two further and higher education institutes and a further education college. The Queen's University is situated in Belfast as is the Belfast campus of the University of Ulster. The Jordanstown campus of the University of Ulster is located in Newtownabbey. While colleges of further and higher education make returns to the Department of Employment and Further and Higher Education in relation to community affiliation, information in relation to individual colleges is not made available; information on the distribution of the communities across the colleges in the sector is currently not available to the public therefore. Of the thirty-nine schools under BELB control, twenty-one were selected to participate in the current study, eight from the grammar and thirteen from the secondary sector.

NTSN

- 1.14 New TSN policy aims to ensure that Government programmes are effective in both identifying and targeting those people and areas in the greatest need within our society. Policy-makers now have an evidential basis for monitoring and reviewing attitudes towards participation in the further education system and a means of ensuring that resources are being targeted at communities and individuals who may have been previously excluded from participation. Moreover, school and college managers also have information to assist marketing and distribution of services and address excluded populations.

Aims and objectives

- 1.15 The recommendations of this project aim to contribute to New TSN policies in terms of investigating why different communities react to policy and provision in different ways, in relation to the distribution of further and higher educational opportunities and possibilities for

progression. It is believed that the study will serve as a basis for mapping the demography of inter-communal division and contribute to the development of strategies to ensure the effective targeting of educational resources.

1.16 The aims of the current study are therefore, to assess pupils' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, further education and university and also to identify and assess factors and entities which influence the formation of these attitudes, with a view to determining the effects on participation rates in further and higher education. The specific objectives are:

- To establish the extent of geodemographic disparity in access to further and higher education across schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) area;
- To identify zones of geodemographic disparity in relation to non-progression;
- To discover reasons for pupils' intentions and aspirations in respect of progression to further and higher education;
- To highlight the cultural, social and economic factors affecting male and female pupils in relation to participation in further and higher education;
- To provide empirical evidence to enhance the delivery of educational services through informing policy-makers, college managers, careers teachers/advisors and practitioners;
- To provide recommendations aimed at alleviating geodemographic disparity and enhancing the life chances of pupils;
- To assess and develop relevant indicators with the potential for measuring/ mapping change in attitudes to and perceptions of participation in FHE on a longitudinal basis.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilised in order to meet the aims and objectives of the current study. In this instance a three-phase approach was followed and each phase is detailed below.

Phase One

Sampling

2.2 The Department of Education supplied a database which contained information on the uptake of Free School Meals (FSM), performance and progression rates of schools within the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB). Thirty-nine schools in the BELB were identified from the database, classified on the basis of their ranking with regard to the three broad bands of each of the sampling variables, i.e., high, medium and low FSM; high, medium and low Progression Rates and high, medium and low School Performance rates. Stratified sampling was applied, with schools selected first in terms of FSM, followed by school progression rates and finally in terms of school performance. The target number of schools was achieved for the quantitative phase, with 21 schools participating in the current study. The breakdown of schools in the sample in terms of the stratifying variables is detailed in tables 1-3. The absence of schools in categories presented in tables 1-3 can be accounted for through the non-participation of schools in the study. These represented the various school management types (Controlled, RC Maintained, Voluntary, Grant Maintained Integrated), school type (secondary/grammar), FSM level, performance and progression rates.

Tables 1-3: Breakdown of sample by FSM, progression and performance

FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM)								
High (8)								
Progression to FE								
Low (3)			Medium (2)			High (3)		
School Performance			School Performance			School Performance		
Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
2	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	0

Table 2

FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM)					
Medium (8)					
Progression to FE					
Low (3)		Medium (4)		High (1)	
School Performance		School Performance		School Performance	
Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
3	0	2	2	0	1

Table 3

FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM)					
Low (5)					
Progression to FE					
Low (1)		Medium (1)		High (3)	
School Performance		School Performance		School Performance	
Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
0	1	1	0	1	2

2.3 The broad categories of low, medium and high FSM, performance and progression were used to classify all schools prior to sampling. These broad categories were derived from the continuous variables provided by the Department of Education. Categories were based on the 33.33 and 66.66 percentiles of each distribution, and then each continuous variable was recoded (i.e. collapsed) in terms of the derived cut-off points.

Phase Two

Pupil questionnaire

- 2.4 The pupil questionnaire in the current study (see Appendix 2) was used to measure pupils' attitudes to Further and Higher Education, as well as the influence of significant others on their decision making processes. Based on the findings of the pilot study (Cairns et al, 2000), the questionnaire was subsequently modified to better suit the needs of the current research. For example, where the relevance or comprehension of particular items was in question, these were either removed altogether or reworded for clarity. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: about yourself; future career intentions; attitudes towards learning; attitudes to further education college and university.
- 2.5 In each school, two year 12 classes were selected, representing where possible, "intermediate" and "lower" streams within the year group. The questionnaire was administered within each school by the researchers. A total of 753 pupil questionnaires were completed and used in the final analyses. Responses were collated and analysed using SPSS.

Analysis of pupil questionnaire

- 2.6 The data are explored in relation to pupils' intentions (aspirations) which are classified into four groups: "University only"; "FE only"; "None" or "Both". Where possible, variables are considered at more than bivariate level.
- 2.7 The first phase of the analysis uses the biographical data to explore associations between one's educational aspirations and factors such as socio-economic status (socioeconomic status was designated according to the categories used in the General Household Survey (1998-1999)), religion, gender, parental set-up (lone or otherwise), and employment status of parent(s).
- 2.8 Diversity across the aspirational groups is then explored in terms of school variables such as FSM, progression and performance rates, using multivariate analysis of variance. Group differences are then

explored in terms of school management type and school type (i.e., grammar or secondary) using Chi-square tests.

- 2.9 Salient questionnaire items are then utilised to explore the extent of influence of 'important others' (e.g., peers, parents and teachers), as well as investigating pupils' attitudes to education. Chi-square tests are again used for this analysis. For example, the association between friends having attended/intending to attend some form of post-16 education and pupil aspiration is expected to give some measure of peer influence. Familial influences such as family participation in post-16 education as well as the predominance of parental discussions (and teacher discussions) about further and higher education are also examined.
- 2.10 Attitudes to education are explored using those items from the pupil questionnaire which are considered to bear the most relevance to the outcome of this study. These are considered in terms of pupil aspirations and are also explored with reference to other factors such as gender, religion, parental set-up and parental employment status. Items included are: 'Education is the most important thing in my life right now'; 'Further education is not for me'; 'I like to go out to work as soon as possible'; 'My parent(s)/guardian(s) would like me to go out to work as soon as possible'; 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my academic ability'; 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others'; and 'I do better at school than my friends'.
- 2.11 The geodemographic aspect of progression was assessed, in part, through exploring pupils' aspirational choice by their postcode (postcodes were truncated to the first four characters). In addition, an index was developed to take account of the impact of a school in an area and the relationship between an individual's postcode, the school they attend and aspirational choice. The high density of postcode areas within the city and its suburban fringe enabled the construction of a postcode index designed to indicate the proximity of fifth form pupils' households with their chosen school (see Appendix 6 for the postcode distribution of each school). This index, based on postcode areas, indicates the strength of community association with a given school. It

ranges from 0 (low community association) to 100 (where all the sampled households are in the same postcode area as the school).

- 2.12 The household proximity index is based on a simple points scheme. If the household is in the same postal area as the school it is awarded 3 points, if it is in an adjacent postal area it is awarded 2 points, if it is beyond the adjacent postal area but within the city limits it is awarded 1 point and, finally, if the household is outside the city limits it gets 0 (zero) points. The points are calculated for each household and summed to give a total number of points for a given school. This total is averaged per household and normalised by a factor of 1/3. The latter normalisation is based on the assumption that if all the households are in the same postcode area as the school then the average number of points per household will be 3 which must be normalised to 1 as the optimal proximity.

For example, consider

School name	Postcode	Adjacent codes	(Associated Household Codes)
1230262	BT12	1, 2, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17	1 in (BT5), 2 in (BT11), 16 in (BT12), 2 in (BT17)
Calculation of points	Points	Number of households	Postcode Index
$1(1)+2(2)+16(3)+2(2)=57$	57	$1+2+16+2=21$	Index = $(57 \div (3 \times 21))100 = 90$

- 2.13 Finally, a multinomial logistic regression was used to identify profiling variables (predictors), such as FSM, HPI, gender, pupils attitudes, influences etc., underlying pupils' aspirational choice.

Careers teachers interviews

- 2.14 A further element of phase two involved surveying careers teachers in each of the sampled schools. An interview schedule was devised (see Appendix 3) and administered via telephone by the researchers. These interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. A total of 20 out of 21 careers teachers participated in this phase of the project. The interviews covered the following areas: personal details; pupils' perceptions/intentions; influence of school location.

Analysis of careers teachers interviews

- 2.15 The responses to all interviews were collated and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to explore a number of pertinent themes arising from the questions asked during the careers teachers' interviews. These included: careers advice offered, the school's relationship with further education colleges and universities, progression rates to further or higher education, barriers to progression, gender differences in progression, the role of parents and addressing barriers.

Phase Three

Focus groups

- 2.16 Focus groups were conducted in 9 of the 21 sampled schools and were chosen in an attempt to provide a relevant cross section of the different rates of progression (i.e. low (4); medium (4); high (1)), however participation was on a purely voluntary basis which accounted for the discrepancy in numbers. Each focus group consisted of an average of 8 pupils and it was requested that these people were among those who had previously completed the questionnaire. Group discussions took place in the relevant schools and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. Discussion was structured around the following topics: future career intentions, post GCSE plans, study culture, further education college and university. The discussion was conducted by one of the researchers, while a colleague recorded pupils' responses (see Appendix 4 for focus group schedule).

Parent interviews

- 2.17 The final stage in the research was the interviewing of 50 parents. Parents were selected via pupils' nominations in the initial questionnaire. An interview schedule (see Appendix 5) was devised and administered by the researchers, covering the following areas: about yourself; future career plans; attitudes towards learning; attitudes to further education and university.

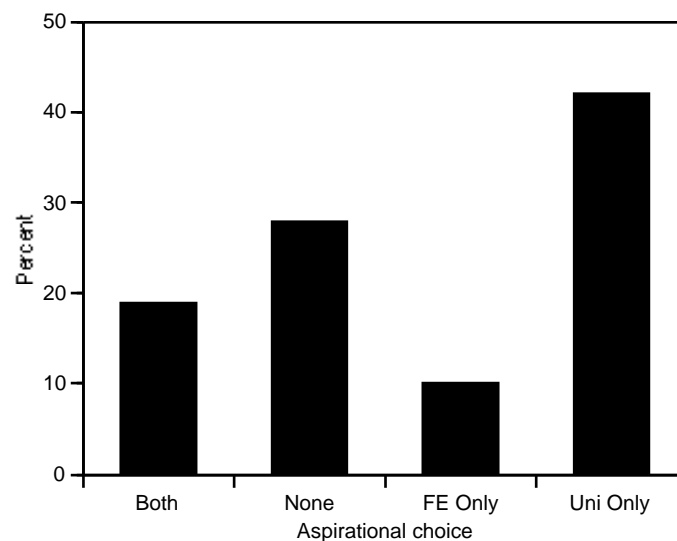
3.0 Results

Pupils' Aspirational Choices

3.1 Based on information collated from the pupil questionnaire, the sample was subsequently divided into the following 4 groups:

- Both – those who express an interest in progressing to FE college and university (19%; N=144);
- None – those who express no interest in progressing to post-16 education (27%; N=203);
- FE only – those who wish to go to FE college only (11%; N=81); and
- University only – those who want to go to university only (43%; N=325).

Figure 1: Pupils aspirational choices



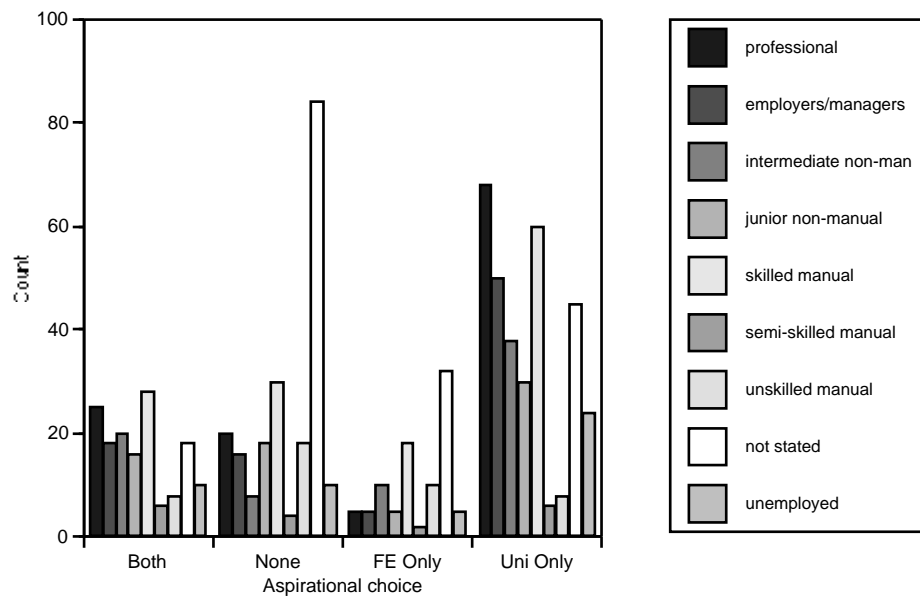
Biographical variables

3.2 Pupils' biographical data was utilised in the current study in order to ascertain whether or not there are any associations between certain data and pupils' aspirations to progress (or not) to post-16 education. The variables explored are SES, Gender, Religion, Parental setup and Parental working status.

Socioeconomic status (SES)

3.3 An association between socio-economic status and pupils' future aspirations is evident from the analyses ($\chi^2=118.384$; $df=24$; $p<.001$; $V=.229$). For example, while those from the Professional and Employer and Manager groupings are more likely to choose 'University only' over the other options available, those from the intermediate non-manual group are also likely to choose 'University only' or 'Both'. While those from skilled manual backgrounds are also likely to choose some form of post-16 education as opposed to not progressing, pupils from the remaining groups, unskilled and 'occupation not stated' are more likely to choose either 'None' or 'FE only' as options.

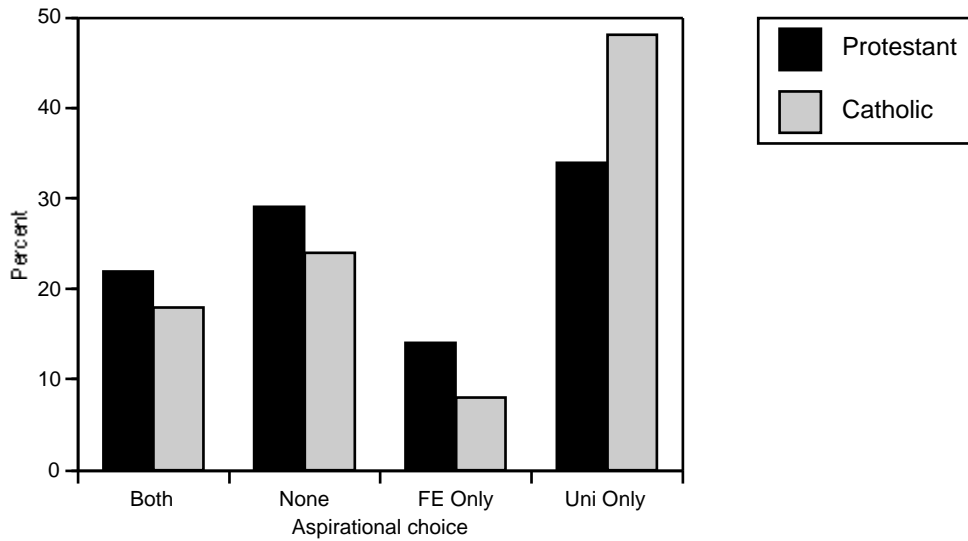
Figure 2: Pupil socio-economic status in terms of aspirational choice



Religion

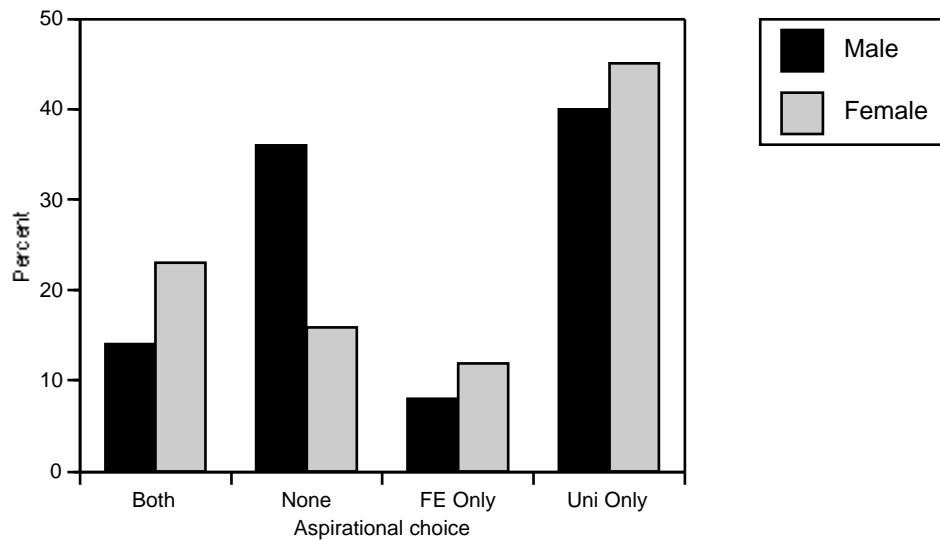
3.4 The association between religion and educational aspirations is statistically significant ($\chi^2=17.029$; $df=3$; $p<.005$; $V=.153$), indicating that while a greater number of Protestants than expected choose 'Both', 'None' or 'FE only', more Catholics than expected choose 'University only'.

Figure 3: Pupils' religious background in terms of aspirational choice



Gender

Figure 4: Pupils' gender and aspirational choice



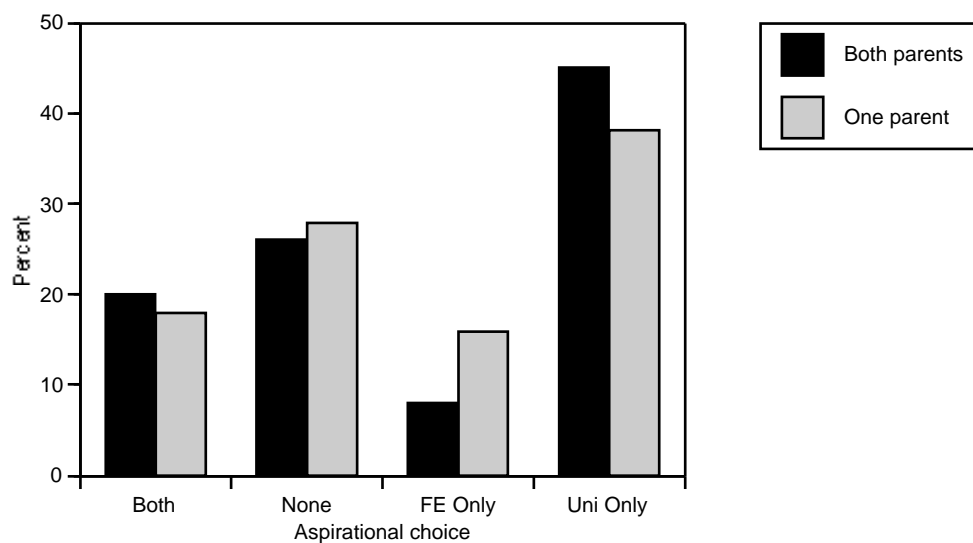
3.5 The results indicate that there is a significant association between gender and pupils' aspirations with regard to post-16 education ($X^2=40.134$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.236$). A higher percentage of females than expected would like to go to 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only'. They are, however, less likely to choose 'None', while males are more likely to choose this option.

Religion and Gender

3.6 It also emerges that Protestant females are more likely to choose to go to 'Both', 'None' or 'FE only', while Catholic females are more likely to choose 'University only' ($X^2= 24.920$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.267$). There are no significant differences between Catholic and Protestant males.

Parental setup

Figure 5: Parental setup and pupil aspirations



3.7 Those who live with both parents are more likely to choose 'University only' over those living in one parent households. On the other hand, those living with one parent are more likely to choose 'FE only' than those living with both. There are, however, only slightly less children in the latter group who opt for 'None' over those in one parent households ($X^2= 8.183$; $df=3$; $p<.005$; $V=.106$).

Religion, Gender and Parental setup

3.8 In terms of the association between religion, gender and parental setup and pupils' future aspirations, a significant association between these variables emerges ($X^2= 23.660$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.3$). For female Catholics and Protestants who live with both parents, a greater than expected number of Protestants choose 'FE only', 'Both' or 'None', while more Catholics than expected choose 'University only'.

- 3.9 There is also a significant association for male Catholics and Protestants who live with one parent as opposed to both ($X^2=9.381$; $df=3$; $p<.05$; $V=.3$). Protestants in this group are more likely to express an interest in going to 'Both' or 'None', while Catholics are more likely to choose 'FE only' or 'University only'.

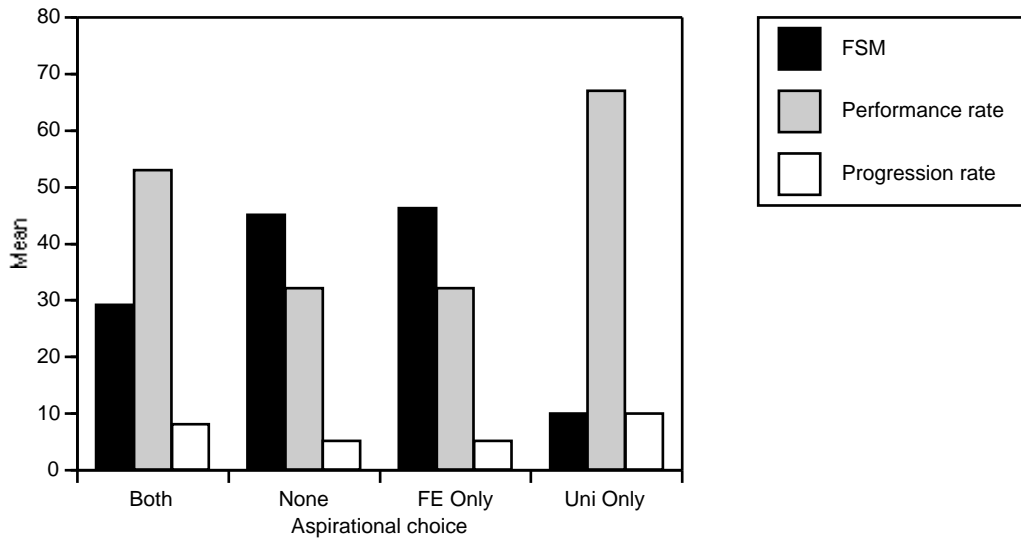
Parental setup and Parental employment status

- 3.10 The association between parental setup, parental employment status and post-16 educational aspirations is also explored here. For those living with both parents, where both parents work, there is a higher than expected number of pupils who choose 'University only' compared with parental setups where one or none work or occupation is not stated. However, where pupils have not stated their parent(s) occupation(s) there is a greater likelihood that they will belong to the non-progressing group. The association between these variables is again significant ($X^2=55.145$; $df=9$; $p<.001$; $V=.186$).
- 3.11 Significant associations between aspirations and working status of parents are also found for those living with one parent ($X^2=21.618$; $df=9$; $p<.05$; $V=.206$). In this setup, those who have not stated parental occupation have a greater than expected chance of choosing 'FE only' or 'None' as their post-16 educational choice. However, some of the respondents volunteered both parents' occupations even though it is not known from the data which particular parent they live with. Notably, there are a greater than expected number of pupils in this parental category who choose 'University only'.

School variables

- 3.12 The school variables chosen for analysis in the current study are FSM, School Performance rates and Progression rates. Management type and school type are also explored. Figure 6 shows the mean values for FSM, performance and progression as they relate to the pupils' aspirational choices. The variables of FSM, school performance and progression are treated as continuous for the analysis.

Figure 6: FSM, Performance and Progression rates in terms of pupil aspirations



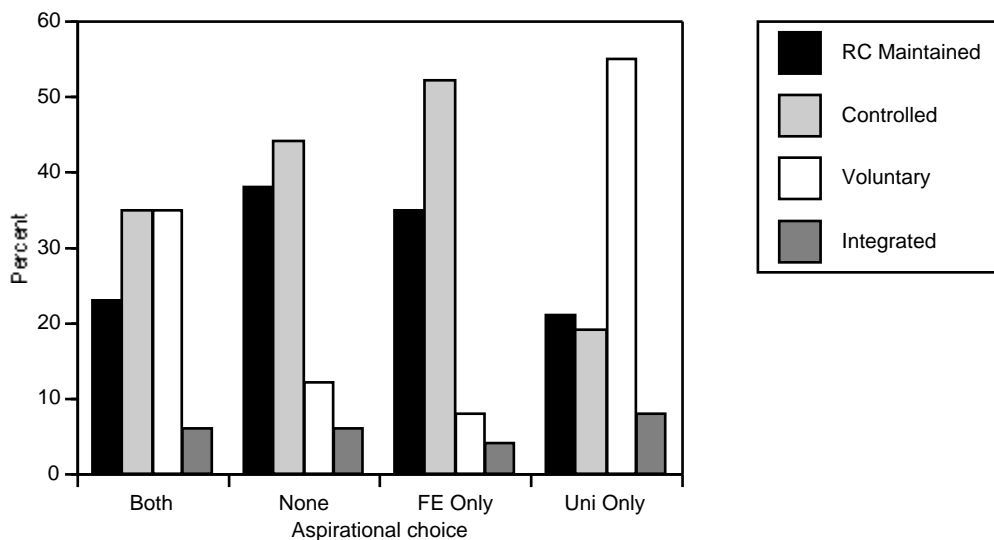
3.13 An initial multivariate analysis of variance found a significant difference between the 4 aspirational groups across all the school variables selected for analysis ($F=32.916$; $df=9$; $p<.001$). Significant differences also emerged for each individual item (FSM: $F=59.174$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; Performance: $F=92.683$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; Progression: $F=89.731$; $df=3$; $p<.001$). Bonferroni tests were then carried out to highlight the source(s) of these differences. For example, those who have aspirations to continue to 'Both' are likely to come from a school with significantly lower FSM ($p<.001$), higher Performance ($p<.001$) and higher Progression ($p<.001$) than those who choose 'None' or 'FE only' as their post-16 educational choices. Furthermore, those in the 'Both' group also belong to schools with higher FSM than those in the 'University only' group ($p<.05$), lower Performance rates ($p<.001$) and lower rates of Progression ($p<.005$).

3.14 Those in the 'None' group come from schools with higher levels of FSM ($p<.001$), poorer Performance levels ($p<.001$) and Progression rates ($p<.001$) than those choosing 'University only'. Those in the 'FE only' group come from schools with significantly higher FSM ($p<.001$), lower Performance ($p<.001$) and Progression ($p<.001$) compared to those wishing to progress to 'University only'.

School Management Type

3.15 The results indicate a significant association between management type and aspiration ($X^2=139.828$; $df=9$; $p<.001$; $V=.249$). For example, in both RC Maintained and Controlled schools there are higher numbers than expected who choose 'None' as a post-16 educational path. In Voluntary schools however, lower numbers of pupils than expected choose this option. A similar pattern emerges for those who would like to attend 'FE only'. However, for those advocating 'University only' the pattern is reversed, RC Maintained and Controlled schools are represented by less than expected numbers, while Voluntary schools are represented by larger than expected numbers.

Figure 7: School management type and pupil aspirations



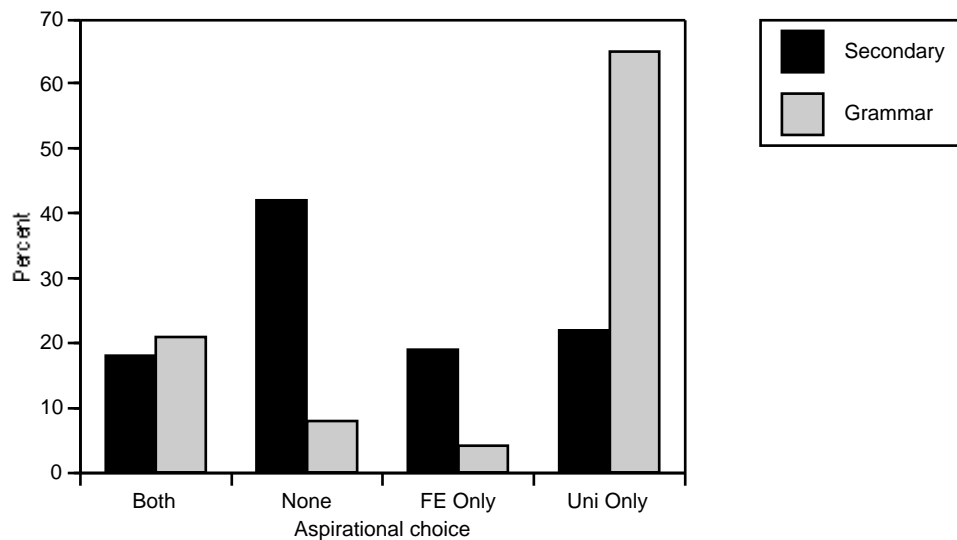
Management type and Gender

3.16 There is a significant association for males and females in RC Maintained and Controlled schools in terms of their post-16 educational aspirations. In RC Maintained schools, greater than expected numbers of females choose 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only', while males are more likely to choose 'None' ($X^2=23.449$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.339$). In the Controlled sector, however, while females are more likely to choose 'Both' and 'FE only', there is a greater likelihood that males will choose 'None' but also 'University only' ($X^2=19.087$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.280$).

School Type

3.17 Associations between different school types are also explored here since grammar and secondary schools do not always fall into discrete management types. It emerges that those in grammar schools are more likely to choose 'Both' and more likely to choose 'University only' compared to those at secondary school. These pupils, on the other hand, are much more likely to choose 'FE only' or 'None'. Statistics show a strong association between the variables ($X^2=198.261$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.513$).

Figure 8: School type and aspirational choice



School Type and Gender

3.18 When gender is also accounted for within the secondary sector, it becomes clear that males are more likely than females to choose 'None'; while females in secondary schools are more likely to choose 'FE only' than males ($X^2=110.743$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.533$). No significant gender differences are found for pupils at grammar school.

School type, gender and religion

3.19 Protestant males at secondary school are more likely to choose 'Both', 'None' or 'FE only'. Catholic males are more likely to choose 'University only' ($X^2=22.326$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.313$).

- 3.20 Protestant females at secondary school are more likely to choose 'None' or 'FE only', while Catholic females are more inclined to choose 'Both' or 'University only' ($X^2=25.536$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.393$).
- 3.21 At grammar school level, there are no significant differences between Catholic and Protestant males, however, Catholic females are more likely to choose 'University only' and Protestant females tend to choose 'Both'.

School type and Parental setup

- 3.22 Those at grammar school who live with both parents are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'University only'. Those at secondary school living with both parents who are more likely to choose 'None' or 'FE only' ($X^2=151.641$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.524$).
- 3.23 Grammar school pupils currently living with one parent tend to choose 'University only' while those in secondary school from one parent backgrounds are more likely to choose 'FE only', 'None' or 'Both' ($X^2=44.844$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.502$).

Key findings

Biographical data

- 3.24 Nineteen percent of the sample choose 'Both' as their option for future education, while 27% choose 'None', and 11% choose 'FE only'. The largest proportion of respondents (43%) choose 'University only'.
- 3.25 More Catholics than Protestants choose 'University only' while more Protestants than Catholics choose 'None', 'Both' or 'FE only'.
- 3.26 Females are more likely than males to choose 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only'. Males are more likely to choose 'None'.
- 3.27 Protestant females are more likely to choose 'Both', 'None' or 'FE only' while Catholic females are more likely to choose 'University only'.

- 3.28 Female Protestants who live with both parents are more likely to choose 'FE only', 'Both' or 'None' whereas female Catholics living with both parents are more likely to choose 'University only'.
- 3.29 Male Protestants from one parent families are more inclined to choose 'None' or 'Both' while Catholic males from one parent backgrounds are more likely to choose 'FE only' or 'University only'.
- 3.30 Those who live with both parents, where both parents work choose 'University only' more often than those where none or one parent works or where parental occupation is not stated.
- 3.31 Those who do not state parent(s) occupation(s) are more likely to choose 'None'.
- 3.32 There is a greater than expected number choosing 'University only' who live with one parent, but have stated both parents' occupations.

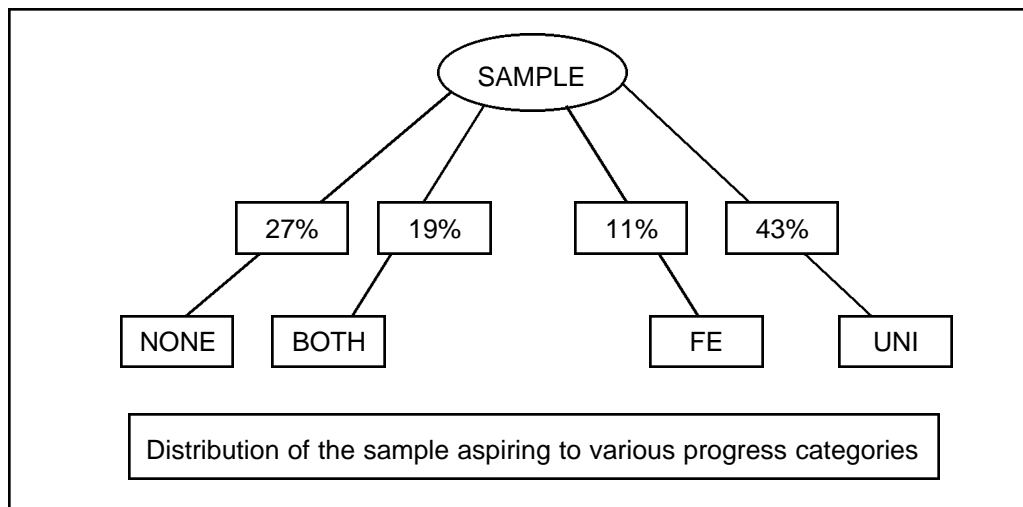
School variables

- 3.33 In RC Maintained and Controlled schools there are higher numbers who choose 'None' compared to voluntary and Grant Maintained Integrated.
- 3.34 Voluntary schools are represented by larger than expected numbers choosing 'University only' compared to RC Maintained and Controlled.
- 3.35 Males in all school management types are more likely than females to choose 'None', however, the differential is greater in Controlled and RC Maintained schools.
- 3.36 Grammar school pupils are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'University only' compared to secondary school pupils who are more likely to choose 'FE only' or 'None'.
- 3.37 Males in secondary schools are more likely than females to choose 'None', while females in secondary schools are more likely than males to choose 'FE only'.

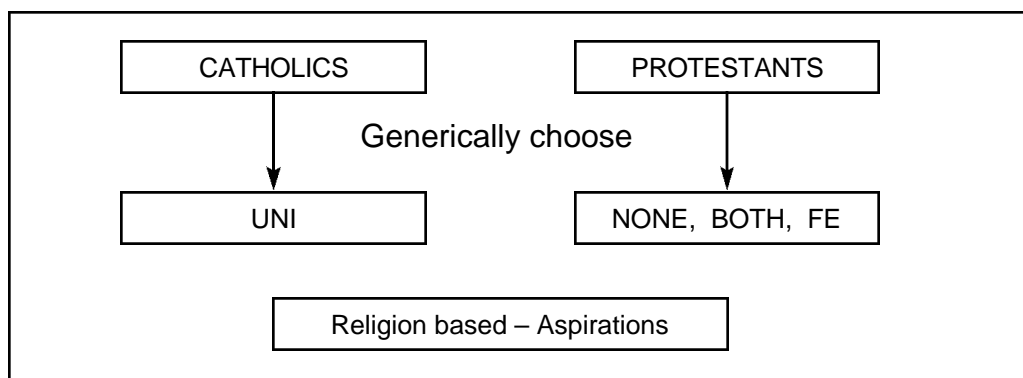
- 3.38 Protestant males at secondary school are more likely to choose 'Both', 'None' or 'FE only'. Catholic males are more likely to choose 'University only'.
- 3.39 Protestant females at secondary school are more likely to choose 'None' or 'FE only', while Catholic females are more inclined to choose 'Both' or 'University only'.
- 3.40 The two most likely options for grammar school pupils are 'Both' or 'University only'. Significant differences are found amongst females in that Catholic females are more likely to choose 'University only' while Protestant females are more likely to choose 'Both'.

Summary trees

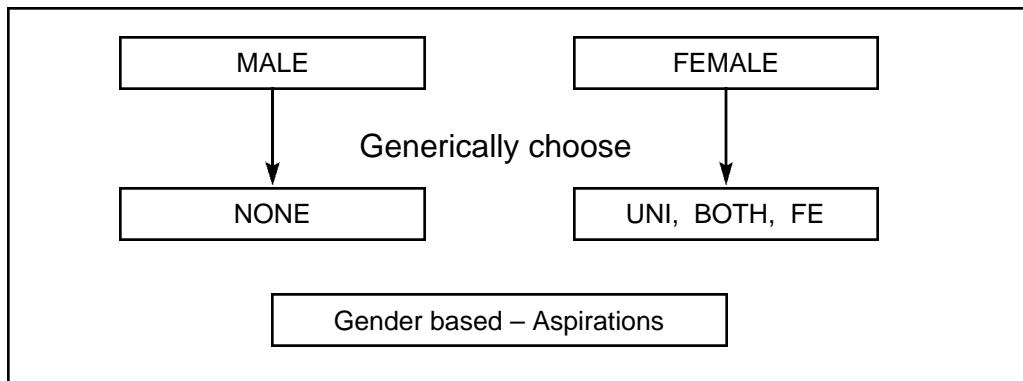
- 3.41 The following diagrams are thumb-nail summaries of the global findings with respect to the defined variables.



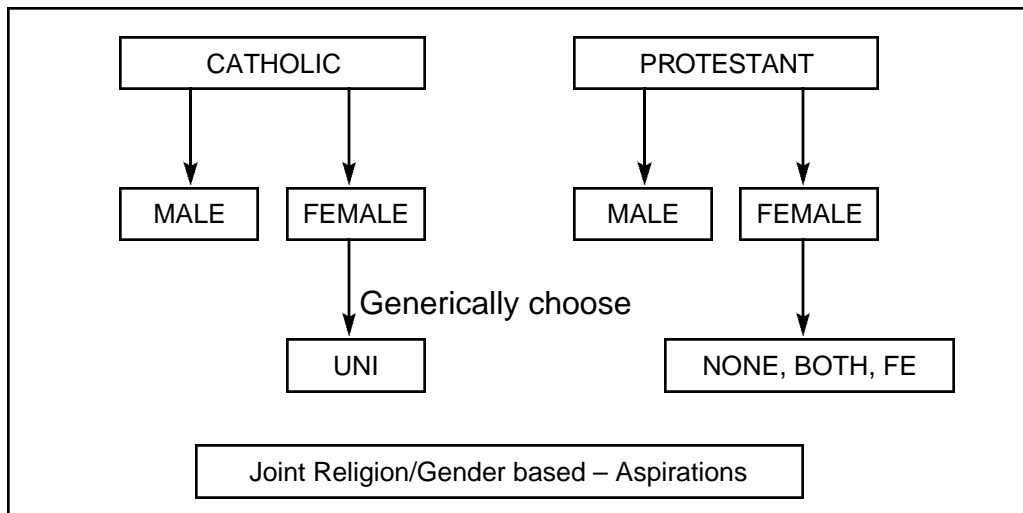
Religion and aspirational choice



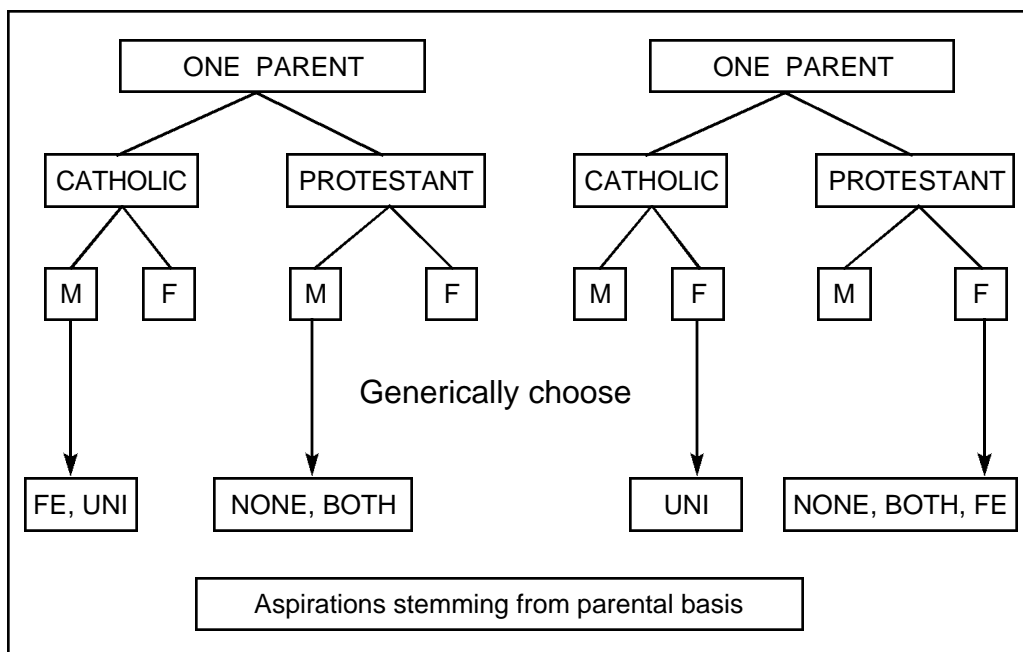
Gender and aspirational choice



Religion, gender and aspirational choice



Parental set-up, religion, gender and aspirational choice

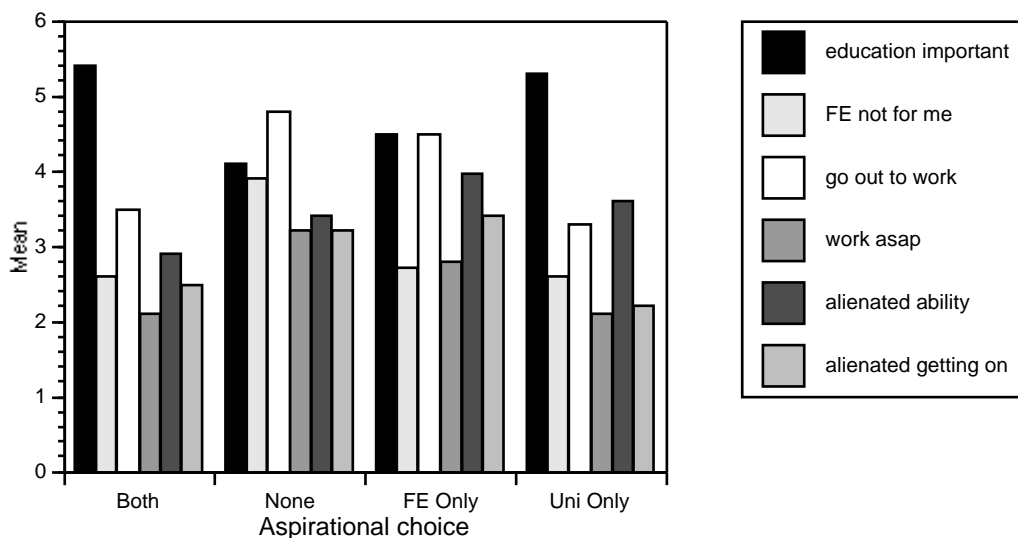


Attitudes to education

3.42 A number of items were selected from the questionnaire which explored pupils' attitudes to education. The attitudinal items were rated by pupils on a 7-point Likert scale in terms of how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements detailed below:

- 'Education is the most important thing in my life right now'
- 'Further education is not for me'
- 'I would like to go out to work as soon as possible'
- 'My parent(s)/guardian(s) would like me to go out to work as soon as possible'
- 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my academic ability'
- 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others'

Figure 9: Mean score for attitudinal items for each group in terms of pupil aspirations



3.43 A multivariate analysis of variance found that there are significant differences between the four aspiring groups across all of the attitudinal items selected for analysis ($F=10.788$; $df=3$; $p<.001$). Significant differences emerge between the four aspiring groups for each individual item.

- 3.44 Responses to the item 'education is the most important thing in my life right now' show that pupils who aspire to go to both further education and university agree more strongly with this statement than pupils who do not want to progress anywhere ($p < .05$) and those who intend to progress to further education only ($p < .05$). Similarly, pupils who want to go to university only agree that 'education is the most important thing in their life right now', more than pupils in the 'FE only' ($p < .05$) and 'None' group ($p < .05$).
- 3.45 Significant differences are found between pupils not wanting to progress to further or higher education and respondents in the other three groups: 'FE only' ($p < .05$), 'University only' ($p < .05$) and those wanting to go to 'Both' ($p < .05$). The greatest mean difference is observed between the 'None' and the 'Both' groups for this item.
- 3.46 Pupils were asked for their opinion on going out to work. It emerges that pupils who do not want to progress in education differ significantly in their opinion than those who want to go to 'University only' or both further education and university ($p < .05$). Pupils in the 'None' category agree more strongly that they want to go out to work as soon as possible than respondents in either the 'University only' or 'Both' groups. No significant difference is noted in the opinions of pupils in the 'FE only' and 'None' group, in terms of wanting to go out to work as soon as possible.
- 3.47 Further explorations reveal a significant association between parental set-up (living with one parent or two) and wanting to go out to work as soon as possible ($X^2 = 50.962$; $df = 6$, $p < .001$; $V = .218$). A larger number than expected in both the 'None' and 'FE only' groups who live with both parents want to go out to work in the near future. Similarly, pupils from one parent households, in these two groups, are also more likely to say they want to go out to work than pupils in the 'Both' and 'University only' groups ($X^2 = 13.519$; $df = 6$, $p < .05$; $V = .198$).
- 3.48 Similar findings emerge for the item 'my parents want me to go out to work as soon as possible', with the attitudes of pupils in the 'None' category being significantly different to the other three aspiring groups ($p < .05$). Pupils who do not want to progress to either further or higher education, agree more strongly that their parents want them to go out

to work as soon as possible, than pupils in the 'FE only', 'University only' and 'Both' groups.

- 3.49 A significant association is observed between parental employment status and pupils reporting that their parents want them to go out to work as soon as possible ($X^2 = 24.205$; $df=6$, $p<.001$; Cramer's $V=.129$). Pupils whose parents don't work or occupation is not stated, are more likely to agree with the statement that 'their parents want them to go out to work as soon as possible', whereas in households where both parents work, pupils are least likely to agree with this statement. In addition, a significant association emerges between parental set-up (living with one parent or two) and this item ($X^2 = 7.263$; $df=2$, $p<.05$; $V=.101$). The findings indicate that pupils in two parent households, whose parents want them to go to work as soon as possible, are more likely to choose 'None', while pupils from one parent families, where the parent wants them to go out to work are most likely to select 'None' or 'FE only'.
- 3.50 Further explorations in terms of pupils' aspirational choice indicate a significant association between parental employment status and intention to progress ($X^2 = 41.285$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.197$). Despite the fact that both parents work, pupils in the 'None' category are more likely to agree that their parents want them to go out to work in the near future.
- 3.51 Responses to the item 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my ability' reveal a significant difference between pupils in the 'None', 'University only' and 'Both' groups ($p<.05$). Pupils who do not want to progress are more likely to agree with this statement than pupils who express an intention to progress to 'University only' or both further education or university. In comparison, no significant difference is found between pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups, although a higher mean score is observed for pupils wanting to go to 'FE only' than those not wanting to progress at all in education.
- 3.52 A significant association emerges between gender, intention to progress and the item 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my ability' ($X^2 = 40.892$; $df=6$, $p<.001$; $V=.250$). Males in the

'None' and 'FE only' categories are more likely to report feeling alienated because of their ability.

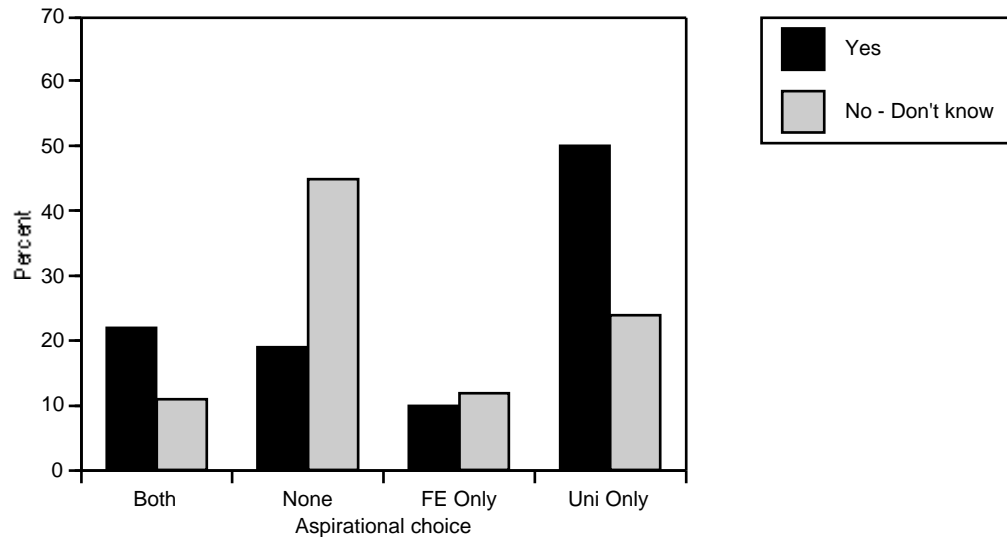
- 3.53 A similar pattern of results emerges for the item 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others'. Significant differences emerge between pupils in the 'None', 'University only' and 'Both' groups ($p < .05$) as respondents in the 'None' group agree more strongly with this statement than pupils in the 'University only' and 'Both' groups. Similar to the previous item, a higher mean score is observed for pupils wanting to go to 'FE only' compared to pupils not wanting to progress anywhere, although the difference between the groups is not significant.
- 3.54 Gender differences are also observed for the item 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others' with regard to intention to progress ($X^2 = 24.735$; $df = 6$, $p < .001$; $V = .195$), with males in the 'None' and 'FE only' categories more likely to report feelings of alienation. There is though less of an association for this item, than the previous item, 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my ability'.

Influences in progression

- 3.55 Possible influences in pupils' intentions to progress are examined through their responses to a number of questions on the questionnaire. Analysis for this section focused on the following:
- The number of pupils who have friends attending further or higher education;
 - The number of pupils who have friends intending to go to further or higher education;
 - The number of pupils who have had family members who attended further or higher education;
 - The number of pupils who have a career choice in mind;
 - Sources of information pupils availed of in terms of making a career choice.

Family at further or higher education

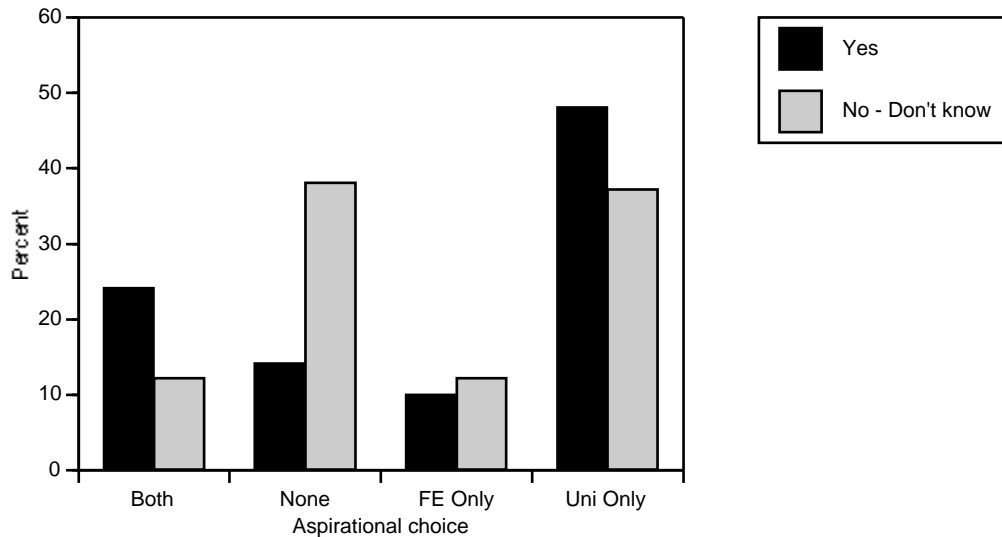
Figure 10: Pupils with family members who have attended further or higher education in terms of aspirational choice



3.56 Pupils were asked if family had attended further or higher education. A significant association between family members who progressed to further or higher education and aspirational choice is observed ($X^2 = 75.153$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.316$). Those individuals who would like to progress to 'University only' or 'Both', are about 60% more likely to have family who attended some form of further or higher education. Additional analysis indicates that males who have family that progressed, are still more likely to select 'None' as their aspirational choice ($X^2 = 22.719$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.206$). Furthermore, females who do not have family who attended further or higher education, are more likely than males to choose 'Both', 'FE only' or 'University only' ($X^2 = 12.615$; $df=3$, $p<.01$; $V=.234$).

Friends at further or higher education

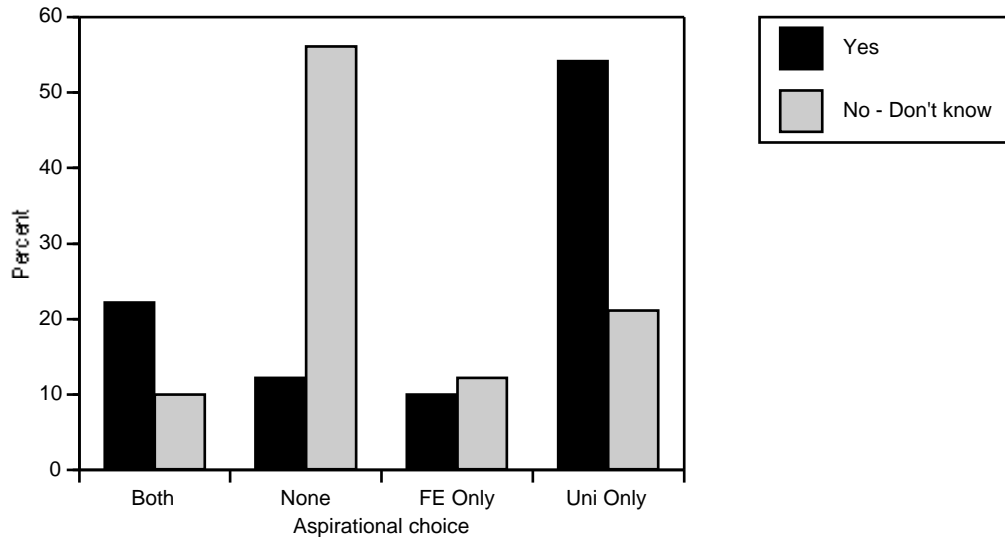
Figure 11: Pupils with friends at further or higher education and aspirational choice



3.57 A significant association is observed between the four aspiring groups and whether pupils in these groups have friends who have attended either further education college or university ($X^2 = 55.329$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.274$). Pupils in the 'Both' or 'University only' groups have more friends that attended further education or university. Additional analysis shows a significant association between gender, aspirational choice and friends who have attended further education or university ($X^2 = 10.851$; $df=3$, $p<.05$; $V=.166$). Males who have friends in further or higher education are more likely to select 'None' than females. There is also a greater likelihood of females who have friends that progressed, to choose 'Both' or 'FE only'. Furthermore, females are still more likely to select 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only' than males, even though they report not having friends who progressed to further or higher education ($X^2 = 24.397$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.260$).

Friends intending to go to further or higher education

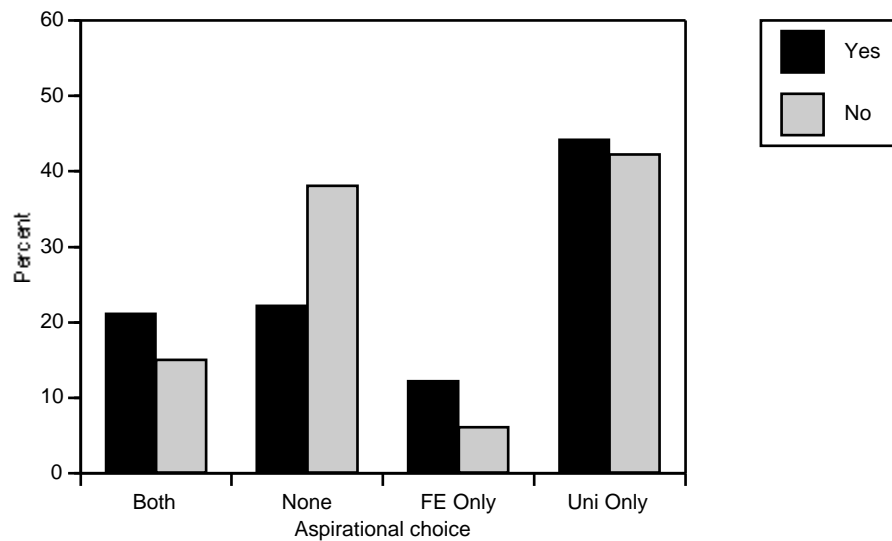
Figure 12: Pupils with friends intending to go to further education and aspirational choice



- 3.58 A significant association emerges between friends' intentions to progress to further education college or university and the pupils' own aspirations to progress ($X^2 = 164.317$; $df=3$, $p < .001$; $V = .477$). The results reveal that a greater number of pupils in the 'Both' and 'University only' groups, have friends who want to progress to further education or university, than respondents in either the 'None' or 'FE only' groups.
- 3.59 Further explorations reveal a significant association between gender, aspirational choice and friends intending to progress to further education or university ($X^2 = 9.613$; $df=3$, $p < .05$; $V = .122$). Males who have friends intending to go to further education or university are more likely to choose 'None' than females. In comparison, females who have friends intending to progress, are more likely than males to select 'Both' or 'FE only'. Males whose friends hope to go to further education or university are more likely to choose 'University only' than females. In addition, a significant association was found between friends not intending to go, gender and aspirational choice ($X^2 = 17.007$; $df=3$, $p < .001$; $V = .267$). Females who do not have friends intending to progress, are still more likely to choose either 'Both' or 'FE only', than males.

Career in mind

Figure 13: Career choice in mind and pupils' aspirational choice



3.60 Pupils were asked if they had a possible career in mind after leaving school. The results highlight a significant association between the four aspiring groups and whether the pupils in the groups have a possible career in mind ($X^2 = 17.469$; $df=3$, $p < .001$; $V = .157$). A greater number of pupils in the 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only' have a career in mind than pupils in the 'None' group, with females more likely to be thinking of a possible career than males ($X^2 = 4.373$; $df=1$, $p < .05$; $V = .071$). Further examination of the data shows a significant association between gender, aspirational choice and having a career in mind ($X^2 = 29.568$; $df=3$, $p < .001$; $V = .245$). Males in the 'None' group are more likely than females in this group to have a career or job in mind, while females, more than males in the 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only' have considered what career to follow after leaving school.

Discussions about further or higher education

3.61 Information about post-16 education is explored as pupils were asked if their parents and teachers provided information about opportunities available to them after Year 12. A significant association emerges between discussion with parents regarding post-16 opportunities and pupils' aspirations to progress

Parents discussed further education

3.62 Those whose parents have discussed FE college with them are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'FE only', while those whose parents have not discussed FE college with them are more likely to choose 'None' or 'University only' ($X^2=18.781$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.0.180$).

Parents discussed University

3.63 Where parents have discussed university with their children, there is a greater likelihood that these children will subsequently choose 'Both' or 'University only', whereas when pupils have not discussed university with their parents they are more likely to opt for 'None' or 'FE only' ($X^2=70.308$; $df=3$; $p<.05$; $V=.343$).

Teachers discussed FE college

3.64 Similarly, when asked if teachers discussed post-16 education or opportunities, there is a significant association between teacher discussions and pupils' aspirations. Where teachers have discussed FE college with their pupils the findings are very similar to those for parents in that, those pupils whose teachers have discussed it with them are more likely than not to choose 'Both' or 'FE only', while those with whom it has not been discussed are more likely than not to choose 'None' or 'University only' ($X^2=20.215$; $df=3$; $p<.005$; $V=.125$).

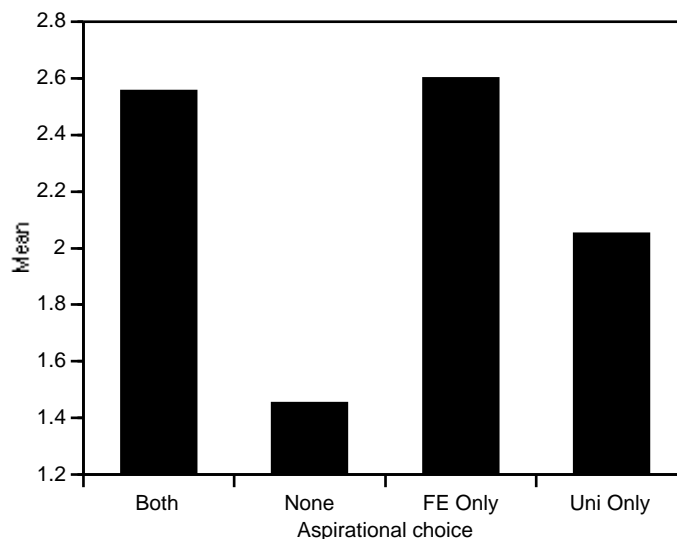
3.65 Furthermore, there is a greater likelihood that those whose teachers have discussed university with them emanate from the 'Both' and 'University only' groups, while those with whom it has not been discussed are more likely to come from the 'None' and 'FE only' groups ($X^2=36.852$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.239$).

Sources of information

3.66 Pupils were asked about who or what they consulted as regards information about progression. Different sources pupils may have accessed include:

- Mother
- Father
- Guardian
- Careers guidance teacher
- Another teacher
- Friends at school
- Friends outside of school
- Television programmes
- Newspapers/magazines
- Information on the internet
- Visitor from further education college
- Youth worker
- Member of the clergy

Figure 14: The mean number of sources of information accessed by the four aspirational groups.



3.67 The extent to which pupils access sources of information may be considered as indicative of interest in progression and intention to progress. Significant differences emerge between pupils' aspirational choice and the extent to which different sources of information are

accessed ($F=6.151$; $df=3$; $p<.001$). Pupils in the 'None' group access fewer sources of information than pupils in the 'FE only', 'Both' and 'University only' groups ($p<.05$).

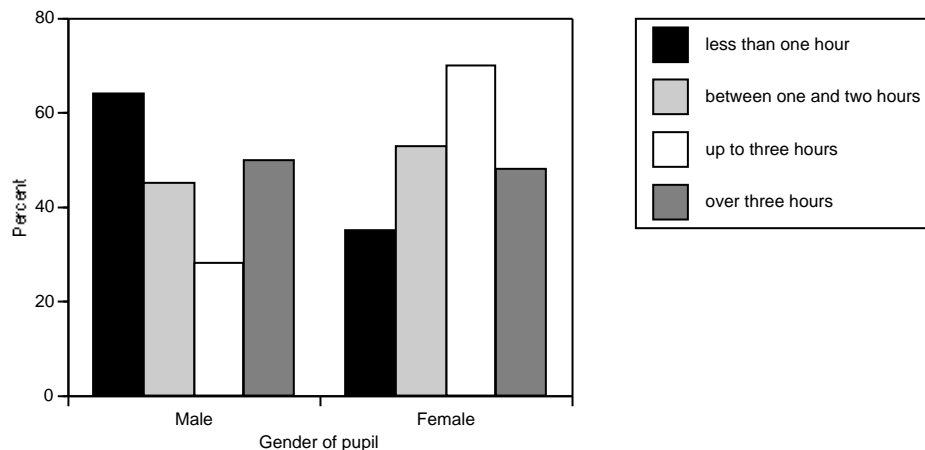
School type and internet access

3.68 Three types of internet access were explored in the current study: unrestricted² access; restricted access and no access. It emerges that within secondary schools, those who have unrestricted access to the internet are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'University only' than those with restricted or no access. However, while those with restricted access are more likely to choose 'FE only', it is those who have no access to the internet who are considerably more likely to choose 'None' as their future educational path ($X^2=19.777$; $df=6$; $p<.005$; $V=.160$). It further emerges that those in the 'Both' and 'University only' groups are more likely than not to have internet access at home, while those in the 'FE only' and 'None' groups are more likely not to have the internet at home ($X^2=33.112$; $df=3$; $p<.001$; $V=.238$).

Pupil activity

3.69 Information selected for analysis in this section refers to the amount of homework pupils report doing, the amount of homework they believe they were expected to do by teachers and their involvement in school activities. These are explored in terms of gender, aspirational choice and where possible, associations between the items are examined.

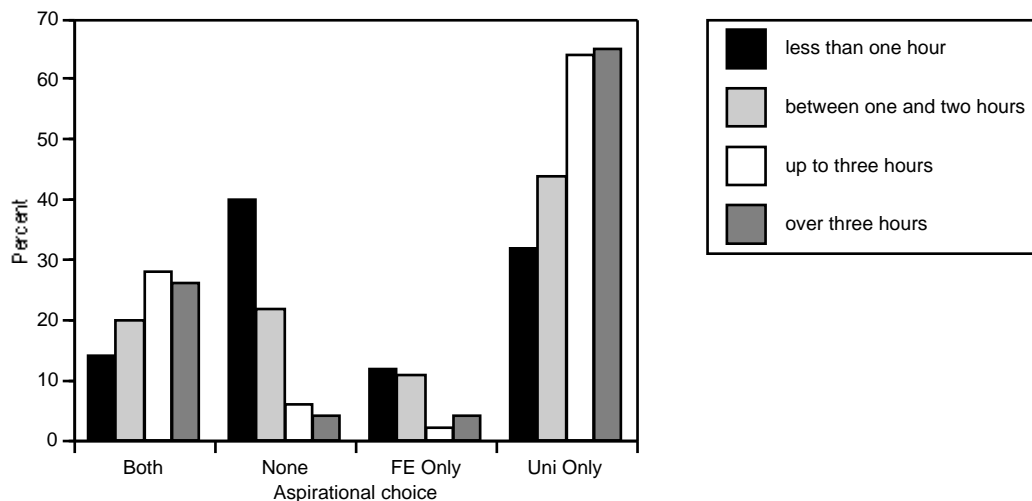
Figure 15: Time spent on homework in terms of pupil gender.



² Unrestricted access in this context refers to unlimited access to all internet websites.

- 3.70 A significant association is observed between gender and amount of time reportedly spent on homework ($X^2 = 49.911$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.288$). Females are more likely to report spending longer periods of time on homework, while a larger number of males spend less amounts of time on homework.
- 3.71 In terms of aspirations, pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups are found to spend less than one hour compared to the 'Both' and 'University only' groups ($X^2 = 78.986$; $df=9$, $p<.001$; $V=.189$). Males in the 'None' group are more likely to spend less than one hour on homework than females in the same group ($X^2 = 11.741$; $df=3$, $p<.01$; $V=.213$).

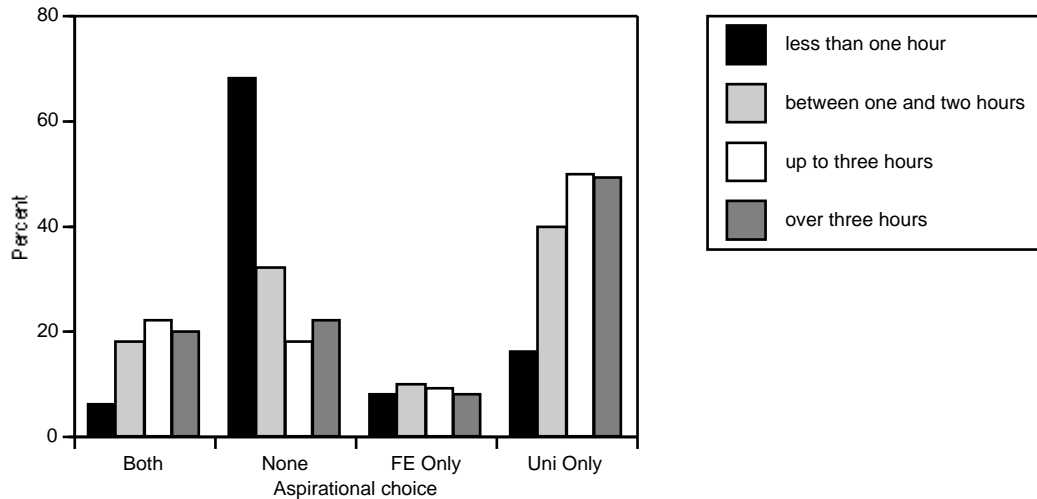
Figure 16: Time spent on homework in terms of pupil aspirations.



- 3.72 Pupils were asked how much homework they believe teachers expect them to do. A significant association emerges between pupil aspirations and the amount of time they believe teachers expect them to spend on homework ($X^2 = 33.141$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.211$). Pupils who believe teachers expect between one and two hours homework a night or less than one hour, are more likely to select 'None' or 'FE only'. In comparison, pupils who report teachers expecting more time to be spent on homework, are more likely to be in the 'University only' or 'Both' groups.
- 3.73 Females are more likely to believe that a greater amount of homework is expected by teachers, while males tend to believe that teachers

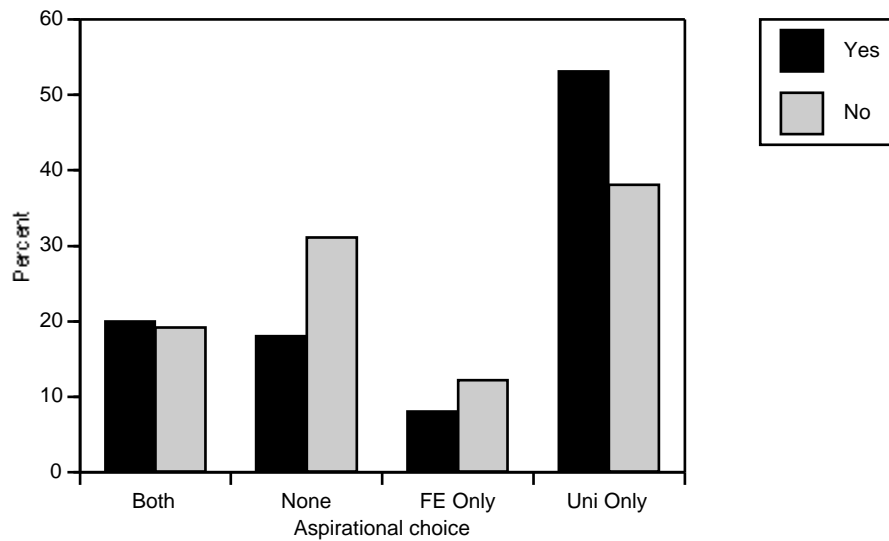
expected less time to be spent on homework ($X^2 = 83.415$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.335$).

Figure 17: Pupils' perception of homework expected by teachers in terms of aspirational choice.



- 3.74 Further explorations reveal a significant association between gender, aspirational choice and teachers expectations of homework ($X^2 = 13.279$; $df=3$, $p<.01$; $V=.187$). There is a greater likelihood that males who report that teachers want pupils to spend small periods of time on homework, will be from the 'None ' and ' FE only' groups. Similarly, females who believe teachers expect less time to be spent doing homework are more likely to be from the 'None' and 'FE only' groups. Additional analysis highlights a non significant trend between pupils who report they feel alienated because of their ability and amount of homework done. Pupils who feel more alienated because of their ability spend less time on homework, while those who do not have concerns about ability spend longer periods doing homework.
- 3.75 Involvement in groups at school is explored in terms of pupils' aspirational choices. A significant association is found between pupils' intention to progress and reported involvement in school activities ($X^2 = 22.486$; $df=3$, $p<.001$; $V=.176$). Pupils involved in groups at school are more likely to want to progress to both university or further education or university only. A significant effect of gender is observed ($X^2 = 6.268$; $df=1$, $p<.05$; $V=.093$), with females more likely to be involved in group activities than males.

Figure 18: Pupil involvement in school groups and aspirational choice



3.76 Furthermore, males taking part in school activities are more likely to be in the ‘Both’, ‘FE only’ and ‘University only’ groups than the ‘None’ group, while females involved in school groups want to progress to ‘University only’. Additional explorations reveal a significant association between amount of homework done by pupils and involvement in school activities ($X^2 = 4.418$; $df=1$, $p < .05$; $V = .081$).

Geographical location

3.77 A significant association emerges between where an individual lives, in terms of postcode, and their aspirations with regard to further education ($X^2 = 106.486$; $df=30$, $p < .001$; $V = .240$) (Table 4). The postcodes represented in the sample include: 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 15, 17 and 36. In terms of distribution of aspirational choice within the postcodes, pupils from BT13 are more likely to choose ‘None’, while pupils from BT4, 6, 11 and 36, have a greater likelihood of selecting ‘University only’. Pupils from BT5, on the other hand, tend to choose ‘Both’, while pupils from BT8 are more likely to choose ‘FE only’ or ‘University only’. Those pupils who are equally likely to be in the ‘Both’ and ‘University only’ groups, in this case emanate from BT17. The findings also reveal that pupils living in BT14 are more likely to select ‘None’ or ‘University only’, while pupils travelling from BT15 are mainly in the ‘None’ or ‘FE only’ groups.

Table 4: Pupil location and aspirational choice

Postcode(s)	Aspirational choice(s) most likely to be represented by this postcode
BT13	'None'
BT5	'Both'
BT4, 6, 11, 36	'University only'
BT8	'Both' or 'FE only'
BT17	'Both' or 'University only'
BT14	'None' or 'University only'
BT15	'None' or 'FE only'

Household Proximity Index

3.78 The results from the previous section refer to the distribution of pupil choice about progression by postcode, i.e., pupils' aspirational choice in terms of where pupils come from. This may be useful in identifying possible pockets of non-progression however it does not take into account the impact of a school in an area and the relationship between an individual's postcode, the school they attend and aspirational choice. HPI, as explained in the Methodology, addresses this relationship and analyses involving pupil aspirational choice is detailed below. An association between HPI and one's future aspirations also emerges from the analysis ($F=52.175$; $df=3$; $p<.001$). For example, those who want to go to 'Both' are more likely to live further away from school than those who choose 'None' ($p<.001$), or 'FE only' ($p<.001$), while there is no significant difference between the 'Both' group and those wanting to go to 'University only'. However, those in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups are significantly more likely to live closer to school than those in the 'University only' group ($p<.001$).

Key findings

Attitudes to education

3.79 Pupils in the 'FE only' and 'None' groups are less likely to agree that 'education is the most important thing in my life right now', in comparison to pupils in the 'Both' and 'University only' groups who agreed more strongly with this statement.

- 3.80 Pupils in the 'None' group agree more strongly that they want to go out to work as soon as possible, than respondents in either the 'University only' or 'Both' groups, regardless of parental setup.
- 3.81 Pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups who live with either both parents or one parent are more likely want to go out to work in the near future than the 'University only' or 'Both' groups.
- 3.82 Pupils who do not want to progress to either further or higher education, agree more strongly that their parents want them to go out to work as soon as possible.
- 3.83 Pupils in two parent households, whose parents want them to go to work as soon as possible, are more likely to choose 'None'.
- 3.84 Pupils from one parent families, where the parent want them to go out to work are most likely to select 'None' or 'FE only', compared to 'University only' or 'Both' groups.
- 3.85 Pupils in the 'None' group are more likely to state they feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of their ability.
- 3.86 Males in the 'None' and 'FE only' categories are more likely to report feeling alienated because of their ability, compared to males in the 'Both' or 'University only' groups.
- 3.87 Pupils in the 'None' group, agree more strongly with the statement 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others' than pupils in the 'University only' and 'Both' groups.
- 3.88 Males in the 'None' group, agree more strongly with the statement; 'I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others' than males in the 'University only' and 'Both' groups.

Influences on progression

- 3.89 Pupils wanting to progress to 'University only' or 'Both', are about 60% more likely to have family who have attended further or higher education.

- 3.90 For pupils with family who progressed in education, males are more likely than females to choose 'None'.
- 3.91 Pupils in the 'Both' or 'University only' groups have more friends that attended further education or university, than the 'FE only' or 'None' groups.
- 3.92 Females are more likely to select 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only' than males, even though they report not having friends who progressed to further or higher education.
- 3.93 A greater percentage of pupils in the 'Both' and 'University only' groups have friends who want to progress to further education college or university, than respondents in either the 'None' or 'FE only' groups.
- 3.94 A greater percentage of pupils in the 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only' have a career in mind, compared to pupils in the 'None' group.
- 3.95 Pupils whose parents have discussed FE college, are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'FE only'. Similar results are found for teacher discussions about further education.
- 3.96 Those with whom FE college has not been discussed, are more likely to choose 'None' or 'University only'. The same pattern of results emerges for pupils who report teachers not discussing FE college with them.
- 3.97 Pupils are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'University only' if university has been discussed with them by their parents. If not, they are more likely to choose 'None' or 'FE only'.
- 3.98 Pupils in the 'None' group access fewer sources of information than pupils in the 'FE only', 'Both' and 'University only' groups.
- 3.99 In terms of internet access, pupils in secondary schools who have unrestricted access are more likely to choose 'Both' or 'University only' than those with restricted or no access.

- 3.100 Pupils with restricted access to the internet are more likely to choose 'FE only', while respondents with no access to the internet are more likely to choose 'None'.
- 3.101 Pupils in the 'Both' and 'University only' groups are more likely than not to have internet access at home, while those in the 'FE only' and 'None' groups are more likely not to have the internet at home.
- 3.102 Females are more likely to report spending longer periods of time on homework, while a larger percentage of males spend less amounts of time on homework.
- 3.103 Pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups are more likely to spend less than one hour on homework in comparison to the 'Both' and 'University only' groups, who on average spend more than three hours per night.
- 3.104 Males in the 'None' group are more likely to spend less time on homework than females in the same group.
- 3.105 Pupils who believe teachers expect between one and two hours or less than one hour spent on homework per night, are more likely to select 'None' or 'FE only'. In comparison, greater teacher expectations in terms of time spent on homework, were more likely to stem from the 'University only' or 'Both' groups.
- 3.106 A non significant trend indicated that less time is spent on homework by pupils who report feeling alienated because of their ability, while those who do not express concerns about their ability, spend longer periods doing homework.
- 3.107 Pupils involved in school activities at are more likely to want to progress to 'Both' or 'University only'.
- 3.108 Males taking part in school activities are more likely to be represented in the 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only' groups than the 'None' group, while females involved in school groups want to progress to 'University only'.

- 3.109 There is a significant association between where individuals live in terms of their postcodes, and pupil aspirational choice.
- 3.110 Pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups are significantly more likely to live closer to school than pupils in the 'Both' and 'University only' group, in terms of their Household Proximity Score.

The Multinomial Logistic Regression Model

- 3.111 In this section a number of geo-demographic characteristics and school related indices are considered, together with the influences on, and the attitudes held by pupils. The aim is to explore and describe the relative influence of these variables, and how they may collectively impact on pupils' decision to progress (or otherwise) to further and higher education. To determine the collective impact of these characteristics a multinomial logistic regression analysis was performed.
- 3.112 Multinomial logistic regression can be used to assess the effectiveness of a range of variables in terms of how well they perform in predicting a set of outcomes. The model seeks to identify those predictor variables that are effective in terms of classifying participants into the outcome categories/groups. It is similar to the linear regression model but is suited to models where the dependent/outcome variable is categorical, as in the current study where the outcome variable is pupil choice – i.e. whether pupils wish to proceed to '*University only*', '*FE only*', '*Both*' or '*None*'.
- 3.113 Following exploratory data analysis, and with reference to the analyses detailed earlier and previous research, a number of predictor variables were considered in the multinomial logistic regression model. The predictor variables are best considered under the following headings (these categories played no role in the statistical model, but are solely an aid to explanation/interpretation):
- **School Indices** – which included *Free School Meals Index*; *School Performance Index* and the *School Management type* (RC Maintained, Controlled, Voluntary or Integrated)

- **Geo-demographic Indices** – which included Pupil’s Gender (male, female), Religion (Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Other); *Socio-economic status* (collapsed into Upper, Intermediate and Lower) and the *Household Proximity Index* (see Methodology section)

- **Pupils’ Attitude/Opinions/Perceptions** – which consisted of the following statements (and to which pupils responded using a seven-point Likert scale from ‘disagree strongly’ through to ‘agree strongly’) *‘Education is the most important thing in my life right now’; ‘Further education is not for me’; ‘I would rather be in employment than continue with my education’; ‘I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my academic ability’; and ‘I do better at school than my friends’*

- **Influences** – which comprised the statement *‘I feel pressure from my friends to go out after school’*; and a variable, which contained information on the number of sources the respondent had used to gather information about the range of courses/qualifications available *‘sources’*; and finally, whether the respondent’s *friends are intending to go to further and higher education.*

3.114 The above predictor variables were entered into the multinomial logistic regression model. The resulting goodness-of-fit statistic ($X^2 = 1594.14$, $p = 0.978$) indicated that the model provided a sufficient description of the data. The variance accounted for in pupil choice (i.e. the four outcome categories) was moderate, with a Nagelkerke pseudo R-square of approximately 55%. In relation to how well the predictor variables performed in terms of classifying the participants into the four outcome measures (i.e. correct prediction rates), the results varied, with classification into the ‘University only’ category having a success rate of 91%; the ‘FE only’ classification was 34% correct; the ‘Both’ category was approximately only 17% correctly classified and the ‘None’ category had a 65% success rate. The overall successful prediction rate across all four categories was approximately 64% correct.

3.115 It would appear therefore that the model is unimpressive in relation to its performance in classifying the participants into the ‘Both’ group, but perhaps one reason for this is that characteristics associated with the

'Both' group can also be found in the 'University only' and the 'FE only' groups. From these results it would seem however, that the model performs well in terms of correctly classifying participants into the 'University only' grouping and the 'None' group.

Table 5 gives the 'Likelihood Ratio tests', which indicate the extent to which each of the predictor variables contributes to the model.

Table 5: Likelihood Ratio Tests

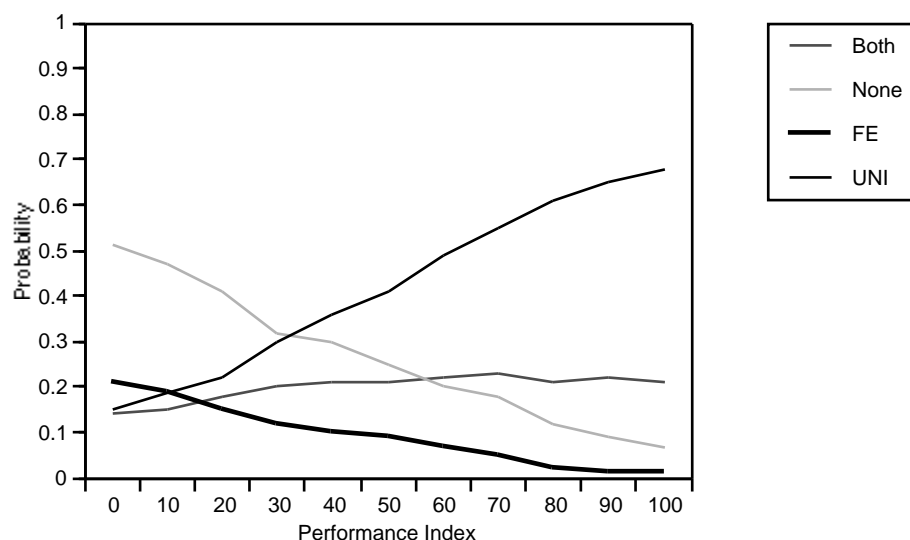
Effect	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	1055.531	.000	0	.
School Indices:				
Free Schools Meals Index	1056.140	.609	3	.894
School Performance Index	1071.876	16.346	3	.001
School management	1075.783	20.252	9	.016
Geo-demographic:				
Household Proximity Index	1069.290	13.759	3	.003
Gender	1071.256	15.725	3	.001
Religion	1060.412	4.881	3	.181
SES (broad)	1062.730	7.199	6	.303
Attitudes/Opinions:				
'Education most important...'	1067.346	11.815	3	.008
'Further education not for me'	1065.817	10.286	3	.016
'Would rather be in employment'	1066.557	11.027	3	.012
'...alienated from the education system...'	1070.091	14.560	3	.002
'I do better at school than my friends'	1063.369	7.838	3	.049
Influences:				
Career decision	1066.704	11.173	3	.011
'...feel pressure from my friends...'	1064.935	9.405	3	.024
'Sources of information'	1063.430	7.900	3	.048
Friends intend to go to FHE	1065.488	9.957	3	.019

3.116 It is evident from the information in Table 5 that most of the variables included in the model contribute significantly in terms of their predictive power. The exceptions are the Free School Meals Index, Religion and parents' Socio-economic status, all of which are non-significant. While it might be expected that such predictors would be significant in regard

to educational progression, it should be noted that other variables in the model may capture the variance attributable to such variables. For example, it is well established that school performance is correlated highly with free school meals (approximately $r = -0.91$ for the current sample). Consequently, variance across the outcome measures in terms of free school meals may be accounted for primarily in terms of the School Performance Index. Likewise, the Religion and the SES variance may be captured parsimoniously by the School Management predictor. It should also be noted that the model does not include any interaction terms, but only main effects. While a number of interactions were explored, the explanatory power of the model did not benefit substantially from their inclusion and they were subsequently discarded for the sake of simplicity of approach.

3.117 For brevity and ease of presentation the parameter estimates (betas, Wald statistics and significance values etc.) associated with the significant predictors are relegated to the appendices and substituted here by a number of derived graphical representations which depict the predicted probabilities obtained from the model. It should be noted however, that while the graphs facilitate explanation and interpretation, calculations are based on their corresponding subpopulation.

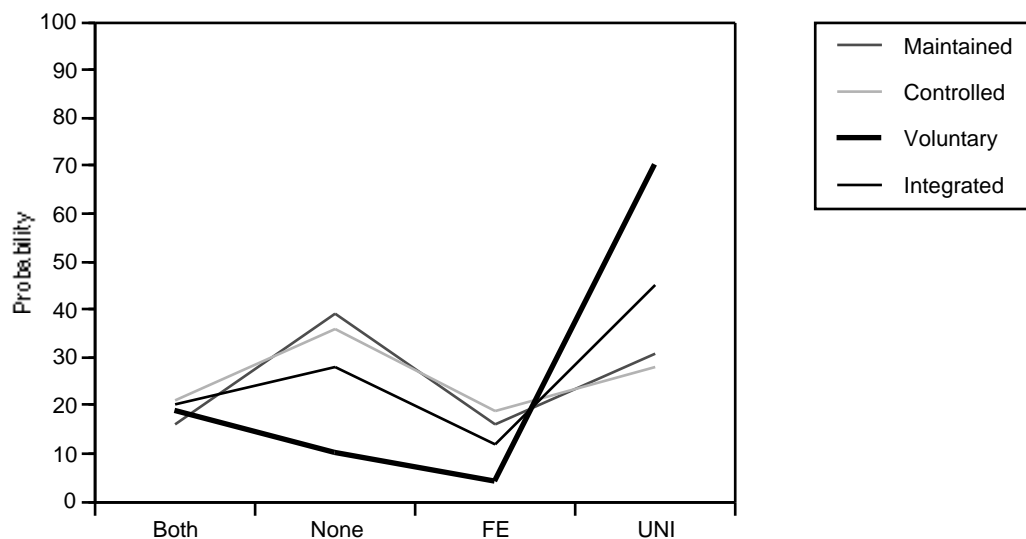
Figure 19: The School Performance Index



3.118 Figure 19 shows the distribution of responses for the School Performance Index across the four aspirational groups. It is evident from this graph that pupil choice is in part a function of their schools

performance index. The aspiration of attending 'University only', for example, increases in accordance with the increase in the school performance index, and conversely, the decision made by pupils not to progress (i.e. 'None') peaks towards the lower end of the school performance index. For the 'FE only' function, it is apparent that a greater proportion of pupils from schools with a relatively low school performance index are more likely to consider the 'FE only' option more favourably, and indeed, this option appears less frequently towards the higher performing end of the index. In considering the graphical information presented in Figure 19 and in conjunction with the data presented in Table 5, it is evident that school performance has an overall impact on student choice.

Figure 20: School Management Type

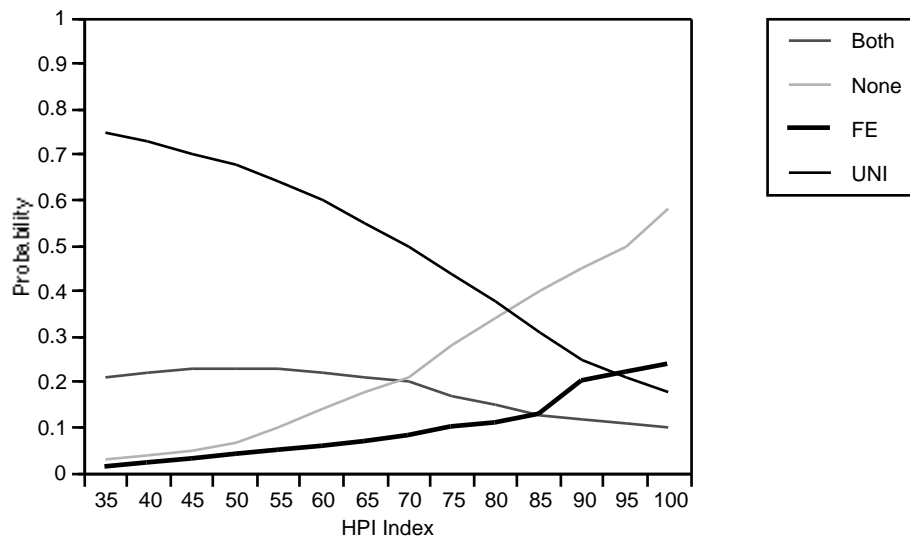


3.119 Figure 20 illustrates the relationship between pupil choice and school management type. It should be noted however, that the lines joining the categories in Figure 20 are inserted to facilitate interpretation only and in no way should be construed as interpolations. This convention is adhered to in subsequent graphs where categorical variables are considered. From the information in Figure 20 it is clear that pupils' choice is differentiated in accordance with school management type. Most notably, the Voluntary school management type appears to be disproportionately represented in relation to the 'University only' option in Figure 21. Similarly, the predicted probabilities for the Integrated school management type indicate that this group is over-represented in the 'University only' category relative to their performance in the other

categories. The probabilities for Controlled and Maintained schools appear fairly stable across the four categories. Some caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the information in Figure 20 since one set of the predicted probabilities are based on a small number of respondents, namely the Integrated School management type, which had thirty only.

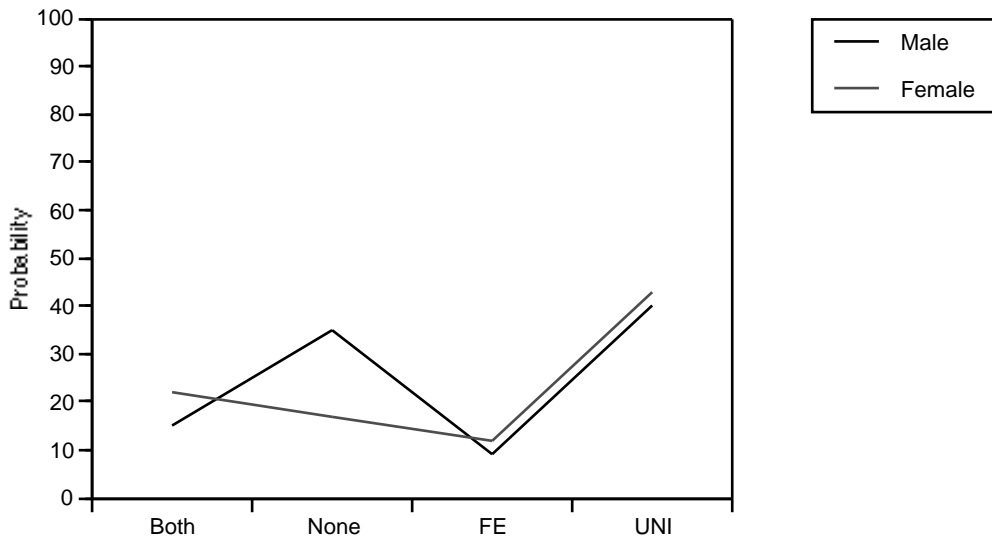
3.120 The predicted probabilities for the Household Proximity index (HPI) are given in Figure 21. The HPI indicates that for those participants from schools with a low index score, the greater the relative probability that these participants will attend university; this estimate gradually decreases as the index increases. Conversely, the probability of choosing 'None', increases as HPI increases. This index appears to perform well in terms of profiling and distinguishing the groupings.

Figure 21: The Household Proximity Index (HPI)



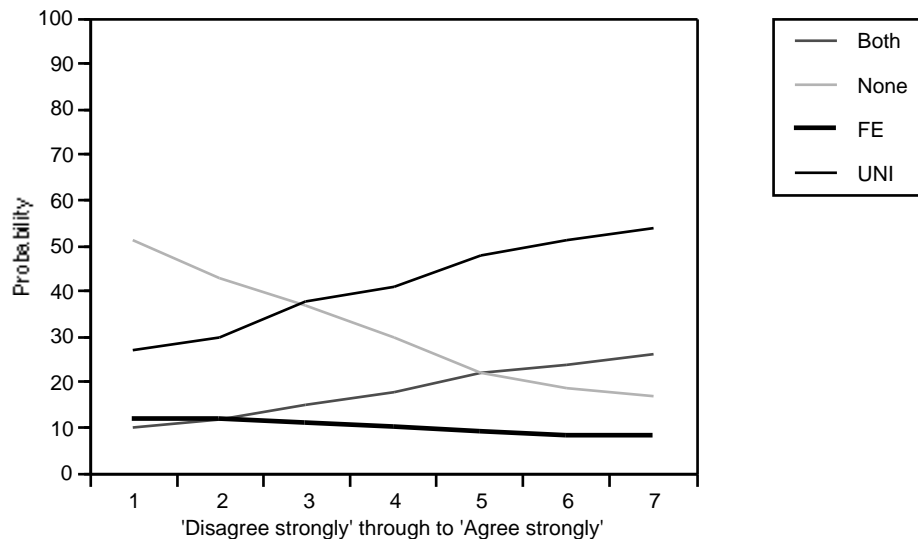
3.121 Figure 22 provides information in relation to Gender. It is evident from this figure that across the categories of 'Both', 'FE only' and 'University only', females appear to be more likely to progress to further and higher education than males. It is only within the 'None' option that males are likely to appear more frequently.

Figure 22: Gender



3.122 Figure 23 provides information on participants' attitudinal disposition towards education currently being the most important thing in their life. It shows differential response rates across the four groups; most apparent though is the contrast between the 'University only' and the 'None' groups. The former tends to agree strongly with the statement, while the latter tends to disagree strongly.

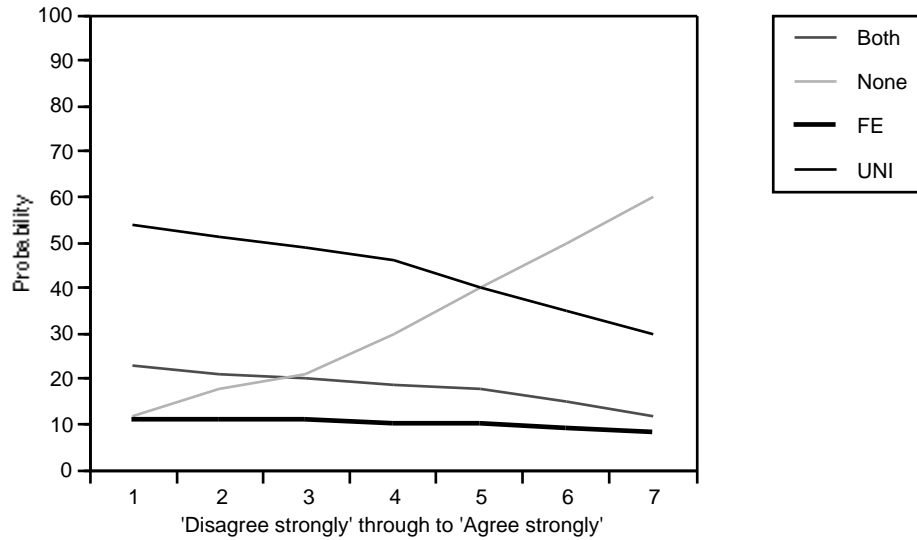
Figure 23: Attitude: 'Education is the most important thing in my life right now'



3.123 Figure 24 gives the distributions relating to the statement that 'further education is not for me'. Most notable in this figure is the distribution

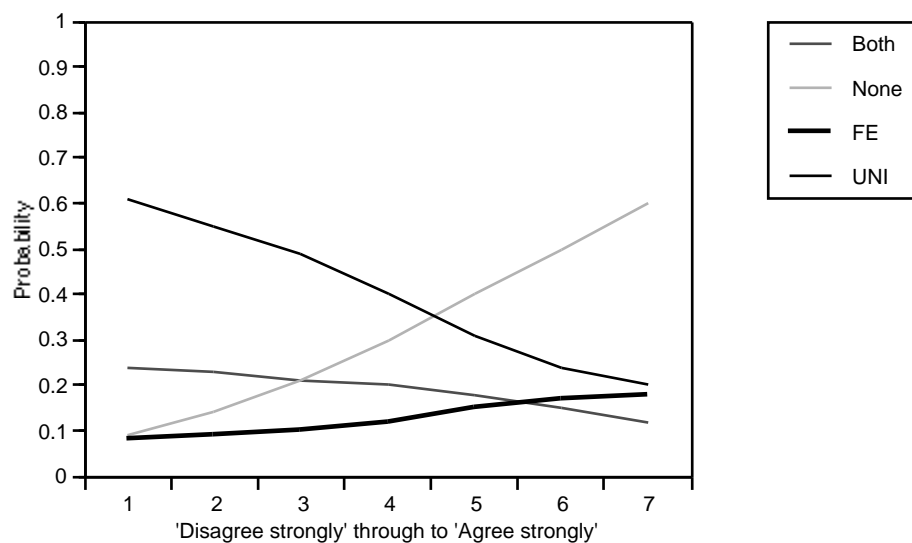
for the 'None' group, with the majority favouring the 'Agree' response and this tails off steeply towards the disagree pole.

Figure 24: Attitude: 'Further education is not for me'



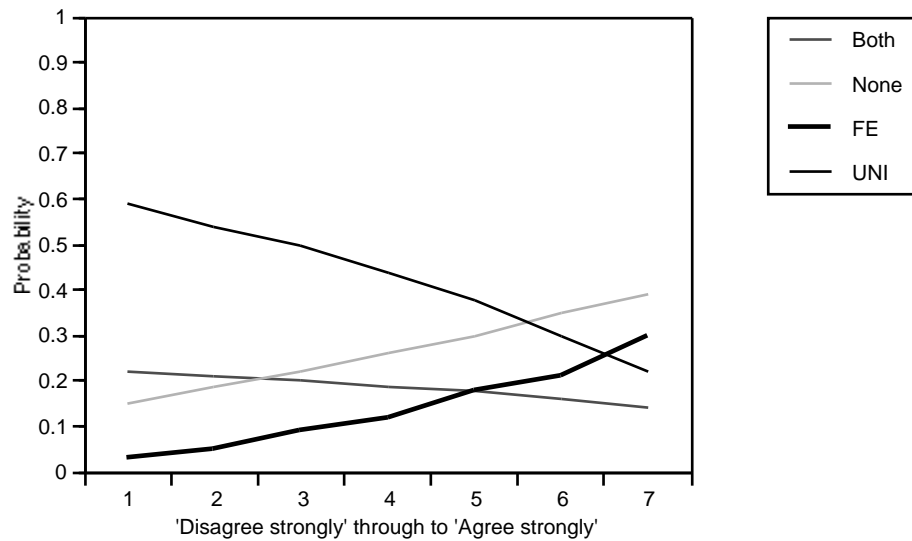
3.124 Figure 25 gives the distributions for participants relating to the statement 'I would rather be in employment than continue my education'. Interestingly, the predicted probabilities in Figure 25 are rather similar to those displayed in Figure 24. These results suggest that the 'None' group within this sample would rather discontinue their educational progression and seek employment.

Figure 25: Attitude: 'I would rather be in employment than continue my education'



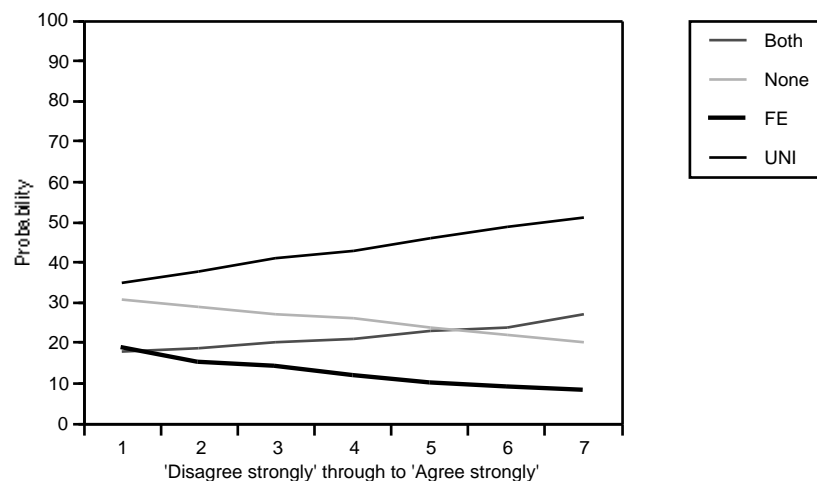
3.125 Figure 26 displays the predicted probabilities for the statement ‘ I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my academic ability’. Most notably, the ‘None’ group appears to agree with this statement most frequently, which is followed closely by the ‘FE only’ group.

Figure 26: Attitude: ‘I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my academic ability’



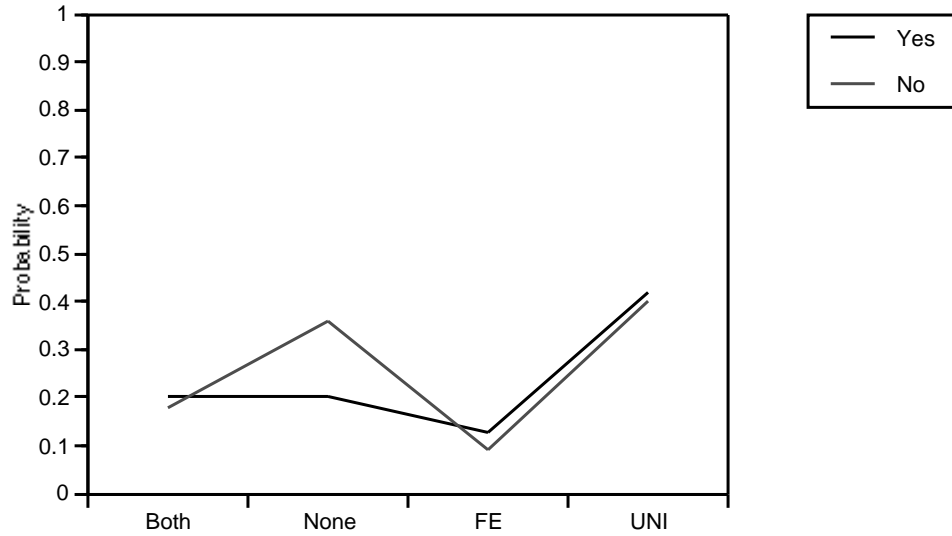
3.126 Figure 27 displays the responses to the statement ‘I do better at school than my friends’. With regard to the ‘Agree strongly’ pole of the scale, the ‘University only’ group have a greater predicted probability than other groups – ‘None’ and ‘Both’ groups score approximately equal, and the ‘FE only’ group are the least probable to endorse this pole of the statement.

Figure 27: Attitude: ‘I do better at school than my friends’



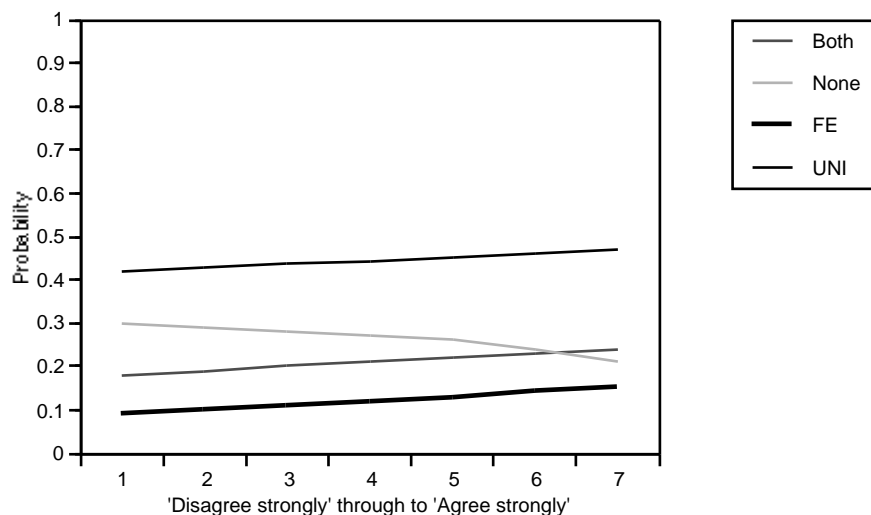
3.127 Figure 28 gives the predicted probabilities for the participants who report that they have made a career decision against those participants who have not. With the exception of the 'None' group, the predicted probabilities for participants within (not across) the other groups are almost equally favourable. Interestingly, for those participants in the 'None' group, most have not made a career decision.

Figure 28: Have made a Career Decision



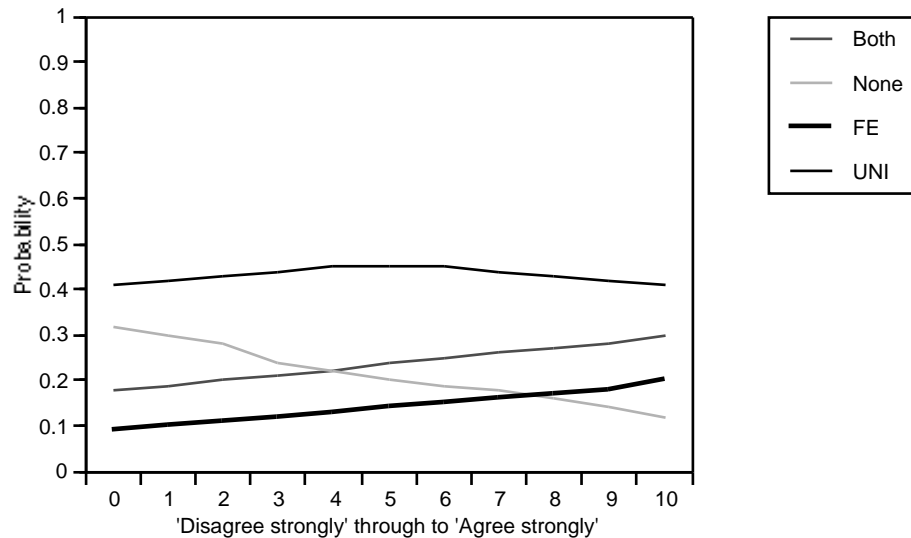
3.128 Figure 29 illustrates the predicted probabilities for the statement 'I feel pressure from my friends to go out after school'. Results appear to be fairly evenly distributed within the seven categories for each grouping, thereby indicating that the probability of being pressured by friends is diffused across the respondents.

Figure 29: 'I feel pressure from my friends to go out after school'



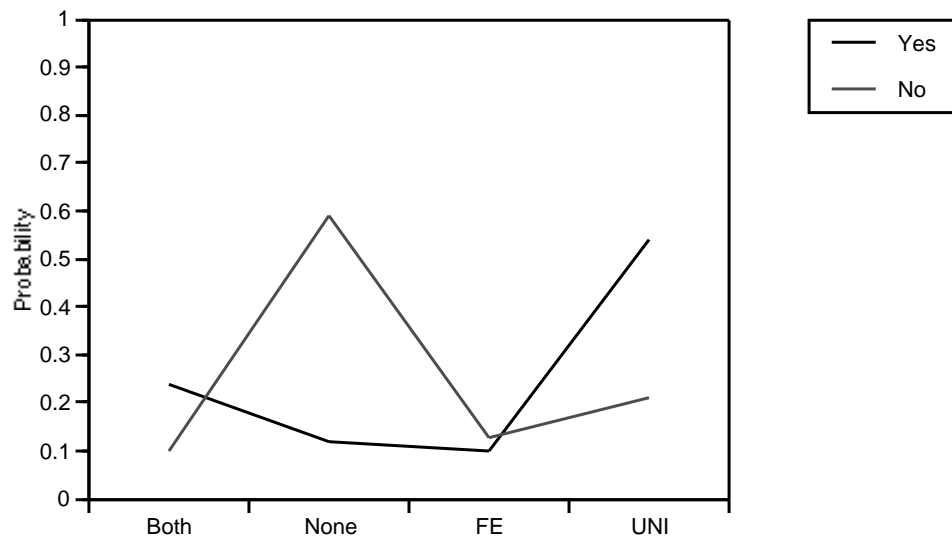
3.129 Figure 30 provides information on the number of sources of information about qualifications, which participants received. The proportion for those participants who wish to proceed to university remains relatively constant, while both the 'FE only' and 'Both' groups rise slightly. In contrast the 'None' group appear to assess the least number of sources of information regarding qualifications.

Figure 30: Number of Sources of Information about Qualifications



3.130 Figure 31 displays the predicted probabilities for participants whose friends intend to go to further education across the four groups. From the graph it is evident that for those participants who wish to proceed to university, a substantial number of their friends also intend to progress to university. Similarly, the predicted probabilities associated with the 'None' group also suggests that individuals who do not wish to progress have friends of the same inclination. For the 'FE only' group there is little difference between those participants whose friends intend to go to further education, i.e. this outcome is almost equally probable. Similar to the 'University only' group, the 'Both' group are more likely to have friends who intend to proceed.

Figure 31: Friends intend to go to further education



Conclusion

3.131 It is evident from the multinomial logistic regression model that variables such as FSM, religion and parent's socioeconomic status, do not contribute significantly in predicting pupils' aspirational choice. Variables which contributed significantly to the model included: school performance rates, school management type, Household Proximity Index score (HPI), gender, pupil attitudes, having made a career decision and friends intending to go to further education.

3.132 The information detailed in this section identifies a number of differences and similarities across the four groups in relation to the predictor variables identified in the multinomial logistic regression model. This information, and indeed the modelling process, highlights the collective impact of a number of hard and soft indices, which contribute to pupils' decisions to progress (or not) to further and/or higher education. This analytic process is of substantive utility since it describes pupils' experiences, influences and perceptions both within and outside the school environment.

Careers Teachers Interviews

3.133 The careers teachers' interviews were designed to obtain opinions from professionals with direct experience of working with pupils who are

currently thinking about progressing to further education college and/or university. A total of 20 out of a possible 21 teachers responded.

3.134 Regarding the personal characteristics of these individuals, a 50/50 gender balance was achieved. Most of these professionals were also departmental heads – of careers – although in 7 cases, teachers were also involved in the delivery of other subjects, e.g. maths, history or science. A breakdown of school management type is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Management type of schools by gender and school type

Management Type	Gender	School Type
CONTROLLED 1	BOYS'	SECONDARY
CONTROLLED 2	BOYS'	SECONDARY
CONTROLLED 3	CO-ED	SECONDARY
CONTROLLED 4	GIRLS'	SECONDARY
CONTROLLED 5	CO-ED	SECONDARY
CONTROLLED 6	CO-ED	SECONDARY
CONTROLLED 7	CO-ED	GRAMMAR
GRANT MAINTAINED INTEGRATED (GMI)	CO-ED	SECONDARY
RC MAINTAINED 1 (RCM 1)	BOYS'	SECONDARY
RC MAINTAINED 2 (RCM 2)	BOYS'	SECONDARY
RC MAINTAINED 3 (RCM 3)	BOYS'	SECONDARY
RC MAINTAINED 4 (RCM 4)	GIRLS'	SECONDARY
RC MAINTAINED 5 (RCM 5)	BOYS'	SECONDARY
RC MAINTAINED 6 (RCM 6)	GIRLS'	SECONDARY
VOLUNTARY 1	CO-ED	GRAMMAR
VOLUNTARY 2	GIRLS'	GRAMMAR
VOLUNTARY 3	GIRLS'	GRAMMAR
VOLUNTARY 4	GIRLS'	GRAMMAR
VOLUNTARY 5	BOYS'	GRAMMAR
VOLUNTARY 6	BOYS'	GRAMMAR

Careers advice at school

3.135 When asked how pupils access careers advice, it is found that in 8 schools, teachers "send for the pupil", while in 9 schools, pupils

generally seek advice. There are "regular time-tabled sessions" in 15 schools, while only 4 schools have "a single session supported by an appointments scheme".

3.136 With regard to the actual advice giving procedure, a number of schools comment that a T&EA careers officer interviews each individual year 12 pupil during the course of the year (RCM 1, RCM 2, Voluntary 3, Controlled 4, GMI, Controlled 5, Voluntary 6 and RCM 5). At RCM 1 there are also proposals for a purpose-designed facility, with "open available resources to all". Voluntary 3 pupils access careers advice via Odyssey computer software, along with a class interview with a year tutor. Voluntary 4 runs a 10-week careers module; pupils in this school are also able to ask for an interview, with imminent leavers selected for individual interviews.

3.137 A number of possible procedural improvements are suggested. While one teacher indicated that pupils would benefit from an increase in the number of time-tabled sessions, another would like to encourage as many pupils as possible to progress to sixth form, but recognises that this path is "not always the best option". He would also like to have time in school solely for interviewing one-to-one. RCM 3 believes that careers advice should begin earlier. It is also felt that they "should get the culture sorted out" and that the "problem", regarding non-progression, is with the "black economy/welfare society" of people "always getting [things] without effort". Another teacher also highlights the fact that help from the T&EA has stopped.

3.138 Issues discussed most often with Year 12 pupils include: A levels, GNVQ's, career opportunities from further education college, personal and social issues and the college environment, while issues such as transportation are discussed less frequently.

Awareness of Further Education college and university

3.139 When asked how they think their Year 12 pupils view FE college, 11 of the 20 careers teachers believe that pupils view further education 'Very positively'. Other responses range from 'Fairly negatively' to 'Don't know'. Some of the more specific comments include:

"Some think it is somewhere they can go and doss, not as much pressure as school" (Controlled 1).

"More focused pupils see it more positively" (Controlled 1).

- 3.140 Teachers were also asked whether Year 12 pupils are aware of the location of their local FE college: 19 out of 20 responded affirmatively. Other issues probed include: awareness about qualifications needed to access local FE college (17 teachers), awareness about the range of courses at FE college (15 teachers), awareness about qualifications available at FE college (15 teachers) and transport to and from these colleges (8 teachers).
- 3.141 Teachers were also questioned as to their Year 12 pupils' awareness of university. A total of 15 teachers believe that their Year 12 pupils are aware of the location of the local universities, and of the qualifications required in order to access them. Twelve teachers indicate that these particular pupils know about the range of courses/qualifications available at most universities, although only 3 teachers think they would be aware of transport to and from these universities.

School relationships with further education college and university

- 3.142 Three quarters of schools surveyed are "frequently involved" with further education colleges in terms of information provision (12 secondary schools, 3 grammar schools), and 11 schools "frequently involved" in terms of careers advice (9 secondary and 2 grammar schools). In comparison, 10 secondary schools state that they rarely visit local colleges, although 9 attend college open days. Overall, it appears that grammar schools are less involved with further education colleges than secondary schools.
- 3.143 A number of colleges visit schools to give talks once a year and many students from the schools attend further education college open days. Eight out of the 20 schools are "frequently" involved with universities as regards information provision, while 2 are "never" involved. Contact or involvement with local universities includes visits once a year from university personnel or visits to open days at Queen's and 7 the

University of Ulster. Voluntary 4 believes that although university information is too "glossy" - magazines and posters upon which there is "too much money spent" - "contacts have improved greatly over the years". RCM 5 thinks not overloading pupils with information is important, while Voluntary 6 believes that more "frequent" access to universities throughout the year, rather than one open day, would improve contacts between schools and universities. RCM 4 believes that people tend to think solely of the link between universities and grammar schools, rather than secondaries, and that universities could raise the profile of GNVQ: "University of Ulster already do this but Queen's aren't interested".

Progression rates to Further Education College

- 3.144 When giving an indication of the percentage of Year 12 pupils intending to progress to further education college, generally lower numbers of grammar school pupils, compared to secondary school pupils, are thought to be interested in progressing to further education college.
- 3.145 At RCM 2, it is thought that 50% of pupils are intent on progressing to further education college. Controlled 4 believe it "very difficult to assess [numbers progressing], as pupils change their minds when GCSE results become available. It also depends on individual years". Of the Year 12 pupils not intending to progress to further education college, careers teachers suggest that they are most likely to go back to school to do A levels, get a job, undertake Jobskills training or apprenticeships.
- 3.146 The most often named further education colleges for possible progression are BIFHE, Castlereagh and East Antrim Institute.
- 3.147 The majority of careers teachers indicate that in the main, pupils considered Queen's University and the University of Ulster to be their Year 12 pupils' most likely choice of university. Controlled 3 indicates that pupils in this school would generally not progress to university. At RCM 2, pupils are normally informed regarding university opportunities in "England", as "requirements are less demanding", although according to Controlled 6, "a lot of pupils don't want to go to a UK university for financial reasons". Results also suggest that pupils not

intending to progress to university are most likely to go into employment, training schemes, GNVQ courses or repeat A levels.

Barriers to progression

Non-progression

- 3.148 While it emerges that 9 teachers believe that pupils' will not progress to further education colleges near their school, RCM 3 indicates that some pupils have the attitude of the college being "too far away".
- 3.149 The most frequently named further education college of non-progression is Lisburn, reasons given being "fear", "off the main bus route" and its "image". Tower Street is also mentioned as the college least likely to be attended, as is East Antrim Institute. RCM 4 indicates that if a college is in a "loyalist" area, pupils will not go for safety reasons, while others view it as being too far away (Voluntary 5). RCM 5 comments that pupils will not go to Castlereagh further education college because of the risk of receiving "sectarian abuse from other students" in addition to being "too far away".
- 3.150 Of potential barriers to progression, 12 teachers regard "poor financial support" as the main barrier to progression, while 5 teachers highlight the "need for the pupil to support their family" as a barrier. In 8 cases, it is believed that Year 12 pupils do not progress to a local further education college due to "peer pressure", while a "lack of support at home" is cited by 11 careers teachers. A further 7 teachers also feel that progressing to FE college is "not the done thing in the area in which they live". Other teachers cite "no family tradition of progression to further education college" (GMI, Controlled 6), "negative parental perceptions" (Voluntary 1 and 4) and "lack of self-esteem, some people preferring to get a job, and having only short-term goals" (Voluntary 4).

Differences between streams

- 3.151 It is found that 14 out of 20 careers teachers perceive a difference in attitudes to Further Education College between differently streamed Year 12 classes in their school. It is felt that:

- Lower ability pupils are more eager to go out and get a job as soon as they leave school (Controlled 2 & 6);
- "Weaker" classes tend to view college for "snobs" only, and perceive college to be "beyond them" (Controlled 3);
- Other "weaker" students look towards further education college as it offers them better curriculum options (Voluntary 3 & 5);
- "Aspirational differences. Some pupils can look at the longer term, and others are influenced by the immediacy of money. [The] Perception is that it is more mature or 'manly' to get out of education as quickly as possible to earn money even if only in the 'Black economy'".

3.152 In terms of different attitudes to university, 14 teachers indicate that there are differences between streams. Those in "lower" streams are generally thought to have low self-esteem in relation to their potential (RCM 1), or not even be thinking of university (Controlled 1). Voluntary 1 comments that:

"Pupils from more middle class backgrounds see progression as natural, than working class pupils who are more wary, even if they have the ability".

3.153 At RCM 2, the "lower" streams are viewed as being "not interested" in university, with the higher classes viewing it as an avenue for getting out of the "poverty trap".

Gender differences

3.154 With regard to the perception of gender differences in attitudes towards further education college and university, Voluntary 1 believes that "girls are more motivated"; GMI also indicates that "girls are more predisposed" to the idea of doing "something else". In relation to university he comments that:

"There is more of an innate motivation with girls [. . .] boys don't look at further education in the same way, they use delaying tactics".

Controlled 5 also indicates that "girls are more willing" to go to FE college and/or university.

Parental role

3.155 When asked about the importance of parental influence on Year 12 pupils' choices after GCSE, 16 careers teachers regard them as either "Extremely" or "Very" important. Only one teacher thinks that the influence of parents is "Not very important". Controlled 4 thinks that parents need to be made aware of opportunities available and encourage their children, since "too often these decisions are left to the pupil". RCM 4 notes that "parents tend to support, but not actually influence".

3.156 When asked if there are ways in which parents could play a more active role in encouraging their children to progress to further education college, Voluntary 1 indicates that often parents' perception of further education college is that it is "inferior" or a "sign of failure", and that parents would "prefer them to go back to school". Voluntary 2 believes that:

"Further education colleges need to push their own image first and then parents may take on a more positive perception and encourage their children".

While RCM 1 comments that many parents have helped to:

"Steer (unwillingly or otherwise) their offspring into many of the traditional trades i.e. mechanics, electrical, plumbing, bricklaying etc.".

3.157 One careers teacher in a boys' secondary notes that in the past, although invited, very few parents attended careers interviews set up with the T&EA. It is also suggested that parents should play a more active role by making sure their child attends "school every day" and "not telling lies for them", also making sure they are doing their homework and not working in a job for too many hours. Another indicates that "parents need to be involved a lot more" and need to be

educated themselves, as they have very "parochial attitudes with the boys, especially from the Ardoyne area".

- 3.158 Responses from the grammar sector, however, highlight the different attitudes towards further education college. Voluntary 5 comments that it "pre-supposes that [parents] want them to go to further education college, but that's not necessarily what is encouraged because most do A levels", while Voluntary 6 notes that "frequently parents are not aware of Post 16 options other than what the school provides i.e. A levels and GNVQ Advanced Business".

Transport

- 3.159 Transport provision between a schools catchment area and its local FE colleges also seems to be dependent upon school location, although a number of careers teachers comment on transport difficulties if more than two bus journeys are required in order to attend the college.

Addressing barriers to progression

- 3.160 When asked to highlight any ways in which barriers to progression might be addressed, suggestions include:

"Try to motivate the boys to see the value of further education"
(Controlled 1).

"More sponsorship from professional bodies and companies"
(Voluntary 1).

- 3.161 Voluntary 2 comments that, "There is a perception that A levels are best", indicating that an advertising campaign by BIFHE would help, as parents and children don't know about FE college courses being affiliated to universities. One teacher notes that peer pressure could be addressed through "careers classes" and "school in general".
- 3.162 Controlled 1 indicates that contacts between their school and local further education colleges might be improved by working closely with other colleges, as they do with Castlereaugh. A number of other schools state that their contacts were good. Voluntary 2 believes there

should be more advertising about courses and pointed out that there are not enough prospectuses provided (100 pupils – 5 prospectuses). RCM 1 suggests that a greater range of accredited vocational courses should be delivered in partnership. The teacher at RCM 5 states that the new BIFHE building at Millfield will be better, as BIFHE out-centres are currently widely dispersed.

Key findings:

- 3.163 Lower numbers of grammar, compared to secondary, school pupils are thought to want to progress to further education college.
- 3.164 Lack of support at home and poor financial support were cited as the main barriers to progression to FE college by careers teachers in the study.
- 3.165 Careers teachers feel that their Year 12 pupils hold a positive view of FE college, are aware of the location of colleges, the range of courses and the qualifications needed to access FE college.
- 3.166 Three quarters of careers teachers state that their school is frequently involved with FE colleges, although a greater number of these teachers are from secondary rather than grammar schools.
- 3.167 A number of possible procedural improvements are suggested by careers teachers. For example, an increase in the number of time-tabled sessions, increased time for one-to-one interviews, re-implementation of help from the T&EA.
- 3.168 Fourteen out of 20 careers teachers perceive a difference in attitude to further education college between differently streamed Year 12 classes in their schools.
- 3.169 Careers teachers believe there may be disparities between different streamed classes with regards to knowledge about university and university courses.
- 3.170 The parental role is regarded by 16 careers as either "Extremely" or "Very" important in influencing pupil career choice and educational pathway.

3.171 Non-progression to certain FE colleges is highlighted as pupils could be at greater risk of 'sectarian abuse' in these places.

Focus Groups

3.172 A total of 9 schools were selected for the focus group component of Phase 3. In order to provide cross-community balance, 4 of these schools were Controlled and 4 were RC Maintained. The remaining school was Integrated.

3.173 Each discussion group consisted of 8 pupils. The selected pupils were taken, in streamed schools, from the lower and intermediate bands. In most cases, the respondents had also previously participated in the questionnaire survey of Phase 2. The discussion was constructed around five themes, the results of which follow.

Future Career Intentions

3.174 The range of pupils' potential occupations is diverse, mirroring the responses obtained to the equivalent question in the Phase 2 questionnaire. Although approximately half of all those surveyed in the focus groups have not as yet decided upon a future career path, in all, a total of 43 (out of 74) pupils have a possible career in mind. The most popular choices are: electrician/electrical engineering (4) and travel/travel agent (3), although a considerable number of responses are clustered in what might be termed "caring" professions, e.g. "nurse", "care assistant" and "child psychologist".

3.175 There is also a considerable gender divide, particularly noticeable between single sex schools, with male pupils gravitating towards the traditional "manual" occupations ("mechanic", "engineer", "electrician", etc.) and female pupils opting for the aforementioned caring professions, although a number of female respondents do proffer non-gender traditional career choices: "fire-fighter" and "draughtsperson". Two respondents in North Belfast Girls' 1 at a later stage in the discussion also express an interest in pursuing a career in engineering.

Career Influences

- 3.176 The diversity of responses to the issue of career choice influence, once again concurs with the questionnaire responses. A number of pupils offer no explanation as to why they have decided upon their particular career choice, while others have multiple reasons.
- 3.177 For those intent upon pursuing a career in a manual occupation, prior knowledge of the job they would like to do, gained through either part-time employment or work experience, seems to be particularly influential, e.g. in West Belfast Boys' 1 and 2. Parental influence also seems to be strong throughout the groups, but particularly prevalent in the RC Maintained schools. In addition, other influential factors include: interest in a particular subject; a distaste for office work, which was particularly prevalent in the Controlled schools; and positive role models (e.g. Richard Branson, stated in West Belfast Girls).

Post-GCSE Plans

- 3.178 The responses elicited to the question of pupils' post-GCSE plans revealed a somewhat dichotomised picture. One split was between those pupils staying on at school to pursue A levels and those following other paths.
- 3.179 Those pupils intent on staying on at school are clustered in North Belfast Co-ed 1 (3), North Belfast Girls' 1 (3) and East Belfast Boys' (2); at North Belfast Co-ed 2 and West Belfast Girls, practically all pupils indicate that they intend to stay on for A levels or AS levels, provided they obtain the necessary grades at GCSE. This is in direct contrast to West Belfast Boys 1, where only 1 pupil has further educational plans, although others are undecided. At North Belfast Girls' 2, a number of the pupils are also unsure of what educational course to take next. One of the respondents in this group explains:

"I dunno whether to leave or not. Everybody seems to be staying on. I don't want to be left out. I couldn't cope [with that]. I have to have my social life".

3.180 This represents an important aspect of post-GCSE educational planning, not always made explicit in the questionnaire responses to Phase 2, of pupils not wanting to be left behind or excluded from their peers. The social aspect of education and future educational planning appears to play a key role in future choices for Year 12 pupils. Alternatively, pupils will stay at school, seeing Sixth form as a default option:

"I don't know what to do yet and will do A levels in the meantime" (West Belfast Boys' 2).

"I don't want to leave school yet. [I] couldn't be bothered to go out and work yet" (East Belfast Boys').

3.181 Others simply fear the consequences of not pursuing further education, as the following two pupils illustrate:

"I'm staying on at school. [I can] get qualifications, get a higher paid job. Otherwise you'd be standing on the corner with a blue bag" (East Belfast Boys').

"My sister influenced me. She's a waster who left school. Now she earns £3.60 an hour in a Winemark" (North Belfast Girls' 1).

3.182 This is an interesting finding, in that friends and older family members can act as role models who have made career and educational choices which are to be avoided. This is a phenomenon also present in parents' accounts, where the negative impact of an older sibling's experience, at a particular educational institution or in a specific occupation, is looked upon as a lesson to be learnt by the younger family members.

3.183 Of the other pupils who wish to pursue post-GCSE paths outside the education system, the most frequently cited options are work, apprenticeship and further education college. For a small but highly vocal minority, going straight into the employment market is the only option considered.

- 3.184 The option of undergoing an apprenticeship is also popular with several pupils. Two of the pupils in North Belfast Girls' 1 would like to follow this route into a career in engineering, one being influenced by her prior work experience, the other, by her brother.
- 3.185 Further education college is only considered by a small number of pupils as the preferred option. One pupil at North Belfast Co-ed 1 is intending to attend Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE) in order to study hairdressing, while interest is expressed at East Belfast Co-ed in GNVQs in leisure and hotel and catering.

Study Culture

- 3.186 On the question of "study culture", major disparities are revealed between and within discussion groups on the key issues of attitudes to homework, amount of homework undertaken and home study environment.
- 3.187 Two distinct trends emerge in relation to pupils' views of homework, i.e. those who can see the value of homework and those who can not appreciate any benefits. At North Belfast Co-ed 1, although the pupils attest to the fact that they do not receive much in the way of assignments, it is felt that homework is a "good way of consolidating the information you need to learn stuff". Likewise, at West Belfast Boys' 2, one pupil feels that homework "makes you smarter and gets you qualifications".
- 3.188 In other schools, homework is similarly valued, but not always welcome. At the other extreme, the West Belfast Boys' 1 respondents attest to the fact that they "haven't done any for 3 years". At East Belfast Boys', one pupil declares that "I haven't done one this year", although he confesses to doing coursework.

Home Study Environment

- 3.189 One issue in the homework debate raised by a small number of respondents across the different focus groups, is the unsuitability of the home environment for studying. The main difficulties appear to be the noise in households with children and/or animals:

"There's a lot of kids around our house" (West Belfast Boys' 2).

"There are seven in my family and it is not easy getting peace and quiet to study" (West Belfast Girls').

3.190 Further temptation for pupils, away from homework, is provided by friends calling in the evenings or at weekends, a finding which mirrors that of the pilot study (Cairns et al 2000: 95). At East Belfast Boys', pupils feel that they are under pressure to go out if "your mates come 'round".

3.191 One solution has been to set up study rooms at school, as has been the case in North Belfast Co-ed 2, although in this instance, the "solution" has brought with it the attendant disruption caused by interrupting teachers and friends. As a further alternative, at North Belfast Co-ed 1, "Mentors" are employed to help set out revision plans, a measure to which pupils seem to have responded positively.

Awareness of Further Education College

3.192 Generally, pupils do not seem to possess a great deal of knowledge regarding FE provision in their area. Where awareness of an educational or training organisation is present, this tends to be due to the pupil in question either having personal experience of the institution, e.g. day release, or having received a visit from a college representative to their school:

3.193 There are also a number of pupils who are aware of further education colleges by virtue of an institution being sited near their home. However, in each of the groups, there are always a small number of pupils who, by their answers to subsequent questions regarding the college environment, seem aware of the existence of their local college, despite not saying so initially.

3.194 Other pupils at North Belfast Co-ed 1 are aware of their local further education college, BIFHE, but not the courses available, as their local college's prospectus has not yet arrived. The pupils at North Belfast Co-ed 2 also explain that they are "not getting much information – except at open days":

"We would like the FE personnel to come 'round regarding options available".

"We want to know about more instead of just A levels".

3.195 Other pupils in this group, however, are of the opinion that FE college is only for people who are "slow" and want to do something "vocational" or "learning a trade". For this reason, they would prefer to "stay in [school] than go to tech".

3.196 At West Belfast Girls' the perception of further education college is very much as a place offering practical courses and GNVQs. Likewise in North Belfast Girls' 1, the local college, in this case East Antrim, is solely associated with courses on word processing, joinery and plumbing.

3.197 On the issue of awareness of college environment, in a number of groups, a more vocal response is made. Some of the most colourful opinions are voiced at West Belfast Boys' 1, were one pupil comments:

"Students are all losers, like Barney Gumball out of The Simpsons".

3.198 While at East Belfast Boys', it is felt that at college, you can "just sit there, smoke, play snooker, computer games". There is also some derision expressed towards particular institutions, Rupert Stanley – "Stupid Rupert" – in particular, at West Belfast Boys' 2.

Barriers to Progression

3.199 A number of issues are brought to light regarding barriers to possible progression. At two schools – West Belfast Girls' and East Belfast Boys' – it is felt that there would be less support from tutors at college, compared to what was on offer from teachers at school. Pupils at West Belfast Girls' also feel pressure from their parents to stay on at their school "so they can have a better life than them". The financial burden of further education is also raised at North Belfast Girls' and East Belfast Boys'. In the latter school, one pupil pronounces:

"I wouldn't want to go. Imagine paying to be educated".

University

3.200 Awareness of university differs greatly across groups. In North Belfast Co-ed 1, there is little or no thought of progressing to higher education; likewise, initially, West Belfast Boys' 1, North Belfast Girls' 1 and 2, West Belfast Boys' 2, East Belfast Co-ed and East Belfast Boys'. However, on discussing the matter further in each group, a number of pupils do indicate that they know of the local universities - University of Ulster and Queen's - even if they know nothing about them. Often, they do not even know the name of the institution, only where it is located:

"Only one I know is Coleraine. And Jordanstown. I think that Jordanstown do a lot of sports there" (East Belfast Co-ed).

"I know that one, the one like a big castle" (North Belfast Girls' 1).

3.201 At North Belfast Co-ed 2 and West Belfast Girls, a higher level of awareness in regard to higher educational institutions is found. In the former, pupils mention not only the local universities but also a number further afield, including Trinity (Dublin) and Napier (Edinburgh), while the West Belfast Girls' pupils mention going away to England or America to study, to gain a sense of independence.

3.202 There is a major divergence of opinion, often within groups, upon the value attached to higher education. As is the case with some of the pupils in the pilot study, (Cairns et al 2000: 97) several pupils highlight the attractions of university social life. On the other hand, a number of pupils question whether the extra time spent studying is worthwhile:

"When you leave school, that's you finished, because you can get a job . . . you can make money" (West Belfast Boys' 1).

3.203 When considering the question of barriers to progression, two distinct trends emerge. In North Belfast Co-ed 2 and West Belfast Girls', most pupils feel that the main hurdle to be overcome is the obtaining of the appropriate entry grades. In the other groups, very few pupils venture as far as to discuss grades, and when they do so, it is in purely negative terms ("bad GCSEs" (East Belfast Co-ed). The financial burden of higher education is also discussed in these two groups and

although a source of concern ("you could end up working in MacDonalds if you go to university" (North Belfast Co-ed 2) it is not thought to be a deterrent in itself. In the other schools, however, the financial burden is thought to be more cumbersome.

- 3.204 Pupils in the remaining schools are also found to be more concerned with personal and social issues than those in West Belfast Girls' and North Belfast Co-ed 2. Several pupils in North Belfast Girls' 1 feel that they would not fit in at university as they perceive students as too "smart" or they perceive themselves as not "smart" enough. At West Belfast Boys' 1, one pupil feels that "[we] haven't got the right things", while at West Belfast Boys' 2, another pupil asks:

"I want to be an electrician, so could I go to university?"

- 3.205 This opinion and others like it suggest an imagined cultural incompatibility between these pupils' self-perceptions and their views of what it means to be a university student. They cannot see how someone from their background, with their values, opinions and orientations, can possibly "fit in" at university.

Key findings:

- 3.206 A total of 43 (out of 74) focus group pupils have a possible career in mind. The most popular choices are: electrician/electrical engineering (4) and travel/travel agent (3), although a considerable number of responses are clustered in what might be termed "caring" professions, e.g. "nurse", "care assistant" and "child psychologist".
- 3.207 There is a gender divide in relation to career choice, particularly noticeable between single sex schools, with male pupils gravitating towards the traditional "manual" occupations ("mechanic", "engineer", "electrician", etc.) and female pupils opting for the aforementioned caring professions.
- 3.208 For those intent upon pursuing a career in a manual occupation, prior knowledge of the job they would like to do, gained through either part-time employment or work experience, is particularly influential.

- 3.209 Friends and older family members can act as role models who have made career and educational choices which participants believe should be avoided.
- 3.210 Interruptions in the home by other family members and temptation from friends to go out in the evening are cited as factors which interfere in pupils' study patterns.
- 3.211 Generally, pupils do not seem to possess a great deal of knowledge regarding FE provision in their area.
- 3.212 Negative perceptions of students attending FE college emerge, with some pupils believing students could "just sit there, smoke, play snooker, computer games".
- 3.213 Attendance at FE college is associated primarily with vocational type courses, such as plumbing or joinery.
- 3.214 It is felt that there is less support from tutors at FE college, compared to what is on offer from teachers at school.
- 3.215 A number of pupils indicate that they know of the local universities - University of Ulster and Queen's - even if they know nothing about them.
- 3.216 Pupils' opinions in the focus groups suggest an imagined cultural incompatibility between these pupils' self-perceptions and their views of what it means to be a university student. They cannot see how someone from their background, with their values, opinions and orientations, can possibly "fit in" at university.

Parents' Interviews

- 3.217 A total of 50 interviews were conducted with parents of pupils who had previously responded to the Phase 2 questionnaire. The interview schedule, as detailed in the methodology section, was divided into four sections, the results of which follow.

Part 1: About Yourself

3.218 Parents' experiences of formal education, e.g. schools/colleges/universities attended and/or qualifications gained, were as follows:

Table 7: Parents' highest educational experience

School Type	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Secondary	33	66.0	66.0
Grammar	6	12.0	78.0
College	4	8.0	86.0
University	7	14.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

3.219 From Table 7, it can be seen that the majority of parents, 33 (66%), have progressed only as far as secondary education, with only 4 and 7 parents progressing as far as further education college and university respectively. The range of institutions attended varies greatly, as might be expected, while a number of parents continue to reside within the catchment areas of the schools they once attended, particularly in West Belfast. In a few cases, these parents even attended the same school as their children.

3.220 In terms of contextualising the issue of parents' attitudes towards education, is the issue of parental success in obtaining qualifications. Table 8 provides an insight into the educational attainment of the parents, in terms of qualifications obtained. At one extreme, a total of 20 parents (40%) have no formal qualifications, while at the other, two parents have progressed as far as post-graduate education, in both cases, with teaching qualifications. Regarding college qualifications, 4 parents have obtained NVQ's, as mature students, while a small number have managed to complete RSA's in typing or word processing. Other qualifications held by individual respondents include: Irish Junior, City and Guilds bricklaying, Assessors Award, Diploma in IT and HND in Business Studies.

Table 8: Parents' highest obtained qualifications

Qualifications	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
None	20	40.0	40.0
O levels	8	16.0	56.0
A levels	3	6.0	62.0
NVQ	4	8.0	70.0
Other college qualifications	6	12.0	82.0
Degree	7	14.0	96.0
Post-graduate degree	2	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

3.221 Parental attitudes to their own education are rated equally positively and negatively by parents, i.e., 17 parents (34%) view their educational experiences as either positive or negative. Many parents are able to elaborate upon their opinions, particularly those with negative educational experiences:

"You've more choice nowadays. You were limited in what you could do [then]."

"It was awful . . . you were bullied by the teachers. They would throw books at you and hit you. I went to the same school as Bobby Sands, so you can imagine what it was like."

3.222 These comments are almost exclusively found amongst parents in West Belfast. Others elsewhere do express more positive feelings regarding their educational experience:

"I went to Belfast High School, then University of Ulster, then Stranmillis [and obtained] a first class BA and an MA in educational development . . . In Northern Ireland, if you're willing to work, you get the chances."

3.223 A total of 14 parents have some experience of education outside of mainstream schooling. Of greatest popularity are vocational courses, most popularly, with computers (e.g. CLAIT or RSA word processing), and courses at work, such as health and safety and first aid. Other

courses attended include reflexology, aromatherapy, victim support, sign language and assertiveness.

Future Career Plans

3.224 Parents report that 36 (72%) pupils had career plans, while 14 (28%) have not. In regard to what these plans consist of, a varied picture emerges.

The most popular choices are "Teaching" (5 pupils), usually at primary school, and "Computing" (5 pupils), followed by "Law" (4 pupils) and "Journalism" (3 pupils).

3.225 In regard to parental influence in the making of a son/daughter's career choice, the level – and form - of input varies greatly. A total of 15 (46.9%) parents have offered some form of encouragement or support, typically in the form of advice and assistance in deciding upon their son/daughter's future career path; a further 4 parents have at least discussed the matter. However, 13 parents (40.6%) report that they have had little or no influence over their son/daughter's future career path.

3.226 Parents were asked about their son/daughter's immediate intentions after leaving school. It emerges that doing A levels at school is by far the most popular choice noted by parents, with 35 (70%) of pupils intending to choose this option. In comparison, parents of 9 pupils express the view that their son/daughter is intent upon progressing to FE college (1 for A levels, the remaining 8 for "other courses", e.g. NVQ). In all, 49 out of 50 parents indicate support for their son/daughter's educational choices.

Attitudes Towards Learning

3.227 As an adjunct to the corresponding questions in the Phase 2 questionnaire, parents are asked to tell us about their perceptions of their son/daughter's homework habits. It is found that perceptions of time spent on homework are generally high, with 22 pupils reported by their parents as doing "Between one and two hours" home study, 7 pupils doing "Three hours" and 10 pupils "Over three hours".

Interestingly, only 2 parents are unaware of how much home study their son or daughter undertakes on an average day. These results are a significant contrast to those obtained for the corresponding questions in the Phase 2 questionnaire, where pupils' self-reports are of generally a lot less time being spent at home study.

- 3.228 Almost a third of parents feel that they are not required to help by their son or daughter when it comes to homework, although 8 parents feel that they would not be able to offer any substantial help, typically because their understanding of their son or daughter's work is "beyond them". Other parents are able to assist in a number of ways, helping with coursework (4 responses), checking homework (3 responses), help with spelling and trips to the local library.
- 3.229 In relation to computer access, 38 parents (86%) state their children have access to a computer at home, 32 of these indicating that they could also access the internet.

Pupil attitude to education

- 3.230 Parental perceptions of their son/daughter's attitude towards their school are generally positive, as the following comments from parents illustrate:

"Loves school. No intention of leaving".

"Loves it and enjoys the work and thinks the teachers are excellent".

- 3.231 Peer influence is perceived as the most important influence upon a pupil's opinion of their school, with a total of 13 responses (26%). The school itself – either in terms of its teachers or its general atmosphere, positive or negative – also proves a significant factor with a total of 15 responses.
- 3.232 Parents were also asked about the location of their local further education college: 48 out of the 50 respondents were aware of the location. Belfast Institute of Further And Higher Education (BIFHE) – in

its various guises – is the one most often named, with "Newtownabbey" (East Antrim) second.

3.233 Parents were also asked to tell us what they thought about their local further education college, in terms of whether they view the institution positively or negatively. Very few negative opinions are noted, although 18 parents "Don't know", indicating perhaps a lack of awareness of what goes on within these colleges.

3.234 However, when asked whether they would like their son or daughter to attend their local college, in contrast to the positive impression implied by the responses to the preceding question, only 21 parents (42%) respond affirmatively, the remaining respondents indicating a negative response (19 parents) or "Don't know" (10 parents). The diverse responses to this question highlight complexities concerning the issue of parental perception of further education college. Although some parents are certainly positive about FE college, in particular BIFHE, in the majority of accounts what emerges is a view of college as the default destination for pupils who do not attain the required grades to continue with at school.

"If she doesn't do A levels but wants to go on and do something then this [college] offers her an opportunity".

"I feel it's [university] the next step and FE college can't fulfil his needs. If he didn't get good grades it might do, however, because it would still have something to offer".

3.235 Many parents are also quite explicit in their condemnation of their local college, because of the poor range of courses or the negative experience of an older son or daughter, but mostly because of the perceived lack of discipline at college:

"Rather they go back to school. When they go to FE college they drift".

"No discipline. They're left to do what they want. It wouldn't be a good environment for my son to study in. It's an easy option".

- 3.236 Therefore, while college is not often totally disparaged, the impression gained is one of a destination only deemed appropriate in the event of other avenues, namely, A levels at school being closed.
- 3.237 When asked if they think that qualifications obtained from a further education college lead to better career opportunities most parents are positive, although there is also a strong preponderance of "Yes, but . . ." answers, e.g. "As a second chance" or "Depends on future job choice".
- 3.238 Furthermore, when asked if they want their son/daughter to go to university, a total of 44 parents (88%) respond affirmatively. In regard to which universities they wish to see their children attend, 25 parents suggest Queens, while 17 opt for the University of Ulster, many selecting both. Other choices include St. Mary's, Trinity, Heriot Watt and Oxford.
- 3.239 The parents were then asked to tell us why they have made these particular choices. The proximity of the local universities – QUB and UU – is obviously appealing to many (19) parents. Related to proximity are financial considerations. In fact, some parents reason for wanting their children to stay within Northern Ireland is because of the anticipated reduction of the financial burden, should their son/daughter remain living at home.
- 3.240 At total of 16 parents feel that attending university will lead to "Better job opportunities" in some way. Some parents unreservedly endorse third level education, while others are more cautious:
- "It depends on the degree they choose. So if they choose, say, history or art, they're not going to get a job necessarily in a good area".
- "It does and it doesn't. I know people with degrees who are still sitting at home. But I suppose it does [help] in a way".
- 3.241 These cases represent the parents who think that university qualifications only "Sometimes" or "Hopefully" lead to enhanced opportunities, who represent a small but vocal minority.

Key findings:

- 3.242 Thirty-three (66%) parents have experienced only secondary education, with only 4 and 7 parents progressing as far as further education college and university respectively.
- 3.243 A total of 20 parents (40%) have no formal qualifications, while 2 parents have progressed as far as post-graduate education.
- 3.244 Parents from West Belfast express quite a negative view of their own educational experiences, while other parents have mixed opinions.
- 3.245 "A levels at school" is by far the most popular post-GCSE choice noted by the parents, with 35 (70%) parents believing their son or daughter intends to do A levels. A total of 9 parents feel their son or daughter is intent upon progressing to FE college.
- 3.246 Parents' perceptions of time spent on homework are generally higher than those reported by pupils themselves.
- 3.247 The majority of parents believe their son or daughter has a positive attitude towards school and that peers are most likely to influence their son or daughter's opinion of school.
- 3.248 Most parents hold a positive view of further education, but only 21 (42%) want their son or daughter to progress to FE college, indicating that it may be seen as a default destination for those who do not do well at school.
- 3.249 Negative views are based on experiences of other family members, the poor range of courses available and the perceived lack of discipline in the college.
- 3.250 A total of 44 parents would like to see their son or daughter go to University, mainly to a local university, as there are financial considerations in selecting either Queen's or University of Ulster.

4.0 Discussion

- 4.1 A number of important trends relating to disparities in rates of progression have emerged from the results presented in the previous section, which point attention towards a number of concerns which need to be addressed in terms of future recommendations.

Perception of further education colleges

- 4.2 Analysis of questionnaire data has identified a large body of pupils who have no interest in progressing to further education college: these were pupils who selected 'None' as their aspirational choice or 'University only'. From the focus groups it also seems that many of these pupils have no adequate, or indeed any, concept of what attendance at FE college involves; as a consequence, many pupils find themselves unable to make any value judgements regarding further education. In terms of strategies for improvement, this finding suggests that traditional marketing methods may not be effective, as the potential clients may not be fully aware of what is being marketed.

Proximity influence and zones of geodemographic disparity

- 4.3 In terms of locating disenfranchised or disenchanting pupils, a "proximity effect" is observed; the further the pupil resides from his or her school, the more interest he/she expresses in progressing to either 'University only' or 'Both' university or FE college. Conversely, the closer a pupil lives to their school, the more likely they are to want to progress to 'FE only' or 'None'. Proximity of household to school is, therefore, a significant factor in determining which post-16 choice pupils make. The paradox of this finding, namely that close proximity to a key service is an indicator of the probability that the clients will, in relative terms, derive less benefit from the service may however point to a possible route for improvement. Since the pupils identified as non-progressors have little knowledge of further education colleges and little intention of going to one, it is worthwhile considering the provision of greater availability of vocational A levels at the relevant schools. Where schools do not have the full resources necessary, collaboration with colleges could be encouraged.

4.4 A postcode analysis revealed a larger number of pupils than expected choosing not to progress from BT13 in North Belfast. Despite the finding that there were other pockets of non-progression within BT14 and BT15, pupils living in BT13 were more likely to choose 'None' than any other option. These pupils seem subject to a discourse of parochialism, emanating predominantly from their parents. Through emphasising the need for local and immediate employment this discourse, which has been critiqued by at least one careers teacher, serves to confine the educational pathways and occupational aspirations of children to what is available in their immediate neighbourhood.

Religious influence

4.5 Religious differences emerged in a number a key issues. Overall, a larger number of Protestants than expected chose 'None', 'FE only' or 'Both', while Catholics were more likely to choose 'University only'. In addition, a gender effect was also noted. While Protestant females are more likely to choose to go to 'Both', 'None' or 'FE only', Catholic females are considerably more likely to choose 'University only'.

4.6 In terms of school type and parental setup, there is a greater likelihood that Protestant males at secondary school will choose 'None' than Catholic males at secondary school. Furthermore, Protestant males living with one parent are more likely to express an interest in going to 'Both' or 'None', while Catholic males living with one parent are more likely to choose 'FE only' or 'University only'. The findings therefore highlight a religion effect on pupil aspirations, with further differences indicated when religion is explored in conjunction with gender, as well as school type or parental setup.

Gender influence

4.7 The results clearly illustrate that in relation to educational progression, female pupils are more likely to express an interest in going to either 'FE only', 'University only' or 'Both'. Male pupils, on the other hand, were more likely to choose 'None' as their post-16 educational choice. Within school type, females at secondary school, for example, were more likely to choose 'FE only' than males. Although it would appear

that there is a predominance of males not progressing, while females simultaneously progress, it is, however, important to uncover the career outcome of the progression routes that females actually select, particularly within the FE sector. Attention paid to the quality of the progression, not solely participation rates, may contribute significantly to knowledge and understanding of female progression and career outcomes. The attitudes and intentions of males to disengage from education when compulsory education is completed and undertake employment, highlights the need to emphasise progression routes that are flexible in their approach, such as work-based learning, accreditation routes and NVQ levels. These options may provide opportunities that enable 'non-progressors' to continue to participate in learning by developing their skills, while reducing the likelihood of exclusion from their social and economic environment, thereby promoting active citizenship.

- 4.8 Additionally, while some schools were well supplied with information on courses and qualifications, and had facilities such as careers suites, other schools were not so well equipped; one school had not, as yet, even received a prospectus from their local college. There is obviously room for tightening up the school/FE college relationship, in order to ensure that all pupils receive an adequate and accurate impression of what FE colleges offer in terms of educational pathways.

Careers provision

- 4.9 Clearly, given that the pivotal role of careers teachers is to inform pupils about their future educational and occupational paths, the administrative burden placed upon careers teachers appeared to be excessive and to constitute a barrier to effective careers teaching. Areas such as work experience placement and maintaining effective working relationships with further and higher education institutions were, hence, found by careers teachers to be difficult to manage. In one school, the careers teacher stated that she was so busy that she could not even find the time to complete our questionnaire. There was also regret expressed in a number of schools at the lack – or withdrawal - of support from the T&EA, and this may be intensifying the difficulties experienced by teachers (sections 3.9.1.3 and 3.9.1.4).

- 4.10 Discrepancies also emerged between pupils' reports of information received from their careers teachers and what teachers stated they had told their pupils. Although there are undoubtedly mitigating circumstances, e.g. pupils' inattentiveness or absence from class at crucial times, practitioners should still be aware of the need to make their information provision as clear and comprehensible as possible.

FE and Grammar School

- 4.11 One unexpected outcome of this research has been to illuminate the lack of cooperation between grammar schools and further education colleges, and the almost total absence of contact in at least one case. It was discovered, from the careers teachers, who did not want to be identified, that several grammar schools had an informal policy of discouraging their pupils from considering progressing to FE college as a possible educational pathway, often against the judgements of the careers teachers. It would appear that the importance of other sites of progression is being marginalized. This policy reflects, and may be reinforced, by the views of parents, many of whom were strongly opposed to the thought of their children attending a FE college.

Parental Education

- 4.12 There is a need for parental education concerning the merits - and indeed the demerits - of FE college. While parents' opinions of their local FE college were overwhelmingly positive, when actually asked whether or not they would like their children to attend these colleges, most parents were less positive. The "problem" appeared to be one of repeated stereotyping of FE colleges as sites solely for the learning of "trades" such as joinery, bricklaying or word processing. This "narrow" view of further education was also re-iterated by pupils in the focus groups and careers teachers' reports of their pupils' perceptions of further education. The consequence of holding this view is that FE college is not considered as a site for potential progression, but rather as a place of almost certain regression, to be attended only if exams have been failed, the correct grades have not been obtained, or as an educational institution for those who wish to avoid "intellectual" labour altogether. It is the default educational facility. It is a matter of serious

concern that pupils who were not high achievers, in academic terms, tended to share these views.

FE and culture

- 4.13 Cultural factors manifested themselves throughout the results of this investigation, putting up barriers to progression in numerous ways. Concerns were expressed about the attendant sectarian "fear" factor present at a number of locations, within which, further educational institutions are sited. Careers teachers highlighted a range of FE sites as being considered out of bounds due to the sectarian codification of these areas as exclusively "loyalist".
- 4.14 A number of parents also informed us of their negative educational experiences, attributable to their past experience of marginalisation within the educational system and the job market. However, rather than have a negative impact, these parents tend to encourage their children to progress educationally and wished to see them enjoy the opportunities denied to the previous generation.
- 4.15 The relationship between pupils' social and intellectual interests and progression to FE college and university was also explored. In areas such as the number of hours spent on homework, progressing pupils did seem to do more. Pupils who did not want to progress or who selected 'FE only' were more likely to spend less than one hour per night on homework, in comparison to the three or more hours reported by pupils intending to progress to 'Both' or 'University only'. It would be difficult to argue whether, for instance, the number of hours spent on home study is in any way "responsible" for incubating a desire to progress to FE college and/or university. This may be the case, but it may also be true that such habits are characteristic of pupils more orientated towards educational progression in the first place.
- 4.16 A further cultural issue relating to progression concerns the relationship between and pupils and their friends and family. The general tendency would seem to be for those with friends or family intent upon progressing to, or with family members with prior experience of, further education college and university, to be more likely to want to progress themselves. Conversely, pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups are

less likely to have friends who have attended further or higher education, or to have friends intending to pursue further or higher education progression. Gender differences emerge with regard to family who have attended a further education college or university, males still being more likely than females to select 'None' despite this being the case. It would appear that the prior experiences of family members acts to discourage pupils in the non-progressing group from selecting further education, higher education or both as a post-16 option. Additionally, pupils in the 'None' group were less likely to access different sources of information with regards making a career choice, than the other aspirational groups. However, it was also found that those in the 'None' group were more likely to not have internet access compared to the other groups who are likely to have some form of access. Furthermore, it is pupils in the 'None' and 'FE only' groups who are less likely than the 'Both' and 'University only' groups to have the internet at home. It may be that less information is available to them, thereby reducing the availability of resources that might help inform their decision.

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Appendix 1

Breakdown of schools by their FSM level, progression and performance rates, management type, gender type and school type.

FSM	PROG	PERF	MANAGEMENT TYPE	SCHOOL TYPE	GENDER
HIGH	LOW	LOW	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	BOYS
HIGH	LOW	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
HIGH	LOW	MED	RC MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
HIGH	LOW	MED	RC MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
HIGH	LOW	MED	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
HIGH	LOW	HIGH	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	BOYS
HIGH	HIGH	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
HIGH	MED	LOW	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
HIGH	MED	MED	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
HIGH	HIGH	LOW	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	BOYS
HIGH	HIGH	MED	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	BOYS
HIGH	HIGH	MED	RCMAINTAINED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
HIGH	HIGH	MED	RC MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	GIRL
HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	OTHER MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
MED	LOW	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	BOYS
MED	LOW	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
MED	LOW	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	BOYS
MED	LOW	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	CO-ED
MED	MED	LOW	GRANTMAINTAINED INTEGRATED	SECONDARY	CO-ED
MED	MED	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
MED	MED	LOW	RC MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	BOYS
MED	MED	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	BOYS
MED	MED	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
MED	HIGH	LOW	CONTROLLED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
MED	HIGH	LOW	RC MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
MED	HIGH	LOW	RC MAINTAINED	SECONDARY	GIRLS
MED	HIGH	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	BOYS
LOW	LOW	LOW	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
LOW	LOW	LOW	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	CO-ED
LOW	LOW	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
LOW	LOW	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	CO-ED
LOW	MED	LOW	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
LOW	MED	LOW	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
LOW	MED	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
LOW	MED	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	GIRLS
LOW	HIGH	LOW	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	BOYS
LOW	HIGH	LOW	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	BOYS
LOW	HIGH	LOW	CONTROLLED	GRAMMAR	COED
LOW	HIGH	HIGH	CONTROLLED	GRAMMAR	CO-ED
LOW	HIGH	HIGH	VOLUNTARY	GRAMMAR	BOYS

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

*School of Education
Further and Higher Education Research Unit*

Attitudes to Further and Higher Education Questionnaire

The University of Ulster is currently conducting a survey of attitudes to further and higher education with pupils in the Belfast Education and Library Board area.

This questionnaire is designed to provide information on issues such as pupils' future career intentions and educational plans.

We would be grateful if you could provide responses to the following questions. Please read through the questionnaire carefully and if you have any queries, please ask the researcher for help.

ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL

Thank you for your co-operation.

Part 1: About yourself

Please tell us some details about yourself.

1. **Name** _____

2. **Date of birth**

Month	Year
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

3. **Gender** (please tick box)

- Male
 Female

4. **Address** (including postcode)

5. **How long have you lived in this area?** (please tick only one)

- Less than 5 years 5 to 10 years More than 10 years

6. **Can you tell us who you live with?**

- Both parents
 One parent
 A guardian

7. **Please tell us your parent(s)/guardian(s) occupation(s)**

Father _____

Mother _____

Guardian _____

8. **How many brothers and sisters do you have?** (please tick boxes)

Brothers

Sisters

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One | <input type="checkbox"/> One |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Two |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three | <input type="checkbox"/> Three |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four | <input type="checkbox"/> Four |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five or more | <input type="checkbox"/> Five or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

9. **Which religious community do you belong to?** (please tick only one)

The Protestant community

The Roman Catholic community

Other – please specify _____

9. **Which qualifications are you currently studying for at school?**
(please tick as many boxes as necessary)

GCSE

GNVQ

Other – please specify _____

Part 2: Future career intentions

Please respond to the following questions about your future career plans and choices.

1a. **In relation to your future plans, have you decided upon a possible career?**
(please tick only one)

Yes

No – please go on to question 2

1b. If you have a possible career in mind, please tell us what this is

2a. **How strong an influence would you say the following people had in your career decision making?** (please circle only one rating per item)

	Strong Influence		Don't Know			Weak Influence	
Your mother	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your guardian	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Careers guidance teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Another teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Friend(s) at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Friend(s) outside of school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Youth worker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A member of the clergy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Yourself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2b. **How strong an influence would you say the following things had in your career decision making?** (please circle only one rating per item)

	Strong Influence			Don't Know		Weak Influence	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Television programmes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Newspapers/Magazines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Information on the internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Visitor from further education college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal issues, e.g. disability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Family circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The amount of money earned in this job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other influence – please tell us what this is	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. **Please rate the following statements about work and education on a scale of one to seven** (please circle only one rating per statement)

	Disagree Strongly			Don't Know		Agree Strongly	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The longer I spend in education, the better the job I will get	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My career/job plans require that I go to a training organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My career/job plans require that I go to university	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My career/job plans require that I go to further education college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would like to go out to work as soon as possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning a trade is more important than obtaining qualifications	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Disagree Strongly		Don't Know			Agree Strongly	
Going to further education college would interfere with my social life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People who go to further education college or university are not really doing anything useful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My parent(s)/guardian(s) would like me to go out to work as soon as possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My family would not like me to go to further education college or university	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not many people from my area go to further education college or university	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I don't think I would fit in at further education college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>If you don't think you would fit in at further education college, is this because:</i>							
– I think that most people who attend further education colleges are from a different religious background to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
– I have a personal disability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
– I feel that people who attend further education colleges are from a different social class to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
– I feel that I have an inability at sports	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
– It is mostly people of the opposite sex who study the subject(s) I would like to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I don't think I would fit in at university	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Disagree
Strongly**

**Don't
Know**

**Agree
Strongly**

*If you don't think you
would fit in at university,
is this because:*

– I think that most people
who attend university are
from a different religious
background to me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

– I have a personal
disability

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

– I feel that people who
attend university are from
a different social class
to me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

– I feel that I have an
inability at sports

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

– It is mostly people of
the opposite sex who study
the subject(s) I would like
to do

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. **What are your immediate intentions after finishing your GCSEs?**
(please tick only one)

- A levels at school
 - A levels at further education college
 - Other courses at further education college
 - Training organisation
 - Apprenticeship with a company
 - Training with a company
 - Work
 - Don't know
 - Other – please specify _____
-

5. **What is the name of your local further education college?**

6. **Has anyone from a further education college visited your school recently to discuss courses and qualifications with your class?** (please tick only one)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

7. Which college did they come from?

8a. Please tell us the name(s) of any further education college(s) you would like to attend:

8b. Can you tell us why you chose these particular further education colleges?

8c. Did your choice include your local college? (please tick only one)

- Yes
 No

8d. If yes, please tell us why you chose your local college?

8e. If no, please tell us why you did not choose your local college?

8f. How do you intend to travel to and from this further education college?
(please tick as many boxes as necessary)

- Bus
 Train
 Taxi
 Private car
 Don't know
 Other – please specify _____

9a. Please tell us the name(s) of any university(ies) you would like to attend

9b. **Would you include Queen's University and/or the University of Ulster in your choices?** (please tick only one per item)

Queen's University

Yes

No

University of Ulster

Yes

No

9c. **If yes, you would choose Queen's University, can you tell us why?**

9d. **If no, you would not choose Queen's University, can you tell us why?**

9e. **If yes, you would choose the University of Ulster, can you tell us why?**

9f. **If no, you would not choose the University of Ulster, can you tell us why?**

Part 3: Attitudes towards learning

Please answer the following questions relating to your home studying habits.

1a. **On an average day, how many hours of homework/revision do you think your teacher expect you to do?** (please tick only one box)

Less than one hour

Between one and two hours

Up to three hours

Over three hours

1b. **On an average day, how many hours of homework or revision do you actually do?** (please tick only one)

Less than one hour

Between one and two hours

Up to three hours

Over three hours

2. **In relation to studying, please rate the following statements on a scale of one to seven:** (please circle only one rating per statement)

	Disagree Strongly			Don't Know		Agree Strongly	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My friends like to study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My home is a good place to study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel pressure from my friends to go out after school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My parent(s)/guardian(s) often help(s) me with my homework	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do better at school than my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My friends do better than me at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My parent(s)/guardian(s) disapprove(s) of my friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My part time job is more important than homework	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3a. **In your school, do you belong to any groups, clubs or societies?**

- Yes
 No

3b. **If yes, please tell us the names of the groups, clubs or societies you belong to?**

3c. **Outside school time, are you involved any of the following activities?**
 (please tick as many as you like)

- Youth group, e.g. scouts/guides, BB/GB
 Sports club – please tell us which sport(s) _____
 Voluntary group
 Church group/society
 Part-time job
 Other type of club/society – please tell us which _____
-

3d. **If you are involved in any of the above, please tell us how many hours per week you spend on this/these activity(ies)?**

4a. **Do you have access to the internet?** (please tick only one)

- Yes – unrestricted access
- Yes – restricted access
- No

4b. **If yes, where do you have access to the internet?** (please tick as many as you like)

- Home
- School
- Friends
- Internet Café
- Other – please tell us where _____

4c. **Can you tell us about any of the sites you have visited?**

5a. **Are you a member of any of the following libraries?** (please tick as many as you like)

- School library
- Local library
- Mobile library
- Other library – please specify _____

5b. **How often do you usually visit the library to borrow books?** (please tick only one)

- Daily
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Never

5c. **Approximately how many books have you read in the last six months for your own interest, i.e. other than for a course at school?**

5d. **Can you tell us the names of any of these books?**

5e. **What was your main reason for reading these particular books?**
(please tick as many as you like)

- Local/Historical interest
- Friends' recommendation
- No particular reason
- Other – please tell us _____

Part 4: Attitudes to further education college and university

Please answer the following questions about your opinions of further education college and university.

1a. **Have any members of your family attended a further education college or university?** (please tick only one per category)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Further education college | University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

1b. **If yes, can you tell us who in your family has attended a further education college or university?** (please tick as many boxes as you like)

- | | |
|---|---|
| Further education college | University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sister/Brother | <input type="checkbox"/> Sister/Brother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aunt/Uncle | <input type="checkbox"/> Aunt/Uncle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please tell us _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please tell us _____ |

2a. **Have any of your friends attended a further education college or university?**
(please tick only one per category)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Further education college | University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

2b. **If yes, can you tell us how many?** (please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One | <input type="checkbox"/> One |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Two |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three | <input type="checkbox"/> Three |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four | <input type="checkbox"/> Four |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five or more | <input type="checkbox"/> Five or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

3a. **Do any of your friends intend to go to a further education college or university in the future?** (please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

3b. **If yes, can you tell us how many friends?** (please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One | <input type="checkbox"/> One |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two | <input type="checkbox"/> Two |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Three | <input type="checkbox"/> Three |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Four | <input type="checkbox"/> Four |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five or more | <input type="checkbox"/> Five or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

4a. **Do you feel that you know enough about the range of courses/qualifications available to you at further education colleges?** (please tick only one)

- Yes
 No

4b. **If no, what would you like to know more about?**

4c. **If you are thinking of going to a further education college, which qualification(s) would you like to come out with?**

4d. **How did you hear about this/these qualification(s)?** (please tick as many as you like)

- Mother
- Father
- Guardian
- Careers guidance teacher
- Another teacher
- Friends at school
- Friends outside of school
- Television programmes
- Newspapers/Magazines
- Information on the internet
- Visitor from further education college
- Youth worker
- Member of the clergy
- Other(s) – please specify _____

5. **Please rate the following statements on a scale of one to seven:**
(please circle only one rating per statement)

	Disagree Strongly		Don't Know			Agree Strongly	
It is worthwhile attending a further education college after leaving school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think I would make friends at a further education college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Education is the most important thing in my life right now	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Further education is not for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I expect to do well at whatever school or college I attend	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Further education qualifications will help me find a good job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would rather be in employment than continue with my education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Opportunities in education will always be open to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of my academic ability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel alienated from the entire education system in terms of getting on with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6a. **Have your teachers discussed further education college or university with you?**
(please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

6b. If yes, how useful did you find this discussion? (please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely useful | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely useful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very useful | <input type="checkbox"/> Very useful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quite useful | <input type="checkbox"/> Quite useful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not very useful | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very useful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not useful at all | <input type="checkbox"/> Not useful at all |

6c. **What aspects of further education have they discussed?**
(please tick as many as necessary)

- A levels
- GNVQ
- The college environment
- Transportation
- Financial support
- Career prospects
- Course structure and content
- Personal and social issues

7a. **Have your parent(s)/guardian(s) discussed further education college or university with you?** (please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

7b. **If yes, how much time have they spent explaining further education college or university?** (please tick only one per category)

- | Further education college | University |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of time | <input type="checkbox"/> A lot of time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A fair amount of time | <input type="checkbox"/> A fair amount of time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hardly any time | <input type="checkbox"/> Hardly any time |

8. **In general, would you describe your opinion of further education colleges and/or university** (please tick only one per category)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Further education college | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly positive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly negative | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely negative | <input type="checkbox"/> Extremely negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |

9. **Do you think that your parents would be interested in telling us their views on further education colleges and university?**

- Yes
 No

If yes, could you please supply name(s), a contact address (with postcode) and telephone number?

If you have any comments to make regarding the issues explored in this questionnaire, please tell us:

Careers Guidance Teachers' Interview Schedule

Part One: Personal Details

1. Name _____

2. School _____

3. Position _____

4. Do you have any industrial/commercial experience?

5. How long have you been a careers teacher?

Less than 5 years 5 to 10 years More than 10 years

6. What training have you received in terms of providing careers advice and assistance?
For example, have you participated in any of the following:

- Short courses
- Award-bearing courses
- Information from colleagues
- Other, please specify _____

7a. What kinds of assistance/resources does the school offer in support of your role as careers teacher?

7b. Do you feel that this assistance is adequate?

- Yes
- No

7c. If no, what other assistance would you wish to have?

8a. How do your Year 12 pupils access careers advice?

- You send for the pupil
- The pupil seeks advice
- There are regular timetabled sessions
- There is a single session supported by an appointments scheme
- Other, please specify _____

8b. Are there any ways in which you would change the school's advice procedure to the benefit of your pupils?

8c. Which of the following do you discuss with your Year 12 pupils?

- A levels
- GNVQ's
- College environment
- Transportation
- Financial support
- Career opportunities arising from college courses/qualifications
- Structure and content of college courses
- Personal and social issues
- Other, please specify _____

Part Two: Pupil's Perceptions/Intentions

1. How do you think your Year 12 pupils view further education college?

- Very positively
- Fairly positively
- Fairly negatively
- Very negatively
- Don't know

2. Generally, would you say that your Year 12 pupils were aware of the following:

- The location of their local further education college(s)
- The required qualifications needed in order to access local further education college(s)
- The range of courses/qualifications available at most further education colleges
- Transport to and from these college

3. Generally, would you say that your Year 12 pupils were aware of the following:

- The location of their local university(ies)
- The required qualifications needed in order to access local university(ies)
- The range of courses/qualifications available at most universities
- Transport to and from these universities

4a. What do you see as the main barriers to Year 12 pupils from your school progressing to further education college? For example:

- Peer pressure
- Lack of support at home
- Not the done thing in the area in which they live
- Poor financial support
- Need to support family
- Other, please specify _____

4b. Are there any ways you feel these barriers might be addressed?

5a. Do you perceive any difference in attitudes to further education college between differently streamed Year 12 classes?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5b. If yes, what are these differences?

6a. Do you perceive any difference in attitudes to university between differently streamed Year 12 classes?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

6b. If yes, what are these differences?

7a. Do you perceive any gender differences in attitudes towards further education college?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

7b. If yes, what are these differences?

8a. Do you perceive any gender differences in attitudes towards university?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

8b. If yes, what are these differences?

9a. Can you give us an indication of the percentage of Year 12 pupils in your school intending to progress to further education college?

9b. Can you tell us which further education colleges these pupils intend to progress to?

9c. Of those who are intending to progress to further education college, please tell us the name of the college that is most often mentioned by your Year 12 pupils:

9d. Of those not intending to progress to further education college, can you tell us from your past experience where they are most likely to go?

10a. Can you give us an indication of the percentage of Year 12 pupils in your school intending to progress to university?

10b. Can you tell us which universities these pupils intend to progress to?

10c. Of those who are intending to progress to university, please tell us the name of the university that is most often mentioned by your Year 12 pupils:

10d. Of those not intending to progress to university, can you tell us from your past experience where they are most likely to go?

11a. To what extent is your school involved with local further education colleges in any of the following:

	Frequently Involved	Rarely Involved	Never Involved
Information provision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visits to local colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local college open day/ Information evening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please tell us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11b. Are there any respects in which you think contacts between your school and local further education colleges might be improved?

12a. To what extent is your school involved with local universities in any of the following:

	Frequently Involved	Rarely Involved	Never Involved
Information provision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visits to local colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local college open day/ Information evening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – please tell us	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12b. Are there any respects in which you think contacts between your school and local universities might be improved?

13a. How important do you think the parental role is in influencing your year 12 pupils in their choices after GCSE?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Don't know

13b. Are there any ways in which parents could play a more active enough role in encouraging their children to progress to a further education college?

Part Three: Influence of School Location

1a. Are there any further education colleges near your school to which your pupils would not progress to?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

1b. Can you tell us the name of this/these further education college(s) and why you believe pupils would not want to go there?

2a. How would you describe the state of transport provision between your school's catchment area and your local further education college(s)?

- Extremely good
- Very good
- Fairly good
- Fairly poor
- Very poor
- Extremely poor
- Don't know

2b. Do you think that pupils would be more likely to progress to further education college if transportation links to and from college in your school's catchment area were improved?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Thank you for your co-operation. If you have any comments to make regarding the issues explored in this questionnaire, please tell us:

Focus Group Discussion Topics

Part 1: Future Career Intentions

- Have you decided upon a possible career?
- What career have you decided upon?
- Who and/or what influenced you in making this decision?
- When did you make this decision?
- How are you going to reach your career goal(s)?

Part 2: Your Post-GCSE Plans

- What, if any, are your post-GCSE education plans, e.g. A levels, GNVQs, Training organisation?
- Which is more important to you? Continuing your education or going straight into work after leaving school?
- Who and/or what influenced you in making your decision about post-GCSE education?
- When did you make this decision?
- How are you going to reach your educational goal(s)?

Part 3: Study Culture

- What is your opinion of homework?
- On an average school day, how much homework do you do?
- Do you feel that you are doing as much homework as your teachers expect you to do?
- Is your home a good place to study in?
- If you needed help with your homework, who would you be most likely to ask?
- Does having to do homework ever get in the way of your social life?
- Do your friends often persuade you to go out rather than stay in and do your homework?
- Do you ever use the internet to help you with your homework or coursework?

Part 4: Further Education College

- Can you tell us what you know about further education provision in your area, e.g. which colleges, courses, qualifications?
- Can you tell us about how you feel about your local college, e.g. quality of teaching, image of college, relevance of courses, value of qualifications?
- What do you see as the attractions, if any, of going to college?
- Do you feel that there are any barriers preventing you attending a further education college, e.g. no transport, financial, parental disapproval, friends disapproval, afraid to go?
- Have any members of your family attended further education college?
- Are any of your friends planning on going to further education college?

Part 5: University

- Can you tell us what you know about university, e.g. where they are, how do you access them, courses, qualifications?
- What do you see as the attractions of going to university?
- Do you feel that there are any barriers preventing you from progressing to university?
- Have any members of your family attended university?
- Are any of your friends planning on going to university?
- How do you feel about your local universities compared to those elsewhere, i.e. Queens & UU vs GB & ROI?

Parents' Interview Schedule

The University of Ulster is currently undertaking a survey of attitudes to further and higher education amongst Year 12 pupils and their parents in the Belfast area. This interview is being conducted in order to provide us with information on parents' roles in pupils' career decision making and educational planning. We would be grateful if you could provide us with responses to the following questions.

All answers will be treated as confidential.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Part 1: About yourself

1. **Name** _____

2. **Gender** (please tick box)

Male

Female

3. **Area of residence and postcode** _____

4a. **Can you tell us something about your own experience of formal education?**
e.g. schools/college/university attended; qualifications gained

4b. **How would you describe your own experience of education?**

4c. **Can you tell us about any informal learning you have been involved in?**
(non award-bearing courses)

Part 2: Future Career Plans

1a. In regard to your son/daughter's future career plans, do you know if they have decided on a possible future career?

Yes

No

1b. If so, what is it?

1c. To what extent would you say that you have influenced your son/daughter's career choice?

2a. What are your son/daughter's immediate intentions after finishing their GCSEs?
(please tick box)

A levels at school

A levels at further education college

Other courses at further education college

Training organisation

Apprenticeship with a company

Training with a company

Work

Don't know

Other – please specify _____

2b. Are you in support of his/her intentions?

Yes

No

Don't Know

2c. If not, what would you like to see him/her doing next year?

Part 3: Attitudes Towards Learning

1a. On an average day, how many hours does your son/daughter spend studying at home?

- Less than one hour
- Between one and two hours
- Three hours
- Over three hours
- Don't know

1b. Do you tend to get involved at all in his/her studying?

2a. Do you have a computer in the house?

- Yes
- No

2b. If yes, does it have access to the internet?

- Yes
- No

2c. If yes, what websites do you think your son/daughter tends to access?

3a. Do you ever read any books in your spare time?

- Yes
- No

3b. Apart from school material, would your son/daughter read much in their spare time?

Part 4: Attitudes to Further Education and College

1a. How would you say your son/daughter feels about school in general?

1b. What would you say has influenced their opinion most?

2a. Do you know where your nearest further education college is? (please tick box)

- Yes – please tell us _____
- No

2c. How would you describe your opinion of this college?

- Extremely positive
- Fairly positive
- Fairly negative
- Extremely negative
- Don't know

2d. Would you like your son/daughter to attend this college?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

2e. What factors would you say have influenced your opinion?

2f. **Do you think that qualifications obtained from a further education college lead to better career opportunities?**

3a. **Eventually, would you like to see your son/daughter go to university?**

Yes – please tell us which _____

No

Don't Know

3b. **If yes, please tell us why you would like them to go to this/these particular university(ies)?**

3c. **Do you think that obtaining a qualification from university enhances career opportunities?**

Just to finish, can I clarify a couple of points?

How many children do you have? _____

If you are currently in employment can you please tell us what your occupation is?

If you have any comments to make regarding these questions, please tell us:
