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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Survey of

Post-16 Provision in Training Organisations in Northern Ireland

1998-1999

FOREWORD

This report contains the findings of a survey of post-16 provision (the provision for trainees in the 16/19 age range) in training organisations in Northern Ireland. The survey was undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate in the 1998-99 academic year.

This report complements the Inspectorate reports on post-16 provision in post-primary schools in Northern Ireland in the 1997/98 academic year, post-16 provision in colleges of further education in 1998/99 and Modern Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland in 1997/98.

At a time of significant challenge in training, the willing co-operation of the managers, the trainers and the trainees in the organisations visited during the survey is readily acknowledged. The report provides a baseline against which all of those involved in providing post-16 programmes in training organisations may evaluate their quality and quantity, and plan for future developments.

TJ SHAW CBE
Chief inspector

A number of quantitative terms are used in the report to comment of aspects of post-16 provision in the training organisations visited. In percentages, the terms correspond as follows:-

- more than 90% - almost/nearly all
- 75% to 90% - most
- 50% to 74% - a majority
- 30% to 49% - a significant minority
- 10% to 29% - a minority
- less than 10% - very few/ a small number.

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

1.1 The learning programmes are suitable in the majority of training organisations surveyed.

1.2 About 50% of the organisations broaden the trainees' programmes by the inclusion of appropriate additional studies.

1.3 The key skills of communication, working with others and improving own learning are included effectively in the programme of about 60% of the organisations.

1.4 The provision for physical education and health education is inadequate in most organisations.

1.5 The provision for careers education and guidance is poor in over 50% of the organisations.

1.6 The induction programme for new trainees is good in the vast majority of organisations.

1.7 While the majority of trainees are competent at managing their own learning, a significant minority of trainees do not take sufficient responsibility for their own development.

1.8 Information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped as a learning tool in training organisations.

1.9 Most trainees are motivated to achieve success in their training, however, a minority exhibit serious behavioural problems which inhibit their learning.

1.10 The majority of staff are well qualified for their vocational specialisms but a significant proportion lack the competence to provide the key skills effectively.

1.11 Local employers are not involved in devising appropriate training programmes for the trainees in many of the training organisations.

1.12 In the vast majority of instances the assessment procedures are appropriate and with few exceptions, are clearly understood by the trainees.

1.13 The majority of the organisations do not use records of the trainees' prior achievements to ensure that the training programmes are well matched to the trainees' abilities and interests.

1.14 The organisations keep good records of the trainees' achievements in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) but they do not use other important performance indicators to manage their training programmes.

1.15 In most training organisations the trainees are making good progress in their vocational training and achieve good standards in their work. For a significant minority, however, the standards are too low.

1.16 There are serious deficiencies in the accommodation and resources in about 30% of the training organisations.

1.17 In the vast majority of the organisations the roles and responsibilities of the management are clearly defined and are appropriate.

1.18 The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the training programmes are unsatisfactory in a significant minority of the training organisations.

2. CONTEXT - RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN POST-16 PROVISION

2.1 The debate on post-16 provision has continued, encouraged and informed at intervals by important and influential position papers and consultative documents, including the following:

“A Joint Education and Training Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds” (DENI T&EA 1995)

“Review of 16-19 Qualifications” (Sir Ron Dearing HMSO 1996)

“Qualifying for Success” (DfEE, DENI and Welsh Office 1997)

2.2 The underlying theme of these documents is the entitlement of all young people in the 16-19 age group to a range of high quality programmes with in-built breadth, balance and coherence within a common, unified framework and which provide continuity and progression from the statutory pre-16 curriculum.

2.3 A post-16 programme has breadth and balance if it incorporates main and additional studies, key skills and careers guidance. Main studies may comprise GCE A-level courses, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) courses, NVQs courses or other vocational courses. The main studies for trainees on Jobskills programmes are NVQs. The additional studies should enable the students or trainees to broaden their experience, support or supplement knowledge of an aspect of their main studies, or gain a new skill or competence. They may be drawn from a variety of courses, units or subjects at different levels, and are not always formally examined. The key skills referred to in this report are communication, working with others and improving own learning and performance which are a requirement for trainees on Jobskills programmes. The inclusion of careers guidance in post-16 provision is intended to enable young people to make decisions related to their further studies and/or careers, and to engage in action-planning related to their existing course and/or to their emerging aspirations and in target-setting within their existing course.

2.4 In its consultation paper on the future of post-16 qualifications “Qualifying for Success”, the Government expresses its commitment to broaden the scope of the GCE A-level examinations and to upgrade vocational qualifications, ensuring that both have rigorously high standards and incorporate within them appropriate key skills. There is also a commitment to establish an overarching certificate to acknowledge achievement across all post-16 qualifications.

2.5 The survey of post-16 provision in training organisations was undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate in the 1998/99 academic year. A total of 24 training organisations were included in the survey. The organisations visited are listed in Appendix 1. The survey encompassed a wide range of vocational areas and is broadly representative of the current post-16 provision in the organisations. In the course of their visits, the inspectors had discussions with approximately 80 trainers and more than 180 trainees and observed about 55 training sessions.

2.6 This report indicates the extent to which the training organisations provide a broad, coherent programme which meets fully the needs and aspirations of all of their trainees and the extent to which this provision is contributing to the needs of the economy of Northern Ireland. The report also provides an insight into the extent to which the training organisations fulfil the criteria for effective post-16 provision and highlights areas where improvements need to be made.

3. THE TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THEIR ORGANISATION

3.1 The learning programmes are suitable for the age, abilities, aptitudes and interests of the trainees in the majority of the training organisations. In about 20% of the organisations the balance between work-based and directed training is inappropriate; a lack of suitable work placements does not enable the trainees to gain the full range of competences required in their NVQ programmes.

3.2 About half of the training organisations do not broaden and/or supplement the trainees’ programme by the inclusion of additional studies. In contrast, the other half provide the trainees with a variety of opportunities to widen their learning through, for example, the provision of first aid training and driving lessons.

3.3 The provision for careers education and guidance has more weaknesses than strengths in about half of the organisations surveyed. The trainees in these organisations are not aware of the career opportunities available to them on completion of their programmes and there is little evidence of systematic careers guidance and education.

3.4 About 60% of the organisations include effectively the key skills of communication, working with others and improving their own learning into their provision. In the remainder, however, there are marked weaknesses.

3.5 In about 60% of the organisations there are few opportunities for the trainees to engage in physical education programmes and learn about health related issues.

4. QUALITY OF TRAINING AND LEARNING

4.1 The induction programme for new trainees is a significant strength in the vast majority of the organisations surveyed.

4.2 The majority of the trainees can prepare suitable personal action plans to identify targets for their own training. In contrast, the trainees in about 20% of the organisations have little understanding of action planning.

4.3 The trainees in the majority of the organisations surveyed are competent at managing their own learning. In contrast, the trainees in a significant minority of the organisations are not encouraged to take any responsibility for their own development. In these instances the quality of the instruction is also poor and the tutors often fail to motivate the trainees.

4.4 The trainees and the trainers make little use of ICT to enhance learning in about 50% of the organisations. Even in the organisations where ICT is in evidence, its use is limited mainly to routine word-processing.

4.5 Most trainees collaborate willingly with each other. The majority are motivated to achieve success in their training, however, a minority display serious behavioural problems which inhibit their learning.

4.6 The majority of the staff are well qualified for the vocational areas for which they have responsibility, but a minority lack the expertise to teach the key skills.

4.7 The planning for directed training is good in most vocational areas but is inadequate for the development of the key skills.

4.8 In many organisations the employers are not involved sufficiently in the negotiation of training programmes in the workplace. As a result there are limited opportunities for trainees to develop appropriate skills.

4.9 The tutors expect high standards of work from the trainees in about 80% of the organisations. In a small minority of the organisations, the tutors' expectations of the trainees are too low and the trainees do not make sufficient progress in their training.

4.10 In most organisations the training methods used are well matched to the age, ability and maturity of the trainees and there is effective learning in the vocational areas. In a few organisations the staff use a narrow range of training methods and do not provide opportunities for the trainees to show initiative and/or to solve problems.

4.11 In the vast majority of instances, assessment procedures are appropriate and with few exceptions, are clearly understood by the trainees. In general, the assessment procedures are used to provide suitable guidance to trainees to help them improve their learning.

4.12 About one-half of the organisations surveyed use records of the trainees' previous achievements to devise individual training programmes and to provide appropriate support.

4.13 The organisations have good records of the trainees' NVQ completion rates but they do not use other important performance indicators, such as retention rates and progression of trainees, to manage their training programmes.

4.14 In most training organisations the trainees make good progress in their vocational training and achieve good standards in their work. For a significant minority, however, the trainees' own expectations and standards are too low and they are unable to complete specified tasks in the workplace.

4.15 The quality of the accommodation ranges from very poor to excellent. Approximately 40% of the organisations visited have serious deficiencies, including dilapidated buildings which are poorly heated and ventilated. In a significant number of organisations there are limited resources for training. The provision of appropriate hardware and software for ICT is generally inadequate.

4.16 In most organisations the roles and responsibilities of the management are clearly defined and are appropriate. There is considerable disparity in the procedures for review and evaluation of the provision. In general, the procedures place insufficient emphasis on retention rates and the progress of individual trainees.

5. ISSUES FOR ACTION

5.1 There is a need to broaden the trainees' training programmes by the inclusion of key skills and additional studies. (3.2 and 3.4)

5.2 All providers should ensure that they provide the trainees with systematic careers guidance and education. (3.3)

5.3 There is a need to develop the use of ICT to enhance the trainees' learning. (4.4)

5.4 A significant proportion of the staff in training organisations need suitable training to enable them to teach the key skills effectively. (4.6)

5.5 The planning for directed training is good in most vocational areas but is inadequate for the development of the key skills. (4.7)

5.6 The employers need to be more involved in the negotiation of the trainees' programmes in the workplace. (4.8)

5.7 There is a need for the managers of the organisations to use records of the trainees' previous achievements and other important performance indicators to devise individual training programmes and to provide appropriate support. (4.12 and 4.13)

5.8 There is a need to place a much greater emphasis on the development of key skills in all training organisations. (4.15)

5.9 There is need to provide suitable accommodation and resources in all training organisations. (4.16)

5.10 All training organisations should ensure that the procedures for review and evaluation of the provision are fit for purpose. There is a need to place greater emphasis on success rates, retention rates and the progress of individual trainees. (4.17)

5.11 There is a need to reduce sex-stereotyping in the courses offered in the training organisations (figure 1).

APPENDIX 1

THE TRAINING ORGANISATIONS INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY

BCW Training Ltd.
Belfast Central Training
Brookfield Business School
Cookstown Community Workshop
Customised Training Services
Derry Youth and Community Workshop
Enniskillen Training Centre
Gwen Savage Training
Graham Training
H J O'Boyles
Joblink
Larne Skills Development
Lisburn Training Centre
Loughview Training
MARI NI Ltd
Network Personnel
North City Training
North Down Training
Orchard Training Services
Rutledge Training
Shantallow Training
Southern ITEC
Strabane Training
Wade Training

APPENDIX 2

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY OF POST-16 PROVISION IN TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

A quantitative survey into post-16 provision in training organisations in Northern Ireland was carried out by the Training and Employment Agency in 1998-99. The main findings of this survey are given below.

In November 1997, 145 training organisations provided training, funded through the Jobskills programme, for 15178 trainees between 16 and 18 years of age and 4258 trainees over 18 years of age.

This report focuses on the trainees aged 16 to 18 years of age; just over 12% were on Access training programmes for trainees with a range of literacy/numeracy programmes or those with behavioural or learning difficulties or for training with learning difficulties leading to NVQs at level 1, 62% were on mainstream programmes leading to NVQs at level 2 and the remainder were on programmes leading to NVQs at level 3.

For this report, the NVQs have been categorised into the 20 vocational areas which are set out in the statistical tables below. These vocational areas have been mapped against the Training Occupational Classification (TOC) used by the Training and Employment Agency.

OTHER INFORMATION FROM GRAPHS

- * The most popular area in Jobskills is construction/ built environment (figure 1).
- * There are more males (70%) than females on Jobskills courses (figure 1).
- * There is evidence of sex-stereotyping in most vocational areas (figure 1).
- * The majority of Jobskills trainees are on level 2 programmes (figure 2).
- * There is a lack of progression from level 2 to level 3 courses (figure 2).
- * The proportion of trainees on level 3 programmes is too small (figure 2).
- * FE is the largest provider of Jobskills (figure 3).
- * Community-based provision is strongest at NVQ level 1, employer-based (including managing agents) is strongest at NVQ level 2 and FE is strongest at NVQ level 3 (figures 4, 5 and 6).

FIGURE 1

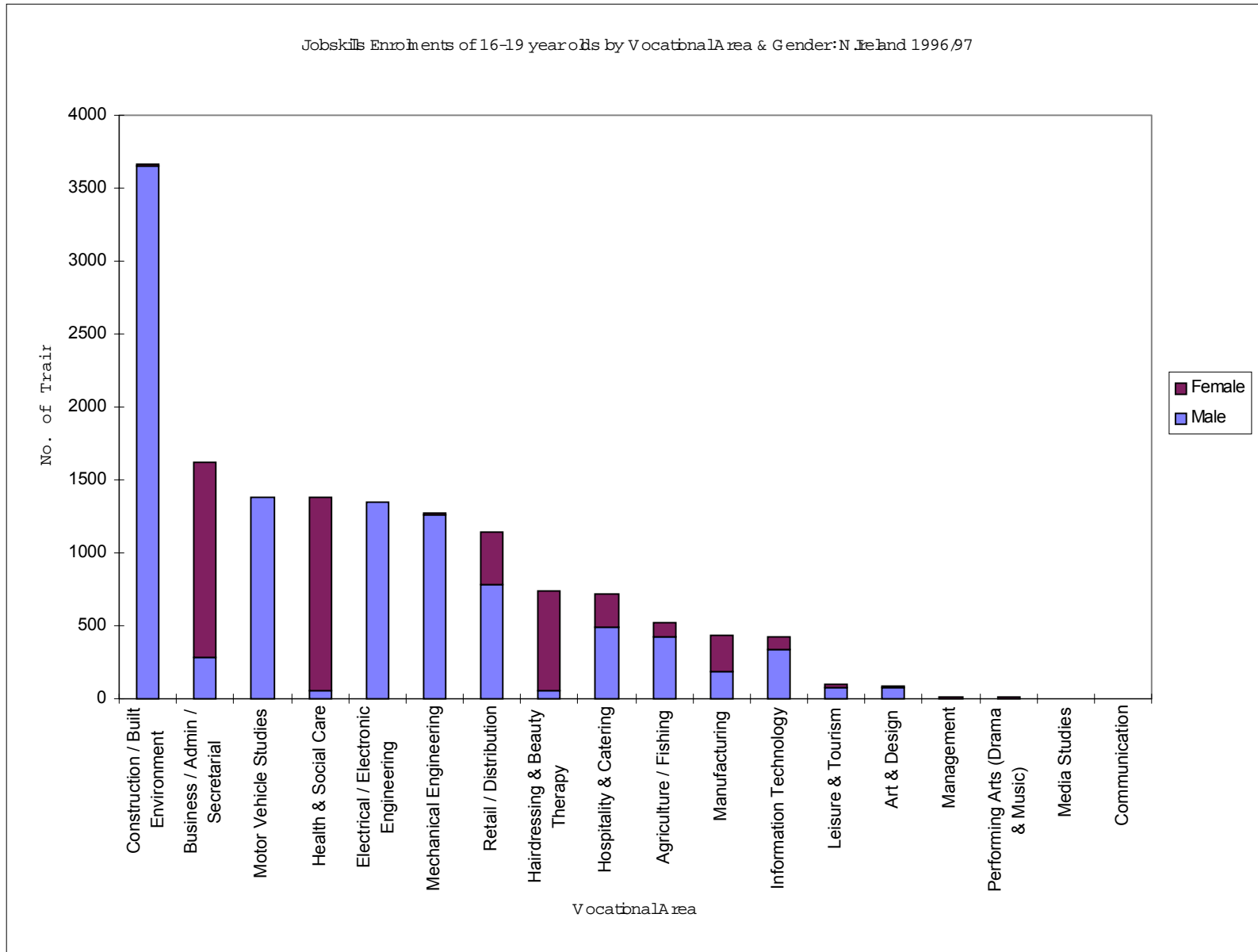


FIGURE 2

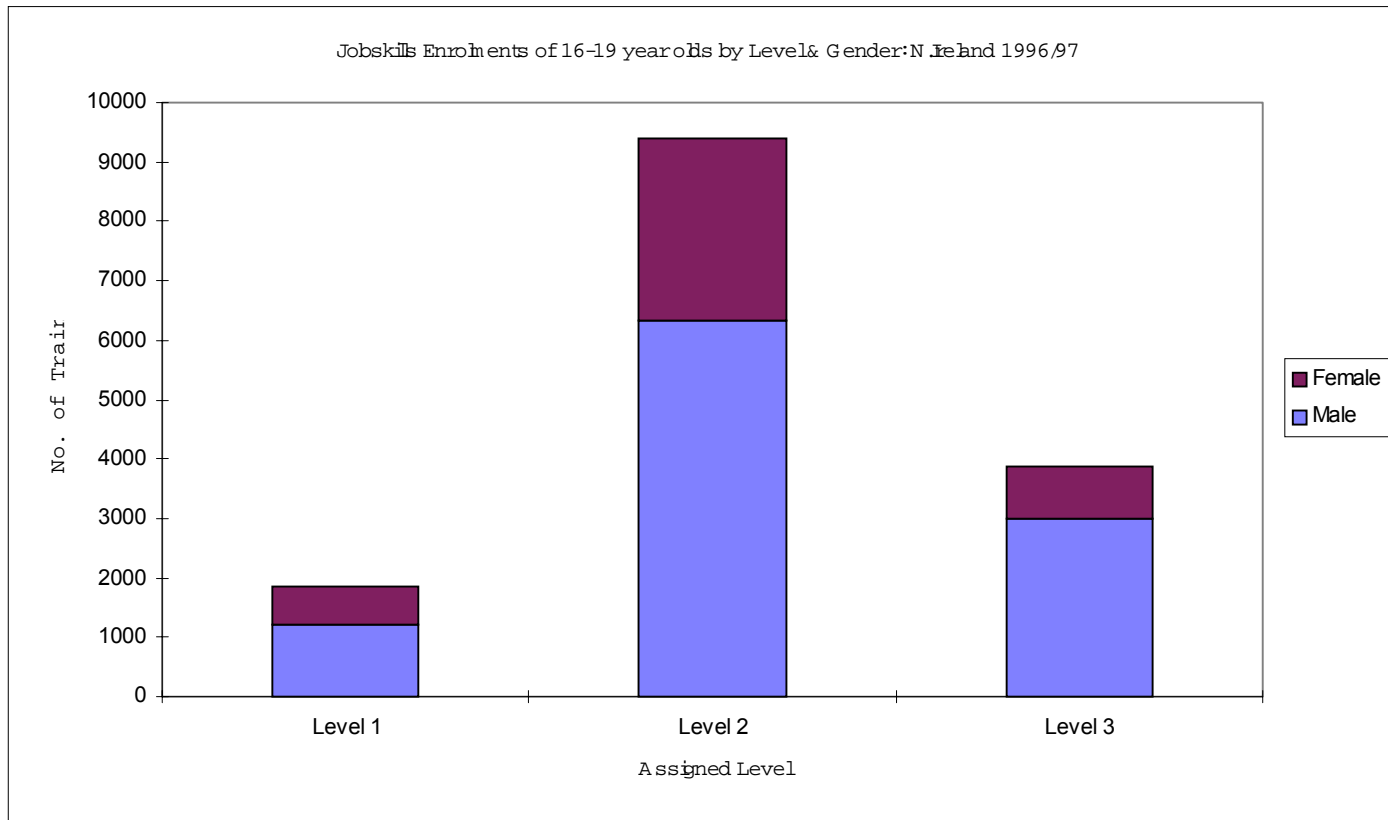


FIGURE 3

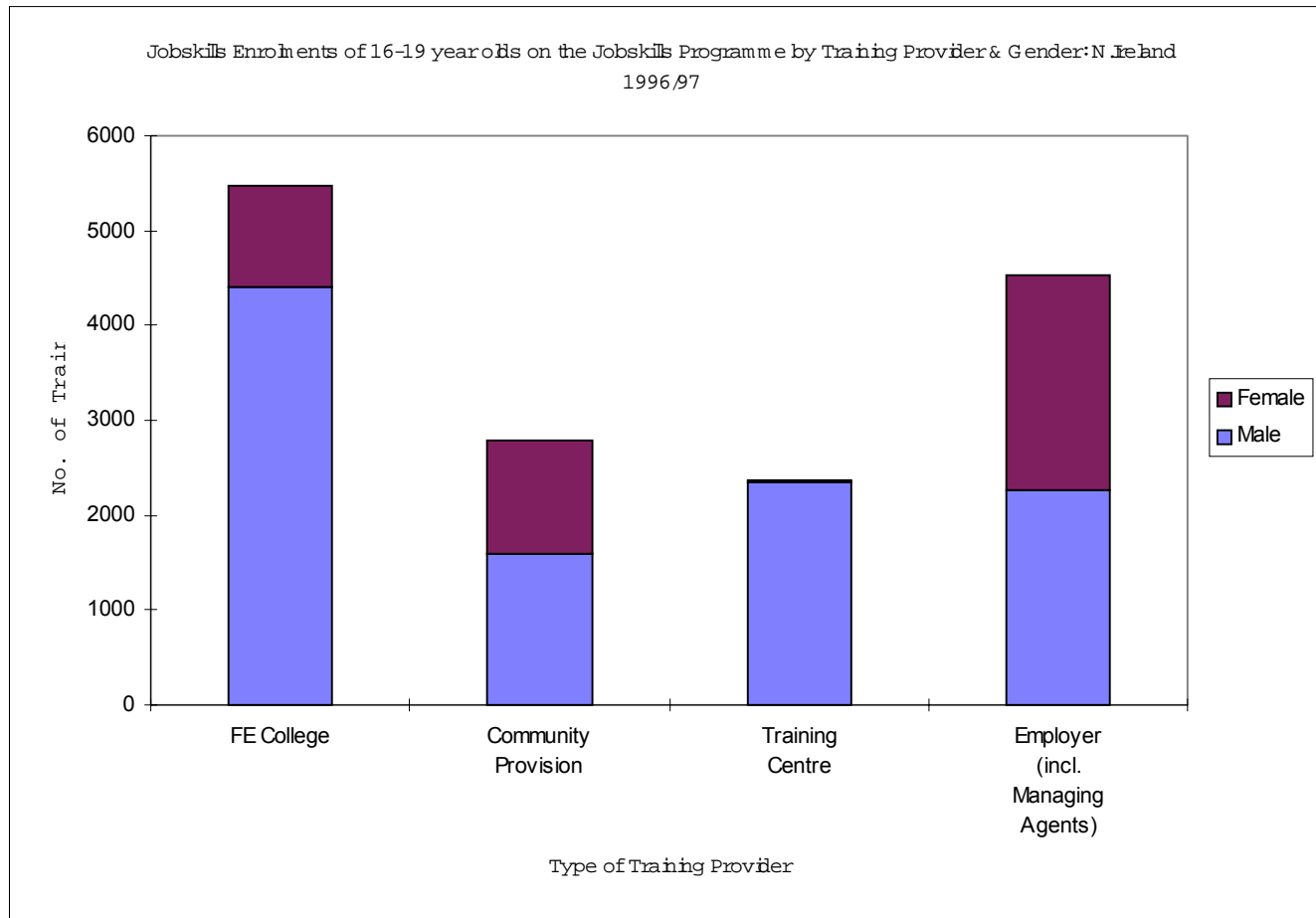


FIGURE 4

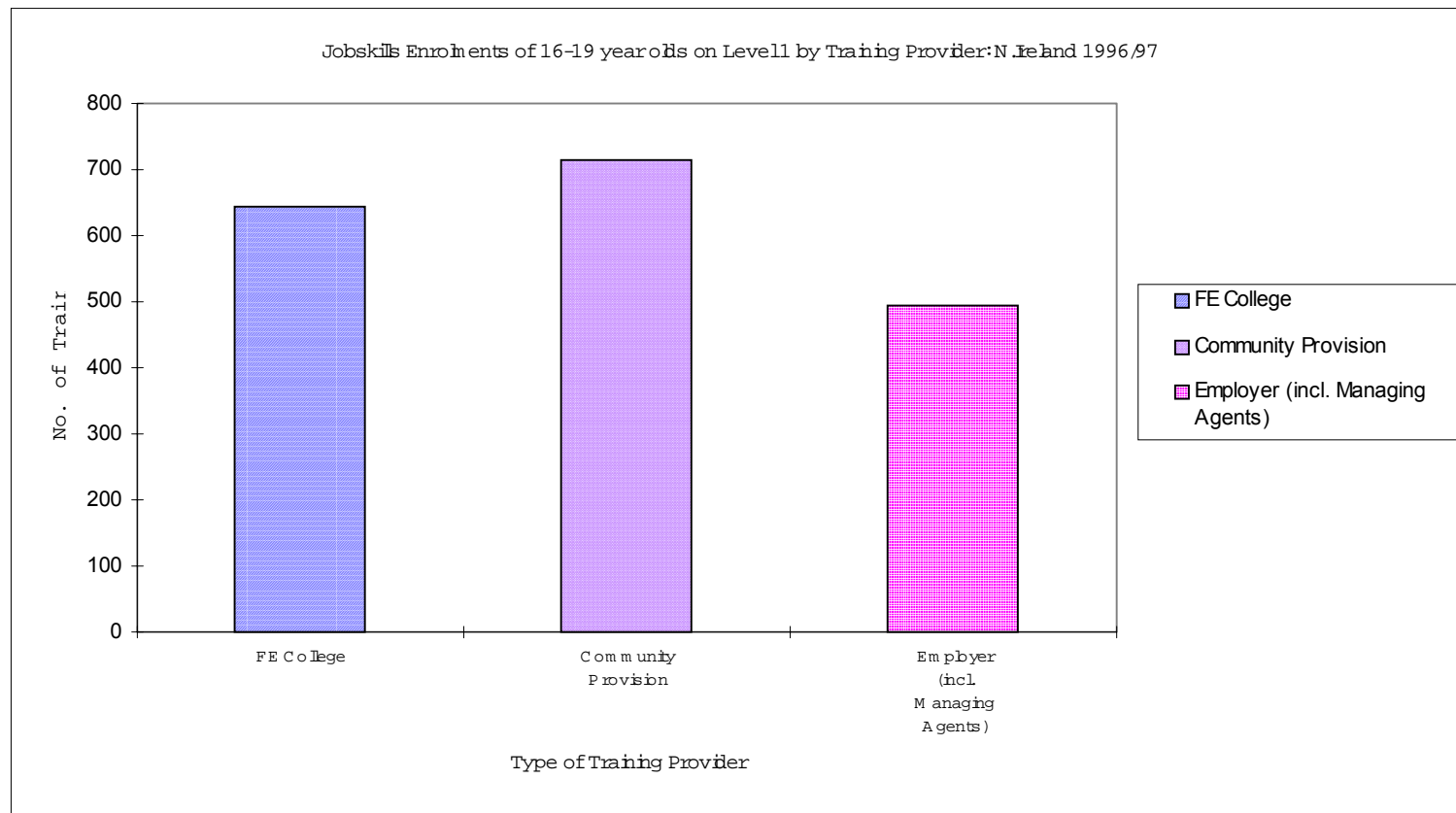


FIGURE 5

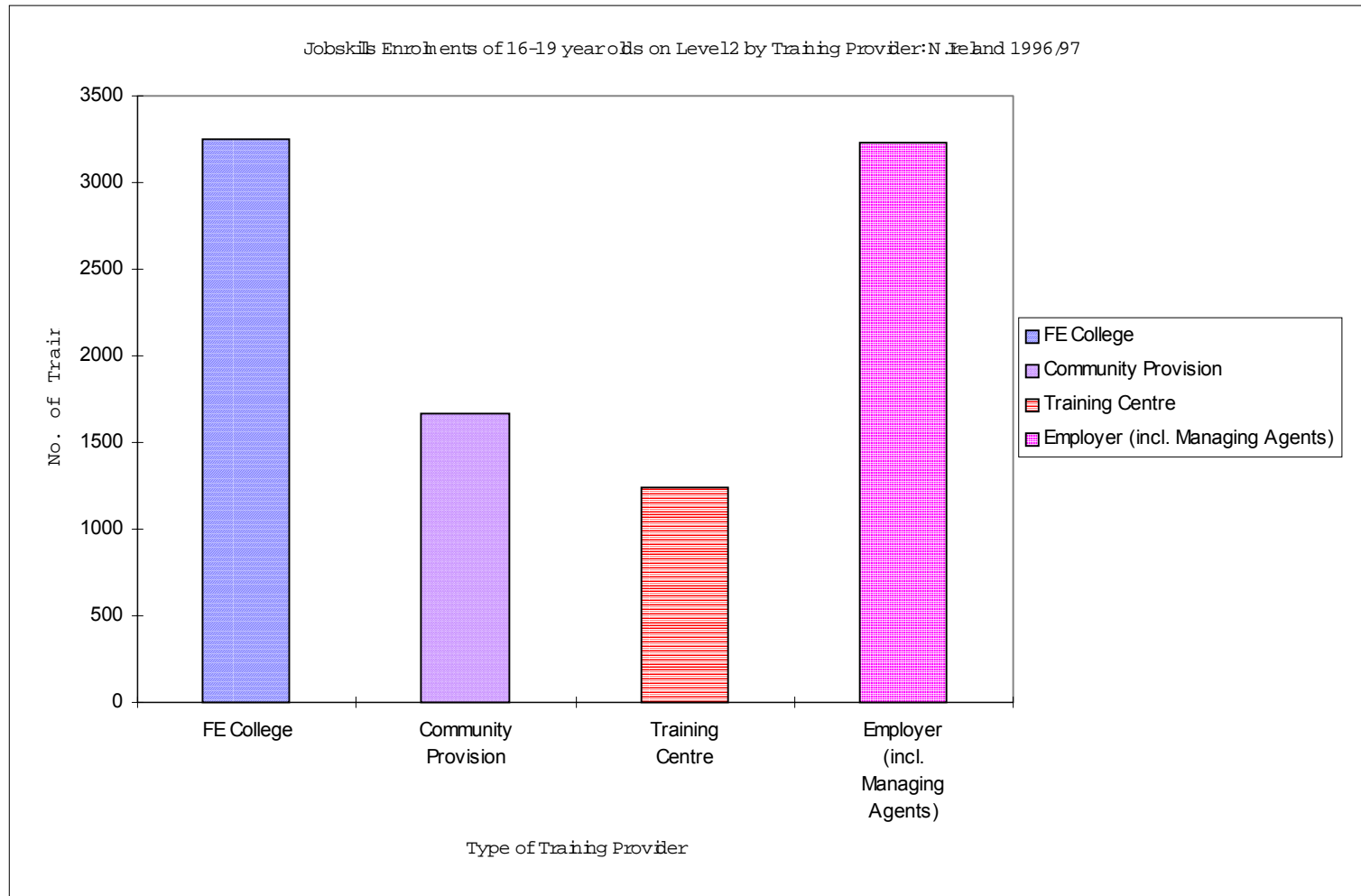


FIGURE 6

