National Evaluation of Diplomas: The first year of delivery

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Background

The introduction of the Diplomas for 14-19 year olds is a central part of the government's reform of 14-19 education and represents a major innovation in educational opportunity for young people in England. The Diplomas are delivered by a consortium which includes schools, colleges, training providers, employers and higher education institutions (HEI). They will be offered at three levels and across 17 lines of learning which are being implemented in four phases (from September 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011). The first five lines of learning started in 2008 (Gateway 1) were: Construction and the Built Environment; Engineering; Information Technology; Creative and Media; and Society, Health and Development.

In January 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the University of Exeter to conduct the national evaluation of the implementation and impact of Diplomas over the period 2008-2013. This summary reports the findings of research which explored experiences of the first year of delivery of the first five Diploma lines of learning amongst a sample of 30 consortia approved to commence delivery in September 2008. It presents the findings from surveys of pre- and post-16 Diploma and comparison learners, Diploma teachers and parents/carers of Diploma learners, and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and Diploma learners in a sub-sample of 15 case-study consortia.

Key findings

- **Satisfaction with the Diploma:** The majority of Diploma learners were satisfied with their Diploma course and were enjoying it. They found it to be interesting and different from other learning experiences and particularly welcomed the practical elements and links with the world of work.

- **Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG):** IAG is important for a positive Diploma learning experience. The more satisfied Year 10 Diploma learners were with IAG prior to starting their course, the more satisfied they were overall with their Diploma. They also had more positive attitudes towards the Diploma and were more likely to think their course would have a positive impact on their future. The findings also emphasise the need for IAG to clearly inform learners about the subject content and learning style, particularly the balance between practical and theory-based learning.

- **Diploma delivery:** Collaboration between institutions was common and seemed to be working well. In-house delivery was also common, often because institutions felt there was no *need* for support from other providers to deliver particular lines of learning, although there were instances of institutions having concerns about collaboration.

- **The teaching experience:** Teachers felt the Diploma involved a different teaching and learning experience to other qualifications. They valued the opportunity for using a holistic model of teaching and the encouragement of independent learning, reported greater use of interactive teaching techniques and less dependence on textbooks and worksheets, and welcomed the link between theory and work-related learning. There was, however, more scope for consortium-wide approaches to monitoring the quality of teaching.

- **Support needs:** There was some challenges faced in teaching functional skills and mapping the skills to principal learning. There was also a desire across consortia for more guidance and support in relation to assessment (in general, not specifically relating to functional skills). Standardisation of assessment across partners remained under-developed.

Were Diploma learners satisfied with their course?

Overall, the majority of Diploma learners were satisfied with their Diploma course and were enjoying it. This new qualification was considered to be interesting and different from other learning experiences; learners particularly welcomed the applied or 'hands on approach' to learning, and appreciated the links with the world of work. Although the evidence suggests that almost all learners had already experienced at least *some* input from employers, to add the 'real' context to Diploma learning, so far this was usually in the form of talks or one-off visits; placements were often still being organised and should feature later in the course. Learners also identified the benefit of having the opportunity to develop independent learning skills. Year 10 students who took part in all of their Diploma lessons away from their own school had a more positive attitude towards their Diploma course. There was evidence of an association between positive attitudes towards the Diploma and a preference for teamwork and practical working.

Almost half of the survey respondents in Year 10 studying a Level 2 Diploma were considering progression onto a Level 3 Diploma in the future; evidence again of satisfaction with the Diploma qualification. More than half of the Diploma learners in Year 12 were planning to progress to higher education; the Diploma was generally considered by learners to support progression to higher education.

How important was Information, Advice and Guidance for the learner experience?

Amongst Year 10 Diploma learners, the more satisfied they were with IAG prior to starting their course, the more satisfied they were overall with their Diploma. They also had more positive attitudes towards the Diploma and were more likely to think their Diploma course would have a positive impact on their future. In contrast, those who were dissatisfied with the IAG they had received were more likely to say their Diploma experience had not been as expected (although this did not necessarily mean it had been a negative experience, sometimes just different than they had expected).

A considerable proportion of case-study learners had expected that the Diploma would be more practical than it had been so far in reality (although, as with any course, it is likely that the early stages would focus on developing underpinning knowledge, prior to the application of that knowledge). There were also indications from interviewees that the content of some Diploma lines did not always match the titles (for example, the business-related content of the Information Technology Diploma had not always been clear). These issues emphasise the need for IAG to clearly inform learners about the subject content and learning style, particularly the balance between applied and theory-based learning.

Amongst the learners *not* doing a Diploma, 81 per cent of Year 10 and 65 per cent of Year 12 learners had not chosen the Diploma because they did not know much about it, emphasising the importance of IAG for recruitment and take-up.

How were Diploma learners progressing on their course?

Most learners believed they were making satisfactory progress on their Diploma course, although this perception seemed to be based more on completing assignments in time, rather than on marks or grades received. There was some appreciation of the need to succeed in all components of the Diploma in order to gain the Diploma award, but a limited understanding of what all the components were (particularly additional and specialist learning). Learners were likely to understand the need to pass functional skills, but had raised concerns about their level of difficulty which was considered to be challenging. It is important to note here that the separate components of the Diploma (namely functional skills and additional and specialist learning), if achieved, are qualifications in their own right, regardless of whether the overall Diploma is awarded.

What was the Diploma 'offer'?

Some consortia did not have a post-16 Diploma offer, either because of a deliberate focus on pre-16 delivery or because of their uncertainty over the acceptance of Diplomas by HEIs. However, the evidence suggests that many were waiting for the first pre-16 learners to complete their Diploma courses in 2010 before offering Diplomas post-16 from the academic year 2010-11 with the expectation that there would be a progression route from a pre-16 to a post-16 Diploma. Level 1 was less widely offered pre-16, generally because teachers were uncertain about learners' progression from Level 1 once they finished their Diploma at age 16. When it was offered, the small number of learners often necessitated co-teaching of Levels 1 and 2 to make it viable.

What models of Diploma delivery were in place?

Models of delivery involving **collaboration** between institutions (most often for the delivery of principal learning units) were common. Most staff involved felt collaboration was working well, and most learners liked the atmosphere in the host institution, liked being treated as adults, and enjoyed working with other learners. A willingness to collaborate, frequent communication, and practical arrangements such as aligned timetables and shared protocols, were all thought to facilitate collaborative working. Where challenges were faced, these were often practical issues, but also sometimes related to overcoming a history of competition. **In-house delivery** was also common, often because institutions felt there was no *need* for support from other providers to deliver particular lines of learning, although there were instances of institutions being concerned about collaboration.

There continued to be some uncertainty about the best way to teach **functional skills**. Although there was recognition of the benefits of mapping the skills to principal learning, so learners understood the relevance and could apply the skills, the most common approach was for functional skills to be taught discretely in the home institution by specialist English, mathematics and Information Technology teachers with a focus on passing the separate examinations.

Additional learning was more widely available than **specialist learning**, but there were positive discussions in a minority of consortia about how partners could be involved in delivering qualifications to broaden the offer.

What were teachers' views on teaching the Diploma?

Overall, teachers felt the Diploma involved a different teaching and learning experience to other qualifications. They valued the opportunity for using a holistic model of teaching and the encouragement of independent learning. They reported greater use of interactive teaching techniques and less dependence on textbooks and worksheets. Teachers welcomed the link between theory and work-related learning and endeavoured to make use of innovative, applied learning techniques in the classroom (although sometimes felt restricted by the nature of assessment requirements).

Assessment continued to be an area of uncertainty and was the area in which teaching staff most frequently reported being under-prepared for and wanted continued support. Standardisation of assessment across partners remained under-developed; teachers wanted reassurance that assessment procedures were being carried out equitably across partners.

When training had been received by teachers to support Diploma delivery it was considered useful (particularly local events which facilitated networking with other practitioners), but the extent to which staff participated in training was dependant on the availability of funding to free up their time to attend. Strategic staff attended most often and then disseminated information to teachers. Several interviewees explained that a more strategic approach to accessing training and support was necessary in order to ensure that training was appropriate in terms of content and the professional status of the practitioner.

The findings across the case-study consortia revealed a mixed picture of how the quality of teaching was being monitored. There was more scope for consortium-wide approaches to quality assurance. There was some uncertainty about how cross-consortia quality assurance would work in practice.

Recommendations for policy and practice

- Consortia may need support and guidance in how to develop consortium-wide quality assurance procedures (for example, in relation to standardised assessment and the quality of teaching practices). Any examples of good practice should be disseminated.

- More support and guidance needs to be given in relation to assessment, including approaches to the standardisation of assessment across partners.

- DCSF could consider exploring with Awarding Bodies how innovative teaching and the assessment approach could be more aligned.

- Consortia would benefit from further support and guidance on how to link functional skills with principal learning. The perceived disparity between the assessment approach and the aim of functional skills should be considered. Awarding Bodies should also be encouraged to review the level of difficulty of Level 2 functional skills examinations.

- The role of Level 1 Diplomas should be considered; firstly how best to promote Level 1 to teachers and learners so that take-up can be increased and courses could become viable; and secondly how to assist teaching staff in targeting Level 1 appropriately to those learners whose attainment to date suggests that they would not yet be able to achieve a Level 2 qualification.
- DCSF should consider how to further support consortia in ensuring that good quality and consistent IAG is provided to all potential Diploma learners.

Recommendations for consortia

- IAG should be a priority. Learners need to be made fully aware of the course content, learning approaches and assessment methods so that the qualification meets their expectations.
- The rationale for in-house delivery should be considered to assess whether a collaborative approach might better meet learners' needs.
- A more strategic approach to deciding who should go on training courses, and which courses should be accessed, is required at a consortium level. Ensuring that the right people access training is essential.
- Consideration should be given to how best to broaden the additional and specialist learning offer within the planning and timetabling constraints within institutions, so that it meets its aims of providing high quality breadth or depth of curriculum experience.
- Consortia should consider how to develop effective quality assurance procedures across partnerships to monitor the quality of teaching and learning that are acceptable to all institutions within the consortium.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The introduction of Diplomas for 14-19 year olds is a central part of the government's reform of 14-19 education and represents a major innovation in educational opportunity for young people in England. The Diploma programme has its origins in the February 2005 White Paper *14-19 Education and Skills* (Cm 6476) (GB. Parliament. HoC, 2005), where the vision set out is of an education system that:

> *should provide every young person with a route to success in life through hard work and dedication. To do so, it must provide opportunities that stretch and motivate each young person; interesting opportunities to learn in a variety of different ways, abstract and practical and rigorous qualifications with currency in the worlds of work and of higher education, both here and abroad. p. 22*

The Department for Education and Skills' *Implementation Plan* (DfES, 2005), published ten months later, set out how this priority was to be tackled through the introduction of a new programme of Diplomas. These new qualifications are being offered at three levels and across 17 lines of learning, and will be implemented in four phases, as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1   Lines of learning

Phase 1 lines of learning Construction and the Built Environment Engineering Information Technology Creative and Media Society, Health and Development	Introduced in September 2008
Phase 2 lines of learning Business, Administration and Finance Hair and Beauty Studies Hospitality Environmental and Land-Based Studies Manufacturing and Product Design	Introduced in September 2009
Phase 3 lines of learning Public Services Retail Business Sport and Active Leisure Travel and Tourism	Introduced in September 2010
Phase 4 lines of learning Science Languages and International Communication Humanities and Social Sciences	It is planned that the last three lines of learning will be introduced from 2011.

For each phase of implementation, consortia (of schools, colleges, training providers, employers and HEIs) have to submit an application to DCSF for each line of learning they want to offer. This application process is known as 'the Gateway'.

The first five lines of learning were introduced in September 2008 (Phase 1) by consortia approved to offer Diploma courses. These first five lines are Construction and the Built Environment, Engineering, Information Technology, Creative and Media, and Society, Health and Development. Approximately 12,000 learners started a Diploma in September 2008.

A further five lines will be available from September 2009 (Phase 2) in Business, Administration and Finance, Hair and Beauty Studies, Hospitality, Environmental and Land-Based Studies, and Manufacturing and Product Design. A further four will be launched in 2010 (Phase 3) in Public Services, Retail Business, Sport and Active Leisure, and Travel and Tourism. In October 2007, the Secretary of State announced that a further three new Diploma lines in Science, Languages and International Communication, and Humanities and Social Sciences will be added from 2011 (Phase 4).

The Diploma consists of three main components:

- Principal learning – sector-related knowledge and underpinning skills needed to progress in relevant sectors.

- Generic learning – functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT, development of personal, learning and thinking skills, and a Project or Extended Project.

- Additional/specialist learning – additional subjects that offer the opportunity to study a particular topic in more depth, or to study something different that widens the learner experience such as another language, for example. Additional and specialist learning aims to broaden horizons and help to open up lots of different opportunities in future study and employment.

Diplomas also include learning in the workplace (a minimum of ten days' work experience), and learning through realistic work environments, to enable the development of practical skills and work-related application of learning.

All of these Diploma components have been designed with the aim of preparing learners for employment or further study through incorporating elements that aim to develop learners' life skills, problem-solving and creative thinking, as well as their functional skills in Mathematics, English and ICT and subject-specific knowledge. The introduction of the Diploma also aims to benefit employers by enabling young people to enter the workforce with more relevant skills and an understanding of work.

In January 2008, the DCSF commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the University of Exeter to conduct the national evaluation of the implementation and impact of Diplomas over the period 2008-2013. The formative elements of this evaluation offer an opportunity to refine the Diplomas as they develop, and could be considered as key evidence when the 14-19 qualification offer is reviewed in 2013.

1.2   Aims and objectives

The purpose of the national evaluation is to provide policy makers and practitioners with systematic and robust evidence which will enable them to make informed judgements about the outcomes of the Diplomas for different stakeholders and to make improvements to design and delivery, if appropriate. The evaluation has two main aims:

- To review the **implementation and delivery** of the Diplomas – in terms of the processes and factors facilitating or hindering successful implementation; the structural issues related to design and content; and the systems for planning, organising and resourcing provision and supporting progression.
- To assess the **impact** of the Diplomas on young people – in terms of their participation in education and training; attainment of qualifications; and progression to further and higher education, training and employment.

The evaluation will also gather the perceptions and experiences of the Diplomas from a range of stakeholders including young people, parents, teachers, employers and higher education staff.

1.3   Research methods

The overall research design for the evaluation provides a complementary mixed-method approach to address the complex range of issues and aims associated with the implementation of the Diplomas. The study has three main strands: surveys of a range of stakeholders (including consortium leads, learners, teaching staff, parents, employers and HEIs); a longitudinal programme of qualitative case studies; and statistical analysis of external datasets. More details can be found in Appendix A.

This report focuses on experiences of the first year of Diploma delivery. Details about each element of the data collection are provided in the following sections.

1.3.1   Selection of the survey sample

Using data collected from a telephone survey of Gateway 1 consortium leads, and information about the schools involved in Gateway 1 consortia, a **sample of 30 consortia** was drawn **for involvement in the survey strand**.

Full details of the sample criteria, the profile of the sample drawn, and a discussion of the representativeness of the sample (compared with all Gateway 1 consortia) are presented in Appendix B. In summary, the sample was representative in terms of government office region (GOR), and free school meal eligibility at consortium level, and was representative in terms of school type and achievement at school level.

1.3.2   Survey of learners

Longitudinal surveys are being carried out to track pre- and post-16 Diploma learners from the first year of their Diploma studies until 'Year 14' which equates to the first year post-18. The surveys explore their experiences of their Diploma course and the choices they make about future pathways. Surveys of comparison learners are also taking place, to allow for comparisons of choices and expectations of those who do and do not take a Diploma.

This report summarises the findings of a survey of Diploma and comparison learners in **Year 10 and Year 12** in the sample of 30 Gateway 1 consortia, undertaken between April and July 2009 (when Diploma learners were in the first year of their course pre- and post-16). All institutions within this sample known to be involved in Diplomas in Gateway 1 were surveyed –178 in total. Detail of the survey process is provided in Appendix A.

A total of 820 Year 10 and 176 Year 12 *Diploma* questionnaires were returned[1]; this represents approximately ten per cent of Diploma learners registered on the Diploma Aggregation Service (DAS) in April 2009, both pre- and post-16, as intended in the original research design. As might be expected, given take-up of Diplomas nationally (according to information on the take-up of Diplomas in Gateway 1/2008-09 recorded on the DAS in April 2009), responding learners in Year 10 were most often taking a Level 2 Diploma, and those in Year 12 were most often taking Level 3 (see Appendix C for details). Overall, the greatest proportion of the response came from Year 10 learners taking Level 2 Diplomas (again reflecting take-up nationally) and, therefore, most of the data summarised in this report will be based on experiences of Diplomas at Level 2 pre-16.

Due to the lower than anticipated numbers of Diploma learners embarking on the qualification in 2008, there are fewer respondents in the survey samples than had been expected. While as a *proportion* of Diploma learners the sample still represents ten per cent of all learners, the smaller *number* of learners in the sample, particularly in the Year 12 sample, means that we estimate that typical 95% confidence intervals for the Year 10 group are within four to eight percentage points of our estimates. Due to the smaller sample size for Year 12, the confidence interval is larger, typically within 10 to 20 percentage points of our estimates. So, for example, where 82% of the Year 10 sample were satisfied with their Diploma experience, we can say that, in the whole population of Diploma learners, between 76% and 89% would be satisfied.[2]

In order to gather the views of young people who had not chosen to take a Diploma, but who would have had the opportunity to do so because they attended the same schools as Diploma learners, a 'comparison group' survey was conducted. Staff in each Diploma institution were asked to distribute questionnaires to a Year 10 or Year 12 class group of students who were not pursuing a Diploma. Questionnaires were received from 1,118 Year 10 and 225 Year 12 comparison learners.

As can be seen in Appendix C the responding comparison group were not fully representative of all non-Diploma learners in their institutions and so the survey data was weighted by gender and attainment to achieve representativeness in these respects. Consequently, the comparison group provide a comparison of learners who do not choose to take a Diploma but who are representative of all non-Diploma learners, rather than being representative of Diploma learners. It is worth noting that this 'comparison group' are not necessarily similar to Diploma learners in all respects. Indeed, as Diploma learners are more likely to be male than female, a comparison group that represents all non-Diploma learners is likely to differ from Diploma learners in this respect. In discussing differences between Diploma learners and comparison learners, therefore, we are exploring the difference between those who choose to take a Diploma and their peers and we would expect to find differences in the characteristics and attitudes of the two groups. Furthermore, it is worth noting

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[1] As many institutions did not provide the number of Diploma learners (see Appendix A), the total number in the target population was not known, meaning it is not possible to calculate response rates.
[2] Based on **unweighted** data.

that, in the multilevel model analysis that was undertaken for most of the comparisons between the Year 10 Diploma and comparison groups in this report, differences between the characteristics of the two groups are taken account of statistically in order to compare on a 'like with like' basis.

As noted above, the survey responses were weighted to ensure that the responding samples were representative of Diploma and comparison learners in England. In particular, representativeness in terms of gender and attainment was desired. As a result, percentages quoted in text and tables are based on weighted numbers (see Appendix A for further details on weighting).

Responses were received from 99 institutions across all 30 consortia (meaning they were from consortia representative of *all* Diploma consortia, as discussed in Appendix B, although it should be noted that the number of responses received ranged across each consortium and institution).

Information on gender and date of birth provided by learners on the questionnaires was then matched to background information held on the National Pupil Database (NPD), where possible, to explore differences in responses in relation to their background characteristics.[3]

Details of the responding sample of learners are presented in Appendix C.

In considering the findings to the surveys of learners, and of teachers (detailed below) it is worth taking into consideration that, while all Diploma learners and teachers within an institution were invited to complete a questionnaire and share their experience of teaching and learning this new qualification, not all of those who could have done so, responded. Consequently, as is often the case with questionnaire surveys, there is a risk of some self-selection or non-response bias in the data. For example, it may be the case that individuals who have certain characteristics, such as being more motivated, or have a greater desire to express their view of the Diploma as a result of a particularly positive or negative experience, are more likely to respond.

As far as possible we have sought to minimise this impact in the analysis through weighting the data by two variables – attainment and gender – for the Year 10 sample which are likely to be influential on young people's experience and attitudes. In the Year 12 sample, weighting by gender and attainment was not required but weighting by line of learning was carried out of the Diploma group and the two Year 12 samples remained representative in terms of gender and attainment. However, it is not possible to weight the data in relation to personal attributes and characteristics as these are not known for the whole population, even where they are known for the responding cohort. Notwithstanding this challenge in conducting analysis of some questionnaire surveys, it is evident that the respondents expressed a range of views – as will be discussed in the report some respondents were content with their Diploma and others were not, in addition some had a positive attitude to learning and others did not. Moreover, the findings from the survey evidence generally corresponded with the experiences of those who were interviewed and with evidence from other research relating to experience of non-GCSE courses. Consequently, the evidence from the surveys appears to represent the views of Diploma learners more generally.

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[3] A total of 1684 (87 per cent) of the 1938 Year 10 Diploma and comparison respondents were matched to NPD. Across the 401 responding Year 12 learners, a total of 214 (53 per cent) were matched to NPD. The low match was due to learners' transition between institutions at age 16 (which occurred between the two survey time points).

1.3.3 Survey of Diploma teachers

Each of the 178 institutions was sent seven questionnaires for Diploma teachers. This was an estimate number; some institutions would have had fewer than seven teachers involved in delivering Diplomas. Those involved in delivering any of the Diploma components could have completed the questionnaire. A total of 166 were received from 74 institutions (42 per cent of institutions) across 28 of the 30 consortia (93 per cent of consortia), although the number of responses ranged across each consortium and institution.

The survey was carried out during April and July 2009 and explored the way in which Diplomas were being taught in the early stages of delivery and teachers' views and experiences of teaching Diplomas so far.

1.3.4 Surveys of parents/carers

A telephone survey of 70 parents/carers of learners who elected to study for a Diploma was undertaken in July 2009 (of those, 44 were parents of boys, possibly because a greater proportion of boys than girls were taking a Diploma nationally, as shown in Appendix C). The survey explored: their awareness and knowledge of Diplomas; their child's reasons for choosing a Diploma; their child's possible future pathway; and views on the Diploma and its impact. Interviews were also carried out with 24 parents of those who did not decide to take a Diploma (a comparison group) in order to explore their awareness of Diplomas and their child's reasons for not choosing a Diploma. Further details of the responding groups are provided in Appendix C.

1.3.5 Selection of the case-study sample

From the survey sample of 30 consortia, a **sub-sample of 15 consortia** was selected for more **in-depth case-study work**. Details of the sample criteria and the profile of the case-study consortia can be found in Appendix D. In summary, the sample included consortia in all nine GOR and a mixture of urban and rural areas and types of local authority (LA). All the lines of learning were represented across the consortia, with three consortia offering all five lines of learning, two offering one, and the remaining eight offering between two and four lines of learning. It is worth noting that two of the consortia had been involved in the Diploma Pathfinder Programme.

1.3.6 Case-study activities

Case-study visits to the sub-sample of 15 Gateway 1 consortia were conducted in the spring term 2009. These were follow-up visits[4] and their main purpose was to explore the early implementation of Diplomas and initial experiences and perceptions of the Diploma, around six months following their introduction. A total of 52 institutions were visited (see Appendix D for details). In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with interviewees (see Table 1.2 for a summary of the number of interviews achieved across the consortia).

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[4] The findings from the initial visits are reported in O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:
http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

Table 1.2   Numbers of interviews achieved

Type of interviewee[5]	Number of interviews completed
Consortium leads/strategic managers	16*
Line of learning leads	31**
Senior institution managers	48
Diploma teachers	59**
Year 10 Diploma learners	137**
Year 12 Diploma learners	72**

Includes one area where the consortium lead and 14-19 strategy manager were interviewed
***More detail, such as information by line of learning, is given in Appendix D*

Additional telephone interviews took place with 13 employers and representatives in three HEIs.

It should be noted that, where consortia were involved in delivering more than two lines of learning, two lines were 'selected' for the focus of the teacher and learner interviews (to minimise the burden on consortia and institutions, but also to ensure that views on all lines of learning were captured across the sample).

Where possible, the number of consortia where a view was expressed is given. This is to provide some guidance on the extent of an experience or approach within the 15 case-study consortia. However, as interviewees are not always asked identical questions during a qualitative interview, the views expressed reflect the issues, priorities, concerns and context perceived to be important for each interviewee.

1.4   Analysis of data

As noted above, the survey responses were weighted to ensure that the responding samples were representative of Diploma and comparison learners in England (see Appendix A for further details on weighting).

The analysis of the survey data included:

- descriptive statistics of the responses to the teacher and learner surveys

- comparative analysis, to explore, for example, the extent of differences or similarities between the responses of: pre-16 and post-16 teachers; teachers of different levels and lines of learning; and Diploma and comparison learners

- cross tabulations, exploring the relationship between a number of variables (for example, line of learning and learner satisfaction)

- factor analysis to aggregate variables from the Year 10 and 12 learner questionnaires in order to produce more robust measures than a consideration of the individual items on the questionnaire alone

- multilevel modelling to explore the relationship between Year 10 learner background factors and outcomes, whilst taking account of other influences.[6]

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[5] Please note that some staff may have dual roles so these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.
[6] Multilevel modelling was not carried out for the analysis of the Year 12 learner surveys, as the number of responding learners was too small.

Further details on the analysis are given in Appendix A.

1.5   Structure of the report

Chapter 2 of the report explores staff reflections on whether they had been prepared for Diploma delivery commencing in September 2008, and examines the CPD opportunities which have been available to try to facilitate preparedness. **Chapter 3** focuses on the structural models of Diploma delivery evident across consortia, including where Diplomas are taught, by whom, and whether there is a necessity for students to travel to learn. The effectiveness of such models is discussed. **Chapter 4** provides an overview of teaching and learning approaches being adopted to deliver Diplomas.

Chapter 5 examines the extent of learner take-up of Diplomas across the case-study sample of consortia, and explores the influences on Diploma learners' decisions to take this new qualification. **Chapter 6** focuses on the experiences of Diploma learners and their satisfaction with their Diploma course to date. It also compares the attitudes to learning of Diploma and comparison students. The planned future progression of Diploma and comparison learners is compared in **Chapter 7**. This is followed by a discussion in **Chapter 8** on future developments reported by Diploma consortia, including expected future delivery of Diplomas, future support needs and any advice for other consortia implementing Diplomas in the future.

The report concludes with an overview of the main conclusions and recommendations in **Chapter 9**.

2. Preparation for delivery and continuing professional development (CPD)

Key findings

- The majority of teachers (83 per cent) reported that they had received some type of training or support in relation to Diploma delivery.

- Where case-study interviewees had accessed training and support, many said it was 'all or mainly of use' illustrating its value.

- The most commonly accessed source of training was that delivered at the local level, either through the LA or the consortium itself. This type of training was generally felt to be of more use than national training as it offered the opportunity to focus on more localised issues, to network and to strengthen partnership working.

- Practitioners wished for further support with teaching methods appropriate to the Diploma, knowledge/experience of the workplace and knowledge around assessment. Line of learning leads requested more guidance on coordinating the different elements of the Diploma and ensuring a holistic approach to delivery.

- Case-study interviewees were generally positive about the resources and funding available for delivery of the qualification. However 27 per cent of survey respondents reported that a lack of resources had made them feel under prepared before they commenced delivery.

Recommendations

- Better access to, and targeting of, training should be a priority for policy makers and consortia. Ensuring that the *right* people access training is essential.

- Opportunities for local training and networking should be facilitated and supported.

- More support and guidance needs to be given to practitioners in relation to assessment, teaching and learning methods and in developing knowledge of the workplace.

This section focuses on staff's reflections on whether they had been prepared for delivery prior to the implementation of the Diploma in September 2008. It then gives an account of the CPD opportunities available to staff to support their preparation for delivery. This is followed by a brief look at the current level of staff's skills and touches on outstanding training and support needs (examined in more detail in Chapter 9 on future developments).

2.1 Staff preparedness prior to delivery

The teacher survey, carried out at least five months after Diploma delivery commenced, explored whether staff, on reflection, had been prepared for delivery from September 2008. Just under half of staff (48 per cent) had felt *very* or *quite prepared*. However, staff were clearly divided in their views and 47 per cent reported that they were *not very* or *not at all prepared.* The most common aspects of Diploma delivery for which staff felt less prepared were in relation to *assessment/tracking progress* (34 per cent), *resources to support delivery* (27 per cent), and *understanding of the specifications/curriculum requirements* (25 per cent). These were issues that had been mentioned by interviewees taking part in the baseline case studies some months prior to delivery commencing, which suggests they were not always resolved before delivery started[7].

Table 2.1 below displays the proportion of staff who reported that they had previous experience in aspects of teaching relevant to the delivery of the Diploma. The majority of staff reported having previous experience of teaching applied qualifications and similar subjects. It is clear from this data that the area in which fewest staff had experience was *working in partnership with other providers to deliver courses;* a point worth bearing in mind when considering consortia effectiveness and issues around shared delivery given that it was common for collaborative delivery to exist (see Chapter 4). As might be expected, those teaching pre-16 learners were more likely than those teaching post-16 learners to have experience of teaching this age group and vice versa.

Table 2.1   Experience prior to Diploma delivery

Experienced in the following..?	%
Teaching 14-16 year olds	81
Teaching similar applied qualifications	67
Teaching 16-19 year olds	64
Teaching similar subjects	60
Working in partnership with other providers to deliver courses	31
N = 166	

A multiple response question so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

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[7] O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

2.2 Training and support for delivery

2.2.1 Delivery of training and support

The survey data showed that Diploma teachers were likely to have accessed a wide range of training and support**.** The most commonly accessed source of training was that delivered at the local level, either through the LA or the consortium itself (69 per cent). Nevertheless, nearly as many survey respondents (63 per cent) reported having received training at the national level. Case-study interviewees reported that support, training and meetings at the LA and regional levels were generally felt to have been of more use than national training. Support at this level offered the opportunity to focus in on more localised issues, share expertise and explore solutions to shared problems. Although *training* at a local level was most commonly accessed, *networking opportunities* were slightly less commonly accessed sources of support by survey respondents (58 per cent accessed networking opportunities within their consortium). This was despite evidence from teachers in case-study consortia that local networking opportunities, where available, were seen to be highly valuable, as they provided a chance for teachers to build on their understanding of partnership working, an element of delivery in which many felt they lacked experience.

The extent to which staff participated in training was dependant on the availability of funding. The case-study visits revealed that access to funding, in order to free up practitioner time for regular meetings, varied. Some described how they had to meet "out of hours" where resources did not permit networking in the normal working day. Although popular, therefore, regular meetings were clearly not a viable option for all staff. This is important given that allowing time for meetings was reported to facilitate successful delivery (see Chapter 4).

2.2.2 Content of training and support

The majority of teachers surveyed (83 per cent) reported that they had received at least one of the types of training or support in relation to Diploma delivery listed in Table 2.2 below. It shows that Diploma teachers were most likely to have received training and support relating to the *structure of the Diploma* (67 per cent), *assessment of the Diploma* (50 per cent), *planning Diploma teaching*, (43 per cent) and *functional skills* (39 per cent). However, it is important to recognise here that these figures also show that there was a significant proportion of staff who had *not* received training and support in relation to these issues at the time of the survey. Furthermore, the fact that half of teachers had not received training in relation to assessment could explain why this was an area in which teaching staff felt less prepared (see Section 2.1). Staff's views on assessment training are explored more fully later in this section.

Table 2.2   Type of support for teachers/tutors

Content of support	Received support %	% who were *very* or *quite satisfied*	*N*
The structure of the Diploma	67	72	112
Assessment of Diplomas	50	61	83
Planning Diploma teaching	43	60	71
Functional skills	39	62	64
Information, Advice and Guidance	36	62	59
Opportunities to work with people in other institutions	30	83	49
Experience of sector related working environment	28	75	47
Pedagogical approaches	20	68	34
Diploma administration	18	57	30
Opportunities to work with people in other departments	14	74	23
Behaviour management with a younger age group of learners	8	69	13
N= 166			

A series of single response items
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

The research evidence suggests that the quality of training and support received by Diploma staff had improved since interviews were conducted prior to delivery[8]. There had been some noticeable dissatisfaction in relation to training (particularly in relation to the mandatory three-day practitioner training, functional skills training and support in relation to assessment). However, during the follow up visits, interviews with Diploma staff revealed that they had generally found the training to be of more use. This was reflected in the survey data; Table 2.2 above illustrates that most teachers were satisfied with training they had received. The highest levels of satisfaction were evident regarding training that enabled staff to liaise with other colleagues or gain current experience of the sector related to the Diploma. More specifically, 83 per cent were very or quite satisfied with access to *opportunities to work with people in other institutions* and 74 per cent were very or quite satisfied with the *opportunities to work with people in other departments*, while 75 per cent were satisfied with their *experience of a sector-related working environment*. However, under a third of survey respondents reported having had access to each of these types of support, which is an important point given the demand for networking opportunities as detailed in Section 2.2.1. It may be that the high levels of satisfaction with opportunities to work with people in other institutions related to the fact that *working in partnership with other providers* was an aspect of teaching of which Diploma staff reported having had little experience (see Table 2.1).

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[8] O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId =DCSF-RW079&

In comparison to views collected prior to Diploma delivery[9], interviews with Diploma staff in the follow-up phase of the evaluation revealed that they were more likely to be satisfied with the level of detail given during training.

Support focusing on **functional skills** was seen to have been of use by 60 per cent of survey respondents. Where an opinion was stated during case study visits, this broadly positive view was also reflected by staff. As one teacher said:

> *The functional skills looked challenging at first but the training undertaken by the practitioners group on functional skills has enabled them to see how functional skills fit into the course and how they can develop these with the learners.*

A member of this teacher's school management team agreed that the functional skills training had been of value and commented that *'the functional skills training has been useful; it has given the staff confidence'*. This suggests that teachers were more prepared for functional skills on commencement of delivery than one year previously.

The survey data (illustrated in Table 2.2) revealed that 61 per cent of those who had accessed training on **assessment** were either *very* or *quite* satisfied. Many case-study interviewees reported having now received in-house support for assessment (the method reported to be of most use by interviewees during the planning year[10]). However, there was much wider variance in the views of case study interviewees on the usefulness of assessment training (in general, not specifically relating to functional skills assessment) both between and within consortia *and* institutions. Half of those commenting reported feeling disappointed with the quality and content of the training while the other half claimed to be happy with training received on assessment. In explanation of their dissatisfaction with the assessment training, various comments revealed that interviewees had felt that the deliverers were not sufficiently knowledgeable, that the content was confused and, in one case, the course was a repeat of a previous session. Those who had found the assessment training more satisfactory attributed this to the quality of the personnel delivering the course, and improved engagement of the awarding bodies with the Diploma. These reflections illustrate the impact of ensuring that appropriate and knowledgeable professionals provide the training.

An outstanding issue relating to support for assessment seemed to relate most strongly to the awarding body involved and the individual needs of the consortia not being met (some interviewees, for example, felt that any support they received needed to be more closely tailored to individual teacher's or consortia's experience and progress in planning for assessment (see Section 2.2.3).

In terms of support available to line of learning leads specifically, the majority of those interviewed felt well supported within their consortium (with varying levels of support and interaction with the consortium lead). While some had accessed training to assist with the **management of the Diploma**, others felt that there were few line of learning lead specific training opportunities available, and suggested that there should be more guidance on coordinating the different elements of the Diploma and ensuring a holistic approach to delivery.

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[9] O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

[10] *ibid*

Overall, while less than half of the teachers responding to the survey had received training in relation to the factors listed, when the training was accessed it was generally found to be of use. The priority should be to ensure that practitioners are given the opportunity to access training. This issue will be explored in the next section.

2.2.3 Accessing training and support and CPD strategies

Strategic consortium staff (such as consortium or line of learning leads) had differing approaches to selecting external support. While some were reactive to the requests of practitioners, others were more strategic in their approach, acting as '*gatekeepers*' between the providers and their consortia staff. Institution staff considered the latter as a useful source of support in itself. One consortium lead had mapped expertise in order to identify gaps, while another had created a directory of training opportunities against roles. A third consortium lead reported holding periodic afternoon meetings to discuss arising issues and potential external sources of support. These interviewees explained that a more strategic approach to accessing training and support had been deemed necessary in order to ensure that training was appropriate in terms of content and the professional status of the practitioner. For example, as one consortium lead said, *'we cherry pick* [training] *a lot more now'*. Further to this, a few interviewees still felt that the training could be better marketed to ensure consortia are fully aware who a course is aimed at. As one line of learning lead explained:

> *Some training was poor or deemed not relevant because it was directed at the wrong people. They've been directed at the wrong people so I've sent the wrong people.*

One or two described their frustration at the number of training courses being advertised and delivered by different agencies. For example, one consortium lead said they felt '*bombarded'* by the amount of opportunities available and said:

> *I find it* difficult *to understand where all these different bodies are coming from and make sense of it all...it's a very confusing picture.*

This is a theme that has continued from the planning year[11], and suggests that strategic consortium staff have had to work hard to ensure the correct and necessary opportunities are accessed.

It was evident that consortium leads or learning leads would need to continue to manage and support the provision of CPD for their collegause as they would continue to require access to training and support opportunities in the future to ensure that staff remain up to date on developments. In addition, they would need to ensure that new members of staff have the opportunity to access a similar range and level of support as their colleagues (staff in six consortia, as described in Section 2.3 to follow, were planning to recruit new staff for 2009 delivery).

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[11] O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

2.2.4   Resources

Interviewees across nine consortia felt they had access to adequate resources (in relation to funding, facilities and equipment). A small minority referred to funding having been specifically directed towards facilities in order to provide the means to deliver the Diploma, and to the need to make the course attractive or different for students. For example, one teacher said:

> *Yes* [we] *definitely* [have] *sufficient resources...start-up funding led to investment in equipment and they are trying to give students exposure to a range of technology so they are lucky.*

However, there were interviewees across four consortia who felt they did not have adequate space or facilities for delivery (although staff in two consortia explained that they were waiting for new facilities to be completed). Other resource concerns tended to be unique to individual consortia and related to staffing and transport (such as access to mini buses). On the other hand, several interviewees questioned how viable their access to resources might be as the cohort grows in the future. This will be an issue explored in later stages of the evaluation.

2.3   Level of staff skills following delivery

Consortium leads interviewed during follow-up visits to case-study consortia generally felt that teaching staff now had the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the Diploma (see Chapter 3). In many cases they pointed out that particular Diploma lines of learning had been chosen to mirror the specialisms and experience of teaching staff. Consortium partners (including HEIs) also provided capacity in terms of skills and knowledge. As one consortium lead explained, '[it is all about] *deployment of staff and the management of resources*'. Others reasoned that any gaps in knowledge (in relation to content or delivery) had been dealt with through training opportunities (for example the justice element of Society, Health and Development principal learning). Line of learning leads were less likely than consortium leads to explicitly say that staff skills were lacking but identified a number of areas in which there were outstanding issues with knowledge or skills. These included (and were mentioned in response to an open question):

- Teaching and learning methods appropriate to the Diploma (i.e. applied learning methods, and the integration and delivery of functional skills, personal, learning and thinking skills, the project and employer engagement) - (five consortia). See Chapter 4 for detail on this issue.

- Knowledge/experience of industry/workplaces outside of education - (four consortia) (one consortium had organised work placements for staff).

- Lack of knowledge around assessment - (four consortia).

- Overall staff capacity; larger groups will require more specialist staff - (three consortia), and staff will require cover when unable to teach (one consortium).

- Whole school awareness of the Diploma - (two consortia).

- Gaps in the Diploma-specific knowledge amongst newly qualified teachers (in relation to this issue, one line of learning lead saw the recruitment of newly qualified teachers as beneficial if they have industry experience) - (two consortia).

- Lack of experience of teaching 14-16 year olds- (two consortia).

- Time to attend training and to plan - (two consortia).

A minority of interviewees expressed concern that, as take-up increases, the capacity of staff will be under pressure, and while skills had been "mapped" and deployed across the consortium, this left little flexibility in the case of, for example, staff sickness. In this first year of implementation, around a quarter of case-study consortia (four) had recruited at least one new member of staff (one of which had recruited three new members of staff), usually to increase capacity or provide specialist knowledge, while the remainder of senior managers explained how they had deployed staff with existing specialisms (sometimes moving staff between roles to accommodate the Diploma). Staff in six consortia explained that they planned to recruit new staff in the following academic year, mainly in order to increase capacity as the offer increases, but also to ensure they have staff with specific specialist skills (often Hair and Beauty).

2.4   Summary

The research evidence suggests that the quality of training and support received by Diploma staff had improved since interviews were conducted prior to delivery, and the majority of consortia leads felt that staff were suitably skilled to deliver the Diploma. However, there still remained some inconsistencies in the quality of training delivered by different organisations and the extent to which training was found to be "fit for purpose" or targeted appropriately at those attending. This is apparent due to the contrasts in experience of Diploma staff throughout not only consortia but, at times, institutions as well. This issue may, to some extent have contributed to the lack of clarity around some of the components and content of the Diploma, and more predominantly, assessment of the qualification.

While staff considered the provision of resources to be adequate, there is some evidence to suggest that further funding is necessary in order to make possible further opportunities and access to localised support activities. This may be the appropriate means of reducing some of the persisting gaps in knowledge and skills as identified by Diploma staff.

3. Diploma delivery

Key findings

- Collaborative models of Diploma delivery were common and seemed to be working well overall. No major problems with 'travel to learn' were reported. 'Shared delivery' most often referred to units of principal learning being delivered by different partners, rather than joint teaching (although there were examples of this).

- In-house delivery was also fairly common, generally due to no perceived need to collaborate, although there were instances of unwillingness to do so.

- Level 1 was less widely offered than Level 2 pre-16, or when it was offered, the small number of learners necessitated co-teaching of Levels to make it viable

- Post-16 Diplomas were not always offered in the case-study consortia, but the evidence suggests that institutions were waiting for the first pre-16 learners to complete their Diploma courses in 2010 before offering Diplomas post-16 from the academic year 2010-11.

- The additional and specialist learning 'offer' pre-16 was typically in the form of the 'standard' curriculum subjects (most often GCSEs), although there was a sense that this component was still being developed for future Diploma learners.

- Functional skills were most often taught as discrete lessons, driven by the necessity for learners to pass the separate examinations in order to pass their Diploma overall. Specialist teachers did not have the sector-specific knowledge to apply functional skills to the broader Diploma curriculum. Functional skills were less likely to be embedded in other subjects, including GCSEs.

- The level of challenge of functional skills was highlighted by teaching staff who felt they were, in general, too difficult for learners to achieve (particularly at Level 2).

- Most consortia had developed aligned timetables across institutions to facilitate collaborative delivery. Diploma 'days' had meant that other subjects (including the core subjects) were condensed into other days for *all* learners; some staff felt this was demotivating for staff and learners, as shorter teaching periods and variety of learning was favoured.

- The rationale for in-house delivery should be explored by consortium managers, to ascertain whether it is due to any *unwillingness* (sometimes resulting from a history of competition between institutions) rather than a lack of *need* to collaborate to give students the best learning experience. Institutions might need support at a local level to overcome competition between institutions and are likely to benefit from messages about what makes collaboration a success and how it can better meet the needs of learners.

- DCSF may wish to consider aligning Level 1 Diplomas more closely with those at Level 2 in terms of guided learning hours, to allow for co-teaching which, in turn, may increase the accessibility of Level 1 programmes.

- Positive messages from the first of a series of surveys of HEIs should be disseminated in order to clarify the position of HEIs, to encourage a broader offer and take-up of Diplomas post-16.

- Institutions should consider ways of broadening the additional and specialist learning offer so it meets the aims of providing high quality breadth and/or depth of curriculum experience.

- Specialist English, mathematics and ICT teachers did not have the sector-specific knowledge to apply functional skills to the broader Diploma curriculum and may benefit from support in doing so, so that learners see the relevance of the skills, and can apply them, in a broader context.

- DCSF may wish to advise awarding bodies to reflect on practitioners' views on the level of difficulty of functional skills, and to consider how to address the potential disparity between the assessment approach and the aim of learners achieving the 'mastery' of functional skills.

This chapter firstly explores the Diploma 'offer' in the case-study consortia, in terms of which lines of learning and levels commenced in September 2008. It then focuses in particular on models of delivery, exploring *how* the Diplomas were being delivered, before discussing the effectiveness of delivery models. It should be noted that the term 'delivery' throughout this report refers to the *structures* put in place to enable the Diplomas to be taught, rather than actual teaching and learning practices, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.1   The Diploma 'offer'

During 'baseline' visits to 15 case-study consortia in the spring/summer terms 2008, some plans for the delivery of lines of learning and/or levels of the Diploma were said to be tentative and dependent on take-up amongst learners.[12] Tables E1 and E2 in Appendix E illustrate initial plans compared with actual delivery which commenced in September 2008, pre- and post-16. As was the case nationally, Diplomas at Level 2 were most often delivered and taken-up pre-16 (therefore, most of the data summarised in this report will be based on experiences of Diplomas at Level 2 pre-16). Post-16, Level 3 was most common.

Pre-16

Consortia had commenced delivery of Level 2 courses pre-16 where planned. In eight consortia, there were some pre-16 Level 1 courses which had been tentatively planned but which did not commence (for each line of learning except Construction and the Built Environment, for which all planned Level 1 courses commenced). In two other areas, Level 1 courses had never been planned. When visits had taken place during the planning stages in spring 2008, delivery of Level 1 courses had been uncertain in some consortia. This was most often because teachers were uncertain about learners' progression from Level 1 once they finished their Diploma at age 16. This view was reflected by a learner studying for a Level 1 Diploma, when asked if they would recommend it to a friend:

> *If you do Level 1…you get 5 GCSEs at D-G grade, so you don't get full GCSEs, you don't get a pass mark really, and you still have to go on and do Level 2 before you can do any higher qualification.*

Where Level 1 courses were being delivered, there were examples of institutions in three consortia combining classes of Level 1 and 2 learners. In one, this was due to the number of Level 1 learners being too small to make separate classes viable, but in two institutions it was because staff considered the learners' Diploma result to be dependent on their ability and progress throughout the course (including their ability to pass functional skills at the necessary level). As one senior manager said, for example:

> *We will decide later on which level they will apply for…it will depend on how they do in their functional skills.*

Some challenges with differentiation had been faced (for example, in relation to assessment). Interviewees in other consortia felt Levels 1 and 2 should not be co-taught due to the different guided learning hours and curriculum coverage. However, there were reports of some Level 1 courses possibly not being sustainable long-term due to low take-up and thus small classes. It may be beneficial for Level 1 Diplomas to be aligned more closely with Level 2 Diplomas in terms of guided learning hours, to facilitate co-teaching, in order to make courses viable.

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[12] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

Post-16

When the Gateway 1 consortia were visited prior to September 2008 delivery commencing, there were two case-study consortia which had not originally planned to offer any Diplomas post-16. This was either because of a deliberate focus on pre-16 delivery, or because of uncertainty over the acceptance of Diplomas by HEIs. Indeed, these two consortia did not commence Diplomas post-16 in 2008. Amongst the other consortia, six decided not to commence Levels 1 and/or 2 post-16, mainly due to a lack of take-up, although plans to deliver these levels post-16 had originally been tentative due to staff uncertainty about learner progression. There were also seven consortia in which one or more of the Level 3 post-16 courses that were planned did not commence. This was most often due to limited take-up, thought to be because Year 11s might be reluctant to choose to go on to take a newly introduced qualification post-16 which might not be accepted by universities, in their view. As one consortium lead said, '*we knew it would be a battle to recruit post-16 for a new course*'. This view was reflected among the considerations raised by Year 11 learners when they were making their choices about whether to take a Diploma post-16 or not.[13]

In some cases lower take-up was also considered to be due to a perceived lack of clarity in relation to progression routes, due to what were described as confusing messages about acceptance of Diplomas coming from HEIs. As will be discussed later in Chapter 6, there were also similar concerns amongst some learners and parents. However, the first of a series of surveys of HEIs undertaken as part of this evaluation (Richardson and Haynes, 2009)[14] found that 18 of 19 HEIs surveyed accepted the UCAS tariff for the Advanced Diploma as equivalent to 3.5 A levels. In addition, most HEI senior managers and admissions tutors viewed the Diploma qualification as both a specialised pathway into undergraduate study and as suitable for a wider range of courses.

One-year courses

There were examples of one-year Diploma courses running in eight of the 15 case-study consortia. In most cases these were Level 2 post-16 courses (in seven consortia), but there was also evidence of one-year Level 3 courses (in two consortia) and Level 1 courses (one consortium). In one consortium, Engineering at Levels 1 and 2 and Creative and Media at Level 2 were offered as one-year courses pre-16. Some staff reported finding it challenging covering the curriculum in one year, even post-16 when there was no need for learners to have to fit in other compulsory subjects. Interviewees will be asked to reflect on this approach during follow-up visits.

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[13] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

[14] Richardson, W. and Haynes, G. (2009). *Evaluation of the Implementation and Impact of Diplomas: Findings from the 2008 Survey of Higher Education Institutions.* DCSF: London. Available online: *http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RR145&*

3.2   Models of Diploma Delivery

3.2.1   Structural models

Plans for a number of models of delivery had emerged during initial visits to case-study consortia.[15] These then formed the basis of questions included in the survey for teachers and the follow-up case-study interviews, to investigate whether these, or others, had indeed been adopted for Diploma delivery from September 2008.

Table 3.1 shows the models of delivery reported by teachers who responded to the teacher survey. Models involving collaboration between institutions were common **pre-16**. It was most likely for the learners' own school and an FE college or training provider to work in partnership (46 per cent of teachers referred to this model). It was also fairly common for different *schools* to be working in partnership pre-16 (38 per cent). While it was most often learners who were travelling to learn, nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of teaching staff reported that they would be travelling to teach Diplomas pre-16 (see Section 3.2.3 below for more on 'travel to learn'). Just over a third of teachers (35 per cent) reported, however, that all delivery occurred 'in house' without support from a partner (see details below on the rationale for this model).

Post-16, Diplomas were most often delivered in the learners' home institution. There was evidence of some collaborative delivery post-16: 28 per cent of teachers said learners travelled between their school sixth form and an FE college or training provider; and 16 per cent reported shared delivery between school sixth forms.

Further analysis of the teacher survey revealed that those involved in collaborative delivery felt no less prepared for delivery in September 2009 than teachers involved in other models of delivery.

Table 3.1   Models of Diploma delivery

Model	Pre-16 %	Post-16 %
Learners travel between their own school and a FE college or training provider for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	46	28
Learners travel between their own school and another/other school(s) for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	38	16
All Diploma learning takes place within the learners' own school (sixth form if post-16)	35	40
Teachers/tutors travel outside their own institution to teach the Diploma	23	18
Learners study *all* of their Diploma in a FE college or training provider	4	33
Other	7	11
No response	1	7
N =	**112**	**57**

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Filter questions; all those who taught pre-16 or post-16
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

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[15] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

The case studies provided further insight into delivery arrangements. As had been originally anticipated by consortia, models varied, not only between consortia, but between different institutions within consortia, and also within institutions for different lines of learning, highlighting the complexity of delivery arrangements.

Reflecting the survey findings, collaboration was common across case-study consortia. As shown in Table E3 in Appendix E, schools in nine case-study consortia had support from a local FE college or training provider for pre-16 Diploma delivery, usually when they did not have the specialist staffing, facilities or resources to deliver the vocational elements of the qualification alone. In six consortia, learners travelled between different *schools* for different aspects of their Diploma learning. Again, this was often because they were utilising shared expertise, but it was also sometimes to combine small numbers of learners to make a large enough class for delivery to be viable. In a minority of case-study consortia, schools did not feel they had the *capacity* (for example, in terms of staffing, sector-related expertise or facilities) to deliver *any* of the Diploma elements pre-16, meaning that they had to seek support from a partner and that their learners would need to travel to another local school or a college for their entire Diploma learning. Note that as delivery of functional skills was found to usually be the responsibility of the home institution, it is likely that interviewees were referring to all *principal learning* being delivered elsewhere.

This evidence of collaboration concurs with the recent Ofsted report which stated that collaborative provision has increased to broaden the experience for young people (Ofsted, 2009[16]). It seemed that many institutions were putting the learning experience of the students first, and were prepared to work to overcome the challenges associated with partnership working in its early stages (see the discussion below on factors facilitating partnerships and on challenges faced). As one consortium lead said, for example:

> [Students] *going somewhere else* [outside their home institution] *is part of the Diploma practices…so the Diploma looks different.*

Moreover, one senior manager's comment about the importance of collaboration reflected the views of others:

> *I think the strength of the Diploma comes from the collaboration…I don't know how, in the ethos of Diplomas, how any one institution could deliver it. It's meant to be collaborative on the strengths of different people.*

See Section 3.2.4 below for a discussion about which partners taught which elements of the Diploma.

However, another prevalent model for pre-16 delivery was for schools to deliver the entire Diploma 'in-house', without any shared delivery with partners (reported in some schools in ten of the 15 consortia). This model was most often adopted when there was **no perceived *need* to collaborate**, as schools felt able and equipped to deliver line(s) of learning without support (as discussed below). However, there were instances of ***unwillingness* to collaborate** in two consortia due to **competition** between schools. As one senior manager said, for instance:

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[16] Ofsted (2009). *Implementation of 14-19 Reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Ofsted: London. Available online: https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas

> *I think you should have healthy competition between schools. Parents have chosen for their children to come to this school…they wouldn't want them to go to other schools. The weakness [of the approach] is that I suppose we're not fulfilling the ethos of the Diploma.*

It may be the case that such institutions need to be convinced about the benefits of collaborative working in order to broaden their Diploma offer and enhance the learning experience for students.

In addition, the absence of a collaborative approach was related to the **geographical distance** making collaboration difficult. This was raised as a barrier to collaborative delivery in two rural areas, although in another rural area students were travelling to learn.

In another consortium, the lead reported that delivery remained 'in house' for the first phase, which was treated as a 'pilot':

> *Schools would recognise there is too much in-house delivery currently, but it is the safest way to pilot a new qualification…I think there will be more shared delivery* [in the future].

Reflecting the survey findings, the most common post-16 model across the case-study consortia was for all Diploma learning to take place 'in house' in a FE college. There was shared delivery between partners in a minority of case-study consortia (for example, collaboration between school sixth forms and FE colleges).

Patterns of delivery models by line of learning

Pre-16, some models of delivery were more prevalent than others for particular lines of learning (see Table E4 in Appendix E for models in case-study areas). For example, for Engineering and Construction and the Built Environment, it was particularly common for learners' own school and an FE college (52 per cent and 43 per cent respectively) or training provider (17 per cent and 18 per cent) to collaborate. They were also less likely than students doing other lines to say learning took place at their own school; 52 per cent and 65 per cent respectively, compared to between 78 and 85 per cent of learners doing other lines. Learners doing Construction and the Built Environment were least likely to learn at another school (ten per cent, compared with between 23 and 34 per cent of learners doing other lines). This was generally due to the need for specialist facilities, as reflected in the comment of one senior manager that '*you need a workshop environment*'.

In contrast, for Information Technology and Creative and Media, schools were more likely to feel able to deliver the entire Diploma in-house without support from a partner. However, both of these approaches were equally as common for Society, Health and Development. Post-16, it was most likely for all lines of learning to be delivered in-house at an FE college.

3.2.2 Involvement of training providers and HEIs

Nine consortia had some involvement by **training providers** in Diploma delivery. Their involvement did not appear to focus on any particular lines of learning, as there was evidence of *some* involvement in all lines. The *extent* of their involvement varied, from helping to secure work placements to delivery of principal learning (sometimes with shared teaching between staff from schools or colleges and the provider staff, as was the case in three consortia). In three consortia, the economic situation was

specifically said to have affected trainer providers' capacity for involvement (particularly in relation to the Engineering Diploma). In one consortium several training providers had initially been active in four lines of learning, but two which had been involved in Engineering had ceased operating. There was not always a perceived *need* for training provider involvement though in all consortia. As one consortium lead said, '*practitioners in school don't see the need'*. Where training providers were involved in shared delivery partnerships, this appeared to be working well.

There was also considerable variation in the extent of **HEI involvement**. In two consortia, HEIs were assisting with delivery of principal learning, which involved Level 3 students attending the university to be taught units of the Engineering Diploma. The main benefits for the students, according to these HEI interviewees, were: the nature of the facilities that were available, which were more sophisticated than anything that could be provided in schools, or even FE colleges; the expertise of the staff at the HEI; and the opportunity to learn in a different environment which may impact on learners' outlook on life . As one interviewee in a HEI commented, for example:

> [Students] *will see the difference in resources – a sense of scale of what's available in industry.*

For the HEIs there was the advantage of encouraging students who might apply to their departments in due course and who would already be familiar with university methods of teaching and learning.

Other examples of HEI involvement from other consortia included:

- involvement in curriculum development
- providing CPD for teachers
- providing consultancy services
- providing facilities for students to use.

The general perception from consortium interviewees was that engaging with HEIs had not been particularly easy, particularly securing long-term commitment.

Among the representatives from the HEIs involved in supporting delivery, however, there was '*high-level support*' for the Diploma, but it was felt that continued involvement would depend on large enough cohorts of learners deciding to take Diplomas. When asked what would encourage other HEIs to become involved in Diplomas, they felt that the focus should be on the benefits of Diplomas to learners rather than the benefits to the HEIs. However, one interviewee stated that, in general, HEIs needed to be convinced that the short-term cost associated with their involvement (in terms of time and facilities) was exceeded by the long-term benefit of students developing skills (such as independent learning skills) which would assist their progression into higher education.

Employer involvement is discussed in relation to work experience in Section 3.3.4 and teaching and learning activities in Chapter 4.

3.2.3 Location of learning and travel to learn

As shown in Table 3.2 below, the majority of learners who responded to the survey said that at least some of their Diploma learning took place in their own 'home' school/college. However, confirming the findings discussed above, it was also fairly common for pre-16 learners to have to 'travel to learn' for aspects of their Diploma learning: 30 per cent of pre-16 Diploma learners said at least some of their learning took place at a FE or sixth form college; and 26 per cent said some took place at another school. Post-16 students were less likely than those pre-16 to have to travel outside their home institution for any Diploma learning.

Table 3.2   Location of Diploma lessons

Location	Pre-16 %	Post-16 %
My school	72	27
Another school	26	7
FE college/sixth form college	30	69*
Training provider	10	1
Employer	1	5
University/HE institution	2	5
Somewhere else	10	6
No response	1	5
Weighted N =	**823**	**176**

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009
*Most likely to be the 'home' institution post-16

Experience of 'travel to learn'

Amongst pre-16 learners who answered a question about any problems faced in travelling to learn, only three per cent reported experiencing 'big problems' (see Table 3.3). Analysis of the difference between Year 10 learners in consortia in rural and urban areas revealed that those in rural areas were significantly more likely to have experienced some problems travelling to learn.[17]

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[17] Any possible significant differences for Year 12 learners could not be detected due to the small number of responding learners who had travelled to learn and lived in urban or rural areas. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the sample size.

Table 3.3   Any problems travelling to lessons

Problems?	Pre-16 %
No problems	71
Yes, small problems	26
Yes, big problems	3
Weighted N =	**517**

Single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
All learners who felt it was relevant to them to answer about travelling to learn
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2009

As illustrated in Table 3.4 below, learners were either positive or neutral about their experiences of learning outside their own institution. For example, around 70 per cent of students responding to the questions either strongly agreed or agreed that they liked the atmosphere in the host location, that they were treated like adults, and that they like working with other students. Around two-thirds enjoyed working with different tutors, and around half felt they got more one-to-one support (which could be due to smaller class sizes). This experience reflects the views of other young people who participate in courses at FE colleges or training providers. For example, young people involved in the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) reported similar positive experiences of undertaking learning for NVQs, other vocational qualifications and applied GCSEs outside their home institution.[18]

Table 3.4   Attitude towards learning in 'host' institution, pre-16

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Weighted N*
I am treated more like an adult during my Diploma lessons outside my school	27	42	19	9	3	572
I like working with students from other schools on my Diploma course	27	40	21	8	5	494
I like the atmosphere when I study for my Diploma outside my school	20	52	18	8	2	575
I get more one-to-one help from my teachers/tutors where I study my Diploma	9	43	24	19	5	577
I do not enjoy working with teachers/tutors from outside my normal school	6	11	18	41	25	555

A series of single response items
*Number of learners who answered each item as they thought it applied to them
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2009

However, further analysis (multilevel modelling) was undertaken to explore Year 10 Diploma learners' satisfaction with the Diploma course, and whether there was any difference in level of satisfaction when the model of delivery was taken into account.

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[18] Golden, S., O'Donnell, L., Benton, T. and Rudd, P. (2006). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: Outcomes for the Second Cohort* (DfES Research Report 786). London: DfES.

There was no significant difference in levels of overall satisfaction between learners who had all of their Diploma lessons in their home school and those who experienced some extent of collaborative delivery. This suggests that, while those who study away from their home institution have positive perceptions of doing so, overall they are no more likely to be satisfied with their experience of taking a Diploma than those who study their Diploma entirely at school.

Amongst the case-study sample, in most consortia some learners travelled for at least some of their Diploma learning. Transport was arranged for learners in most consortia, in the form of minibuses or taxis, for instance. The evidence from interviews with parents suggests that there were very few reported issues associated with travel, other than one parent who had arranged a lift rota with other parents of Diploma learners as bullying had taken place on the bus provided.

At the time of the case-study visits, at least four months after Diploma delivery commenced, staff interviewed in most consortia were positive overall about this model of travelling to learn. There had been initial problems, particularly where learners were travelling between different *schools*. Staff reported that learners were nervous about going to a different school due to a sense of rivalry between young people. Visiting students were also reported by teachers to feel apprehensive if the 'host' school was considerably larger and had a different 'culture' (for example, different timetable structures, procedures and uniforms). As one teacher said, for example, [learners are] '*completely out of their comfort zone*'. In most cases, these problems had eased over time and had been supported by, for example:

- Diploma 'uniforms' (such as polo shirts) for *all* Diploma learners, to create a group identity and better integration of visiting learners

- including *all* learners in a range of group activities aimed at encouraging them to build relationships

- allowing Diploma groups to have different break times, so that visiting students did not feel intimidated by having to mix with the whole school.

Once any initial problems had been overcome, the general view was that students were positive about their experience. Comments included:

> *Students love it…they've really enjoyed meeting other students, a break in the routine,* [and] *the variety*.

> *Students have matured more quickly going to different places and mixing with other students…that side is brilliant.*

These comments reflect the findings from the learner survey reported above.

Fewer problems were experienced when learners travelled to an FE college, as it was a new location for all. Comments from college senior managers included:

> *Learners enjoy coming into college…it is a more relaxed atmosphere*'.

> *At that age* [the students] *like to be thought of as adults…they have responded well to how we have approached and treated them.*

A minority of staff reported feeling anxious about teaching and disciplining learners from another institution, but some referred to handbooks of agreed protocols which had been developed across partners.

Most parents reported a positive response to the travel-to-learn model. They believed their sons or daughters were coping well with taking part of their course away from their normal school or college. Furthermore some appeared to embrace the change:

> [my son] *loves it. He does a paper round every day. He usually gets up at 7.30am, but on college days he gets up at 6.30am to do the paper round and get to college on time: he is never late.*

Furthermore some indicated that additional travel was viewed as insignificant because the young people enjoyed making new friends, they liked the independence and liked being treated like an adult at college.

The views of learners on the travel-to-learn model are discussed in Chapter 6 which focuses on 'the learner experience'.

3.2.4 Delivery of the different Diploma components

Principal learning

In case-study consortia, where more than one institution 'shared' delivery, it was most often the principal learning units which were shared. This did not necessarily entail joint teaching; rather each institution was taking responsibility for *different* units, depending on their expertise and facilities. As one consortium lead said, for example, *'the college will become involved in delivering particular units if they have the necessary facilities and expertise'*.

Additional and specialist learning

In most of the 15 case-study consortia, the learners' home institution was responsible for delivering additional and specialist learning. There were examples in three consortia where this component was taught by a different 'host' institution where most Diploma learning took place. In one such case a consortium of sixth form colleges offered a range of options to give learners more choice.

Learners who responded to the survey were asked to state which lessons they did, other than their Diploma and core English, mathematics and science subjects; subjects recorded may well have included their additional and specialist learning qualifications (interviews with young people indicated that not all learners recognised the term 'additional and specialist learning', so an explicit question was not included). A wide range of subjects were recorded, and there was *some* evidence of possible specialist learning by line of learning[19]:

- **Construction and the Built Environment:** of those doing this Diploma in Year 10, 18 per cent were also doing a construction 'vocational' qualification, two per cent were also doing product design; 25 per cent of Year 12 learners doing this Diploma were also doing graphics/graphic design and 25 per cent were also doing a surveying qualification.

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[19] These figures are based on all learners in Years 10 and 12 who responded to the surveys, regardless of level of study or location of learning.

- **Creative and Media:** of those doing this Diploma in Year 10, 20 per cent were also doing media studies, 13 per cent were also doing art/art and design and 15 per cent were also doing drama; 17 per cent in Year 12 doing this Diploma were also doing media studies and seven per cent were also doing photography.

- **Engineering:** of those doing this Diploma in Year 10, nine per cent were also doing art/art and design, six per cent were also doing resistant materials; and five per cent in Year 12 doing this Diploma also mentioned mathematics courses.

- **Information Technology:** of those doing this Diploma in Year 10, 13 per cent were also doing business studies, eight per cent were also doing graphics/graphic design, and six per cent were also doing product design; and 19 per cent in Year 12 learners doing this Diploma were also doing business studies.

- **Society, Health and Development:** of those doing this Diploma in Year 10, three per cent were also doing child development and two per cent were also doing sociology/social studies; 25 per cent in Year 12 were also doing Health and Social Care and 15 per cent were also doing human physiology.

Overall, 14 per cent of Year 10 learners reported also doing history, and eight per cent did geography. Eight per cent did French and four per cent studied German. 'Core' subjects were also mentioned amongst post-16 learners (at all levels): 30 per cent were doing mathematics, 27 per cent were doing English and 16 per cent were studying an ICT-related courses. Other subjects were mentioned by fewer learners.

In general, the pre-16 additional and specialist learning offer in case-study consortia was typically the standard range of curriculum subjects (most often GCSEs). This was confirmed by parents who were asked what subjects their child was taking alongside their Diploma, most of whom referred only to the core GCSE subjects of English, mathematics, science, and religious education. This was mainly due to timetable constraints, but also due to the small numbers of learners doing a Diploma not making it a viable option to offer individuals a free choice of options. As one senior manager said:

> *The ideal model would be that* [learners] *could choose whatever they wanted to, but the cost would be too great and* [it would be] *too complicated.*

Therefore, *additional* learning was most common, unless a course available from the standard offer complemented the line of learning (for example, learners studying for a Creative and Media Diploma could choose to do media studies or drama GCSE).

In a few case-study consortia, there were discussions about partner FE colleges providing additional and specialist learning for school students because they were more able to offer specialist learning options (including BTEC qualifications). For example, '*we're trying to align timetables so some students could, in theory, go elsewhere* [for additional and specialist learning]'. There was indeed more availability of specialist learning in FE colleges, although the *number* of options available to post-16 Diploma students was still sometimes limited due to timetabling. In school sixth forms, options were also often restricted to the standard offer, often AS/A Levels. It should be noted that some staff in schools, albeit a minority, specifically said that they were positive about additional learning adding breadth to the Diploma qualification pre-16, and felt that specialist learning would contribute to learners specialising too early. This view was not expressed in colleges, where specialist learning was more likely to be offered:

> *We wanted them to do something that would complement their learning and deepen their understanding.*

The findings suggest, though, that more specialist learning opportunities could be offered in the future as numbers of learners increase, particularly pre-16, to help learners who want to add depth to their learning.

There was a sense overall, that the additional and specialist learning component was still being developed. In the early phases of delivery of the new Diploma qualification, institutions were prioritising other aspects of delivery, such as the principal learning. For example, as one consortium lead said:

> [Institutions are] *getting their heads around Diplomas for the first time* [and] *didn't want to worry about coming up with additional and specialist learning at the same time…*

In a minority of consortia, staff in some schools specifically mentioned an intention to broaden the specialist learning offer over time. In the first phase of delivery, numbers of Diploma learners had often been too small to do so. These findings reflect the recent Ofsted finding that the range of additional and specialist learning options was underdeveloped in four out of five areas that they visited (Ofsted, 2009)[20].

There was evidence that a minority of institutions did not give learners a choice of additional or specialist qualifications. For example, schools with specialist status ensured that learners took a GCSE in their specialist subject (including in one case a modern foreign language and in another an additional science subject). Students were sometimes dissatisfied with this lack of choice, which is reflected in a comment made by a learner who was told to do business studies GCSE as additional and specialist learning for the Information Technology Diploma:

> *I thought I was going to be learning about computers and how they work…I wasn't expecting to be doing Business* [GCSE]'.

Functional skills

The case-study findings indicate that learners' home institutions were usually responsible for delivering functional skills and that models of delivery varied across consortia and institutions within consortia. Teachers responding to the survey reported that functional skills in mathematics, English and ICT were most often taught as **discrete lessons**, pre- and post-16 (see Table 3.5).

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[20] Ofsted (2009). *Implementation of 14-19 Reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Ofsted: London. Available online: https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas

Table 3.5   Delivery of functional skills

Delivery approach	Pre-16			Post-16		
	Maths %	English %	ICT %	Maths %	English %	ICT %
Taught as a discrete lesson	38	38	47	63	54	58
Embedded in GCSEs*	34	32	24	-	2	2
Embedded in Diploma principal learning	26	27	33	18	28	25
Embedded in other courses/lessons	6	7	7	4	4	4
Don't know	13	13	9	11	11	9
No response	11	10	10	18	16	18
Other	3	2	1	-	-	-
	N=112			N=57		

A series of multiple response items
More than one answer could be given so percentages may not sum to 100
Filter questions: all those who taught a Diploma pre-16 or post-16
*most relevant to pre-16 learners
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

There was also evidence in institutions across at least four case-study consortia of functional skills being taught entirely discretely as 'functional skills' lessons on the timetable. Where this approach had been adopted, it was said to be to '*train*' learners for the functional skills examinations; the delivery approach seemed to be driven by the assessment approach. As one senior manager commented, '*assessment of functional skills is discrete, not embedded*'.

Considerable importance was placed on learners passing their functional skills examinations, as it is a requirement in order to pass the Diploma. There was general concern about the level of difficulty of the Level 2 functional skills (that the level is set too high for the average ability of Level 2 learners overall), so preparation for the examinations was considered crucial in order to ensure learners passed their functional skills and, in turn, their Diploma. As one teacher said, for example:

> *To pass* [functional skills Level 2] *seems like a grade B at GCSE – that's raising the bar – that's causing us some concern. We have a real concern that functional skills are too hard.*

Some were critical of the 'teaching for the test' approach, as illustrated by a comment from a senior manager:

> *We genuinely want to do it right…we are not looking at having functional skills as "just pass the test", because that's not helping anybody. We want to make sure they acquire the skills…and have the opportunity to demonstrate them in the principal learning.*

Therefore, pre-16, it was also common for functional skills to be **delivered as part of GCSEs** (see Table 3.5 above). This was in fact the most prevalent approach amongst the case-study sample (found in institutions in eight consortia), whereby functional skills were taught in English, mathematics and ICT GCSE classes by specialist teachers. However, the case-study findings suggest that the extent to which functional skills were *truly* integrated within GCSEs varied: some still had 'discrete' sessions called 'functional skills' within GCSE classes; others embedded the skills into GCSEs in a more 'hidden' way (although this was less common); whereas others had made little or no changes to teaching, as the GCSEs were

thought to already cover the skills required to pass functional skills examinations. At this stage in Diploma delivery, therefore, there does not appear to be a prevailing approach to accommodating functional skills and the extent to which a preferred approach emerges will be explored in future in the evaluation.

Amongst case-study institutions, it was reported that liaison between the specialist English, mathematicss and ICT teachers, who most commonly taught functional skills, and those who taught the principal learning units of the Diploma was somewhat limited. Thus, some staff were sceptical that learners would see the relevance of functional skills to the Diploma line of learning; specialist teachers did not have the sector-specific knowledge to apply functional skills to the broader Diploma curriculum. As one senior manager reported:

> [Functional skills] *doesn't have an engineering take on it which is the biggest problem of all…it is taught by functional skills specialists.*

In addition, as numbers of Diploma learners were relatively small within institutions, functional skills classes consisted of learners doing different Diploma lines of learning, and sometimes those not doing a Diploma at all if the skills were taught within GCSEs, making it more difficult for the links to be made with the lines of learning. There were a few examples of principal learning teachers embedding functional skills in their teaching to help learners make links (also evident from the survey of teachers, as shown above in Table 3.5), but it was considered harder for specialist English, mathematics and ICT teachers to make the links to principal learning because they did not have the sector-specific knowledge.

Thus, the delivery approaches adopted for functional skills raise a question about learners' opportunity to fully develop *mastery* of functional skills i.e. for them to be able to *apply* the skills in real situations that relate to their Diploma learning and their broader lives. These findings are supported by the recent recommendation by Ofsted for Diploma consortia to link functional skills more closely with principal learning (Ofsted, 2009)[21].

As discussed in Chapter 2, 62 per cent of teachers who had received training in relation to functional skills had been very or quite satisfied with that support. Moreover, case-study interviewees who had received training felt it provided clarity and gave them confidence to teach functional skills. Thus, consortia and institutions should consider carefully who is accessing such training. It may be particularly useful for principal learning teachers to receive guidance on how best to apply functional skills to their Diploma teaching.

Work experience
Almost all Diploma learners (93 per cent in Year 10 and 97 per cent in Year 12) reported that they had taken part in at least one activity involving someone from the world of work as part of their Diploma course (see Section 4.2.1 for details on activities). The proportion of learners reporting such activities were similarly high across all lines of learning.

There was much variation in the way work experience was being organised across the case-study consortia, even across institutions in a consortium. At the time of the visits (spring term 2009) the majority of staff reported that learners had already

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[21] Ofsted (2009). *Implementation of 14-19 Reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Ofsted: London. Available online: https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas

experienced some level of employer input during one-off visits/talks. This was described by one consortium lead as '*work relatedness*' rather than work experience; many consortia were still arranging block work placements for learners (two blocks of five days each seemed to be favoured). It seemed that some had found it easier to engage employers in providing 'industry days', rather than with block placements for learners (although some were doing both) as it was considered less of a commitment for employers. The consensus was that block placements must offer the learner a worthwhile experience. As one teacher said, '*we don't want learners doing mundane jobs*'. Some found it difficult to arrange the timing of block placements at consortium level, as individual institutions wanted to stagger placements, meaning learners would be absent from other Diploma lessons at different times.

Overall, success at engaging employers was very varied across consortia and seemed to be dependent on local circumstances (for example, the economic climate and size and nature of local businesses). There was no clear line of learning pattern (with some staff reporting difficulties in finding employers to support particular lines of learning, while others reported it had been easy). Where *specific* comments about particular lines of learning had been made by a number of interviewees, these corresponded with those reported during the earlier phase of the research, as summarised briefly below:

- **Society Health and Development**: it appeared that opportunities for placements were linked more frequently to particular sectors (for example, children and young people or social care), but not to others (such as health and community justice). This was considered to be due to age restrictions and legal issues associated with access. One line of learning lead commented that, '*the type of placements they want to access…a lot of issues* [have been] *thrown up that might not come up with other Diplomas*'.
- **Engineering/Construction and the Built Environment**: health and safety issues associated with learners being on construction sites.

Specific examples of types of activities involving employers are discussed in Chapter 4 which explores teaching and learning.

Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) and the project

It was reported across the case-study consortia that the PLTS would be embedded in general teaching, such as in the principal learning units or project. Few learners within the case-study sample were said to have started their project at the time of the visits (January-April 2009) and thus feedback was limited. It seemed that the delivery approach would vary; the home institutions were reported to take full responsibility for the project in some consortia, whereas partners were planning to contribute in other areas.

3.3   Effectiveness of delivery models

Table 3.6 shows that, overall, teachers who responded to the survey felt the models of delivery were working well in practice. In particular, teachers felt delivery was working particularly well when all learning took place within the learners' own school or college. This may be because there are no logistical issues faced, such as with travel to learn, but it is worth emphasising that amongst the 64 teachers who referred to the model which involved learners travelling between their own school and a college or training provider, 54 reported that this was going 'quite well' or 'very well'. Only small numbers reported that this model was not working. Similarly, only a minority of learners reported challenges with having to travel to learn.

Table 3.6   Success of delivery models

Model	Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all well	Total No. for each item
	N	N	N	N	
All Diploma learning takes place within the learners' *own* school or college	26	36	4	1	67
Learners travel between their own school and a FE college or training provider for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	14	40	9	1	64
Learners travel between their own school and another/other school(s) for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	9	33	9	2	53
Learners study *all* of their Diploma in a FE college or training provider	4	18	3	-	25
Teachers/tutors travel outside their own institution to teach the Diploma	4	19	4	1	28

A series of single response items
Filtered by those who said each model was relevant
Numbers are used instead of percentages, as the number of respondents to each item were small
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

Case-study interviews were carried out at least four months after the delivery of Diplomas had commenced, so it was possible to explore how well the models were working in practice after a term of delivery. Most staff involved in **collaborative delivery** felt this model was working overall. The prevailing factors reported to facilitate the success of collaborative delivery were:

- **A *willingness* to collaborate**: where partnerships seemed to be working well, there appeared to be a '*shared vision*' that the learners' needs should be put before individual institutional interests. For some consortia and institutions, partnership working was replacing a culture of competition between institutions, but a shared willingness to work together was helping to facilitate effective delivery. As one consortium lead reported, '*there is genuine willingness to succeed…overall, there is commitment to making it work*'. The importance of individuals' attitudes to the success of collaborative delivery was understandably emphasised by interviewees, as this consortium lead explained: '*It's very dependent on institutions and their staff and it takes time and effort to build relationships with each other'.*

- **Communication/frequent meetings:** regular contact (particularly face-to-face), joint planning, and frequent dialogue between partners when students were travelling to learn, were all contributing to effective partnership delivery.
- **Aligning timetables:** most consortia had agreed a 'Diploma day' (or days) on the timetable to facilitate collaboration, although this had caused challenges with the timetable (see Section 3.3.2 below).
- **Shared protocols:** most consortia had developed shared policies and procedures which set out protocols for partnership delivery and quality assurance. Comments included:
- *'there is a 14-19 partnership handbook and that sets out all the procedures'*
- *'the schools in the partnership trusted each other's delivery beforehand, so protocols built on what already existed'.*
- Shared protocols had not been agreed in all consortia at the time of the visits.

Where partnership delivery was considered to be less successful, it was often because some of these factors were missing, such as staff's willingness, the time to meet and communicate, and shared protocols. Some staff were cautious about the quality of teaching in host organisations, suggesting that the monitoring of quality assurance is important. There were also reports in a minority of case-study consortia of staff workload pressures preventing successful joint planning and inhibiting effective communication. In one such consortium, pressures on staff (in terms of time for planning and time taken out of school when at the host institution with the learners) had resulted in the decision to cease any in-school delivery and send all Diploma learners to the local college for all Diploma learning in 2009.

Where case-study schools were delivering the Diploma entirely in-house, this was also thought to be working well. This was considered the *easiest* model to operate. As one senior manager commented, it is '*better to keep it* [Diploma delivery] *confined*'. However, as discussed above, some felt this model did not match the collaborative ethos of the Diploma. Therefore, the rationale for keeping the Diploma delivery in-house should be considered carefully by schools (as discussed above, some felt there was no *need* to collaborate, whereas others were reported to be *unwilling* to collaborate).

3.3.1 Factors facilitating delivery of Diplomas in general

Factors thought to **facilitate the delivery** of Diplomas (regardless of the models adopted), according to consortium leads, line of learning leads and Diploma teachers, were:

- **Personalities, commitment and enthusiasm**: where staff were reported to be willing and enthusiastic this was reported to have contributed to effective delivery. Comments included, '*teachers are putting their hearts and soul into it*' and '*personality makes a difference*'.
- **Strong consortium leadership:** staff who considered their consortium to be effective referred to strategic staff having clear roles and responsibilities. For example, '*It's all about the individuals at that* [leadership] *level*', who are able to keep people up-to-date and react quickly to queries.
- **Time for curriculum planning:** the release of Diploma funds to allow time for line of learning/curriculum leads to meet and plan the curriculum was considered invaluable.

- **Funding**: staff appreciated the funding which had enabled the purchase of facilities and resources, paid for staff time for planning, and given learners work-related learning opportunities (including trips to employers).

3.3.2 Delivery challenges

Some challenges had been encountered in the first phase of delivery, which is inevitable when implementing a new qualification, although delivering a qualification in which they had no previous experience had left some staff feeling '*vulnerable*'. As was the case when staff were interviewed prior to delivery commencing,[22] practitioners reported **a need for more practical exemplar materials** to assist their teaching (for example, from Awarding Bodies).

Line of learning/curriculum leads in particular reported the challenge of having enough time. The amount of work associated with planning and implementing a new qualification was a challenge, meaning that protected time was important for those in key roles. A number of interviewees commented that it had involved a lot of work to accommodate a relatively small number of students in the first phase, but acknowledged that numbers would increase. The scale of assessment was mentioned, particularly the amount of time it took to verify portfolios of evidence (as discussed in Chapter 2, half of the teachers responding to the teacher survey had not received training about assessment, and in an open-ended question 34 per cent reported that they lacked confidence in relation to assessment).

Senior curriculum manangers in institutions were asked whether there had been any unforeseen impact of Diploma delivery on the **curriculum and timetable**. Regarding the **curriculum**, the challenges to date seemed to be negligible, mainly due to the relatively small numbers of learners in each institution opting to take a Diploma. There were no reports of any subjects being replaced by Diplomas to date, although two senior managers specifically said this was likely in the future as numbers of Diploma learners increased (for example, the Society, Health and Development Diploma replacing the Applied GCSE in Health and Social Care); this was reported as being a concern for staff teaching subjects which may be replaced. The main issue relating to the curriculum, although only raised specifically by four senior managers in different consortia, was the impact of taking a Diploma on the range of other subjects a Diploma learner could take, due to the number of guided learning hours required to teach the Diploma. As one said, '[the Diploma] *takes away a bit of choice*'. For example, in one institution learners were only able to study core subjects and the Diploma (including their additional and specialist learning qualification). However, in others, learners were able to take an additional GCSE. One senior manager, for example, reported that learners were no longer able to opt for a modern foreign language qualification. He said:

> *This is a concern for me…that when we are trying to get students to take more modern foreign languages the opposite is happening.*

The impact of Diplomas on the **timetable** was noted by a greater number of interviewees. For example, as most consortia had adopted collaborative models of delivery, they had taken steps to accommodate this approach by aligning timetables.

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[22] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

This meant that Diploma lessons were condensed into 'Diploma days' or half days. This was said to impact on the rest of the key stage 4 curriculum, as other options and core subjects had to be condensed into the non-Diploma days for *all* key stage 4 students. Some staff felt that having shorter core subject lessons, on different days, was more motivating for staff and learners than double or triple lessons which had to be timetabled on non-Diploma days. There was a general view, amongst staff who regarded it as a challenge, that for pre-16 students, who were used to shorter teaching periods and more subject variety, several hours in a Diploma lesson was too long. This was not only the teacher perspective, as in some cases interviewees referred to students' feedback on Diploma lessons. As a senior manager explained:

> *From the student surveys we know they don't like doing the Diploma all day. They are used to the usual pattern of small chunks of time on different subjects.*

For students who were working at Level 1, it was seen as particularly challenging to have long sessions with the same teacher. Conversely, some teachers found that one day on the Diploma worked well, because it provided teachers with greater flexibility on how to use the time without impacting on other lessons, for example allowing for day trips. The learners' perspective is discussed further in Chapter 6.

As numbers of Diploma learners were small in the first phase of delivery, staff held the view that the timetable was being adapted to accommodate a minority. As one teacher said:

> *It was necessary to change the schedule for the rest of the curriculum to accommodate a small number of Diploma students.*

Two institutions in different consortia wanted to restrict any impact on the timetable so had reduced the guided learning hours for the Diploma. However, they had already fallen behind in their teaching by the time of the case-study visits (three or four months after delivery commenced), and learners were either having to drop their additional option or make up the Diploma time in their own spare time. A minority of staff had found it challenging to fit the number of guided learning hours into the key stage 4 timetable; there were reports from a minority of teachers who were spending less time on some aspects to ensure all of the curriculum was covered in the time, which had proved challenging for some less able students.

There were some challenges associated with **collaborative delivery** where this was in place. These included some practical/logistical issues (such as collating information from different partners to feed into reports for parents) and overcoming concerns about 'cultural' differences between partners, for example the quality of teaching and learning and discipline procedures, which highlights the importance of monitoring and having shared protocols. Overcoming a history of competition (for example between school sixth forms and FE colleges) was a further challenge. Where there was insufficient commitment, trust, or willingness to put institutional interests to one side, then shared delivery did not develop as envisaged in the introduction of Diplomas. As one line of learning lead described:

> *The intended school-college collaboration has broken down and the magnitude of change has not been embraced by heads and principals.*

3.4 Summary

Models of delivery involving collaboration between institutions were common and most staff involved felt they were working well overall. No major problems with travel to learn were reported, and learners were positive about their experiences of learning outside their home institution. A willingness to collaborate, frequent communication, and practical arrangements such as aligned timetables and shared protocols, were all thought to facilitate collaborative working. Where challenges were faced, these were often practical issues, but also sometimes related to overcoming a history of competition. However, the fact that there was evidence in most consortia of some shared delivery suggests that consortia were trying to meet the needs of students and give them the best learning experience. Where institutions were collaborating it was often to deliver principal learning; other elements of the Diploma were usually the responsibility of the home institution.

In-house delivery was also common, often because institutions felt there was no *need* for support from other providers to deliver particular lines of learning (such as Information Technology), although there were instances of an *unwillingness* to collaborate due to competition or geographical distance between institutions.

Level 1 was less widely offered pre-16, or when it was offered small numbers of learners necessitated co-teaching of Levels 1 and 2 to make it viable. Some consortia did not have a post-16 Diploma offer, but the evidence suggests that they were waiting for the first pre-16 learners to complete their Diploma courses in 2010 before offering Diplomas post-16 from the academic year 2010-11.

Additional and specialist learning tended to be the responsibility of the home institution, and was typically the standard range of curriculum subjects available pre-16 (thus, was more often *additional* rather than *specialist* learning). Functional skills were most often taught discretely, with fully embedded approaches being rare; this could have implications for learners not being able to see the relevance of the skills, and not being able to apply them, in a broader context. At the time of the research, consortia had found it easier to engage employers in providing 'industry days' rather than longer block placements which were seen as a bigger commitment for the employer.

Whereas this chapter has explored the structural models underpinning the implementation of Diplomas, the following chapter concentrates on more operational teaching and learning approaches adopted to teach this new qualification.

4.   Teaching and learning

Key findings

- Most teachers considered that Diplomas provided a different teaching and learning experience. They welcomed the link between theory and the real world practice of industry, business and the professions.

- Teachers were positive about the encouragement of independent learning, the opportunity to teach in a more 'holistic' way, and the greater use of interactive teaching techniques, such as group work and role play. Diploma learners identified the benefits of the 'real world' context of their programme and its development of their independent learning skills.

- Although teachers endeavoured to make use of innovative techniques whenever possible, there was some reported tension between this and assessment criteria.

- Consortium-wide quality assurance procedures required further development. This was an issue, as there was a lack of confidence in how other institutions operated, which was undermining the trust necessary for effective partnerships.

- The main challenges of Diploma teaching from the practitioner perspective were perceived to be: time (for staff to prepare adequately and to cover all the necessary principal learning units and components of the Diploma); functional skills (the level of difficulty of the assessments, and the perceived lack of connection between functional skills and principal learning); varying levels of support from awarding bodies and, where relevant, unfamiliarity with teaching a particular age group. While the two latter issues are likely to be resolved with time, experience and good training systems, the former two may require discussions with awarding bodies.

- Learners raised issues about functional skills, in particular the level of perceived difficulty of the assessments (especially Level 2), and the need to pass functional skills assessments in order to achieve their Diploma. To a lesser extent, there were concerns about the volume of work to be undertaken within a limited amount of time available on the timetable and the disadvantages of Diploma classes concentrated into one day.

Key findings

- Almost all Diploma learners had taken part in at least one activity involving someone from the world of work as part of their Diploma course, most often visits to employers, listening to an employer give a talk, or receiving assistance with project work. The current economic situation alongside health and safety considerations had caused challenges for some consortia in engaging employers, particularly in providing block placements. There were good examples of single activities involving employers. Using the expertise of Education Business Partnership Organisations (EBPOs) or someone with responsibility for employer engagement to establish links with employers was particularly helpful.

- There was still considerable uncertainty about how assessment procedures were supposed to work and standardisation of assessment across partners was still under-developed. The development of the domain and lead assessor role should help the progress of standardisation.

Recommendations

- There may be a need for liaison between practitioners and awarding bodies to find ways of addressing the reported tension between innovative approaches to teaching and the assessment criteria in some lines of learning.

- There were some good examples of how the barriers to achieving consortium-wide QA procedures could be overcome, and these could usefully be disseminated among both existing and new consortia in order to encourage progress in this area.

- Clear guidelines and exemplars from awarding bodies would assist in building the confidence of delivery staff in assessment processes, as would training tailored to specific needs.

- Dissemination of some of the good examples of employer engagement from consortia that had begun delivery in 2008 may help to encourage similar development elsewhere.

When the Gateway 1 baseline interviews were carried out in 2008 with senior institutional managers and line of learning leads, they were anticipating what it would be like to actually teach Diploma courses. Their views were based on their understanding of the components of the Diploma, and on the specific requirements of the units of the five lines of learning, and it is interesting to compare their expectations of the teaching and learning of Diplomas with the reality, as it had emerged by the time of the follow-up interviews in the early spring of 2009.

4.1   Changes to teaching approaches

As predicted by interviewees in 2008[23], the majority of practitioners who had started delivering Diplomas considered that this new qualification provided a different teaching and learning experience. The majority of the respondents to the teacher survey had changed their teaching practices for Diploma delivery (57 per cent said that they had to some extent, and 14 per cent had done so to a great extent, while 22 per cent replied that they had not done so).

Most of the comments made by case-study interviewees on teaching and learning approaches referred to the principal learning element of the Diploma, but the Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) element was raised by some as a distinguishing feature of the Diploma. Its inclusion was viewed positively because of the development of transferable skills and confidence building, and some of those interviewed said that they were attempting to include these in the principal learning whenever possible.

Some lines of learning, for example Creative and Media and Engineering, were considered to facilitate innovative teaching and learning approaches more than others, as was Level 3. Practitioners' prior experience also played a role in the confidence with which they approached Diploma teaching. Some FE college tutors who had not taught pre-16 students before had found adapting to a younger age group challenging. As one teacher stated, for example, '*I had to rethink my teaching approach completely*'. As her new learners had a shorter attention span, she had adapted by using kinaesthetic methods, practical tasks and as much variety as possible. However, others thought that their experience of applied and vocational learning had made such adaptation less challenging. One FE college interviewee put this across more strongly than others when he stated:

> *It doesn't offer a different learning experience as far as the college is concerned; I suspect it might be different for schools. FE colleges have always been about the vocational and the practical.*

There was a widespread perception from all those who had taught BTEC courses that this had provided a valuable foundation for teaching Diplomas, and there were some who thought that there was little difference between teaching BTECs and Diplomas, but that staff adaptability was the key. As one line of learning lead emphasised:

> *The teaching and learning methods are not any different to the BTEC, because there was never one particular method that was used – every method that you come across has to be used. Staff have to be extremely versatile.*

In fact, it was a commonly held view amongst interviewees that it was this versatility and a willingness to adapt that was most important for those teaching the Diploma.

The impact on pedagogy is discussed in the following sections.

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[23] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

4.1.1 The 'real world' context

Most of those teaching the Diploma **welcomed the link between theory and real world practices** of industry, business and the professions. One teacher, for example, described how the Diploma was '*making learning come alive*'. Work-related learning, including taking students out for visits and having employers and professionals to talk to and engage directly with learners, made the Diploma different and helped learners to make sense of what they were doing in the classroom. One line of learning lead described it in a practical sense of '*putting the classroom and the workshop together'*. Examples included seeing how a software programme that students had learned about was used in a leisure centre, or how business and the art world came together in the organisation of a gallery exhibition. Survey responses to an open-ended question on how teaching had changed included similar references to integration with industry, and increased use of visits to businesses and other organisations. The benefits of these links with 'the real world', in terms of increasing learners' motivation and putting learning into context, were evident across all five lines of learning.

There was evidence of the **development of good contacts with local businesses**, services and organisations. For example, one teacher explained that '*the students are learning through experience. It's not a banking of knowledge system'.* This teacher (of the Creative and Media Diploma) had established a link with The National Trust that involved Level 3 learners assisting with the restoration of a local property, including the production of a marketing film which would eventually be used for all visitors to the house. Learners were said to be '*engaging creatively'.* In another consortium, an interviewee who was teaching the Level 2 Engineering Diploma to learners, commented that the difference with other courses he had taught was the link with industry:

> *The students can have access to a range of new facilities and opportunities which are not available at school and that give that industrial flavour. It makes it real, it's somebody else that's challenging them, and then it's got a purpose and a meaning.*

It is however worth noting that the enthusiasm with which interviewees spoke about 'real world' connections were in some cases tempered by comments about the **challenges involved in establishing and maintaining employer connections**. As one teacher explained:

> *We try to ensure it's different, because of the amount of trips and hands-on experience, but I can see it not happening in some settings and I'm not sure if it would be possible with larger numbers of students. It's very time-consuming just arranging visiting speakers, and the issue is, the time to do this can't be sustained.*

There was also the concern about the growing pressure on employers for their commitment, which is discussed later in this chapter (Section 4.4). In general however, there was a perception that the 'real-life context' was not only what made the teaching and learning of Diplomas different, but was also a major strength of the qualification.

Positive comments widely made by learners also related to the opportunities that their Diploma course presented for **practical work** and **connections with the workplace and employers** (Chapter 6 explores how this affected learners' enjoyment of Diploma courses). Among learners across all lines of learning there was much appreciation of visits outside their institution, either on a regular, or

occasional basis, and of interesting speakers coming to them, and many examples of the type of applied tasks that they had found particularly engaging. Direct engagement with companies and organisations were seen as making learning relevant and exciting, but so too were smaller scale tasks such as designing costumes or learning to weld. One Level 3 student described how he was struck by the innovation of an approach where they were able to deal directly with a client organisation, produce their own ideas and implement them with professional support. He stated, '*I've never had that in education before*'. The advantages of connecting to the 'real world' in encouraging motivation (including motivation to attend school) was noted by many students, as it had been by those teaching Diplomas. For example, one learner felt the work was '*more interesting and I'm not just sitting bored*'. By contrast, and as discussed in Chapter 6, there was dissatisfaction if practical skills acquisition and 'real life' application did not occur as expected.

4.1.2 Independent learning

The requirement for students to '**take charge of their learning' and develop the skills of independent enquiry and good organisation**, were regarded as a key element of the Diploma. There were many references from teachers interviewed to the need for learners to become self-reliant and for teachers to act as facilitators of learning rather than take a didactic role.

Similarly, a quarter of teachers who responded to the survey reported, in an open question, that they had changed their teaching practices to encourage independent learning. For example, as this teacher explained:

> [You need to] *allow students to work in groups, to take responsibility for their own learning and to take charge of their projects, so the teacher acts as a consultant.*

There was a general perception that this changed approach was positive, both for the learners, because of the skills it taught them and for the teachers, who were less restricted than they might have been with other courses. As one teacher commented, the Diploma is about '*looking at the interests of the students – it's not tied to curriculum content*.

There were some lines of learning that generally suited this learner-centred approach better than others, but even different subject components within a line of learning could be more adaptable. The Creative and Media Diploma was one that appeared to have generally moulded well to this different approach, but even within this line of learning, there could be differences in the level of adaptability required of staff teaching different components. For example, as one line of learning lead explained:

> *Performing arts and art teachers are often very comfortable with the new methods, but perhaps Music and English teachers find the lack of structure more difficult because they're more used to a prescribed content.*

While an Information Technology line of learning lead also reflected the need to change from the current culture and commented:

> *Some teachers prefer a more structured approach, because they are used to being prepared for inspections where lessons are expected to have a specific structure.*

While such a change may take time for staff to adjust to, there was some indication that this was beginning to evolve as reflected in the following comment of an Engineering lead:

> *There's some resistance to change, as the teachers prefer to teach in the way that they have always taught. They've been trying to make sense of the Diploma as they've been delivering it, so they've tended to fall back on what they know, but they are now developing a more creative approach.*

Additionally, the age of the learners could also be a significant element in how well they adjusted to developing a more independent role. While post-16 Level 3 students might be expected to become more independent learners regardless of which courses they were taking, for some Year 10 students this could be more difficult as was the case for a pre-16 Society, Health and Development group whose teacher explained how different style of learning had not suited all the students and some had transferred to a different course. This reinforces the need for students to be made fully aware of how different Diploma learning could be, and for those guiding student choices to be fully aware of this too. On the whole however, practitioners recognised the value of developing independent learner skills and believed that most of their students did too.

Further reflecting the views of practitioners, many young people studying for a Diploma appreciated the level of independence that they were given, as illustrated by the comments of two learners:

> *We were told the outcomes and then it was up to us how these were achieved.*

> [We] *met and discussed what we would be doing during the day, like a business meeting, then a lot of it is down to us how we go about it.*

As has already been pointed out, the success of this approach did depend on the age and level of skills of the students, but the principle of being given more control over their learning was clearly gaining a positive response from learners.

4.1.3 'Holistic' teaching

Some interviewees reflected on the opportunity the Diploma provided to **avoid a linear approach and to teach different units concurrently.** Sometimes this was described as a holistic approach, which avoided compartmentalisation, and provided closer integration between different elements of the principal learning, so that teaching generally could be more task-driven than unit-driven.

Although the majority of line of learning leads and their teaching staff felt that the opportunity for such innovative approaches to teaching and learning was what helped to make the Diploma distinctive, there were some who thought that so far, the opportunities for achieving this had been limited. There was a widespread view among those delivering the Information Technology Diploma (at all levels) that opportunities for avoiding a linear approach and for enlivening learning were restricted by the assessment model. For example, one Information Technology teacher felt that examining boards should align assessment around the shape of the Diploma more effectively. Another said that he thought the assessments were old fashioned:

I find this disappointing because the marking criteria are old hat and we're held back by the way the marking criteria works.

Those delivering the Information Technology Diploma appeared to be finding ways of making the learning interesting in a variety of ways, by linking with local businesses and basing assignments around this 'real world' knowledge, but some interviewees clearly felt that their task was made more difficult by the assessment specifications.

There were different student views over the advantages of tackling units of work concurrently, or following a linear pattern, as there was among teacher interviewees. A student taking the Information Technology Diploma made this observation:

We are doing lots of different units at once, because they relate to each other. It is more immersive and realistic, but you can feel overwhelmed with work.

Others found that doing units close together was confusing, as this learner described:

We do different units with different teachers, so we do two in a day. It might be better to do one unit one week and the other unit the other week, as it gets confusing as to which work we're doing.

These comments illustrate the skils required of teaching staff in order to navigate learners through the Diploma requirements and assist them in managing their workload overall.

4.1.4   An interactive approach

The survey responses provided some detail of the type of techniques that were used by those teaching Diplomas and these indicated an emphasis on interactive approaches. Amongst Year 10 learners, 63 per cent said group work happened often and 67 per cent said class discussions happened often. By contrast, noticeably fewer (14 per cent) said that they often used textbook or worksheets while 29 per cent students said that they used these rarely and 43 per cent did so sometimes. Teaching methods which encouraged inter-activity, such as group work and role play were also mentioned by case-study interviewees, as was the desire to avoid reliance on the use of textbooks and worksheets, except when really necessary, as this was not considered appropriate for encouraging independent learning. One practitioner summed this up:

The Diploma has to be applied in a real-world context…doing it from a textbook doesn't work.

Amongst Year 10 learners, the comparison learners were significantly more likely than the Diploma learners to work from text books in most lessons (50 per cent compared with 44 per cent). They were also more likely to work alone in most lessons (56 per cent compared to 50 per cent). Amongst the Year 12 learners, the only significant difference related to use of textbooks (39 per cent compared to 23 per cent of Diploma learners). Interestingly, there was a slightly higher proportion of comparison learners reporting that they did practical activities in most lessons in both Year 10 and 12 (26 per cent of Year 12 Diploma learners and 30 per cent of comparison learners; 27 per cent of Year 10 Diploma learners and 31 per cent of comparison learners). This reinforces the need for learners to be made fully aware of Diploma content before they make a decision on choices.

4.2 E-learning

In discussing the extent of their use of e-learning approaches, it was evident that teaching staff and consortium leads interpreted 'e-learning' in a wide variety of ways. This ranged from learners using the internet to undertake research for their Diploma to more extensive use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to store and provide access to resources, as well as share information between teaching staff in different institutions. It was apparent that having access to a VLE was a key element that interviewees perceived as facilitating e-learning, including in consortia where such a facility was not available. Staff in three consortia mentioned that they would value the introduction of a VLE that could support both the administrative aspects (for example, registration, transport details) and the learning elements (providing access to resources, enabling learners to upload work, and a facility for tutors to record and track learners' progress) of Diploma delivery.

While there were institutional VLEs that were used by Diploma teachers and learners in six consortia, a VLE that was accessible across the consortium was in place in only two areas. Nevertheless, some interviewees reported plans for the development of such a resource in the future. It was also noted that the development time required to achieve this could be considerable.

Where staff did have access to a VLE, either at an institutional level or consortium-wide, they reported its use for a range of activities. Teaching staff made use of it for:

- storing schemes of work
- sharing materials and resources with other staff
- accessing information about individual students such as their timetable and when they are doing work experience
- communicating with staff in other institutions
- placing key information and notices, about forthcoming trips for example.

In addition, in three areas use of the VLE was to be extended to monitoring learners' progress or electronic marking.

The main focus of the e-learning approaches identified by interviewees, which often incorporated references to the use of a VLE, was how this was used with learners. Across all consortia, learners were reported to have benefited in some way from the use of computers to:

- undertake research on the internet
- easily access relevant resources placed in a VLE by teaching staff
- take part in discussion forums with other students to share their ideas
- access teachers' notes from lessons on the VLE
- save their own work and submit coursework and create an e-portfolio on the VLE
- be aware of grade criteria by being able to access details on the VLE
- use blogs
- complete functional skills resources
- refer to PowerPoint presentations for PLTS with audio accessed via the VLE.

The extent of this use varied across consortia and within consortia depending on the access to facilities and also to individual staff's chosen approach. Indeed two-fifths (40 per cent) of teaching staff who responded to the survey indicated that pre-16 learners had access to a VLE to support their Diploma learning and 53 per cent of those teaching post-16 said that this was the case. For some case-study interviewees, what they regarded as an e-learning approach was integral to their teaching. However, in order for an e-learning approach to be effective in the context of inter-institutional movement of learners and shared delivery, learners and tutors need to be able to access the VLE from their school and from home. While this was sometimes the case, there were also instances where such access was not possible because an institutional VLE could not be accessed externally, or because of security settings in some institutions preventing access.

Overall, it appears that the use of e-learning is in its infancy in some consortia, but better-established in others and how its use progresses as the delivery of Diplomas continues to develop, will be explored through future visits.

4.3   Challenges of teaching and learning

Teacher/tutor survey responses and case-study interviews indicated that they faced the following key challenges in relation to teaching the Diploma in general:

- **A lack of time:** referred to by almost a third (29 per cent) of survey respondents, including having insufficient time on the timetable to cover all the line of learning content, lack of time for team planning and coordination and lack of time for finding/creating appropriate resources. Time pressures were also a feature of case-study responses on challenges of teaching Diplomas, as illustrated by the following teacher's comment:

    We have too little planning time and it's difficult even to arrange joint meetings with each of the partner institutions.

Other teachers pointed out that they had a Diploma coordination role in their institution and that this role had expanded greatly. As one explained, '*coordinating Diplomas is a full-time job'.*

- **The 'size' of the Diploma:** the **large content of the Diploma**, either in terms of the principal learning units, or the different components, featured in case-study responses on challenges to delivery, and was raised particularly by teachers delivering the Society, Health and Development line of learning (in four consortia). Comments included:

    The size of the qualification is too big for the time available to teach it and this has implications for how applied the learning can be. It's only possible to teach the main areas needed for them to be able to complete the assignments, but if you haven't got time to do the applied bit, you're losing the whole ethos of the qualification.

This issue was reflected in the views of some students. In two consortia, learners described having to go to mathematics lessons after school because there was no other time to fit it in, and Engineering students in another consortium spoke of their course as being very tightly-packed. The different elements that make up the Diploma can also make it seem more onerous for students by comparison with single subject courses, and some schools provide more time for the Diploma than others.

- **Teaching functional skills:** There was some uncertainty over the best method of delivering functional skills, particularly mapping the skills to the principal learning content, and issues over liaising with English and mathematics departments, where functional skills were often delivered, but which were not engaged in Diplomas in any other respect (see Chapter 3 for further details). Amongst the case-study responses, there were also comments about the perceived level of difficulty of the Level 2 functional skills assessments (see Chapter 3 for details). Learners' responses reflected the same concern about the level of difficulty, particularly of Level 2 assessments, and the requirement to pass functional skills in order to achieve a Diploma.

- **Integrating PLTS:** although the general inclusion of PLTS was well-received, the challenge of integrating PLTS into assignments was mentioned, as well as providing all the required evidence. For example, one line of learning lead explained that:

  PLTS are an ambitious part of the course and we have concerns about obtaining the evidence that learners are demonstrating these skills.

However, students in three consortia commented positively on the inclusion of PLTS in their Diploma course. As one explained, '*it makes us think on our feet'.*

- **Lack of support from Awarding Bodies**: this was seen as a challenge by some interviewees in five consortia, and related mainly to the late arrival of detailed course information and resources. As one line of learning lead explained, for example:

  Delivery has been hindered by the lack of resources and teaching materials, so there are no exemplar materials and students are producing portfolios in a void, because we don't know the benchmark for levels. It needs a lot of lobbying at a very senior level to achieve anything with the Awarding Bodies.

As these interviews took place in the first year of a new qualification, such issues were probably not surprising and given time they may be resolved. Meanwhile, Awarding Bodies may need to focus on providing information on assessment criteria to increase the confidence of those teaching the Diploma that they are preparing their learners adequately.

- **Teaching pre-16 learners:** there were comments from some FE college staff in five consortia about the challenge of both teaching and being responsible for **pre-16 students**, if they had not had experience of this before. Some referred to the duty of care that was required for pre-16 students and how college staff could be unprepared for the complications of having younger students on college premises during break and lunch times, or even letting individuals out of the room unsupervised. Although there were colleges where no such concerns were raised, this challenge could become more significant if there is an increase in shared delivery models between schools and colleges. In one consortium, shared delivery had been restricted because the college only allowed pre-16 students on site at a time when the post-16 students were not there, with consequent restrictions on the school timetable.

The other challenges reported most frequently by the teachers who responded to the survey related to assessment (17 per cent of responses) and employer engagement (ten per cent), which are discussed later in this chapter.

4.3.1 Challenges for inidvidual lines of learning

Most of the challenges referred to by case-study interviewees were not specific to particular lines of learning, although there were some that were a feature of certain lines. As has already been pointed out in Section 4.1, line of learning leads and practitioners of the **Information Technology Diploma** were particularly inclined to consider that their attempts to teach in an innovative and engaging way were restricted by the nature of the assessment requirements (see also Chapter 6 on learner satisfaction).

To a lesser extent, some of those delivering **Society, Health and Development** had also found a tension between trying to use interesting teaching methods and the course content, which was described as '*dry*'. Others said, for example, that the case studies provided by the Awarding Body were good but were not related to the assessments, or that the holistic model of delivery did not match the assessment criteria.

During the baseline case-study visits in 2008, there had been a difference of opinion about the potential strengths and weaknesses of the **Creative and Media Diploma**,[24] with some regarding its breadth as particularly attractive, while others suspected this might cause problems for some learners. Although views of this line of learning were generally positive during the 2009 visits, there were some practitioners who faced the challenge of students who were only interested in certain aspects of the line of learning. For example, the performing arts element was proving difficult for one teacher as learners did not consider themselves performers. She commented that: '*the students are not performers and are more interested in media and fashion*'. In another consortium, staff reported having had to work hard (but successfully) to engage students who were more interested in 'media' than 'creative' units.

Providing detailed information to potential Diploma students on the exact nature of the course would help to provide a solution to the some of these issues, so that learners are fully aware of what the Diploma will entail. There may be a case for the assessment criteria of the Information Technology Diploma to be revisited or at least for teachers to have discussions at consortium level with representatives of the Awarding Bodies, so that concerns can be addressed.

4.4 Involvement of employers

For those delivering Diplomas and for those taking them, employer engagement was often a key factor in how they measured what was special and interesting about the new qualification, although the picture that emerged on the level of employer involvement in this sample of consortia delivering from 2008 was quite varied.

4.4.1 Employer activities

Responses to the teacher survey indicated that most teachers had some level of employer involvement in the pre-16 Diploma (with 71 per cent replying that they had achieved this). A further 12 per cent said not yet, but this was planned. A minority

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[24] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

(nine per cent) responded that they had not achieved employer engagement yet and had no plans to do so. The equivalent responses for involvement in post-16 Diplomas were: 58 per cent with some examples of involvement, 11 per cent where it was planned and seven per cent with none planned.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, of the range of employer-related activities that could be provided, in most cases employers had been used as speakers and to host one-off visits.

Table 4.1   Contribution of employers to activities so far – pre-16

Activity	Yes %	No %	No response %
Providing speakers	85	9	6
One-off visits	83	9	9
Work placement	68	21	11
Providing projects	58	31	11
Curriculum design	28	51	21
Mentoring teaching staff	25	55	20
Delivery of principal learning	21	54	25
Mentoring young people	20	60	20
Other	9	23	69

N =80

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100.
A filter question: all those who reported involvement of employers
A total of 80 respondents gave a valid response to at least one of these items.
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

Responses for those involved in post-16 Diplomas were very similar, with the highest response for one-off visits (85 per cent), followed by work placements (79 per cent), providing speakers (76 per cent) and providing projects (55 per cent).

The case-study data also indicated that it was on-going contact with employers, who provided facilities for visits, support for specific tasks and visited institutions to talk to learners that had been particularly helpful. The value of this type of contribution by employers from the teachers' and strategic staff perspective has already been discussed in Section 4.1, and learner survey responses showed a similar pattern.

Amongst Diploma learners, almost all (93 per cent in Year 10 and 97 per cent in Year 12) reported that they had taken part in at least one activity involving someone from the world of work as part of their Diploma course. Table 4.2 illustrates how employers had been involved, from the learner perspective. Consistent with the findings from the teachers, learners reported that employers had most frequently been involved in providing talks or hosting visits.

Table 4.2   Involvement of employers

Type of involvement	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
Visited workplace	65	64
Employer visited to talk	64	76
Had advice from employer	46	48
Undertaken projects	43	43
Weighted N =	**823**	**176**

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

Across the employers who were interviewed, their type of involvement reflected the range of activities mentioned by staff and learners. Four had provided work placements, but the contribution of the others ranged from hosting visits for groups of students during which specific tasks were undertaken; for example a one day workshop on computer games design for Information Technology students, to a collaboration over many weeks with a school, where a group of Creative and Media students undertook a project with an end product that was then used by the organisation with the public. Some involvement, such as the latter, was on a substantial scale with a smaller group of students, while other employers offered more contained activities, but with larger groups, such as a masterclass for Engineering students, site visits for Construction and the Built Environment learners, a 'scenarios' day with the police for Society, Health and Development students, or providing access to broadcasting studio facilities for Creative and Media learners.

The placements that were provided varied considerably in scope, but involved learners:

- undertaking specific projects

- gathering evidence required for specific parts of their Diploma course

- gaining an understanding of the relevant sector

- giving presentations to employers and school staff.

The consortia that reported higher levels of success in obtaining employer involvement tended to be those that had some central system for communicating with employers. Usually this was through the active support of Education Business Partnership Organisations (EBPOs), referred to as very helpful by five consortium leads and by many teacher interviewees. As one consortium lead stated:

> *Our employer engagement has been a real success story because we agreed the EBP would take on that role.*

Not only did EBPOs have the extensive contacts that made this task easier, but if they took the lead in communicating with employers, it avoided the problem of teaching staff not having the time for this and made a central point of contact much easier for the employers themselves. In areas where there was one person with responsibility for employer engagement, this was also considered useful.

4.4.2 Learners' attitudes towards employer involvement

Students' perceptions of the benefits of their employer-related experience are shown in Table 4.3. The responses accorded closely with the comments made by many teaching staff about the perceived value added to Diploma delivery by employer engagement, even though work placements had often not yet taken place.

Table 4.3   Attitude towards employer involvement (Year 10)

Effect of experience with an employer	Strongly agree/ agree %	Not sure %	Strongly disagree/ disagree %	Does not apply %	No response %
Learnt about types of jobs	63	10	4	14	9
Helped me understand my Diploma better	53	20	6	13	8
Made Diploma more interesting	52	16	9	14	9
Helped me learn how businesses work	51	18	8	14	9
Used skills I am learning	50	19	8	15	9
Did not see link	11	21	44	15	9
Did not enjoy	7	14	54	17	9
Weighted N = 823					

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 762 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2009

Responses from Year 12 learners were also positive, although less so than for the younger students: half the respondents (50 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that they had learnt about other types of jobs; just under half (48 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that they had been helped to understand their Diploma better; 41 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that contact had made the Diploma more interesting; 43 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they had used the skills they were learning and 37 per cent understood more about how businesses worked.

The employers interviewed commented on the positive manner in which Diploma students had responded to their involvement with work related learning, in some cases contrasting this with the less than enthusiastic response of students whom they had encountered in non-Diploma related work experience weeks. This was only a small sample of employers and they possibly had responded because their experience had been positive, but it may also have been that for the Diploma learners, there was a greater sense of the relevance of their engagement with employers to the course they were taking. For the employers the realisation that their involvement had been both useful and enjoyable for the students helped to make the whole experience worthwhile, and perhaps the message about the positive effects on both sides of this targeted intervention could be spread more widely to encourage greater employer involvement with Diploma delivery. It was also the case that the employers nearly all referred to the twin benefits to their own organisations of this engagement: building a relationship with the young people who might be their future work force, and providing a valuable service to their local community which provided good public relations.

4.4.3   Challenges to achieving employers' involvement and overcoming them

Case-study interviews with strategic staff (consortium and line of learning leads) revealed a more **mixed picture of the successes and challenges of achieving employer involvement** by the middle of the first year of Diploma delivery. There were eight consortia where some level of difficulty was reported, with some lines of learning more frequently affected, but no overall pattern emerged.

- The most common challenge related to the current **economic climate** and the pressure that this was putting on many large companies as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The problems faced by car manufacturers was having a particular effect on Engineering in some areas, and the Creative and Media line, which was often dependent on SMEs was also being affected. As one interviewee pointed out, *'these businesses are less able to undertake philanthropic activity'*. The use of incentives to encourage employer involvement was raised by some interviewees. As one consortium lead pointed out:

    It will continue to be a big problem unless there are incentives for employers such as tax breaks.

The use of incentives for employers had also been suggested during the 2008 baseline case studies[25] as a potential facilitator for employer engagement.

From an employer perspective, one who had provided a two-week placement for the first cohort of Diploma students said that he would not be able to do the same this year (2009-2010) because of economic conditions and structural changes within the company. Alternatives to placements were under discussion in this interviewee's consortium, because of the increasing difficulty for some employers of providing these, and he explained that meetings with teachers revolved around finding such alternatives, for example:

    How to create work experience where there can't be a direct placement – is it possible to create an environment that mimics that?

- **Health and safety considerations** were also a challenge. Although employer involvement in the Society, Health and Development Diploma generally presented fewer problems, because contacts tended to be with large public service organisations, such as Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and the Police, this line of learning was more likely to face problems with health and safety regulations, particularly for pre-16 students. As one Society, Health and Development teacher explained:

    If they are under 18, they either can't go into placements, or they are very limited in what they can do.

In one area where block placements with the police were not considered possible, Information Technology students had been able to see the control room and take part in interactive scenarios. In another consortium, Society, Health and Development learners had been involved in a special open day at the police training centre, where they could interact in a safe environment, and take part in scenarios, including a

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[25] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available:http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

mock court. This also helped to address the issue that had been raised by some teachers about the difficulty of finding ways of dealing with the justice element of this line of learning.

- The requirement for students to have **CRB checks** had raised issues in two consortia. In one because some learners had police cautions on their record, meaning employers had been reluctant to take them, and in another consortium teachers had not realised CRB checks on students were required until the last minute.

- In 11 consortia, at least one line of learning had faced some difficulty in **setting up work placements**, as distinct from more general work-related learning. Mostly these challenges related to the economic situation already referred to, but in some cases, the situation was exacerbated by other issues, such as shortage of practitioner time for organisation, and the complications of partner schools with different times for blocks of work experience. Such difficulties were another reason why alternatives to block placements, such as one day a week spread over several weeks, could be preferable.

- From an employer perspective, although the employers interviewed had found their relationship with education mutually beneficial, some emphasised the importance of maintaining contact with teachers and being provided with information to help them prepare for visits.

4.5   Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning

The Ofsted Report, on 14-19 developments, published in August 2009, which focused on Diploma delivery (Ofsted, 2009)[26], drew attention to the need for Diploma consortia to '*put in place rigorous procedures to assure the quality of collaborative provision'*, and responses from case-study interviewees at strategic and delivery level revealed a mixed picture of how quality assurance of teaching and learning was developing. This indicated a need for more consortium-wide QA protocols to be developed, because, as referred to in Chapter 3, a successful shared delivery model was partly dependent on this.

Five of the 15 case-study consortia had some degree of a **consortium-wide quality assurance procedure** in place. Of those, two consortia involved external consultants in undertaking quality assurance, including lesson observations. In the other three consortia there was also a system of lesson observations undertaken by the consortium lead, usually with the assistance of line of learning leads, as well as obtaining feedback from learners. In all other consortia there did not appear to be a comprehensive consortium-wide QA policy (which may take time to develop), and although *sometimes* line of learning leads were responsible for carrying out visits and observations in all consortium centres, this procedure did not always work well in practice, as leads did not always think they had the authority to judge and intervene.

In most consortia, therefore, it appeared that **QA was to a large extent undertaken by individual institutions**, and the lack of a consortium-wide process and the trust this could engender, appeared to be a general issue. As one consortium lead explained:

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[26] Ofsted (2009). *Implementation of 14-19 Reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Ofsted: London. Available online: https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas

> *It needs to happen strategically at consortium level – that is a big beefy issue that needs to be addressed.*

The main issue was that, although individual institutions usually considered that their own QA systems were adequate, they had less confidence in the procedures in other schools and colleges that their students were attending. This view is summed up in the comment of one college tutor who said:

> *I have no control over who is teaching the students in school and the students' learning experience there.*

School staff also expressed similar concerns about pre-16 students at colleges.

On both sides there could be a lack of understanding of how the other sector operated, which perhaps was associated with lack of communication. As one college senior manager observed:

> *Schools misunderstand the level of QA that is currently undertaken in FE, where each faculty has a quality manager.*

This may indicate a need for better liaison between staff from different types of institutions engaged in shared delivery. Additionally, some institution staff were conscious that expressing concerns about what happened to their students in other schools could undermine the trust which was crucial to the success of a shared delivery model. As this senior manager pointed out:

> *We only know the quality of our own teaching staff, so it is a worry, but there has to be trust in shared delivery and we can't be seen to be checking up.*

It would appear that one of the main reasons why consortia had not introduced more comprehensive QA systems was because of **sensitivity over who would carry out lesson observations** and how often these could take place. For example, one consortium lead explained that:

> *As far as we are concerned whatever model of observations in an institution already exists will remain. We have to ensure, in line with union rules, that they are not observed above a set number of times.*

Others added that there was also an issue about whether teachers from one institution could be observed by staff from another. Another consortium lead described how a strategic decision had been taken to set up a Quality Task Group to look at these issues and try to find a way forward:

> *There is tension between wanting to do QA checks, against a lot of existing QA practices in schools and colleges and union agreements which are different in schools and colleges.*

It is important to bear in mind that these interviews were conducted in the early part of 2009, when Diploma delivery had only been taking place for a few months, and that the issues expressed by interviewees about QA were perhaps not surprising at this relatively early stage. There were also signs that both strategic staff and practitioners were aware of the issues and were hoping to address them as soon as possible, for example by setting up a QA group or seeking support from Awarding Bodies.

4.6   Monitoring and assessing progress

Monitoring and assessment of the Diploma was highlighted as an area of uncertainty and some concern during the baseline case-study visits in 2008[27], and to a large extent this was still the case during the follow-up visits. As some interviewees pointed out, this was not surprising, as any new qualification was likely to require a period of settlement while practitioners became familiar with the requirements.

As can be seen in Table 4.4, teachers' responses to the survey revealed that observation, oral tests, practicals, self-assessment by learners and written homework were widely used to assess learners' progress with the Diploma. Written examinations and short answer tests were noticeably less frequently used but this may change later in the course as around one fifth of teachers indicated that they planned to use these approaches although they would still be less common than the other approaches that were used or planned.

Table 4.4   Methods of assessing progress pre-16

Method	Yes %	No, but planned %	No, no plans %	No response %
Observation	75	10	4	11
Oral tests	70	12	10	9
Practicals	70	11	12	8
Learner self-assessment	67	17	6	10
Written homework	64	18	7	11
Written exams	45	21	28	7
Short answer tests	29	21	37	13
N = 112				

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
A total of 107 respondents answered at least one item in this question
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

Responses for post-16 methods revealed that written examinations and short answer tests featured more strongly (58 per cent and 40 per cent respectively responded yes), and learner self-assessment less so (58 per cent).

Information from case-study interviewees suggested that oral and short answer tests, as well as self-assessment and peer assessment, were being used to ensure that learners were making adequate progress. Some practitioners referred to tracking sheets and target-setting, or electronic independent learning plans (ILPs), which were used at institution level, but the use of these at consortium level as an on-line facility, was only mentioned in two consortia. The alternative appeared to be for each teacher to monitor their own students and the line of learning lead to take an overall view.

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[27] See O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

As regards assessment, this was interpreted in different ways by interviewees, probably because of the **different nature of the requirements of different lines of learning and Awarding Bodies**. The common perception amongst those delivering the Diploma was that assessment was complicated, assessment procedures were still at a formative stage and standardisation of assessment was under-developed. As one practitioner said, for example:

> *I don't fully understand the assessment system and there has been no training about assessment or levels. At present, there's not much material to use and liaison with the Awarding Bodies is not productive because they don't have a model of assessment in mind.*

The appointment of domain assessors to standardise across a line of learning, and of a lead assessor, who would standardise across all lines within the consortium, should help to provide the **standardisation of assessment** that many practitioners thought was missing at present. However, at the time of the interviews, only two consortia had both all their domain assessors and their lead assessor in place. In most consortia, the process of appointing to these posts was underway, although in some cases this process was being delayed by issues about how the posts should be funded, and whether domain assessors should be practitioners or not. A number of line of learning leads commented that they had been asked to take up the domain assessor role – some had agreed and others were considering this, but had concerns about the extra work that would be involved.

In some consortia, teaching staff reported that a pragmatic approach to assessment standardisation had been developed, which involved those teaching a line of learning coming together at regular intervals to discuss assessment outcomes and moderate these internally. In some cases samples were also sent to the awarding body for comment, and the responses were logged and informed further development. However, concerns about lack of standardised assessment practices across the consortium were still raised in both schools and colleges. A comment from a college tutor mirrored those made by other practitioners:

> *Our staff meet the requirements regarding assessment, but I'm not sure they are being addressed elsewhere.*

As was the case with QA procedures in delivery, this drew attention to the role played by trust in partnerships, and the need for consortium-wide procedures that would encourage the development of confidence in partnership working.

Apart from the need to develop consortium-wide approaches to assessment standards, the other main areas where further clarification was required related to:

- grade boundaries (distinctions between marking criteria and how marks translated into grades)
- how much support should be given to students
- controlled assessments (an approach to internal assessment where there are set requirements or 'controls'), as some delivery staff had no previous experience of these or of how they should be standardised across institutions
- more concrete assessment examples
- assessing PLTS, which was described as being different to other forms of assessment.

Opinions about the extent of **support from Awarding Bodies** were divided. While some had positive experiences when they had sought clarification, as was the case with one interviewee who said:

> *The exam boards are always there to answer questions*

others considered that strategic decisions about assessment had yet to be finalised by the awarding bodies and, consequently could not be communicated to teachers, as the following comments illustrate:

> *The specifications we were working to changed over the summer holiday and were not agreed until October, long after we started teaching, also which units would be externally assessed changed several times.*

> *Someone from* [awarding body] *came to talk to us in January* (2009) *about assessment, but she didn't know any more than us. If they don't know, it makes you uncertain about what's happening really.*

Despite the general air of uncertainty over assessment, there were signs that the situation might be improved by the amount of training still due to take place, by the fact that some delivery staff were, or were going to be, chief moderators for Awarding Bodies and by the development of standardisation procedures.

When respondents to the teacher survey were asked for their views on the **progress of their students**, three-quarters (75 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that learners were making good progress. However, the information obtained from case-study interviewees on the progress being made by Diploma students was less conclusive, because there was a strong perception that it was too early to say. A few line of learning leads made comments about units that had been completed and progress had been good so far. The largest number of references to known levels of progress related to functional skills assessments which had already been undertaken, and the predominating view was that these were causing concern because of poor results, particularly in mathematics.

As with quality assurance generally, effective partnership delivery of Diplomas was dependent on institutions and individual teachers having confidence in assessment procedures working fairly and efficiently. Follow-up case-study work will reveal the extent to which concerns about assessment have been addressed, and knowledge about how the assessment procedures work has improved.

4.7   Summary

There was a consensus evident from survey responses and case-study interviews that the Diploma did offer the opportunity to use different teaching and learning approaches, and that this related particularly to placing knowledge in a 'real world' context and encouraging learner independence. Although there were challenges associated with this, in terms of practitioner and learner adaptability, and the essential engagement of employers; this different pedagogy was welcomed by the majority of learners and those who taught them. In fact there was disappointment if practitioners felt that their ability to teach innovatively was hampered by the nature of assessment requirements.

Almost all learners had taken part in at least one work-related learning activity and both learners and employers had responded positively to their involvement. Some consortia had found it more difficult than others to achieve good levels of employer

involvement and there was evidence from employer and consortium staff interviews that the current economic uncertainty was affecting employer involvement and was likely to do so in the near future.

Consortium-wide quality assurance procedures were under-developed and regulations surrounding lesson observation systems were generally regarded as a significant barrier to achieving these. However, there were some good examples of systems that had been established with the consent of partner institutions and dissemination of these could provide models for other areas. The standardisation of assessment across partner institutions was also at an early stage of development and there were considerable levels of uncertainty among practitioners about how assessment procedures were supposed to work. This situation is likely to be improved by the appointment of domain and lead assessors, and by training from Awarding Bodies which was due to take place after these case-study visits.

5. Learner choice

Key findings

- In the majority of consortia take-up was lower than had been expected at the time of baseline visits, this was particularly the case in relation to post-16 take-up.

- Consortium staff identified gaps in IAG, negative media coverage and the variance in promotion of Diplomas across schools, as central to the overall lower take up rate.

- A common attraction for all learners who had chosen the Diploma was the opportunity to study a broad curriculum within their sector of interest. Learners welcomed the breadth of learning and variety of learning styles on offer within the Diploma. The breadth was also supported by learners' parents, the majority of whom supported their child's decision to take a Diploma.

- Around a quarter of young people surveyed who had chosen not to study for a Diploma said they had not done so because they had not known enough about it.

- Consortia that had most successfully delivered IAG, according to the students, and had consequently been the most successful in terms of recruitment, had done so via a range of methods, fully covered the content and structure of the Diploma, imparted advice about decision-making and provided learners with access to well-informed staff.

Recommendations

- Ensuring all learners are given clear, comprehensive and consistent information about Diplomas should be a priority for policy makers and consortium staff. Information should extend to all those in an advisory position, such as parents and institution staff. IAG is crucial to help inform learner choice and, in turn, could have a positive impact on recruitment.

- Policy makers and consortium staff might wish to consider how best to disseminate learners' positive experiences of the Diploma as a means of ensuring that young people and their parents receive a balanced impression of the new qualification.

- The use of area wide 14-19 prospectuses might be better marketed and the experiences of current Diploma students shared, in order to contribute to consistent IAG delivery across institutions.

This chapter focuses on the take up of Diplomas and the perceived reasons for lower than expected take-up. It then goes on to examine the reasons given by young people as to why they decided to take a Diploma or to choose an alternative qualification and considers the role and impact of IAG and parental support on choices. It draws on both survey data and interviews with young people in Gateway 1 consortia. Where relevant it makes reference and comparisons to data collected during the Diploma planning year.

5.1 Take-up of Diplomas

The majority of case-study consortia (12 of the 15) reported that overall take-up (in relation to both pre- and post-16 age groups) was lower than had been expected at the time of the baseline visits. Where specified, the majority of the decline was in post-16 take-up, with seven consortia explaining that Level 3 or Level 2 post-16 take-up rates had been disappointing. In contrast, four consortia reported that Level 2 take-up pre-16 was higher than had been expected. This pattern of take-up amongst case study consortia would appear then to reflect the pattern of take-up nationally. Consortium leads and line of learning leads suggested a range of reasons for why overall expected/target numbers were not reached (the disparity between take-up of the Diploma by pre- and post-16 learners specifically is explored more fully throughout in Sections 5.2.1. and 5.2.3). These included:

- variable IAG and a lack of awareness of Diplomas amongst young people (particularly amongst those choosing post-16 options), their parents and other school staff (five consortia). One interviewee felt the name 'Diploma' itself had confused students who were aware of similarly titled qualifications (such as National Diplomas)

- negative stories in the media (five consortia) and limited positive publicity (one consortium)

- uncertainty around a new course and its 'credibility' as a qualification compared with others (four consortia)

- an unwillingness by some schools (four consortia) or some teachers (one consortium) to promote a qualification that they would not be teaching (for example where the students would be learning in another school or college)

- the reduced number of option choices due to the size of the Diploma in relation to the timetable (three consortia). Take up was reported by one consortium lead to have been worse in schools that did not allow an extra option choice, while another consortium lead felt that the time commitment required was off-putting to students

- competing GCSEs/BTECs in similar subjects (three consortia). Take up of Diplomas was noted by some to be better in schools without competing qualifications

- insufficient numbers of students who were interested in, and able to take (according to the required attainment at key stage 3) the Level 2 course (two consortia)

- the late agreement nationally of GCSE/A-Level equivalencies (two consortia).

The impact of low take-up meant that four consortia reported that the number of learners was insufficient to cover their costs. Others reported that the course was still viable but that low take-up had an effect on class sizes.

5.2 Influences on learner choice

5.2.1 Learners' reasons for choosing the Diploma

As shown in Table 5.1 below, learners in Year 10 were, overall, most likely to have chosen a Diploma because the course was related to the career they were interested in, because they liked the number of GCSEs or A-Levels that the Diploma was equivalent to or because they thought the course sounded interesting. Influences were similar for Year 12 learners overall, although they were more concerned with the potential of the qualification to earn them a place in university/higher education than with the equivalencies of the qualification (although there is a possibility that these two items might be connected to some extent). Learners in Year 12 were influenced much more strongly than their younger counterparts by the relevance of the course to their career interest, while the influences reported by learners in Year 10 were spread across a range of factors. To some extent this suggests that it was the specific line of learning which attracted the older students, while younger students appeared to be attracted by a range of characteristics unique to the qualification itself. For example, they were more likely than their older counterparts to choose the Diploma because it was new and different and worth more than other qualifications. In addition to this, Year 12 learners who had chosen *not* to take the Diploma (discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.3) were most likely to cite the fact that they preferred to take different types of qualifications such as A-Levels or BTECs, while Year 10 learners were more likely to say that they had not been interested in the first five lines of learning. This suggests that Year 12 learners were less likely to be attracted by a new qualification, and that the reverse was true for a notable proportion of their younger counterparts.

Table 5.1 Reasons for choosing to study for a Diploma

	% Year 10 learners	% Year 12 learners
The course is related to the career I am interested in	58	76
I liked the number of GCSEs/A-Levels that the Diploma is equivalent to	48	23
The course sounded interesting	46	41
I wanted to do something different to the other subjects I am taking	32	14
I liked the idea of doing some of the course outside my school	26	n/a
I wanted to try a different way of learning	24	14
I thought it would help me to get into college	23	n/a
I thought it might help me to get into university/HE when I am older	23	32
I wanted to be the first to try a new course	16	7
I wanted to gain work experience	16	13
My parents encouraged me to	12	4
My school encouraged me to	9	4
I didn't know what else to do	5	6
Weighted N =	**823**	**176**

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

A theme common among *case-study* Diploma learners was the opportunity to study a varied curriculum within their sector of interest. Whether or not they wanted to increase their competitiveness in the work place or broaden their horizons or interests, this seemed to be key. In fact it was this aspect of the Diploma which relieved some of the concerns held by Year 10 learners that the relative size of the Diploma meant they were unable to choose other, more discrete subject choices.

Although learners interviewed during case-study visits were satisfied with the options available to them in terms of the variety of courses and subjects available, Year 10 students found it more difficult to make the choice between the more 'traditional' curriculum and the Diploma course. Generally, the extent to which they *understood* and welcomed the opportunity presented by the Diploma to spend more time learning about a variety of issues relevant to their sector of interest impacted upon this decision. Many Year 10 learners who eventually chose the Diploma explained that they felt the loss of the more 'traditional' broad curriculum of discrete subjects for a curriculum which combined a variety of inter-related subjects relevant to their sector of interest was a worthwhile loss. Because they favoured this approach to their curriculum, many felt the Diploma had more to offer them personally.

This is perhaps an indication that the Diploma offers a real alternative to the qualifications and curriculum currently on offer pre-16 (in contrast perhaps to the post-16 curriculum). Year 10 interviewees who had opted for alternative qualifications often mentioned the size of the Diploma but did not seem aware of the variety within it. Distracted by this concern, they therefore did not always fully appreciate some of the more fundamental differences between the Diploma and other qualifications. As more lines of learning are introduced it will be important to recognise the role and importance of IAG in ensuring young people are fully aware of the benefits and limitations of the Diploma and the nature of the curriculum offered.

5.2.2 Influences for learners considering each line of learning

There were some interesting contrasts between the influences on learners' choice and the Diploma ***line of learning*** that had been chosen. It appears that specific elements of the Diploma appealed more to learners doing particular lines of learning than they did to others.

Learners who had chosen to study for a **Creative and Media Diploma** were more likely than those choosing other lines of learning to have chosen a Diploma because *the course sounded interesting* (56 per cent of Year 10 learners and 47 per cent of Year 12 Learners), or because they wanted to *do something different to the other courses they were taking* (38 per cent of Year 10 learners and 23 per cent of Year 12 learners). Year 10 learners were also more interested in this Diploma line of learning because they wanted to *try a different way of learning* (37 per cent) although this was not such a concern for those in Year 12. Creative and Media students were the least attracted by the possibility that the Diploma might *help them to get into HE/university* (17 per cent of both Year 10 and Year 12 learners). The case-study data supported these findings and revealed that Year 10 learners who had chosen a Creative and Media Diploma were most likely to have chosen it for the proposed active learning style, as reflected in the following two comments:

> 'you can] *do it yourself, not write essays about it'.*

> '*I want to be doing film production, not writing about it.'*

It seemed that the Diploma had been suggested to several of these learners as an opportunity to engage with their main area of interest (whether that be drama, music art or dance etc) while experiencing new but similar subjects and learning in a more active way. Another learner studying for a Creative and Media Diploma said:

> [Our teacher] *talked to us about how you contribute your own skills. That sounded really good. …*[the most important factor] *was the ability to be myself, to contribute to the group, rather than just be a student in class doing set work.*

The opportunity to engage with a range of related disciplines was seen as a benefit by interviewees studying for a Creative and Media Diploma, particularly for a group of young people who had unclear ideas about their plans for the future. Only one person talked about how the qualification might give them a competitive edge – considering that a Diploma would make them '*qualified in several different areas*'.

Those in Year 10 who had chosen the **Information Technology Diploma** were attracted by the widest range of aspects in relation to the qualification. For example, they were more likely than students who had chosen other lines of learning to have chosen the qualification because they *liked the number of GCSEs that the Diploma was equivalent to* (58 per cent), *thought it might help them to get into HE/university* (36 per cent) or *college* (33 per cent) *when they were older.* They were also more likely to have chosen it to *gain work experience* (20 per cent) or because their *parents had encouraged them* (18 per cent). The pattern of responses from both Year 12 learners who chose the Information Technology Diploma and learners of all ages who had opted for the **Engineering Diploma** were similar to the overall averages across lines of learning.

The case-study data revealed that those who had chosen the Information Technology or Engineering Diploma were also attracted by the breadth of learning which the Diploma offered. However, they were more concerned than Creative and Media students that the broad range of knowledge they would gain would enhance the marketability of their qualification and enable them to progress into careers with, what several of the learners termed as, '*good prospects'.* Learners of Information Technology generally welcomed the fact that they had the opportunity to study business as part of their Diploma (this refers to learners who were aware of this when they chose the Diploma, although not all had been aware or were happy, as discussed in Chapter 6).

Learners in Year 10 who had chosen the **Construction and the Built Environment Diploma** were attracted by the subject matter, rather than necessarily the Diploma qualification itself. This may be because they lacked a range of relevant options. Interestingly, however, one of the most common responses of Year 12 learners choosing this line of learning was that they thought the Diploma would *help them to get into HE/university* (45 per cent), while this was a priority for only 19 per cent of Year 10 learners who had chosen the same Diploma. Case-study interviewees overwhelmingly reported that having family in the construction industry and related trades was the main influence on their choice. They were attracted to the Diploma as they wanted to do something practical.

Year 10 students doing **Society, Health and Development Diploma** were more likely than students opting for other lines of learning to have chosen the Diploma because it was *related to their career interest* (71 per cent). Year 12 students who had chosen this line of learning were the most likely (of all Diploma learners surveyed in this age group) to have chosen it because they thought it *would help to get into*

HE/university (48 per cent). In addition to this, the case-study interviews revealed that those who chose Society, Health and Development were more likely than any other learner who took a Diploma to have known their exact career goals at the time of their option choices and to have taken the Diploma with this in mind. Most often, these learners wanted to work with children in the future, become midwives, nurses, teachers or paramedics. Those interested in joining the police had been attracted by the justice element of the qualification. Several learners across two consortia reported that the Diploma was the only course offered that matched their interests, as other similar courses (such as health and social care) had been discontinued to allow for the introduction of the Diploma. However, there were also several interviewees who had actively chosen the qualification in order to learn about other relevant careers within the sector and to therefore, keep their options open in case they changed their mind about their specific career goals (and there is some evidence that, as a direct result of Diploma learning, some had).

The majority of parents who were interviewed had been happy to support their son or daughter in their decision to take a Diploma. For many of the parents, the variety of the Diploma curriculum was the main attraction, as it not only covered their child's main area of interest but combined several related subjects. Several stated that, despite their initial unease, the qualification seemed to be tailored to the needs and interests of their child.

The potential of the Diploma to broaden the curriculum within a particular sector, alongside experience of the working world, instilled confidence in several parents that their son or daughter would be set on the right track in terms of thinking about their future career. As a parent of a learner who opted for the Information Technology Diploma said:

> *Few students know at age 16 or 17 what they want to do in life, so a qualification that helps broaden horizons is good.*

Another remarked that:

> [My daughter] *took in the big picture. She thought her course would be useful to bring to any subject area.*

A minority of parents, however, stated that they had been initially uncertain or unhappy with the decision to take a Diploma because it was a new qualification. As one explained, for example, it was '*unknown territory*'.

5.2.3 Learners' reasons for not choosing the Diploma

Survey respondents who had chosen alternative qualifications, were asked why they had not chosen the Diploma. While there were some important contrasts between the responses of those in different age groups, there were also some interesting commonalities. For example, in both age groups **around a quarter of learners** *did not know much about it* (26 per cent of Year 10 learners, and 25 per cent of those in Year 12). In addition to this, only a minority of learners in both Year 10 and Year 12 said that they *did not want to take a new qualification that other students had not taken yet* (less than five per cent in each age group).

In terms of the most common reasons for not taking a Diploma in each age group, Year 12 respondents were most likely to report that they *preferred to take only A-Levels/other qualifications* (36 per cent). This type of issue was slightly less of a concern for Year 10 learners (27 per cent of whom preferred to take GCSEs/other

qualifications). Younger students were more likely to have had *no interest in the subject area* (40 per cent of Year 10 students and 20 per cent of Year 12 students). The majority of parents of learners *not* doing a Diploma reported that their son or daughter had chosen not to take the qualification because the first five lines of learning on offer had not appealed to them[28].

5.3 Satisfaction with information, advice and guidance

5.3.1 IAG for learners

The issue of IAG was one of the most commonly cited amongst staff as to why take up of the Diploma was lower than expected, particularly for older students and this section looks at this issue in more depth.

Seventy per cent of Year 10 and 62 per cent of Year 12 Diploma learners were either *very satisfied* or *quite satisfied* with the information and advice received about their Diploma before they started the course. The survey data for Year 10 learners showed that students who had chosen Construction and the Built Environment were most satisfied with IAG received about the Diploma. Further analysis revealed that Year 10 learners who were most satisfied with IAG scored higher in terms of their attitude towards the Diploma course (see Appendix A for details).

The most commonly reported methods of IAG (not necessarily Diploma-specific), as *recalled* by Year 10 interviewees who had chosen the Diploma, were: speaking with a range of teachers, attending open evenings, reading literature (such as option booklets, leaflets or brochures) and attending assemblies on the issue of IAG. Less commonly used methods of IAG were the use of websites and one-to-one interviews with Careers Advisors (both methods were reported by learners across only three consortia). Diploma students were unlikely to make reference to the use of a 14-19 area prospectus, a finding which concurs with evidence from the recent Ofsted report[29].

In terms of Diploma-specific IAG, most Year 10 Diploma learners interviewed had received written material on Diplomas, although this ranged from small leaflets to large brochures. Learners remembered attending presentations on the Diploma in just under half of all consortia areas. The use of videos/DVDs and taster sessions were reportedly used across three consortia and interviews (to gain a place on the course) provided a further opportunity for information sharing in two consortia. It is worth noting that **many learners spoke about the opportunity to receive Diploma-specific IAG only upon expressing an initial interest in the qualification**. This suggests that those who were initially disinterested, or did not look in detail at Diplomas as a possibility (for whatever reason) may well have lacked the opportunity to find out anything more about the qualification and may not have made an informed decision. Again, Ofsted[30] made the same observation in their recent report on 14-19 education. The resultant satisfaction with IAG amongst this group of learners is explored later in this section.

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[28] It is worth noting that these learners could choose from the first five lines of learning only.

[29] *Implementation of 14–19 reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas.* Oftsed, 2009 Available online: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas/(language)/eng-GB

[30] *Implementation of 14–19 reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas.* Oftsed, 2009 Available online: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas/(language)/eng-GB

In relation to the content of IAG, Year 10 learners widely reported being told about the GCSE equivalencies of the Diploma (across 12 consortia) and the practicalities of delivery (i.e. travel to learn or the requirement to commit full days to the Diploma). Year 10 learners across four consortia *remembered* being told specific information about the content of the course or the units that would be covered. A minority of consortia, from the recollections of students, would seem to have shared information about assessment.

Across the majority of consortia, there were Year 10 learners who felt that they could or should have been given more information about the Diploma. Some remarked that they had not known important information, such as the need to travel to learn (a particular problem in one area where young people were expected to resource their own travel) or that they would need to pass functional skills to gain a Diploma. There were two consortia where learners felt misled about the content of the course. This was a particular issue in relation to the Information Technology Diploma which was reported, by both pre- and post-16 learners, to include a higher content of business studies than had been stated in the IAG literature.

Whilst the level of satisfaction seemed to differ *within* most consortia (suggesting a lack of consistency across institutions), there were three exceptions to this. In these three consortia, Year 10 learners seemed to be consistently positive about the IAG received and this would suggest good, consistent, practice throughout the consortium. Further to this, two of these consortia had proved to be the most successful at recruiting young people to the Diploma, and the only areas out of the 15 visited to have matched or exceeded expected take-up (although one had not met targets in relation to Level 3, and felt that this was due to a lack of promotion by the college). It is notable that in these three areas, learners were more likely to report that they had received a combination of information via a **broad range of methods**, and in contrast to other areas, the IAG was more likely to **fully cover the content and structure of the Diploma**, impartial advice around "choosing" and "decision-making", and provided the **opportunity (both formally and informally) to seek further information** from well-informed teaching staff. Therefore, these would appear to be factors associated with positive IAG. Comments of students within these consortia included:

> *It gave a good idea about what it* [the Diploma] *would be like.*

> *We got everything you could want...they went through whether or not it was a good or bad idea for you - they didn't put words into your mouth.*

IAG received by case-study **Year 12 Diploma students** appeared to be less broad. The majority of these learners found out about the Diploma through FE prospectuses, open evenings/days, or a teacher/tutor suggesting it as a suitable qualification to their style of learning (usually at the Diploma delivery institution). There was much less evidence of IAG received from their own school, and learners were more likely to report doing their own research or that the Diploma was suggested to them by an institution to which they had applied for an alternative course, as might be expected in relation to post-16 choices. This would seem to reflect the findings of the Gateway 1 baseline study[31].

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[31] O'Donnell, L., Lynch, S., Wade, P., Featherstone, G., Shuayb, M., Golden, S. and Haynes, G. (2009). National Evaluation of Diplomas: Preparation for 2008 Delivery. London: DCSF. [online] Available: http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-RW079&

The extent to which this age group were given details about the Diploma also seemed to have been less, perhaps because they were relying on the content of a prospectus or the information given to them at interview. Indeed, the survey findings one year previously[32] found that Year 11 students preferred to speak to subject teachers or tutors with whom they had an existing relationship as opposed to using written or web-based materials and therefore these teachers need to be well informed. These findings may well explain the slightly higher levels of dissatisfaction amongst Year 12 students in relation to IAG and may contribute to the lower levels of Diploma take up amongst post-16 learners.

The comments of Diploma students', on an individual basis, bring up some interesting issues around the nature and extent of IAG given to them and suggest that **young people are in need of more guidance around *how* to make decisions**, for example, how to compare the potential positive and negative aspects of a course and how to make sense of, or put into the perspective, their concerns around certain elements of a qualification. With hindsight, some students having experienced the course, reported that they were now disappointed with the level of information given to them; others, in contrast, were glad they had not known certain things as they suspect it might have, wrongly, put them off. Some were content to know the basics, not the detail.

One or two others expressed a desire to be surprised by delivery to make the experience more interesting for them, and so were content to know less of the detail. Therefore, young people displayed differing attitudes and opinions to IAG and the extent to which they felt they needed to be informed about certain factors.

There may be value in consortia making use of current learners' experience in order to provide young people in the future with a more realistic view of what the Diploma will be like. As one Year 12 learner felt:

> *More students would have taken it* [the Diploma] *if they'd have known how good it would be.*

Therefore, perhaps the best people to make that judgement and share their perspective with other students, would be Diploma learners themselves. The extent to which this has taken place will be an interesting issue to follow up during next year's visits to Gateway 2 consortia.

Views of IAG amongst learners who did not choose a Diploma

Eighty-one per cent of Year 10 and 65 per cent of Year 12 learners who had not chosen the Diploma reported that they had *heard of the qualification but did not know much about it*. Satisfaction with IAG provided in relation to the Diploma was lower amongst those that had chosen not to study for the Diploma than those who had, although over half of non-Diploma students were very or quite satisfied with IAG they had received on the Diploma. Perhaps because these young people had not been interested in taking a Diploma, they did not feel the need for more information.

The evidence presented in Section 5.2.2 indicates that a lack of knowledge contributed to many young people not choosing the Diploma and it is clear that consortia need to find ways to explore further how best to engage students who have 'made up their minds' without perhaps fully understanding the extent or nature of

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[32]*ibid*

options available to them. This provides further evidence of the need for comprehensive IAG for all learners and institution staff advising them.

Views of IAG amongst consortium staff

There was current recognition, from the consortia leads' perspective, that **the quality and consistency of IAG was dependent on the individual institutions**. For example, as one consortium lead pointed out:

> A lot depends on where schools are in terms of their vision. For example if it's a school that sees Diplomas as engaging learning and providing good progression routes, then IAG will support that, but if the school's not sure then the IAG won't be either.

Some consortia appeared to have successfully adopted a standardised approach for all institutions to use. As one consortium lead explained:

> Each school has adopted a PowerPoint presentation I prepared about Diplomas. I worked with Connexions to produce materials for pre- and post-16 about Diploma, Apprenticeships etc.

However, another consortium lead observed that even the provision of standardised IAG did not guarantee unified delivery across institutions:

> The LA provided standardised information which was given out by schools: this was good quality. However the issue is that some schools may not have circulated the information provided: if they have their own sixth form, they would want to keep their own students, so if they were not involved in the Diploma offer they would not have necessarily publicised the Diploma offer.

While the most recent Ofsted report[33] on 14-19 education described the *overall* quality of IAG for young people be good in around two thirds of the consortia visited, the findings from our research would seem to explain to some extent why Ofsted also found slow progress in relation to the implementation of the National Standards[34] for IAG in most consortia, despite evidence that where they were used, they were "*increasingly contributing to the standardisation, coherence and coordination of advice and guidance within consortium areas*".

In terms of satisfaction with IAG provision for learners, most consortium leads recognised that there was scope for improvement, and some revealed extensive plans. For example one described proposals to enhance IAG comprising:

- bringing the LA input forward to the end of September, so Year 9 students would consider their Year 10 options in September.

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[33] *Implementation of 14–19 reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Oftsed, 2009. Available online: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas/(language)/eng-GB

[34] *Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance*. DCSF, 2007. Available online: http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=IAGQS07&

- school events would be scheduled for the spring term, so between LA events and individual school events, there can be input from school within guidance programmes.

Furthermore a few consortium leads recognised that time and guidance may be needed to enhance the quality of IAG (and possibly underpinning careers education). Further training for school careers coordinators and LA (often Connexions) personal advisors might help. As one interviewee observed, in the previous year:

> *the knowledge of the people giving advice and guidance* [about the Diploma] *was very limited.*

Another consortium lead noted the following:

> *The Diploma is so complex that few people understand it anyway...IAG needs to be developed over a long period of time with different systems for example online systems* [so that there is a] *variety of ways of accessing information for parents, staff and students.*

5.3.2 IAG for parents

The majority of parents of students who had chosen to take a Diploma felt that they had *a little* knowledge of the Diploma (49 of 70). Fifteen parents felt they knew *a lot* and only six felt they had *no* knowledge. There seemed to be a link between the IAG extended to parents, their knowledge levels and their confidence in advising their son or daughter around their option choices.

Those that felt they had *a lot* of knowledge about Diplomas (15 interviewees), and felt confident in advising their son or daughter at the time of their option choices, were most likely to report that they:

- had received information about the qualification direct from the school prior to the option/open evening
- were more likely to have been invited to attend a meeting or presentation focusing specifically on the Diploma
- had access to other sources of information such as careers advisors and DVDs
- had received updates from the school since the start of the course.

In contrast to this, parents of Diploma students who considered themselves to have *a little* knowledge of Diplomas (49 interviewees), were most likely to have first heard about the qualification at a school options evening or through their son or daughter. This group of parents were much less likely to have had the opportunity to attend a talk or presentation specifically on the Diploma, and instead relied on any literature handed out at the open evening, attempted to find out more information on the internet or reported having received no further information. In addition to this, some felt confident in advising their child around their option choices, while others did not. A number of these parents felt that they should have been in receipt of further information, particularly in relation to the detail of delivery, the content of the syllabus, comparisons to other qualifications or the stance of universities. Others reflected that in hindsight they had not known as much as they thought they did. As one parent commented:

Much more has happened than I understood at the time.

Two others felt that the information had been inaccurate or misleading (reasons for which will be explored in Chapter 6 on learner experience).

Those who reported having *no knowledge* of the Diploma (six interviewees) had all initially learned of the qualification from their son or daughter and had received no further information. Unsurprisingly, these parents all stated that they had no confidence in their ability to advise their child.

Just over a third of parents did not know what level Diploma their son or daughter was studying for. While this may reflect their understanding of levels of qualifications generally, it may suggest that more information is needed to explain levels and the implications for progression to parents.

Interestingly, no parent of a Year 12 student taking a Diploma considered themselves to have *a lot* of knowledge about the qualification. This would suggest that the provision of information to parents of younger students is more effective than for those taking post-16 options or reflect less parental involvement in decision making post-16.

Amongst parents of students who were not taking a Diploma, the majority had been informed about the course through school open evenings. Only one had been told about it by their son or daughter. Six had first heard about it through the media, a high proportion in comparison to parents of Diploma students (a minority of whom mentioned this as a source of information). Most displayed a lack of knowledge around the qualification itself and almost all reported that they did not feel confident in advising their son or daughter around their option choices (many reported that they had first heard of the Diploma at an open evening, which may be less effective at supporting understanding, as discussed in Section 5.5.1).

One third of parents (eight of 24) whose children had not opted for the Diploma were either *unsure* of their awareness of the Diploma or said they had *no awareness.* Of the remainder, ten had *some awareness* and six *a lot.* This would seem to explain some of the confusion in their opinions towards the qualification. The initial view of these parents towards the Diploma generally was that it was a less academic but complex course aimed at those who wanted to focus on a vocational area and study in a practical way. Parents of young people who were not taking Diplomas were more positive about the potential of the qualification to prepare young people for employment than for HE, although they expressed concerns that the qualification might be less widely accepted and recognised by employers than more traditional qualifications. One parent felt the name of the qualification itself was misleading to employers:

> *In the USA a 'Diploma' is awarded at the end of higher education, whereas in the UK a Diploma may represent only a few weeks studying something in little depth, therefore the name 'Diploma' carries no weight.*

Indeed, two parents themselves had confused the new Diploma with other qualifications they had studied in the past (a concern that was expressed by a member of staff, detailed in Section 5.1).

Another factor that parents had identified was the longevity of a qualification the parents perceived as 'vocational'. As one expressed, for example:

> *The world of work is a sea of change, therefore the Diploma has a limited shelf-life.*

Interestingly, despite some of the concerns voiced by the parents of young people who had not chosen the Diploma, once the ethos and approach of the Diploma (in theory) had been explained to them a large proportion of interviewees did in fact respond that that this type of qualification would either match their son or daughters learning style or be of benefit to them in terms of their future.

It would seem that, without access to fuller IAG in relation to the Diploma, many of these parents had formed views based on messages from the media, which highlights the importance of high quality information for parents.

5.4   Summary

Initial take-up of the Diploma was lower than expected but this may change over time as, for example, the credibility of the qualification becomes established, as students achieve their Diploma and if Diploma learners are accepted onto HE programmes and/or into suitable employment.

The main concern amongst staff, and reflected in the reasons for non-take up by those choosing alternative qualifications, was the reported lack of quality IAG delivered consistently across consortia. Without intervention, this may continue to have an impact on the take-up of Diplomas. Learners require a clear understanding of the characteristics of the Diploma in order to make an informed choice about whether to take one or whether to opt for what they feel are better known qualifications. This particularly applies to those considering their post-16 options, who were less likely than younger students to receive IAG from their school and generally preferred the 'safety' of more well known qualifications.

It is clear that those studying for the Diploma were able to identify characteristics unique to the Diploma which they saw as beneficial to them personally (such as the opportunity to study a broad curriculum *within* their area of interest, or a more appealing learning style). Ensuring all learners are given clear, comprehensive and consistent IAG around Diplomas should be a priority for policy makers and consortium staff so that all learners have access to information and guidance and can determine, for sure, whether or not the Diploma is suited to them. This principal should also extend to those who have a role in advising young people, such as teachers, form tutors and their parents. While it is recommended that Diploma students themselves are encouraged to share their experiences of the qualification with other students, consortia should ensure that these messages are not heard in isolation and without some access to impartial guidance.

The most effective consortia with regards to IAG appeared to use a broad range of methods, ensured learners had access to knowledgeable staff, provided high quality information on the content and delivery style, and put into action guidance on decision-making. There is also some evidence to suggest that the 14-19 area prospectuses could be better marketed to young people and their teachers as a hub of information and resources relating to local opportunities, and may go some way towards contributing to consistent delivery of IAG across institutions.

6.   Learner satisfaction

Key findings

- The majority of learners were satisfied with, and were enjoying, their Diploma course. Most would select to study the Diploma again, but felt that it was hard work and required a real interest in the subject matter. There was evidence that Year 10 young people who appeared to be more satisfied with prior IAG, were more satisfied with the Diploma course. Additionally, those who took part or all of their Diploma lessons away from their home school had a more positive attitude towards the Diploma course.

- Learners, on the whole, considered the Diploma to be interesting and different from previous learning experiences. They liked the applied or 'hands-on approach' to learning, they felt well-supported, appreciated the links with industry and the variety of learning approaches and institutions involved.

- Reasons for dissatisfaction, expressed by a minority of Diploma learners included not enough practical or active learning opportunities, too much writing and coursework and reported lack of organisation in the early stages of course delivery.

- Most learners believed they were making satisfactory progress on their Diploma programmes. There was some confusion reported by learners (although this could emanate from tutors) over the mark schemes and there were low levels of understanding of all the component parts of the qualification.

- The evidence suggests that access to support for Diploma learners was variable.

- Overall parents appeared to support their son's and daughter's Diploma studies. In terms of further support they felt that enhanced communication (between institutions and with parents) was important to further improve the Diploma experience.

- There was no significant difference in the preference for team working and practical learning between Year 10 young people studying for any of the Diploma lines of learning and those not taking a Diploma. This might point to the need for further focus on preferred learning styles in IAG, especially as Year 10 students who were more positive about their experience of studying Diplomas expressed a preference for teamwork and practical learning.

- It appears that overall Year 10 young people not doing a Diploma were more committed to learning and held a more positive attitude to learning in general. It may be that dissatisfaction with existing learning opportunites lead some young people to choose a Diploma and their attitude to learning may change over time. It highlights the importance of ensuring that young people guided to take a Diploma do so on the basis of an interest in the subject, content and learning style.

Recommendations

- Similarly to last year it is suggested that awareness amongst learners of the composite nature of the Diploma needs to be further raised.

- Satisfaction with the Diploma course would be enhanced if Diploma tutors were fully conversant with the subject content, mark schemes and cross institution ways of working.

- Learner support (for example, the provision of taster sessions and pastoral support) would benefit from cross institution coordination and communication.

This chapter explores Diploma learners' satisfaction with Diploma courses started in September 2008 and examines whether the Diploma has met learners' expectations and the elements enjoyed most and least. Parents' and staff views on learners' experiences are also included. Consortium leads' and senior managers' perceptions of learners' access to support and IAG are also considered (and builds on learners' views on IAG discussed in Chapter 5), as well as wider attitudes to learning in general and the Diploma specifically.

6.1 Satisfaction with the Diploma course

6.1.1 Levels of satisfaction

The majority of Year 10 Diploma learners (79 per cent) and Year 12 learners (76 per cent) who responded to the survey (and case-study Diploma learners) were either very or quite satisfied with the Diploma course (see Table 6.1). Sections 6.1.3 (elements enjoyed most) and 6.1.4 (elements enjoyed least) provide case-study details of reasons for learner satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Table 6.1   Overall satisfaction with the Diploma course

Levels of satisfaction	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
Very satisfied	30	21
Quite satisfied	49	55
Not very satisfied	11	13
Not at all satisfied	5	3
Not sure	2	4
No response	2	3
Weighted N =	**823**	**176**

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
804 Year 10 learners and 173 Year 12 respondents answered this question
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

Further analysis (multilevel modelling) was undertaken to explore Year 10 learners' characteristics in relation to their **overall satisfaction with the Diploma course**

(see Appendix A). Analysis revealed that Diploma learners with the following characteristics were more satisfied with the Diploma course:

- learners who were more satisfied with IAG they received before starting the Diploma course
- learners who had a more positive attitude towards learning
- learners who lived in a less deprived area.[35]

Further analysis (multilevel modelling) was also undertaken to explore Year 10 learners' experience in terms of their **attitudes towards the Diploma** (see Appendix A for detail). Analysis revealed that Year 10 Diploma learners with the following characteristics had a more positive attitude towards the Diploma course:

- learners who were more satisfied with the IAG received prior to starting the Diploma course
- learners who took part or all of their Diploma lessons away from their home school
- learners who had a more positive attitude to learning in general
- learners who were more committed to learning
- learners who had a preference for teamwork and practical working.

On the other hand Year 10 Diploma learners with the following characteristics had a less positive attitude towards their Diploma course:

- learners who lived in a more deprived area
- learners studying the Information Technology Diploma.

Overall, this suggests that receiving satisfactory IAG and/or studying part of the Diploma away from school may lead young people to be more satisfied with their Diploma experience.

Further analysis was undertaken to explore the satisfaction of a small group of 38 Year 10 survey respondents who were arguably 'atypical' in terms of the Diploma line of learning they had taken according to their gender (as discussed in Appendix C, girls taking Engineering and Construction and the Built Environment, and boys taking Society, Health and Development, can be classed as 'atypical', as a large majority of learners taking these Diplomas nationally are the opposite gender). Amongst this small group, three quarters of them (28) were either very or quite satisfied with their Diploma. However, these learners are not representative and the numbers are small so the findings should not be generalised. See Appendix C for more discussion on 'atypical learners'.

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[35] IDACI scores used as a proxy for deprivation in this analysis.

The majority of case-study Diploma learners reported that they would select the Diploma again (given the opportunity) and, as can be seen in Table 6.2 below, the majority of survey respondents would either 'definitely' or 'maybe' recommend the Diploma to a friend. (Chapter 7 discusses the extent to which learners would consider taking another Diploma in the future).

Table 6.2   Extent Diploma learners would recommend Diploma course

Recommend?	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
Definitely	44	33
Maybe	30	40
Probably not	11	14
Definitely not	7	4
Not sure yet	3	2
No response	5	8
Weighted N =	**823**	**176**

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
784 Year 10 and 167 Year 12 respondents answered this question
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2009

Case-study learners, across all lines of learning, who would recommend the Diploma to a friend, offered two main provisos. Firstly, prospective students were advised that they would have to *'work hard',* be motivated and cope with the amount of coursework*.* For example*,* one learner would advise friends to do the Diploma if:

> '*they were prepared to do loads of work and if they don't mind a lot of writing and pressure'.*

another suggested:

> '*you have to be willing to keep going'.*

Secondly, many learners would only recommend the Diploma to friends who have a real interest in the subject and who know they want to do something related to the subject in the future. For example, one learner studying Engineering said: *'I'd only recommend doing it if you're interested in Engineering'.* The fact that the selected Diploma line of learning should hold a distinct appeal to prospective learners was a recurrent theme across lines of learning and levels.

Additionally, a few Diploma learners pointed out that potential Diploma candidates should like coursework, should not mind some travelling between sites, where relevant, and be able to work independently, but also be able to communicate well and enjoy teamwork.

A minority of case-study learners believed that they would not choose the Diploma again. Although early course organisational problems (on a few lines of learning in several institutions in different consortia) and unforeseen issues, such as having no friends at college, contributed to this hypothetical choice, IAG was perceived to be integral. The majority of the students who would not chose the Diploma again felt the

IAG had not sufficiently prepared them for the course, as illustrated in the comments of two pre-16 learners who explained: *'the course content was not made clear'* and *'it's nothing like they said it would be'* (See also Section 6.1.2 on expectations.) This perception inevitably meant that some students would not recommend the Diploma to friends. As one post-16 learner explained, for instance:

> '*because you don't get to go to college like they said you would and you don't do the things like drama and dance that they said you would do'.*

It must be noted that these activities could be covered later in the course. Additionally one girl taking the Society, Health and Development Diploma felt there were few boys on the course because the full content of the course had not been explained:

> *I think they* [boys] *think it's all girls' stuff, and its babies. They think it's more like Health and Social Care, like looking after old people and like. So I don't think they think it includes more things such as criminal and stuff.*

Further to discussions in Chapter 2, evidence from the learners on the Information and Technology Diploma suggested that it presented a distinct issue (in contrast to other lines of learning). Many learners believed that there was a significant business component which was not apparent in either the Diploma name, description or any guidance received. For example one Information Technology learner warned, '*be sure you are aware of the business element of the ICT Diploma'.*

In support of the survey evidence that more Year 10 students were very satisfied (30 per cent) and would '*definitely'* recommend the Diploma (44 per cent) than Year 12 students (21 and 33 per cent respectively), analysis of case-study learner data revealed that a number of the post-16 learners expressed concerns about the newness of the Diploma and offered this as a reason for not '*definitely'* recommending the Diploma to a friend as one post-16 learner explained:

> *My main concern is that it was pitched as a new qualification which would give you entry anywhere, but both universities and employers seem uncertain about it. At the moment I would recommend a more recognised course* [to a friend], *in future if the Diploma was more recognised, possibly yes* [I would recommend it].

6.1.2 Expectations

A minority of case-study Diploma learners felt the Diploma was much as they had expected. For example, some believed it would be *'hard work – which it is',* others thought there would be a significant element of practical work or, as described by one Year 12 learner, *'theory work mixed in with practical work'* which she believed the Diploma *'pretty much is'.* Additionally some considered themselves to have few expectations of the new course (as, for example, one learner described them to be '*guinea pigs'*). This was not necessarily a negative view as in some cases the reality of the Diploma was perceived to be better than expected. For example, some found it '*more interactive than expected'* and '*less boring'*; others found it '*easier than expected'* and more enjoyable: *'I didn't think it would be this good – it's fun'.*

However the majority of case-study learners had expected the Diploma to:

- be more practical. For example, one learner pointed out *'I expected more of the learning would be hands-on'*

- involve less written work. In some cases there was a view that there was *'too much writing'*

- be less onerous. The amount of work was generally perceived to be considerable, and some learners commented that they found functional skills to be *'difficult'.*

Many learners had anticipated (but interestingly did not cite as a reason for dissatisfaction) more trips to the workplace and the involvement of more external speakers and work experience. Although it is possible that work experience and workplace involvement may be more prevalent in the second year of the course.

It appeared that some lines of learning in some consortia were better prepared, and learners had possibly received more comprehensive IAG, than in others. For example, in general the **Creative and Media** learners indicated that the course was as expected, whereas in one consortium learners were either clearly not fully prepared or the course delivery was not as well planned as in other consortia. As one learner studying Creative and Media explained: *'I thought we'd be going to college and doing lots of practical things'.* Another student, on the same course, said: '*I didn't think I would be sitting all day in one classroom'.*

Similarly, although a considerable proportion of learners taking the **Information Technology** Diploma expressed disappointment at the amount of business content (see Section 6.1.1), it was evident in one consortium that students had been well-prepared as learners believed the course was largely as expected as the following comments illustrate: *'I knew it would be about IT and business'* and *'nothing so far has been a surprise'.*

These findings support Ofsted's recommendations in their recent 14-19 survey[36] to enhance detailed understanding of Diploma components. Clearly there is a need for IAG to fully inform all young people, regardless of consortia, institution or lines of learning, about the composite elements (including content, location and styles of learning) of Diplomas, and the proportion of practical and theoretical learning was a recurrent key feature of Diplomas about which learners felt information should be available. It is anticipated that as Diplomas become more embedded in the curriculum this information will be more readily available and understood and will be systematically relayed to young people and parents.

6.1.3 Elements learners enjoyed most

Approximately three-quarters of Diploma learners surveyed (74 per cent Year 10 and 73 per cent Year 12) agreed or strongly agreed that they were enjoying their Diploma course, although Year 10 and 12 students enjoyed different aspects.

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[36] Ofsted (2009). *Implementation of 14-19 Reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Ofsted: London. Available online: https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by-Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas

In response to an open question on the survey, it was apparent that the element of the Diploma that was valued most highly by Year 10 Diploma students was the practical element (31[37] per cent), whereas Year 12 learners enjoyed the trips and visits most (22 per cent). Parts of the Diploma enjoyed most included:

- Practical work/making things/hands on experience (31 per cent of Year 10 and nine per cent of Year 12 learners)

- Going on trips/visits (18 per cent Year 10 and 22 per cent Year 12)

- Specific aspects/unit (15 per cent Year 10 and 20 per cent Year 12)

- Specific activity (15 per cent Year 10 and 14 per cent Year 12)

- Experiencing the world of work (six per cent Year 10 and 13 per cent Year 12)

- Work/learning is interesting (eight per cent Year 10 and 11 per cent Year 12)

- Work/learning is fun/enjoyable (13 per cent of Year 10 and 11 per cent Year 12)

- Chance to explore new things/learn new skills (nine per cent of Year 10 and 12).

Case-study interviewees provided further insight into the reasons for satisfaction with the Diploma course. Overall there were five main aspects of the Diploma that learners reported that they particularly enjoyed.

Firstly, learners considered the content, and in some cases the applied elements, of the Diploma to be **interesting and different** from previous learning experiences. For example, one learner enthused:

> '*it's fun ..... it's stuff you would never learn at school like how a roof could be pitched'.*

Furthermore, there was some evidence that learners liked the **breadth of the curriculum** and aspects not necessarily specific to the Diploma but representing a wider outlook on life. One comment represented those made by many:

> *The things we learn about, like reflective practice and learning that we're never going to stop learning .....is stuff you don't usually learn at school but will be useful when you're older.*

Secondly, learners (as seen above, particularly Year 10 learners) liked the **practical or 'hands-on approach'** to learning. Many, across all lines of learning, enjoyed this characteristic although there was some evidence that a greater proportion of the learners taking Construction and Built Environment, in contrast to the other lines of learning, appeared to value this aspect.

Thirdly, many learners reported that they felt **well-supported** on the Diploma course. This characteristic may be related to the smaller class sizes (in contrast to school class sizes in key stage 3 and 4) presently experienced on Diploma courses. It appears that, regardless of whether in school or college, learners reported that they valued more individual attention and support from teachers.

A fourth aspect of the Diploma courses that many learners (as seen above particularly Year 12 Diploma learners) appreciated was the trips out into the **working**

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[37] Percentages are based on all Year 10 Diploma learners (820) and all Year 12 Diploma learners (176).

environment and visits from speakers from industry. This provided them with the context into which they could apply new-found knowledge.

The last main aspect of the Diploma course that learners enjoyed was the **variety of learning approaches** that were reported to be used, for example many commented that they appreciated the more independent style of learning, but also enjoyed teamwork. In addition, many who experienced tuition at different institutions liked the diverse atmosphere and approaches at the alternative establishments.

Parents' and teachers' perceptions

Overall, the majority of parents (57 out of 70) believed that their sons or daughters enjoyed their Diploma course, primarily because of the practical constituent. As one parent expressed, *'he likes doing practical things because he learns best that way'*. Another parent explained the value of applying learning: *'making a catapult – there is science and engineering behind an apparently simple task'*. Parents also felt that, in many cases, the young people particularly enjoyed the specific subject matter of some units, for example animation in the Creative and Media Diploma and photoshop in the Information Technology Diploma. This perhaps underlines the point made by young people that a keen interest in the Diploma subject is necessary and suggests that accurate IAG in terms of course's content is fundamentally important. Echoing students' views this was emphasised by a few parents of Information Technology students who suggested that potential students should be made aware that the Information Technology Diploma includes a significant element of business studies.

Parents also commented on other aspects believed to be enjoyed by their children. These included the variety of learning experiences, for example *'getting out* [of the classroom]', work experience placements, visits to the work place, outside speakers and *'going to college one day a week'*. Some parents reported that their children were not only enjoying, but also benefiting from (see Section 6.2.5 for more detail) interaction with other students and adults and the independence fostered from attendance at other institutions, (see Chapter 3.2.1 for details of the structural models of Diploma delivery).

The majority of case-study teachers similarly felt that Diploma learners particularly valued the interaction with the world of work such as guest speakers coming into the school or college, work placements and visits to the work place. Additionally teachers perceived the more flexible approach to learning, characterised in the Diploma, to be popular with the young people. For example, they believed the students liked doing something different, studying in different institutions, projects, more freedom (at college) and input from different people.

Diploma tutors interviewed as part of the case studies also widely believed that the Diploma had elicited a positive response in many learners. In particular there was a perception that, in some cases, learners' confidence had increased as a result of specific characteristics of the Diploma way of learning (such as interaction with the world of work) as described by one tutor:

> *Their* [Diploma learners] *self-confidence has improved no end. I couldn't get X to talk at the beginning of the year – his social skills were so limited. Now he is used to talking to Creative and Media professionals and to justify his work and the meaning he is creating through his work. He even took a leadership role on one of the tasks last week.*

In addition tutors believed that some young people were taking more responsibility for themselves and their work, although this could be attributed to natural maturation. Nevertheless there was evidence of good attendance, teamwork, engagement and interest amongst Diploma learners.

6.1.4 Elements learners enjoyed least

A minority of Diploma learners (12 per cent in the Year 10 survey and nine per cent in Year 12 survey) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were enjoying their Diploma course.

The elements of the Diploma enjoyed least by Year 10 Diploma learners were[38]:

- Some of the work being boring/repetitive (15 per cent)
- The amount of writing (15 per cent)
- Specific aspects/units (for example legislation/art) (12 per cent)
- Specific activity (seven per cent)
- The amount of coursework (seven per cent)
- The amount of work (seven per cent).

The elements of the Diploma enjoyed least by Year 12 Diploma learners were:

- Specific aspects/unit (for example legislation/art) (22 per cent)
- Doing functional skills (nine per cent)
- Not having enough time to complete the work (nine per cent)
- The number of assignments (eight per cent).

In line with the survey findings, a minority of case-study Year 10 and 12 learners expressed dissatisfaction with the Diploma courses. The most prevalent reason, reported by a minority of learners across all lines of learning, but held slightly more strongly by learners taking the Information Technology and Engineering Diplomas, was the view that the course did not include enough practical or active learning opportunities. Aligned with this was the perception that there was too much '*writing*' and coursework. Additionally several post-16 learners disliked the functional skills component as they felt they did not want to repeat GCSE work in English and mathematics.

Another reason given for dissatisfaction, and mentioned in Section 6.1.1, was the reported lack of organisation in the early stages of course delivery. This appeared to be specific to several institutions in two consortia, such as one where staff appeared to be less convinced of the value of the Diploma and the management structures were not perceived to be effective by staff in the centres. For example a learner, in one institution, felt: *'it was not as well-planned as I had hoped',* while another observed: *'sometimes I feel the teachers do not know what they're doing'.* Another student expressed frustration at the lack of initial organisation:

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[38] Percentages are based on all Year 10 Diploma learners (820) and all Year 12 Diploma learners (176).

> *When we started off* [at] *first, we never knew where we was, really. We had to track down the teachers as we couldn't find one... but then it got a bit better.*

While it may be that these preliminary problems will resolve themselves as the Diploma courses become more embedded, it is apparent that learners noted when teachers had perhaps not fully embraced the changes implicit in Diploma delivery. Similarly it is possible that other organisational aspects, such as learners only having to go to school for just one hour on some days, will be resolved. Although some specific challenges had emerged between students from different schools not mixing well together, on the whole, these issues appeared to have been addressed. Moreover only a small proportion of young people expressed concern about disruptive students.

Parents' and teachers' perceptions

The main aspect of the Diploma course that parents perceived to be enjoyed least by the young people was the written element. For example, *'writing up reports'* and *'putting pen to paper'.* Additionally a substantial number highlighted that some specific elements of the Diplomas were enjoyed more than others, such as building a brick wall in Contruction and the Built Environment. Teachers interviewed in case study consortia concurred; they believed that Diploma learners enjoyed the 'conventional' side of learning least, including '*evidencing work', 'writing up findings'* and *'written assignments'.* Many Information Technology tutors also recognised that learners felt there was too much business-related content in the Information Technology Diploma. This perhaps emphasises the importance of the provision of comprehensive information on course content so that potential Diploma learners acquire a clear concept of course content and understand that, as with most learning, and assessment of learning, an element of written work is necessary.

Some other areas of dissatisfaction highlighted by a minority of parents, such as the absence of Diploma teachers in some lessons, the apparent lack of knowledge of Diplomas by supply teachers, and poor organisational structure so young people appeared to be unaware of when, for example work needed to be submitted, could be avoided.

6.1.5 Perceived progress

Most line of learning leads in case-study consortia reported retention rates on Diploma courses to be consistent with other courses (although two parents interviewed in the summer of 2009 expressed concern at the number of students dropping out of their son's or daughter's classes). Learners were reported, by their teachers, to have discontinued because the course was not consistent with expectations (see above) particularly with regard to the perception that the content of the Diploma was not practical enough. Other reported reasons included personal issues (for example a student leaving the area) and too much travelling.

Most learners believed they were making satisfactory progress on their Diplomas. For example, some felt they were progressing really well, while most described their progress as *'alright'.* Overall students indicated that they valued support and feedback, and pointed out its importance in terms of further improvement, although many perceived the fact that they were on time with their assignments and had completed everything as an indication of satisfactory progress (in contrast to receiving marked work back from teachers). There was some reported confusion by learners (although this could emanate from tutors) over the mark schemes.

Additionally, although there was some appreciation that all component parts of the Diploma had to be passed, there appeared to be limited understanding of what the components were, though there was a general awareness that they had to pass the functional skills element. This finding supports the Ofsted recommendation in their 14-19 survey[39] to '*ensure that students have a clear understanding of how all parts of the Diploma contribute to the full qualification'.* It is suggested that awareness amongst learners of the composite nature of the Diploma needs to be further raised.

6.1.6 Diplomas compared to other subjects

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 clearly demonstrate two findings:

- Diploma learners believed that their Diploma course involved more work, provided more skills and experience, was taught in classes with fewer students and would be more useful for future life than other subjects taken simultaneously. Furthermore it appeared that they did not feel it was less interesting than other subjects and most were not finding it harder than other courses.

- Year 10 Diploma learners felt more favourably about the Diploma, in comparison to other subjects, than their Year 12 peers (although the numbers of surveyed Year 12 learners was quite small).

Table 6.3   Diploma course compared with other courses (Year 10)

Views on Diploma courses	Strongly agree/ agree %	Not sure %	Strongly disagree/ disagree %	No response %
My Diploma course involves more work	83	11	4	1
My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience	82	13	3	1
My Diploma will be more useful for my future	73	21	4	1
The classes in my Diploma course have less people	71	13	14	1
My Diploma course is more practical	55	18	26	1
My Diploma course is less interesting	17	28	53	2
I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course	16	24	59	1
Weighted N = 823				

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2009

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[39] Ofsted (2009). *Implementation of 14-19 Reforms, including the introduction of Diplomas*. Ofsted: London. Available online: https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by-Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Implementation-of-14-19-reforms-including-the-introduction-of-Diplomas

Table 6.4   Diploma course compared with other courses (Year 12)

Views on Diploma courses	Strongly agree/ agree %	Not sure %	Strongly disagree/ disagree %	No response %
My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience	61	15	4	20
My Diploma course involves more work	58	15	8	19
My Diploma will be more useful for my future	55	22	2	20
The classes in my Diploma course have less people	50	14	15	21
My Diploma course is more practical	41	18	21	19
I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course	14	24	42	20
My Diploma course is less interesting	13	22	45	21
Weighted N = 176				

A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

Parents' perceptions

Parents, who expressed an opinion, believed the Diploma (in contrast to other qualifications) offered practical, work-related experience to young people and considered the main benefit of the Diploma to be linked with future work-related opportunities. The Diploma was widely believed to provide breadth of experience. As one parent explained, '[The Diploma] *provides a broad spread of subject areas and is related to the real world'.* Several parents felt it would contribute to finding a job (and more effectively than other qualifications). For example: '*the Diploma is a qualification which will give him* [son] *a good start to his working life'.* Although some parents felt the Diploma was not a good preparation for the world of work, more perceived that it was, either in the sense that it provides practical skills-based elements or that it brings real life into education. As one parent said, '[the Diploma is] *a step forward from pure academia – it brings in the reality of the real world and how competitive the world of work is'.*

Furthermore several parents felt that the Diploma widened the learning experience. For example, the Diploma was perceived to '*broaden learning and the way of learning'* and provide '*more life skills'.* Their perception was that it offered a more adult approach to learning and encouraged independence. (It must be noted, however, that some of these attributes might well emerge from post-16 learning on other courses about which the parent may not be aware). Additionally, some parents felt the Diploma was enhancing their sons' and daughters' social development, as the following observations illustrate:

> *The Diploma has brought out different abilities in him, it's shown he is capable in areas we didn't think he was,*

the different style of teaching suits my son – it's improved his social skills.

Amongst those who expressed an opinion, parents were divided as to the degree to which the Diploma might prepare learners for university. Some believed the qualification would provide a good foundation for future learning, as illustrated by one comment: '*it gives students an insight into how they must study if they want to achieve their goals'.* Others, however, expressed concern about whether the Diploma has sufficient academic rigour. Indeed some expressed concern that universities might not recognise Diplomas: *'I don't think it* [the Diploma] *is good preparation as I don't think it is accepted by universities'.*

Parents of young people not studying a Diploma had little knowledge or understanding of the qualification. For example, while a few believed that *'it was more practical'* and *'will prepare young people well for the world of work',* several others felt it was not an appropriate qualification for students wanting to progress to university. Some were uncertain that it would fulfil entry requirements for university.

6.2   Support for learners

In reflecting on the support provided for learners, interviewees referred to different types of support, including, for example, support in the classroom, remedial support, support for learners when travelling and pastoral support.

6.2.1   Support available

Table 6.5 reveals that, according to tutors surveyed, while the majority (66 per cent of pre-16 and 77 per cent of post-16) of teachers reported that students received an induction, fewer said learners had experienced taster sessions. Additionally both pre- and post-16, a greater proportion of tutors indicated that learners received learning support than pastoral support. This data suggests that there is scope for increased support structures for Diploma learners.

Table 6.5   Support provided for Diploma learners

Type of support	Pre-16 %	Post-16 %
Induction for learners when they started their course	66	77
Taster sessions for learners prior to starting their course	52	40
Individual learning support for learners	51	65
Access to a VLE	40	53
Ongoing IAG support (e.g. form Connexions/careers service)	32	51
Individual pastoral support for learners	24	54
Other	3	5
No response to this question	11	11
N =	**112**	**57**

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009

Further analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in the amount of support offered to learners across the different lines of learning.

The majority of senior leaders in the case-study institutions believed that Diploma learners did have access to sufficient support, although the evidence suggests that **support was variable**. Some consortia, where communication appeared to be high-quality, provided coordinated support for learners. For example, one senior college leader described the teaching sessions to be '*generously-staffed*' (two tutors to a group of fifteen or sixteen students). He also explained that a person was appointed by the consortium to travel with the students from the school to the college and back again thereby providing a communication mechanism between the two institutions, as she decribed it:

> '*she will see what the students are working on at the college and she also provides a day-to-day link between the schools and the college*'.

In other consortia the quality of, and access to, support was not so advanced and could depend on the host institution's understanding (or lack of understanding) of the needs of visiting learners. For example, one teacher described how a behavioural issue with a school pupil '*wasn't dealt with there* [host school] *it was sent back here* [home school]'. However, some institutions were addressing these issues, as in the case described below:

> *We have talked about allocating the Diploma students to another pastoral group on the days they came here. A non-tutor will look after them and give them different guidance perhaps a discrete class. We haven't got anything in place yet ….at present they* [Diploma learners] *are not even attached to a pastoral group; they just have an extended break.*

Logistical learning and pastoral support are all important to Diploma learners and it was evident that, on the whole, consortia were working to develop this where it was not yet fully in place. It may be, therefore, that as consortia collaboration and communication mature, access to, and the quality of, support will improve.

Overall, in terms of support for young people from teaching staff, there was reported to be a gradual acceptance of Diplomas by school and college teaching staff and it may be that this will become more widespread as more lines of learning are introduced and more young people take them. Consequently, in the future, senior staff may wish to keep all teaching staff fully informed on Diplomas so careers guidance can be supported.

6.2.2 Parental involvement

The majority of parents reported involvement in their son's or daughter's Diploma learning either in terms of helping with research (for example on the internet) or providing general encouragement by taking an interest. A few parents, if they felt confident with the subject, said they became more involved. For example, one parent took his son to work with him every Saturday and said *'sometimes* [I] *go in* [to college] *to help with the Diploma as a I am a qualified joiner'*. A minority felt they had little or no involvement, but a few expressed interest by, for example, contacting teachers for advice at certain times.

Just over a half of the parents interviewed believed their children had experienced no particular challenges or problems in terms of their experience of the Diploma. Of those who did, key challenges included:

- organisational issues, for example non-attendance of teachers or young people being tested on subjects they had not covered

- poor communication between institutions such as college and school

- the integration of young people from different institutions into one coherent, settled course

- the content of the Diploma work, for example *'he* [my son] *would like more practical work'* and *'he* [my son] *is struggling with understanding the work'*. This parent also pointed out that his son was having to catch up with work missed on additional subjects (for example mathematics and English GCSEs) at school while studying the Diploma at other institutions.

Approximately half of those parents who reported problems, found that challenges had been subsequently resolved; others felt the issues were ongoing. Additionally, a minority of parents expressed particular concerns with regard to the Diplomas. These included anxiety about the uncertainty of the acceptability of Diplomas with universities and employers, individual course issues, learners' lack of enjoyment (related to, for example, lack of trips and class discipline) and the volume of work. Parents believed that most of these issues could be resolved by better communication:

- between the tutors and the learners in terms of course content and expectations

- between institutions to alleviate organisational issues

- between institutions and parents so parents can support learners more effectively

- by the media: '*more media coverage* [is needed] *so more people know about it* [the Diploma]', as one said.

Overall the majority of parents, interviewed as part of this study, appeared to support their son's and daughter's Diploma studies and felt that enhanced communication was important to further improvement to the Diploma experience.

6.3   Attitudes to the Diploma and learning in general

Further analysis of the factors constructed (see Appendix A for details) revealed that amongst Year 10 young people surveyed, those who were not taking a Diploma had a significantly more positive attitude towards learning in general and were more committed to learning than those who were studying for a Diploma.[40] There was no significant difference in preference for teamwork and practical learning between Year 10 Diploma learners and those not studying for a Diploma.

In terms of Year 12 young people, there were no significant differences between Diploma learners and those learners not studying Diplomas with regard to their attitude to and commitment to learning and their preference for teamwork and practical learning. This might be more reflective of the fact that numbers of Year 12 learners surveyed were low rather than there were no differences in attitude.

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[40] Please see Chapter 1 for a discussion of the composition of the comparison group.

Multilevel modelling analysis was undertaken to further explore how Year 10 learners' characteristics relate to each of the three factors mentioned above. This analysis investigates differences between Diploma learners and non-Diploma learners in each of the factors, over and above the effect of their background characteristics. Analysis revealed that learners with the following charactersitics held a more **positive attitude to learning in general**:

- learners with higher key stage 3 mean score
- learners with English as an additional language
- learners not doing a Diploma.

Diploma learners held a significantly less positive attitude to learning in general than those not studying for a Diploma, over and above the effect of their background characteristics. Additionally, students on Construction and the Built Environment, Information Technology and Society, Health and Development were significantly less positive than those young people not taking a Diploma. There was no significant difference for those studying Engineering and Creative and Media.

In terms of **commitment to learning in general**, learners with the following characteristics were more committed:

- learners with higher key stage 3 mean score
- learners with English as an additional language
- learners with no special educational needs
- learners not doing a Diploma.

Diploma learners were significantly less committed to learning in general than those not studying for a Diploma[41], over and above the effect of their background characteristics. Additionally, Engineering was the only line of learning in which learners were *not* significantly less committed than the comparison group of learners.

In terms of **preference for teamwork and practical learning** learners with the following characteristics had a stronger preference:

- learners with higher key stage 3 mean score
- boys.

There was no significant difference in terms of preference for teamwork and practical learning between Diploma learners (regardless of line of learning) and non-Diploma learners.

Overall, it appears that learners who take Diplomas may have a less positive attitude and commitment to learning than those who do not take Diplomas. It may be that their dissatisfaction with learning may have lead them to choose to take a Diploma and that, over time, their experience may lead to a change in attitude. This will be explored further through the longitudinal surveys.

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[41] The muti-level modelling analysis takes into account differences between the groups where data is available and so any differences observed are not related to differences between the Diploma and comparison group samples.

In commenting on their confidence on a range of skills, overall most young people surveyed appeared to be confident about working in a team and using computers and other ICT, although confidence appeared to be greater among Year 12 students who also reported themselves to be confident with regard to researching issues or topics on their own. Fewer young people expressed confidence in terms of thinking about their progress in class, speaking in class discussions and communicating clearly in writing. There was no significant difference between Diploma learners and non-Diploma learners in terms of confidence in the following skills:

- working in a team

- researching an issue or subject on their own

- managing your own time (i.e. organising your own time)

- thinking about your progress in class

- speaking in class discussions

- thinking creatively and problem solving

- understanding what you will need to do in a job

- communicating clearly in writing

- using computers and other ICT

- working with adults or other young people

- using your initiative.

Further analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in terms of *'speaking in class discussions'* between different lines of learning for Year 10 Diploma learners. Overall students on Construction and the Built Environment and Society, Health and Development were less confident about speaking in class discussions. In addition, not surprisingly, Level 2 learners were significantly more confident (than Level 1 learners) about communicating in writing and using their initiative.

6.4   Summary

Overall the majority of learners were satisfied with, and were enjoying, their Diploma course. Learners, on the whole, considered the Diploma to be interesting and different from previous learning experiences. They liked the applied or *'hands-on approach'* to learning, they felt well-supported, appreciated the links with industry and the variety of learning approaches and institutions involved.

Year 10 Diploma learners who were particularly satisfied with prior IAG were also more satisfied with their Diploma course. Additionally, those who took part or all of their Diploma lessons away from their home school had a more positive attitude towards the Diploma course. This, combined with the reasons for dissatisfaction (expressed by a minority of Diploma learners), such as not enough practical or active learning opportunities and too much writing indicate a clear need for comprehensive IAG so that potential learners are fully informed about all elements of Diplomas such as the content, learning styles and location of learning.

7. Future progression

> ## Key findings
>
> - Most learners in Year 10 were planning to progress to some form of further education or training after finishing their Diploma course. Whilst course-based routes were the most popular intended choice, Diploma learners were more likely to consider a future work-based learning route than those in the comparison group. The majority of Diploma learners said they would continue studying in the same subject area as their Diploma.
>
> - Nearly half of the Year 10 Diploma learners wanted to continue to study a Diploma at a higher level with many considering progression onto a Level 3 Diploma in the future.
>
> - Year 10 Diploma learners who had the most positive attitude towards the Diploma, and those who were more likely to believe their Diploma would have an impact on their future, were more likely to consider studying for another in the future.
>
> - Over half of the Year 12 Diploma learners were planning to progress to higher education. Generally, the Diploma was considered by learners to support progression to higher education rather than inhibiting it.
>
> - Over half of the Year 12 Diploma learners studying at Level 1 and Level 2 would consider further Diploma study at a higher level in the future.
>
> - For both year groups, the Diploma being studied was generally considered to be a positive influence on learners' future progression. This included reinforcing their decision to take a particular progression path, opening up new options for young people and through enjoyment of the subject area.
>
> ## Recommendations
>
> - Consortia without a post-16 Diploma offer should consider the future progression of pre-16 Diploma learners, particularly as progress from Level 1 or 2 Diplomas to a higher level was reported as a likely post-16 route for learners in Year 10.

This chapter explores the plans for future progression of learners currently studying for a Diploma, the probability of those learners studying for another Diploma in the future, and the influences on these decisions. Comparison is also made to learners who were not currently studying a Diploma. Parents' views on progression are also included in this chapter.

7.1 Future progression of Year 10 learners

Year 10 learners who had been studying for a Diploma since September 2008 were generally considering a number of options post-16. The most common route considered was a course-based route through either a school sixth form (31 per cent) or college (58 per cent). A notable minority were considering a work-based route such as an Apprenticeship (24 per cent) or a job with training (32 per cent). As highlighted in Figure 7.1, it can be seen that a greater proportion of young people in the Diploma group were considering a work-based route than in the comparison group. This concurred with the future destinations being considered by learners and parents interviewed.

Figure 7.1 Year 10 plans after Year 11
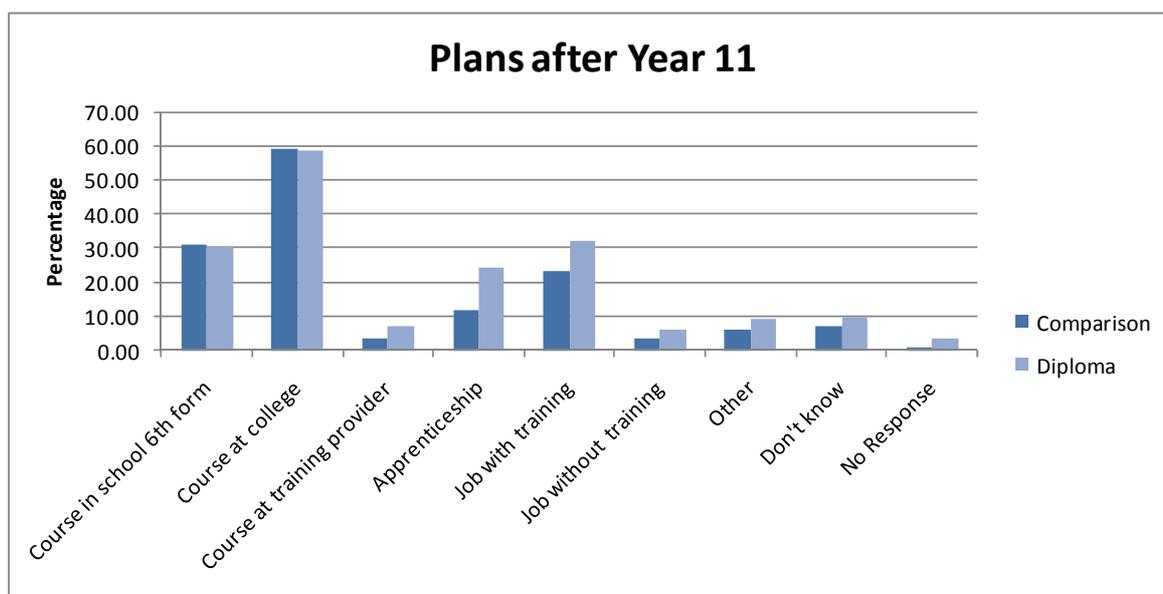
More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100S
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 learner surveys, 2009

There were differences in the type of progression route being considered by Year 10 learners, dependent on which line of learning they were taking. Learners studying for an Information Technology Diploma, Society, Health and Development Diploma or Creative and Media Diploma were more likely to consider a course-based route with almost two thirds (65 per cent, 65 per cent and 63 per cent respectively) of those studying these Diplomas considering a college course compared with less than half (46 per cent) of those studying Construction and the Built Environment Diploma. In contrast, those studying for an Engineering Diploma or a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma were more likely to be considering a work-based route than other lines of learning. For example, 45 per cent of learners studying an Engineering Diploma and 38 per cent studying a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma were considering an Apprenticeship compared with between eight per cent and 19

per cent of those studying for other lines of learning. This finding was also reflected in the case-study interviews with learners and parents.

Comments from the majority of Year 10 parents interviewed also identified further education or training, either at college or in a sixth form at school as the planned progression for their children. A number of parents also stated that their child was considering an Apprenticeship.

Over half of learners studying Engineering, and Society, Health and Development Diplomas intended to study a course or start a job in the same subject as their Diploma (59 per cent in each case). This was higher than the proportions for the other Diploma subjects (ranging from 53 per cent for Construction and the Built Environment to 40 per cent for Information Technology). Further details from the case study interviews showed that learners studying an Engineering Diploma often wanted to study engineering at a higher level either through an Apprenticeship or Level 3 Diploma. This was a similar case for those studying for a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma. In addition, many of those studying Society, Health and Development had already decided on a related career which included teaching, social work, paramedic and midwifery. Those learners studying for a Creative and Media Diploma, who knew what career path they wanted to take, had also chosen courses related to their line of learning such as performing arts courses or photography.

However, overall Diploma learners studying a Creative and Media Diploma were less likely to know (43 per cent did not know) whether they would be working or studying in a similar subject area to their Diploma. This maybe because, as the case-study data shows, these learners felt that they had a wide range of options to choose from.

7.1.1 Likelihood of Year 10 learners studying another Diploma in the future

It appears that progress from one Diploma to another is a likely route for some Diploma learners. As shown in Table 7.1, 30 per cent of Diploma learners would consider another Diploma '*sometime in the future*' whilst 15 per cent would consider another Diploma '*immediately after Year 11*'. However, 19 per cent of Year 10 learners studying for a Diploma would '*probably not*' and seven per cent would '*definitely not*' consider another Diploma.

Table 7.1   Possibility of Year 10 learners doing a Diploma in future

Possibility	Year 10 Diploma learners %	Year 10 comparison learners %
Immediately after Year 11	15	8
Sometime in the future	30	31
Probably not	19	28
Definitely not	7	7
Not sure	23	24
No response	7	3
Weighted N =	**823**	**1125**

A single response item
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 learner surveys, 2009

A similar proportion of Year 10 learners studying for a Diploma and comparison learners would consider studying for a Diploma *'sometime in the future'* (30 per cent

and 31 per cent respectively). However, a higher proportion of learners currently studying a Diploma would consider embarking on a Diploma *'immediately after Year 11'* compared with learners who had not taken a Diploma in Year 10 (15 per cent compared with eight per cent) suggesting that there is an immediate progression route as anticipated by consortium leads for a notable minority of Diploma learners (for more information see Chapter 8). Diploma learners' satisfaction with the qualification may be reflected in the finding that fewer Diploma learners (19 per cent) than comparison learners (28 per cent) would probably not take a Diploma qualification in the future.

As the majority of learners surveyed were currently studying a Diploma at Level 2 (85 per cent at Level 2 compared with 11 per cent at Level 1), it is unsurprising that the majority (71 per cent) of those who would consider a Diploma in the future would study at Level 3.

Further details can be gained from the case study interviews in which learners were generally positive about the prospect of studying for another Diploma in the future, with many already considering a higher level of their Diploma after finishing Year 11. Reasons given for wanting to study a higher level included course enjoyment, building on what they have already learnt and wanting to increase their skills base and progress to university, which was particularly true of learners studying for an Engineering Diploma.

Some learners had mixed views as to whether they would want to continue with the Diploma. A small number studying Information Technology wanted to continue in the same area but would opt for a different qualification. For example, one learner commented:

> *A lot of business* [in the Diploma] *puts me off; I would probably choose a more IT based course.*

Other learners wanted to do a different subject, which might include a different Diploma. For example one Year 10 student studying an Information Technology Diploma stated:

> *I won't do Level 3 IT Diploma, it would feel too much like doing the same thing. I would rather do A Levels. I might do Business and Finance Diploma.*

Others had chosen the career path they wanted to take before studying a Diploma and therefore were aware of what courses they were going to study next. For example a small number of young people studying Society, Health and Development Diploma wanted to go into a medical career and therefore had planned to take A Level science subjects.

A small proportion of learners interviewed were not planning to take a Diploma post-16. The main reasons included that the course being perceived as too difficult, the learners had other areas of interest and that the Diploma was not specialised enough. The desire to follow a work-based route was also influential especially for a number of those studying Engineering and Construction and the Built Environment Diplomas who wanted to start an Apprenticeship after finishing Year 11.

There was an overriding view among parents that their child was planning to stay in education to study either A Levels or a Level 3 Diploma. Whereas others stated that their child was still unsure.

Further analysis was undertaken to ascertain the probability of learners doing another Diploma in the future. Year 10 Diploma learners with the following characteristics were more likely to consider doing another Diploma in the future:

- learners who had more positive attitudes towards the Diplomas

- learners who believed their Diploma would have a greater impact on their future.

A similar model was also run for Year 10 comparison learners which revealed that Year 10 comparison learners who had a higher attainment at key stage 3 were less likely to consider a Diploma in the future.

7.1.2   Influences on Year 10 decisions on progression

Case-study interviews with Year 10 learners studying for a Diploma explored the influences on their decisions about their future after completing their Diploma and whether their Diploma course had been influential. The findings were as follows:

- **Enjoyment of subject**: The enjoyment of the Diploma subject was an influencing factor for a large proportion of young people. As one learner stated, '*I'm enjoying this so much I thought why not carry on.*'

- **Confirmation of future plans**: A large proportion of learners stated that the Diploma had confirmed or reinforced their plans for the future. Others did not know which area of their subject they wanted to focus on, but through their Diploma work they had learnt what areas they were better at and enjoyed most. This was also noted by parents of Diploma learners as a major influence on learners' future progression routes.

- **Providing an insight into future opportunities:** In some instances the Diploma was perceived to open up more opportunities for young people. Some learners and parents thought this was a positive influence as it had broadened their horizons and opened up the possibility of doing other options. A small number of learners, however, believed this further insight had confused them as they had previously been unaware there were so many opportunities available. Consequently, some young people believed they wanted to study a more specialised subject in the future.

- **Provision of a good knowledge base:** A small number of learners stated that their Diploma had given them a good background on which to build on and as such were planning to progress onto the next level of Diploma.

- **Achievement:** A small number of learners stated that their main influence was the grades they would get at the end of Year 11. For some this meant their GCSE grades whilst others stated that whether they received high grades for their Diploma at Level 2 would influence their decision to continue onto a Level 3 Diploma or take A Levels.

- **Role models:** Friends and parents were also noted as influencing learners' decisions about what to do after completing Year 11. Interviews with parents provided evidence that parents, family friends and older siblings had influenced their child's progression plans.

The Diploma had influenced learners in other ways. For example, one learner stated that, after being taught some of his Diploma lessons in college, he wanted to study in

college after Year 11. A minority of learners had found that studying the Diploma had made them realise the subject was not right for them.

7.2 Future progression of Year 12 Diploma learners

For Year 12 Diploma learners, a number of progression routes are available post-18. Fifty-three per cent of those surveyed were considering entry into higher education. Just over a quarter (28 per cent) said that they were considering a course in a further education or sixth form college. The work-based route was preferred by slightly fewer learners; 21 percent planned to get a job with training and 18 per cent planned to do an Apprenticeship[42]. The proportion considering progressing to an Apprenticeship is greater than the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds who are engaged in an Apprenticeship nationally in 2008, which is 5.5 per cent[43]. This suggests that there may be a greater propensity among Diploma learners to have an interest in pursuing an Apprenticeship compared with their peers. However, at this stage these findings reflect the routes that young people are considering, the extent to which these intentions are converted into decisions will be explored in the next phase of the research.

Figure 7.2   Plans after Diploma course
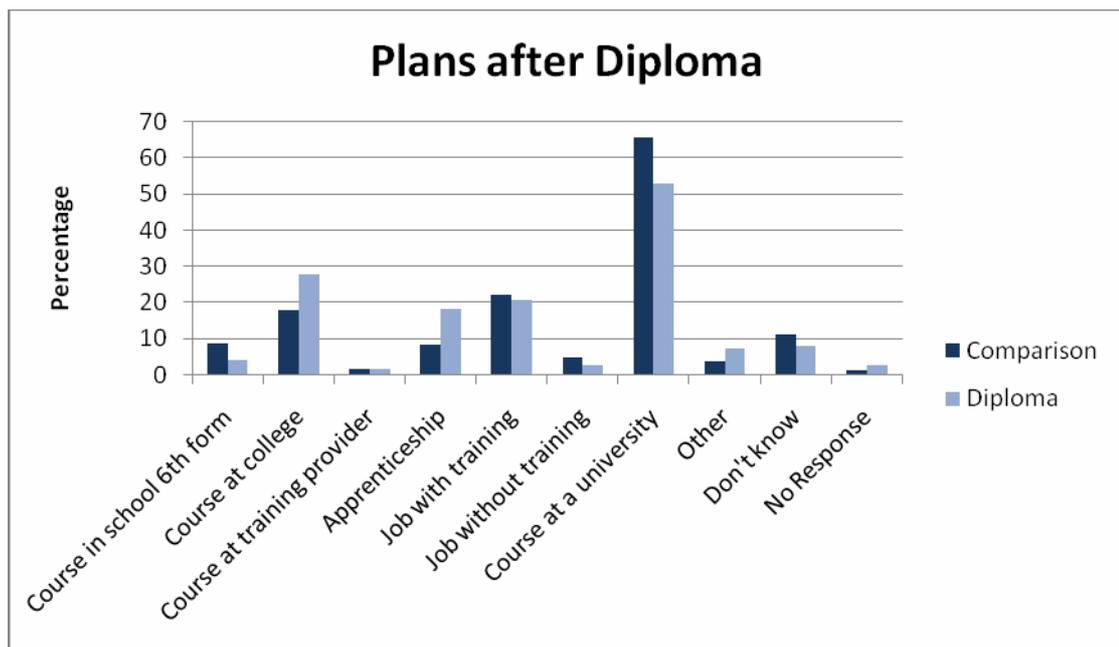
More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 12 learner surveys, 2009

As might be expected, learners' future plans varied across those taking different Diploma levels. Level 3 learners were more likely to be considering higher education (76 per cent) than Level 2 learners (19 per cent) whereas Level 2 learners were more likely to be considering college courses (67 per cent) than Level 3 learners (seven per cent). It is worth noting that this is based on a small numbers of young people and may not reflect the wider population of Diploma learners.

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[42] Young people could be considering more than one post-16 route and could specify more than one route in their response. Therefore, these percentages should not be totalled.

[43] Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009b). *Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England* (Statistical First Release 12/2009). London: DCSF [online]. Available: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000849/index.shtml [30 November, 2009].

When Year 12 learners studying a Diploma were compared with the Year 12 comparison learners it can be seen that a slightly higher proportion of comparison learners were planning on progressing to higher education (66 per cent compared with 53 per cent). Conversely, a slightly higher proportion of those studying for a Diploma were planning to progress to college (28 per cent) or an Apprenticeship (18 per cent) than comparison learners (18 per cent and eight per cent). It is worth noting that this is based on a small numbers of young people and may not reflect the wider population of Diploma learners.

Interviews with Year 12 Diploma learners similarly revealed that higher education was the preferred destination after completing their qualification. This was particularly the case for students studying for an Engineering or Creative and Media Diploma. Those studying an Information Technology Diploma were less likely to be decided on their future with many considering both employment and higher education. The majority of parents of Year 12 learners interviewed further highlighted the plans of Diploma learners to progress into higher education. Many of the learners currently studying Level 1 or 2 Diplomas stated that they planned to choose a higher level of Diploma course in the future.

There appeared to be continuity in the subject interest for most Year 12 Diploma learners. The majority (65 per cent) of Year 12 Diploma learners who were surveyed stated that they planned to take a course or job in the same subject area as their Diploma. Almost a fifth (19 per cent) of respondents were unsure whereas 11 per cent did not want to study or obtain a job in the same area as their Diploma. The case-study data further indicated that learners were planning to continue studying the subject area of their Diploma. As was the case among Year 10 learners, this was particularly true for Engineering Diploma learners with the majority wanting to go to university to study an area related to engineering such as structural design, civil or structural engineering, marine engineering, electrical engineering and architecture.

Young people in Year 12 currently studying an Information Technology Diploma were also likely to comment that they planned to progress in the Information Technology subject area. Some were planning to progress onto the Level 2 Diploma, others wanted to go to university to take courses such as forensic computing or computer science. Many of the learners studying an Information Technology Diploma stated that they wanted to find employment within Information Technology. Those studying a Creative and Media Diploma also generally planned to progress onto a course related to creative and media. This included the Level 3 Diploma course, media production courses, photography and graphic design.

7.2.1 Likelihood of Year 12 learners studying another Diploma in the future

The majority of Year 12 Diploma survey respondents studying at Level 1 and 2 reported that there was a possibility that they would study another Diploma at some point in the future. Over a quarter (28 per cent) of learners said there was a possibility they would study another Diploma '*immediately after finishing current course*' whilst 31 per cent would consider studying a Diploma '*sometime in the future*'.

Table 7.2   Possibility of doing a Diploma in future

Possibility	Year 12 Diploma Learners	Year 12 Comparison Learners
	%	%
Immediately after current course	28	6
Sometime in the future	31	22
Probably not	10	33
Definitely not	10	15
Not sure	14	20
No response	7	5
Weighted N =	**71***	**225**

A single response item
*Excluding Diploma learners taking a Level 3 Diploma who would be unlikely to progress onto another Diploma
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 12 surveys, 2009

As was the case among Year 10 learners, current Diploma learners were more likely to consider a Diploma in the future compared with those learners currently not studying a Diploma (28 per cent of Diploma learners stating *'immediately after current course'* compared with six per cent of comparison learners). It should be noted that the comparison group does include learners currently studying at Level 3 and, as noted earlier, the majority of this group were planning to go on to higher education after completing their current course.

Of those Year 12 Diploma learners who wanted to study a Diploma in the future, 59 per cent stated this would be at Level 3 with 39 per cent wanting to study a Level 2 qualification. Of those learners who were interviewed who were currently studying at Level 2 and Level 1, the learners were generally considering a higher level of Diploma in their current line of learning.

7.2.2 Influences on Year 12 learners' decisions about future progression

Reflecting on what had influenced their decisions on what to progress on to after finishing their Diploma, and whether this had changed since starting their Diploma, many of the learners believed that the broad nature of the Diploma had opened up more options for them by highlighting different areas in which they could work or study in the future and helped them to realise which areas of their subject they would like to specialise in the future. This finding is illustrated in the reflections of one learner who said:

> *It's given me a taster. Otherwise you might do something which you just think is going to be good and then you actually get doing it you don't enjoy it and you paid all that money to do it at uni and just drop it.*

Some learners stated that their enjoyment of the subject had influenced their decision to study the subject further after finishing their Diploma. For example, one learner commented:

> *I'm enjoying the Diploma and the knowledge of IT and business I'm getting. The Diploma has made me realise I'm really interested in these things.*

Others believed the marks they received for their Diploma would influence their decision on future progression. For example one learner stated:

> *The marks I get for the Diploma will affect my decision. If I get really good marks I might go to University.*

This was also true for Level 2 learners who stated that they would want to study a Level 3 Diploma course if they achieved the required grades in their Level 2 Diploma.

Some learners believed a benefit of the Diploma was that it opened up options for them, including higher education, as it gave them a good basis on which to build and was worth more UCAS points than other courses. Indeed, one young person stated:

> *I want to go to university to study either science or IT but I could go into a job with this course… if I was going to university I would get more points on this course than on other courses.*

However, a small number of learners stated that studying for a Diploma would influence their decision because they would need to ascertain whether Diplomas would be accepted by higher education establishments before applying to university.

For some learners, particularly those who had known what path they wanted to take before starting the Diploma, the Diploma itself was less influential, whilst for others it confirmed what they had already chosen to do. For example, one learner had always wanted to be a teacher but had not decided what subject she wanted to teach. However, through studying the Creative and Media Diploma, this had reinforced her decision to become a teacher and furthermore she had decided she wanted to teach this Diploma.

Some of the parents interviewed stated that the Diploma had influenced their child's plans, as one explained:

> *The Diploma course has definitely influenced his plans. He sees IT as a tool, not just for information and learning.*

However a small number of parents believed that the Diploma had not influenced their child's plans as they had always been focused on a certain career path.

7.3   Summary

- Diplomas were generally considered to be a positive influence on learners' future progression. Indeed, many of the learners currently studying a Level 1 or 2 Diploma would consider studying a higher level Diploma in the future. This is an important message for consortia without a current post-16 Diploma, as the future progression of pre-16 Diploma learners should be considered. Many post-16 learners were considering progressing on to higher education courses.

- Current Diploma learners were more likely, when compared with those not studying a Diploma, to consider work-based learning routes such as Apprenticeships, although they were still *most* likely to plan to take a course-based route through either school, college or university.

8.   Future Developments

Key findings

- Numbers of learners per cohort on individual lines of learning available since 2008 are expected to remain constant; no substantial increases are expected from September 2009. Case-study consortia, however, reported an increase in the lines of learning being delivered and therefore overall numbers of learners are increasing.

- Consortia will be experiencing significant changes in management and coordination as they move from coordinating one or two lines of learning to six or seven lines of learning.

- Lack of understanding and negative media coverage was reported to have had an impact on Diploma take-up.

- Numbers of learners on Diploma courses, particularly Level 3 courses, are unlikely to increase significantly until there are cohorts of learners who have completed the Level 2 Diploma (which will occur in September 2010 for the first cohort). This cohort of learners will be important for providing evidence of the benefits and usefulness of the Diploma course and will also provide a pool of learners likely to consider carefully progression to a Level 3 course. It should be noted that many Year 10 learners, both in case-study areas and who responded to the survey, were planning to study for a Level 3 Diploma once they had completed their current Level 2 Diploma.

Recommendations

- Due to the significant change in the scale of Diploma management, there may be a need for further support for consortium leads. Some consortia were already taking steps to streamline management systems, develop consortium-wide administrative systems and become more systematic with their planning in order to manage the scale of Diploma implementation and delivery.

- Consistent and high quality IAG is important to address potential misconceptions amongst learners and their parents which may have resulted from a lack of understanding or the sometimes negative media coverage surrounding the Diploma.

- There is a need for further support for practitioners in relation to assessment, due to a lack of confidence in this area.

- It will be important for the DCSF to disseminate evidence of the outcomes of Diplomas from the first cohort, as some parents and learners were 'uncertain' about this new qualification, and some consortia were delivering Diplomas on a small scale until this evidence became available.

This chapter details the expected future take-up of Diplomas in the case-study areas, the lessons learned since starting delivery of Diplomas in September 2008, future support needs of those involved with the management and delivery of Diplomas and any advice and guidance offered to other consortia.

8.1   Future take-up

The majority (12 out of the15) of consortia involved in the case studies were due to deliver new lines of learning in September 2009 approved through Gateway 2. Almost half of the consortia were significantly increasing their numbers of Diploma lines from one or two in Gateway 1 to between four and six new lines in Gateway 2. Therefore, delivery would be on a much greater scale from September 2009. Two institutions were ceasing delivery of the Diploma once their current cohort had completed the course. This was not a reflection of their views of the qualification but was because of a lack of adequate resources, including staffing, or because of institutional changes, such as becoming a National Challenge school.

Consortia anticipated an increase in overall learner numbers starting a Diploma course from September 2009 compared with 2008. However, in the majority of cases this was due to the increase in the number of lines of learning being offered, rather than an increase in the uptake of Diplomas available since 2008, which was expected to either remain constant or decline. Perceived reasons for this lack of increase or decline in Diploma cohort size included:

- Cohorts remaining small until there was a pool of learners that had completed the Diploma and could provide evidence of the benefits of Diplomas.

- Negative media coverage or less media coverage of Diplomas over 2008/2009 academic year.

- Competition for students from new lines of learning offered from September 2009.

- Parents and students being uncertain about these 'unknown' qualifications.

- Entry requirements being more difficult for the second cohort of learners to ensure they only recruit learners who can cope with the academic level of the Diploma.

Take up of pre- and post-16 Level 2 Diplomas was expected to continue to be greater than take up of Level 3 Diplomas. A number of consortium leads commented that they felt this discrepancy would remain until there was a cohort of Level 2 Diploma learners who could advance onto Level 3 Diplomas (which would be the case in September 2010). A small number believed this difference was due to perceived uncertainty as to whether Diplomas would be accepted qualifications for entering University.

There were noticeable differences in estimated take-up of future lines of learning. For example hair and beauty was said to be '*naturally appealing*' to students resulting in higher take-up. In contrast, the current economic recession was expected to impact negatively on learners choosing to take Engineering, Manufacturing and Product Design and Construction and the Built Environment Diplomas due to publicised unemployment in these industries. The Information Technology Diploma was also noted by a small number of interviewees to have fewer learners than expected for September 2009. It was felt this was because the name of the Diploma did not represent the course content which was described as more business-orientated than the name 'Information Technology' would suggest.

8.2 Lessons learned

8.2.1 Consortium management

Interviewees in case-study consortia were asked what lessons they had learned since the beginning of the implementation of Diplomas in their consortium. The main lessons related to planning and management, collaboration and recruitment:

- **Planning and management:** Six of the consortium leads believed they had learned lessons relating to the planning and management of Diplomas in the past year. For example, a small number felt they needed to streamline the management systems, develop consortium-wide administrative systems or become more systematic with their planning. Related to this was the need to improve communication across the different partners involved. Indeed, at an institution level, it was felt that clear communication was essential so that teachers or tutors felt in control of the delivery of Diplomas when they were not being organised through their institution.

- **Collaboration:** Three of the case-study consortia felt that there needed to be more collaboration between the partners, as currently they felt they were not collaborating enough to make the consortium work effectively. Generally it was felt there needed to be more shared delivery because there was not the required expertise at an institution level to deliver all the lines of learning in each of the providers. A further four consortia had learned that they needed to do more to break down barriers to collaboration. For example, two of the four consortia had realised that they would need to carry out some further work on aligning timetables and year calendars of institutions to ensure they were more compatible in the future. Another felt they needed to address the issue of transport budgets for learners travelling between different institutions, whilst another wanted to address the issue of staff in different institutions providing different messages to learners about the Diplomas.

- **Recruitment:** Eight consortia stated that they had learned lessons from recruitment challenges over the past year. For example, line of learning leads in four consortia would need to change the way they recruited learners to ensure they had larger numbers of learners in their courses to ensure they were viable. However, in a number of case-study areas the recruitment process had led to some learners being entered at a level not commensurate with their prior attainment and therefore line of learning leads were planning to increase the entry requirements, which they felt would result in a reduction in the numbers of learners starting Diplomas.

- **IAG**: The importance of ensuring that IAG is giving young people and parents a good understanding of the context and the different aspects of Diplomas was particularly highlighted as an important lesson learned by three consortia. It was felt that some young people and parents did not understand what the Diploma would involve before they started the course. Therefore all partners involved in providing information to learners needed to ensure messages are clear so that students do not choose inappropriate courses. The information provided should give an accurate reflection of the Diploma course, for example, taster days for Diplomas should be realistic rather than focusing on the more practical elements alone.

- **Employer engagement:** The need to spend more time working with employers to encourage employer engagement was noted as a lesson learned by interviewees from five consortia.

8.2.2 Changes to models of delivery

Whilst the majority of consortia were pleased with their models of delivery and were not planning any significant changes, a small number, after reflecting on Gateway 1 delivery, were planning to change the models they currently used.

Two consortia were planning to change at least some of their delivery from collaborative delivery to in-house delivery whilst another consortium was converting all Diploma delivery to in-house delivery. This was seen by one consortium lead as a reversion to the norm. The reasons for this change included a belief that collaborative working did not make the best use of schools' specialisms, increased numbers of learners on Diploma lines making in-house delivery viable when previously small numbers of learners had made this not viable, and a lack of capacity at a local college.

Other adjustments to current delivery models included changing the number of days of Diploma delivery from two half days to one full day to try to save time lost when learners travel between providers. Another case-study area wanted to change the location of the delivery institution from a school to a perceived neutral location, such as a college, due to conflict between students of rival schools.

8.2.3 Changes to teaching and learning

Staff in institutions delivering Diplomas, were asked what lessons they had learned with regards to teaching and learning. The most commonly cited lesson learned was that instead of teaching one unit at a time, teachers needed to be more flexible, taking a more holistic approach to the curriculum and teach related elements of different units at the same time. This is discussed further in Chapter 4. A small number of teaching staff felt that they had learned that they needed to provide more opportunities for applied learning. Others felt that they needed to get employers more involved in the curriculum and provide more employer speakers.

8.2.4 Advice offered to other consortia

The advice and guidance that case-study interviewees would provide to other consortia generally mirrored the lessons they had learned themselves through involvement in Gateway 1. The advice is summarised below.

- **Planning and development**: The need for early planning and development was advised at both the consortium level and the delivery level. As one senior leader said, for example,

  from the date you get through the Gateway to the date you start delivering is about 15 months. You need every one of these months to get ready. It is a huge undertaking.

- **Procedures***:* To ensure there are clear and appropriate procedures and management systems in place across the consortium.

- **Partnerships**: The importance of partnership working and clear communication, including the need for trust, transparency and equal commitment between partners and an understanding that collaborative working meant a loss of some autonomy. It was also advised that infrastructure of the consortium should reflect this collaborative approach.

- **Employer engagement**: Establish contacts with employers as soon as possible.

- **Applied learning:** Sustain the applied elements of the Diploma through visits, trips, speakers and practical activities.

- **Flexible delivery**: Consider the value of delivering units of the curriculum in a holistic, non-linear extent. Practitioners advised other deliverers be creative with the syllabus.

Other advice that did not mirror their own lessons learned included advising others to start by implementing Diplomas on a small scale and not to be concerned by a small take up by learners Indeed, one consortium lead stated:

> *Don't be disheartened by small numbers* [of learners]*, the Diploma is a new qualification therefore has to find its place in the market.*

8.3   Future support needs

Generally, consortium leads interviewed felt they did not have any additional support needs. Very few mentioned specific areas of support they would need. Where they did, these related to training and support for implementing consortium-wide quality assurance systems and support with different funding models.

Delivery staff who completed the teacher questionnaire were asked an open-ended question to ascertain their future support needs. Of those who responded, the most commonly cited response related to support with assessment (29 per cent of respondents). Interviewees from the case-study consortia felt that they lacked the knowledge and confidence with regards to the assessment of the Diploma and called for more support from Awarding Bodies. This was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Sixteen per cent of teachers surveyed wanted more resources or practical materials for teaching. Those interviewed believed staff lacked knowledge of applied learning and up-to-date industrial knowledge. One consortium was hoping to address this by providing all delivery staff with one-day placements in industry. Other interviewees wanted more collaboration with specialists so that they could have an input into the curriculum.

Nine per cent of teachers answering the survey wanted more time and support for planning. Building on this, those interviewed as part of the case studies felt there was a need for support with the additional administrative pressures that Diplomas have put on teachers such as delivering and organising collaborative off-site events and increased paperwork.

Nine per cent of those answering the survey wanted more information generally, whilst eight per cent of teachers wanted support with employer engagement. Those interviewed in the case studies felt that there was a need for administrative support to help staff with employer engagement as well as a need to increase staff confidence in how to make links with employers.

8.4   Summary

Consortia were generally seen to be expanding their Diploma offer in 2010 to offer more lines of learning. As such, a challenge for consortia may be managing Diploma implementation and delivery on a much larger scale in the future. Some had already

taken steps to streamline the management systems, develop consortium-wide administrative systems or become more systematic with their planning, in preparation for the increase in scale. This also emphasises the importance of communication between partners.

It appears that numbers of learners on particular lines of learning are not expected to increase until there is a pool of learners that have completed a Diploma. The reason for this is two-fold; firstly, there will be a group of learners well positioned to progress on to a higher level of Diploma (hence the Level 3 offer post-16 is expected to expand), and secondly, they will provide an evidence base for young people in the future, which is currently unavailable. As such, a lower take-up than was perhaps expected should not be seen negatively whilst the qualification is still very new.

Over the past year, consortia have learnt a great deal about the need for good collaboration, planning and management of Diplomas and these were areas they felt others, starting out with Diploma delivery, should be advised on. With regards to teachers, assessment was the main area that they felt they lacked confidence in and as such is an area that policy makers should look to support further.

9.   Conclusions and recommendations

This report has focused on experiences of a sample of 30 Gateway 1 consortia in their first year of Diploma delivery. Given the early stages of delivery of this new qualification, the research findings are positive. In general, Diploma learners are enjoying their course and are satisfied with their experiences. Teachers report that the Diploma offers a new type of learning experience and are positive about the opportunities for independent learning and for them to teach in a more interactive and holistic way. Where partnership working is taking place, it is generally considered to be working well. Inevitably though, as might be expected with the introduction of a new qualification, there are some issues that need attention.

The following three sections of this chapter present the key findings and conclusions in more detail, in relation to the experience of learners, teachers and partnerships. In the final section, recommendations are given for policy-makers and consortia which have emerged from these conclusions.

9.1   The learner experience

Overall, the majority of Diploma learners reported **satisfaction** with their Diploma course and were enjoying it. Most learners in case-study consortia would still choose to do the Diploma if they could go back and make their choices again. Furthermore, the majority who responded to the surveys would either 'definitely' or at least 'maybe' recommend a Diploma to a friend (with a proviso from case-study learners that they would recommend it to friends who were willing to work hard and who had a real interest in the subject). This new qualification was considered to be interesting and **different from other learning experiences**; learners particularly welcomed the **practical elements or 'hands on approach'** to learning where this had been available, and appreciated the **links with the world of work**. Additionally, Year 10 students who took part in all of their Diploma lessons away from their own school had a more positive attitude towards their Diploma course. There was evidence of an association between positive attitudes towards the Diploma and a preference for teamwork and practical working. Learners also identified the benefit of having the opportunity to develop independent learning skills.

The evidence emphasises the **importance of IAG for take-up and the learning experience**. For example, amongst Year 10 Diploma learners, the more satisfied they were with IAG prior to starting their course, the more satisfied they were overall with their Diploma. They also had more positive attitudes towards the Diploma and were more likely to think their Diploma course would have a positive impact on their future. In contrast, those who were dissatisfied with the IAG they had received were more likely to say their Diploma experience had not been as expected (although this did not necessarily mean it had been a negative experience, sometimes just different than they had expected). Overall, the quality and consistency of IAG varied and seemed to be dependent on individual institutions and the extent to which they fully implemented any consortium-wide strategies.

A considerable proportion of case-study learners had expected that the Diploma would be more practical than it had been so far in reality. Similarly, where a minority of learners were less satisfied this was often due to **a desire for more practical or active learning**. The fact that visits to consortia and surveys were carried out in the first year of Diploma delivery (most visits taking place just four to six months after delivery commenced) should be considered as context here. Although the evidence suggests that almost all learners had already experienced at least *some* input from

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employers, to add the 'real' context to Diploma learning, so far this was usually in the form of talks or one-off visits (which were perceived as valuable by learners); placements were often still being organised and should feature later in the course. As with any course, it is likely that the early stages would focus on developing underpinning knowledge, prior to the application of that knowledge in a practical sense. However, the importance of IAG should be raised again here; learners need to be clear about the subject content and learning style, particularly the balance between practical and theory-based learning, so that the Diploma meets their expectations. There were suggestions that the content of the Diploma lines did not always match the titles (for example, the amount of business-related content in the Information Technology Diploma was a surprise for many learners, again suggesting the importance of comprehensive IAG).

Access to other forms of **support for Diploma learners** had been variable, often dependent on the quality of the communication and collaboration between partners sharing elements of Diploma delivery. Partners should be careful that the quality and scale of pastoral support is monitored when learners are outside of their home institution.

Amongst Year 10 learners, those *not* studying for a Diploma[44] had more **positive attitudes towards learning** in general than Diploma learners overall. When line of learning was taken into consideration, it emerged that this attitude tended to be related to three of the five lines of learning as learners doing Construction and the Built Environment, Information Technology and Society, Health and Development who had less positive attitudes towards learning than the comparison group; there was no significant difference for those doing Engineering and Creative and Media. However, these were baseline attitudes towards learning, and although they might reveal something about the type of learner likely to choose these lines of learning, their attitudes might not be as a *result* of taking the Diploma line of learning at all. Further investigation of attitudes in the second year of Diploma learning may well reveal different attitudes (for example, more positive or more negative attitudes towards learning) which could be related to their Diploma experience.

Overall, Diploma learners were significantly less **committed to learning** than those not studying for a Diploma, with the notable exception of students doing Engineering, who were not significantly less committed. For students studying this line, a priority when choosing options had been studying a course which enabled them to enter their chosen sector (they were perhaps more decided about future goals). Again, these findings summarise a baseline position, and changes to commitment to learning amongst learners studying all lines of learning will continue to be investigated. What these findings suggest is that 'Diploma learners' are not a homogenous group; those doing different lines of learning may have different reasons for doing a Diploma initially, and different levels of certainty about future goals. This highlights the importance of differentiation of IAG to respond to the different mindsets of young people.

In terms of **progress**, most learners believed they were making satisfactory progress on their Diplomas. However, this seemed to be based more on completing assignments in time, rather than on marks or grades received; learners may value earlier feedback (formative and summative) to give them a more informed idea of their progress. There was some appreciation of the need to succeed in all components of the Diploma, but a limited understanding of what all the components were (particularly additional and specialist learning). Learners were likely to

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[44] Please see Chapter 1 for a discussion of the composition of the comparison group.

understand the need to pass functional skills, but had raised concerns about their level of difficulty which was considered to be challenging.

Almost half of the survey respondents in Year 10 studying a Level 2 Diploma were considering **progression** onto a Level 3 Diploma in the future; evidence again of satisfaction with the Diploma qualification. A greater proportion of Diploma learners than comparison learners were considering a work-based route after Year 11, although a course-based route was most common overall for both groups. Those doing Engineering and Society, Health and Development were most likely to want to continue with a course or job in the same subject area as their Diploma. Those doing Creative and Media were least likely to be sure, possibly due to a perception from learners that there was such a wide range of options for progression from this line. More than half of the Diploma learners in Year 12 were planning to progress to higher education (interviews revealed this was particularly the case with learners doing Engineering and Creative and Media). The Diploma was generally considered by young people in Year 12 to support progression to higher education.

9.2   The teacher experience

Endorsing the learners' view, the prevailing view amongst practitioners was that the Diploma involved a **different teaching and learning experience** to other qualifications. Teachers valued the opportunity for a **holistic model of teaching** and the encouragement of **independent learning**. They reported greater use of **interactive teaching techniques** and less dependence on textbooks and worksheets. Again, the potential for '*making learning come alive*' by relating theory to a '*real world context*' via **work-related learning** was welcomed. There was evidence that good contacts had been made with local businesses, aided by support from EBPOs, and most reported that employers had already provided talks to learners and had hosted one-off visits. Such events had proved easier to arrange than block placements, which required greater commitment from employers. Difficulties gaining such commitment from employers, thought to be caused in part by the current economic situation, meant that some teachers were uncertain about the level of success they would have in reality at giving learners enough 'real world' experience and opportunities to apply their learning. Organisation of work-related learning was an on-going process; it was acknowledged that block placements would come later, where possible, or more 'industry days' would be arranged as an alternative. As this element of the Diploma was considered so valuable, by staff and learners, it was considered worth striving to overcome challenges associated with employer engagement.

Teachers endeavoured to make use of **innovative, applied learning techniques** in the classroom, but sometimes felt restricted by the nature of assessment requirements. This was particularly thought to be the case with Information Technology, but also to a lesser extent with Society, Health and Development. Assessments were also sometimes thought to be incompatible with the 'holistic' model of teaching preferred.

The fact that the majority of Diploma learners were satisfied with, and were enjoying, their Diploma course could imply that the **quality of teaching** was good. However, the findings across the case-study consortia revealed a mixed picture of how the quality of teaching was being monitored. There was more scope for consortium-wide approaches to quality assurance. Only a minority had this in place, aided by independent consultants/task groups who carried out lesson observations and other monitoring activities. In most consortia, quality assurance was undertaken by

individual institutions, and while they tended to be content with their own quality and monitoring procedures, they lacked the same confidence in that of partners (which is an issue given the extent of 'collaboration'). There was some uncertainty about how cross-consortia quality assurance would work in practice: who would carry out observations; would raising concerns about quality of teaching at a partner institution undermine trust; and would the number of times a teacher is observed have to increase?

There continued to be some uncertainty about the best way to teach **functional skills**. Although there was recognition of the benefits of mapping the skills to principal learning, so learners understood the relevance and could apply the skills, the most common approach was for functional skills to be taught discretely in the home institution by specialist English, mathematics and ICT teachers with a focus on passing the separate examinations. There were a few examples of principal learning teachers embedding functional skills in their teaching to help learners make links, but it was considered more challenging for specialist English, mathematics and ICT teachers to make the links to sector-specific learning. Teachers also referred to what they perceived to be the level of difficulty of the Level 2 functional skills assessments and the possibility that some learners would be capable of gaining a Level 2 equivalent in their principal learning but not in functional skills (which has implications in terms of not passing the whole Diploma). Some had put learners through examinations early in order to establish their ability and to gauge the extent of work required if they failed; careful consideration should be given to this approach and how it is presented to learners, to ensure that they do not become demoralised if they do not achieve the qualification the first time they try.

Some teachers in case-study schools commented on the practical timetable restrictions that impacted on what could be offered as **additional and specialist learning**, particularly pre-16. Additional learning was more widely available than specialist learning, but there were positive discussions in a minority of consortia about how partners could be involved in delivering qualifications to broaden the offer.

Assessment continued to be an area of uncertainty. When reflecting on the extent to which they were prepared to teach the Diploma, assessment was the aspect in which teaching staff most frequently reported being under-prepared and they wanted continued support in this area. Although young people thought they were progressing well, they were also uncertain about assessment criteria. Standardisation of assessment across partners remained under-developed; teachers wanted reassurance that assessment procedures were being carried out equitably across partners. More assistance from awarding bodies, in the form of assignment exemplars, would be welcomed. More training of staff was due to take place, particularly for those who would become chief moderators.

When **training** had been received it was considered useful, but there were gaps in terms of *practitioners* accessing training. A more strategic approach to deciding who should go on training courses and which courses were most appropriate to attend was necessary. Networking with colleagues within a consortium, and across others, was considered very valuable.

9.3   The consortia and partnership experience

Models of delivery involving **collaboration** between institutions were common and most staff involved felt they were working well. A willingness to collaborate, frequent communication, and practical arrangements such as aligned timetables and shared protocols, were all thought to facilitate collaborative working. Where challenges were faced, these were often practical issues, but also sometimes related to overcoming a history of competition (in four areas, interviewees specifically talked about a need to overcome barriers to collaboration when asked what changes they would make in the future to Diploma implementation and delivery). However, the fact that there was evidence in most consortia of some shared delivery suggests that expertise and facilities were being used in order to meet the needs of students and give them the best learning experience.

Nevertheless, **in-house delivery** was also common, often because institutions felt there was no *need* for support from other providers to deliver particular lines of learning (such as Information Technology), although there were instances of an *unwillingness* to collaborate. Information from the evaluation which shows that collaboration was common, and thought to be working well, should be disseminated. Consortia managers anticipated an increase in overall **learner numbers** starting a Diploma course in September 2009 than had been the case in 2008. This was mostly said to be due to an increase in the number of lines of learning being offered. The numbers taking existing lines were either expected to remain consistent with 2008 or decline (due to, for example, competition with new lines of learning or changes to entry requirements for the second cohort).

Some consortia did not have a **post-16 Diploma offer**, but the evidence suggests that they were waiting for the first pre-16 learners to complete their Diploma courses in 2010 before offering Diplomas post-16 from the academic year 2010-11. This will be important, given that 15 per cent of Year 10 Diploma learners reported considering doing a higher level Diploma immediately at the end of Year 11 (a further 30 per cent said they would do so sometime in the future). **Level 1** was less widely offered pre-16, or when it was offered small numbers dictated co-teaching of Levels 1 and 2 to make it viable.

9.4   Recommendations

The evidence suggests that progress in the early stages of Diploma delivery was positive overall, yet there is still scope for more progress in relation to certain areas. The recommendations for policy-makers and consortia, based on these areas, are outlined below.

9.4.1   Recommendations for policy

- Consortia may need support and guidance in how to develop consortium-wide quality assurance procedures. Any examples of good practice should be disseminated.

- More support and guidance needs to be given in relation to assessment, including the standardisation assessment across partners. Awarding Bodies should be encouraged to disseminate more exemplar materials.

- DCSF could consider exploring with Awarding Bodies how innovative teaching and the assessment approach could be more aligned.

- Consortia would benefit from further support and guidance in relation to the '*best*' way of delivering functional skills; guidance on how to link the skills with principal learning would be valued. The perceived disparity between the assessment approach (driving the decision to teach functional skills discretely) and the aim of functional skills should be considered. Awarding Bodies should also be encouraged to review the level of difficulty of Level 2 functional skills examinations.

- The fact that a collaborative approach to Diploma delivery was common and was working well should be disseminated in order to encourage this approach, along with information on the factors which facilitate effective partnership working.

- There would be merit in giving further consideration to the role of the Level 1 Diploma within the Diploma qualifications. Firstly, in order to explore how best to promote this Diploma level to teachers and learners so that take-up, which is notably lower than the other two levels, can be increased and courses could become viable. Secondly, to assist teaching staff in targeting the Level 1 Diploma appropriately as part of Foundation Learning to those learners whose attainment to date suggests that they would not yet be able to achieve a Level 2 qualification.

- IAG continues to be important, particularly given that satisfaction with IAG was associated with satisfaction with the Diploma and more accurate expectations of what the Diploma will be like. DCSF should consider how to further support consortia in ensuring that good quality IAG is provided to all potential Diploma learners.

9.4.2   Recommendations for consortia

- IAG should be a priority, particularly as it was evidently important for the learning experience and satisfaction with the Diploma course. Learners need to be made fully aware of the course content (including the composite nature of the Diploma) and learning approaches so that they understand its requirements and, in turn, that the qualification meets their expectations. Such IAG could usefully adopt the principles underpinning the new strategy[45] which includes the need to provide excellent, personalised and impartial IAG support for parents to help their children to make the right decisions.

- A more strategic approach to deciding who should go on training courses, and which courses should be accessed, is required at a consortium level. Ensuring that the *right* people access training is essential.

- The rationale for in-house delivery should be considered to assess whether a collaborative approach might better meet learners' needs.

- Consideration should be given to how best to broaden the additional and specialist learning offer within the planning and timetabling constraints within institutions, so that it meets its aims of providing high quality breadth or depth of curriculum experience.

- Consortia should consider how to develop effective quality assurance procedures across partnerships to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, and how far these can be integrated with, or incorporated into, existing institutional quality assurance procedures.

- Consortia should recognise the value placed by staff and learners on work-related learning opportunities; if block placements are difficult to arrange,

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[45] http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/IAG-Report-v2.pdf

'industry days' which take place throughout the Diploma course should be considered, as they were viewed positively by learners, teachers and employers.

- Consortia should review the level and quality of support offered to learners, particularly the pastoral support available outside the home institution.

Appendix A: Research Methods and Analysis

A1   Evaluation Strands

The evaluation has three main strands:

- **Surveys of a range of stakeholders** – in each phase of the evaluation (coinciding with each phase of Diploma implementation which commence in September 2008, 2009 and 2010), these include a telephone survey of consortium leads; longitudinal tracking surveys of learners and cross-sectional surveys of teaching staff and parents in a sample of 30 consortia; and surveys of HEIs. Two surveys of employers will also be undertaken in 2010 and 2012.

- **A longitudinal programme of qualitative case studies** – comprising visits to 15 consortia in each of the three phases of implementation. Within each of the consortia selected, visits to up to four institutions take place and interviews are conducted with strategic and operational staff, learners and consortium partners.

- **Statistical analysis of external datasets** such as the DAS, the NPD and the Individual Learner Record (ILR), to explore the outcomes and impact of the Diplomas on a larger scale than would be possible through surveys or qualitative data collection.

A2   Survey administration process

A survey of Diploma and comparison learners in **Year 10 and Year 12** in the sample of 30 Gateway 1 consortia was undertaken between April and July 2009 in 178 institutions. Each was asked to provide the number of Diploma learners in Year 10 and 12 (where relevant); where possible, this number of questionnaires was despatched in other cases, 25 questionnaires were sent for Diploma learners in each relevant year group. In all institutions, 25 questionnaires for comparison learners in each year group were provided. Each institution was also sent seven questionnaires for Diploma teachers.

The main contact in each institution was asked to distribute surveys to Diploma learners. Comparison questionnaires were distributed to one tutor group in each relevant year group. For Year 10 learners, institutions were encouraged to administer questionnaires in class; Year 12 learners were given questionnaires to complete in their own time. Please see Chapter 1 for a discussion of the response, sample sizes and the appropriateness of the comparison group.

A3   Survey analysis

A3.1   Matching to National Pupil Database

Information on gender and date of birth provided by learners on the questionnaires was then matched to background information held on the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and NPD, where possible, to explore differences in responses in relation to their background characteristics.[46]

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[46] A total of 1684 (87 per cent) of the 1938 Year 10 Diploma and comparison respondents were matched to NPD. Across the 401 responding Year 12 learners, a total of 214 (53 per cent) were matched to NPD. The low match was due to learners' transition between institutions at age 16 (which occurred between the two survey timepoints).

A3.2   Weighting

The survey responses were **weighted** to ensure that the responding samples were representative of Diploma and comparison learners in England. Population data from the Diploma Aggregation Service (DAS) and background data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) were used to derive the weights.

Year 10 Weighting

The samples of Year 10 Diploma and comparison learners were significantly different from their corresponding national populations in terms of gender and key stage 3 attainments. The samples were therefore weighted by these two variables, and were subsequently representative of the corresponding national populations in relation to these factors.

Year 12 Weighting

As discussed above, only 53 per cent of the Year 12 responding samples were matched successfully to the National Pupil Database due to learners' transitions between institutions at age 16. As a result, attainment data from the database were missing for a large proportion of learners, and it was not, therefore, possible to weight by this variable. Weightings using alternative variables were therefore considered.

The responding samples of Year 12 Diploma learners were significantly different from all Diploma learners nationally in terms of line of learning, but no significant differences were observed in gender or level of Diploma taken. The sample was therefore weighted by line of learning. There were no differences in terms of GCSE attainment, before or after weighting, between the proportion of Year 12 Diploma learners with matched attainment data in the sample and the corresponding national population. However, due to the large percentage of missing attainment data for the responding sample, it was unclear whether the sample differed from the corresponding national population in attainment or not.

The sample of Year 12 comparison learners was significantly different from the national population in terms of gender and, therefore, the sample was weighted by gender. There were also significant differences in terms of GCSE attainment, before and after weighting, between the proportion of Year 12 comparison learners with matched attainment data in the sample and the corresponding national population. However, due to the large percentage of missing attainment data for the responding sample, it was unclear whether the sample differed from the corresponding national population in attainment or not.

Impact of weighting on total numbers

Weights were assigned based on a number of stratifying variables, such as gender and attainment. When such stratifying variables were missing for a pupil, the weight of this pupil was approximated by the mean weight of similar learners (Diploma or comparison) in the same school. If this was not possible, the mean weight of the school was used as an approximation. Such approximations, together with rounding effects, sometimes result in the sum of the weights being different from the raw number of respondents. This phenomenon occurred in the Year 10 samples, meaning that the total number of respondents appearing in tables is slightly inflated. However, the analysis and discussion is based on the percentage of respondents.

A3.3   Analysis undertaken

Cross-tabulations

The further analysis of the teacher and learner surveys included **cross-tabulations**, which explored the relationships between two categorical variables.

Factor analysis

Exploratory factor analyses were carried out to consolidate a number of individual items included in the questionnaires for Year 10 and Year 12 Diploma and comparison learners. Some questions were identical on each questionnaire, in order for comparisons to be made between the attitudes of Diploma and comparison learners. Some were specific to Diploma learners, as they asked about their experiences of their Diploma course. Aggregated variables produce more robust measures of learners' attitudes than a consideration of the individual items on the questionnaire alone.

Factor analysis looks for variables that correlate highly with each other. The existence of such correlations between variables suggests that those variables could be measuring aspects of the same underlying issues. These underlying issues are known as factors. Thus, the aim of the factor analyses was to derive a smaller number of 'attitude' composite variables from selected questions on the questionnaire which could be used to explore the attitudes of learners in further detail. The 'factors' which are identified can also be used in more sophisticated analysis (multilevel modelling).

For **Year 10 learners**, five separate factors were identified, as follows:

- Attitude to the Diploma (Diploma learners only)

- Impact of the Diploma on my future (Diploma learners only)

- Positive attitude to learning (both groups)

- Commitment to learning (both groups)

- Preference of teamwork and practical learning (both groups)

A description of the individual items on the questionnaire that made up each factor is presented below:

Factor 1:   Attitude to the Diploma
- I am enjoying my Diploma course

- The work I do in lessons is interesting

- I would like to spend less time on my Diploma course

- I can cope with the amount of work

- My Diploma course is more practical (than other subjects)

- My Diploma course is less interesting (than other subjects)

- I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course (compared with other subjects)

Factor 2: Impact of the Diploma on my future
- I am learning new skills on my Diploma course
- My Diploma will help me get a job in the future
- My Diploma will help me get into college in the future
- My Diploma will help me get into university/higher education if I want to go in the future
- My Diploma will be more useful for my future (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience (than other subjects)

Factor 3: Positive attitude to learning
- The subjects I am doing make me want to learn
- The subjects I am doing make me feel ready for work in the future
- The subjects I am doing make me feel confident about what I can do
- The subjects I am doing are giving me useful skills
- Most of the time I like going to school
- School work is worth doing
- I enjoy learning

Factor 4: Commitment to learning
- I always do my homework/coursework
- I am well behaved in school
- The work I do in lessons is a waste of time
- I am often late for school or lessons
- I sometimes play truant/skip lessons

Factor 5: Preference of teamwork and practical learning
- I like working in a team
- I prefer practical work to lots of writing
- I learn best when I put something into practice
- I don't like lessons where we work in groups

Five separate factors were also identified for **Year 12 learners**, as follows:

- Attitude to the Diploma (Diploma learners only)
- Impact of the Diploma on my future (Diploma learners only)
- Impact of subject on motivation to learn (both groups)*
- Intrinsic motivations for learning (both groups)*
- Preference of teamwork and practical learning (both groups)

Note that although the questions relating to these factors were the same for Year 10 and 12, the items correlated with each other differently for each Year group, meaning that slightly different factors emerged for each.

A description of the individual items on the questionnaire that made up each factor is presented below:

Factor 1:   Attitude to the Diploma
- I am enjoying my Diploma course
- The work I do in lessons is interesting
- I would like to spend less time on my Diploma course
- I can cope with the amount of work
- My Diploma course is more practical (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is less interesting (than other subjects)
- I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course (compared with other subjects)

Factor 2:   Impact of the Diploma on my future
- I am learning new skills on my Diploma course
- My Diploma will help me get a job in the future
- My Diploma will help me get into university/higher education if I want to go in the future
- My Diploma will be more useful for my future (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience (than other subjects)

Factor 3:   Impact of subject on motivation to learn
- The subjects I am doing make me want to learn
- The subjects I am doing make me feel ready for work in the future
- The subjects I am doing make me feel confident about what I can do
- The subjects I am doing are giving me useful skills

Factor 4:   Intrinsic motivations for learning
- Most of the time I like going to school
- School work is worth doing
- I enjoy learning
- I always do my homework/coursework
- I am well behaved in school

Factor 5:   Preference of teamwork and practical learning
- I like working in a team
- I prefer practical work to lots of writing
- I learn best when I put something into practice
- I don't like lessons where we work in groups

All of the items for each factor are consolidated and scaled to provide an average score for learners overall of between zero and ten (with ten being the most positive score).

Multilevel modelling

Further exploration of the relationship between Year 10 learners' attitudes and various background factors that might have an impact on outcomes for learners, such as satisfaction with the Diploma, was carried out using **multilevel modelling**, which estimates the true relationship between each background factor and the outcome of interest, whilst taking account of other influences. Multilevel modelling was carried out to explore the following outcomes for learners:

- Attitude to the Diploma (Diploma learners only; Factor 1 above).

- Satisfaction with Diploma course (Diploma learners only; question 15 in Year 10 Diploma learner survey).

- Possibility of doing a Diploma in the future (question 26 in Year 10 Diploma learner survey and question 14 in comparison survey); separate models for Diploma and comparison learners.

- Positive attitude to learning (two models, one comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall, and another comparing Diploma learners doing each line of learning and comparison learners).

- Commitment to learning (two models, one comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall, and another comparing Diploma learners doing each line of learning and comparison learners).

- Preference for teamwork and practical learning (two models, one comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall, and another comparing Diploma learners doing each line of learning and comparison learners).

Multilevel modelling was not carried out for the analysis of the Year 12 learner surveys, as the number of responding learners was too small.

For each of the above outcomes the model explored the influence of the following background factors:

Table A1   Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'attitude to the Diploma'

Variable	Explanation of variable
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)
KSmean	Mean point score for KS3 English, maths and science
Idaci	Deprivation index
LOL	Line of learning (model compares learners doing each line with those doing Creative and Media learners as base case).
Level	Diploma level (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma as base case).
Q12/satisfaction	Satisfaction with IAG before started Diploma 5 point score; higher score = greater satisfaction
Q7a/location of learning	Location of learning (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in own school only as base case).
Q10/employer involvement	Number of Employer activities; from 0 to 5
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10

Variable	Explanation of variable
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)
KSmean	Mean point score for KS3 English, maths and science
Idaci	Deprivation index
LOL	Line of learning (model compares learners doing each line with those doing Creative and Media learners as base case).
Level	Diploma level (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma as base case).
Q12/satisfaction	Satisfaction with IAG before started Diploma 5 point score; higher score = greater satisfaction
Q7a/location of learning	Location of learning (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in own school only as base case).
Q10/employer involvement	Number of Employer activities; from 0 to 5
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10

Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'possibility of doing a Diploma in the future' (Diploma learners)

Variable	Explanation of variable
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)
KSmean	Mean point score for KS3 English, maths and science
Idaci	Deprivation index
LOL	Line of learning (model compares learners doing each line with those doing Creative and Media learners as base case).
Q12/satisfaction with IAG	Satisfaction with IAG before started Diploma 5 point score; higher score = greater satisfaction
Factor 1	Attitude to the Diploma factor score from 0 to 10
Factor 2	Impact of the Diploma on my future factor score from 0 to 10
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10
Q15/satisfaction with Diploma	Learner satisfaction with the Diploma course 5 point score; higher score = greater satisfaction.

Table A4 **Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'possibility of doing a Diploma in the future' (comparison learners)**

Variable	Explanation of variable
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)
KSmean	Mean point score for KS3 English, maths and science
Idaci	Deprivation index
Q6/satisfaction with IAG	Satisfaction with IAG about Diplomas 5 point score; higher score = greater satisfaction.
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10

Table A5 **Variables included in the Year 10 model outcomes 'positive attitude to learning', 'commitment to learning' and 'preference of teamwork and practical learning' (comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall)**

Variable	Explanation of variable
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligble to FSM)
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)
KSmean	Mean point score for KS3 English, maths and science
Idaci	Deprivation index
Diploma/comparison	Indicates whether learner is in Diploma or comparison group
pcFSM08	School-level free school meals eligibility

Table A6   **Variables included in the Year 10 model outcomes 'positive attitude to learning', 'commitment to learning' and 'preference of teamwork and practical learning' (comparing Diploma learners doing each line of learning and comparison learners)**

Variable	Explanation of variable
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)
KSmean	Mean point score for KS3 English, maths and science
Idaci	Deprivation index
pcFSM08	School-level free school meals eligibility
Const	Indicates whether learner is doing a Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment (model compares learners doing Construction and the Built Environment Diploma to learners in the Comparison group)
CreMed	Indicates whether learner is doing a Diploma in Creative and Media (model compares learners doing Creative and Media Diploma to learners in the Comparison group)
Engin	Indicates whether learner is doing a Diploma in Engineering (model compares learners doing Engineering Diploma to learners in the comparison group)
InfTech	Indicates whether learner is doing a Diploma in Information Technology (model compares learners doing Information Technology Diploma to learners in the comparison group)
SHD	Indicates whether learner is doing a Diploma in Society, Health and Development (model compares learners doing Society, Health and Development Diploma to learners in the comparison group)

Case-study Analysis

Case-study data has been analysed using computer-aided qualitative analysis software (MAXQDA), which assists researchers in undertaking systematic coding of data and facilitates analysis by sub-group and triangulation between groups.

Appendix B: The consortia sample

Using data from the consortium lead telephone survey, and information provided by DCSF about the schools involved in Phase 1 consortia, a sample of 30 consortia was drawn for involvement in the survey strand. The sample was selected according to the following criteria:

- **Lines of learning and levels offered** – to ensure that all lines and levels were represented in the sample.
- **Number of lines of learning offered** – in order to maximise the number of learners and lines of learning represented within the sample, the sample of consortia was selected to over-represent consortia offering five lines of learning, or between two to four lines of learning, and under-represent those offering one line of learning.
- **School characteristics** - in order to ensure that the sample could be said to be representative of Diploma learners as a whole, the sample was representative in terms of school-level variables (for example, learner achievement, free school meals eligibility and region).

Tables B1 and B2 present the key characteristics of the sample, at a consortium level, and institution level. In summary, the sample was representative in terms of:

- **Achievement** bands of schools at school level.
- Schools that are **comprehensive to 16 and comprehensive to 18.**
- **Government Office** Region at consortium level – this is not necessarily the case at school level but this will have been influenced by the numbers of schools in consortia in certain regions.
- **FSM** eligibility at consortium level and with a slight over-representation of schools with the highest and lowest percentages of students known to be eligible for free school meals at school level.

Table B1   Representativeness of consortia in the sample

Characteristic	Sample of consortia		All Phase 1 consortia	
	Number	%	Number	%
Government Office Region				
North East	3	10	7	5
North West/Merseyside	4	13	23	16
Yorkshire & The Humber	3	10	13	9
East Midlands	5	17	18	12
West Midlands	3	10	17	12
Eastern	1	3	10	7
London	4	13	20	14
South East	5	17	26	18
South West	2	7	12	8
N=	**30**		**146**	
Learners eligible for Free School Meals in schools associated with consortium				
Less than 10	10	34	47	33
10-20	10	34	51	36
More than 20	9	31	45	31
N=	**29**		**143**	
Lines of learning				
Engineering only	1	3	21	16
Society, Health and Development only	1	3	9	7
Information Technology only	1	3	12	9
Creative and Media only	2	7	25	19
Construction and the Built Environment only	1	3	18	13
2 to 4 lines of learning	20	67	40	30
All 5 lines of learning	4	13	9	7
N=	**30**		**134**	
Type of organisation employing Consortium lead				
FE college	2	7	25	19
School	4	14	35	27
6th form college	1	3	5	4
Training provider	0	0	1	1
Local Authority	17	59	54	41
Other	4	14	11	8
More than one organisation indicated	1	3	0	1
N=	**29**		**132**	

Pre/Post 16 Engineering				
Not planning to deliver	11	37	76	57
Planning to deliver	19	63	58	43
N=	**30**		**134**	
Pre/Post 16 Society, Health and Development				
Not planning to deliver	17	57	97	72
Planning to deliver	13	43	37	28
N=	**30**		**134**	
Pre/Post 16 Information Technology				
Not planning to deliver	16	53	94	70
Planning to deliver	14	47	40	30
N=	**30**		**134**	
Pre/Post 16 Creative and Media				
Not planning to deliver	13	43	79	59
Planning to deliver	17	57	55	41
N=	**30**		**134**	
Pre/Post 16 Construction and the Built Environment				
Not planning to deliver	18	60	94	70
Planning to deliver	12	40	40	30
N=	**30**		**134**	
Schools				
Mostly Comprehensive to 18	11	38	61	43
Other	18	62	82	57
N=	**29**		**143**	

Table B2   Representativeness of institutions in the sample consortia

Characteristic	Sample of institutions		All institutions involved in Diplomas	
	Number	%	Number	%
LEA type				
London Borough	36	14	145	15
Metropolitan Authorities	87	33	299	30
English Unitary Authorities	74	28	157	16
Counties	69	26	394	40
N=	**266**		**995**	
Government Office Region				
North East	10	4	46	5
North West/Merseyside	33	12	170	17
Yorkshire & The Humber	57	21	132	13
East Midlands	40	15	105	11
West Midlands	27	10	99	10
Eastern	6	2	73	7
London	36	14	145	15
South East	31	12	153	15
South West	26	10	72	7
	266		**995**	
Governance				
Academy	6	2	22	2
City Technology College	1	<1	1	<1
Further Education College	22	8	99	10
Community School	152	57	509	51
Community Special School	10	4	31	3
Foundation School	21	8	124	13
Foundation Special School	0	0	1	<1
Pupil Referral Unit	0	0	9	1
Voluntary Aided School	34	13	112	11
Voluntary Controlled School	5	2	20	2
Sixth Form Centre	9	3	30	3
Tertiary College	4	2	22	2
Other institutions	2	1	15	2
N=	**266**		**995**	

School type				
Secondary Modern	4	2	33	3
Comprehensive to 16	107	41	337	34
Comprehensive to 18	95	36	362	37
Grammar	4	2	14	1
Other Secondary schools	6	2	27	3
CTC schools	1	<1	1	<1
Special schools	10	4	32	3
Pupil referral units	0	0	9	1
6th Form colleges	8	3	31	3
Tertiary colleges	4	2	22	2
FE colleges	22	8	101	10
Other institutions	2	1	11	1
Coeducational schools	242	92	893	91
Boys' schools	9	3	40	4
Girls' schools	13	5	44	5
N=	**264**		**980**	
Eligible for FSM 2005				
Lowest 20	14	6	69	9
2nd lowest 20	49	22	155	20
Middle 20	47	21	194	25
2nd highest 20	46	21	205	26
Highest 20	65	29	166	21
N=	**221**		**789**	
Achievement Band (total GCSE point score 2005)				
Lowest band	66	31	204	27
2nd lowest band	44	21	175	23
Middle band	37	17	152	20
2nd highest band	36	17	138	18
Highest band	30	14	93	12
N=	**213**		**762**	

Appendix C: The responding samples

Details are given below about the characteristics of the responding samples of learners, teachers and parents.

C1 The responding learner sample

A total of 820 Year 10 and 176 Year 12 Diploma questionnaires were returned[47], along with 1118 Year 10 and 225 Year 12 comparison questionnaires. Responses were received from 99 institutions across all 30 consortia

Tables C1 and C2 present the characteristics of the Year 10 Diploma and comparison learners who responded to the survey. Diploma respondents are compared with all Diploma Year 10 learners nationally (those registered on DAS in April 2009) and with all learners nationally. The responding comparison learners are compared with all Year 10 non-Diploma learners in all schools which have any Diploma learners, as well as all learners nationally. Tables C3 and C4 show the equivalent information for Year 12 Diploma and comparison learners.

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[47] As many institutions did not provide the number of Diploma learners (see Appendix A), the total number in the target population was not known. It was difficult to calculate response rates.

Table C1 Background characteristics of Year 10 Diploma learners – responding learners, all Year 10 Diploma learners registered on DAS, and all Year 10 learners nationally

Characteristic	Year 10 Diploma respondents to the survey %	*All* Year 10 Diploma learners (from DAS data) %	All Year 10 learners in England %
Gender			
Male	58	63	51
Female	41	36	49
Missing	1	<1	1
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	68	82	85
Eligible	14	18	14
Missing	18	<1	1
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	66	74	76
School Action/Plus	15	24	19
Statement	1	2	4
Missing	18	<1	1
English as an additional language			
No EAL	72	89	88
EAL	10	10	11
Missing	18	1	1
Ethnicity			
White - British	66	79	79
White - Other	2	4	4
Gypsy/Roma	0	<1	<1
Mixed	2	3	3
Asian - Indian	2	2	2
Asian - Pakistani	2	3	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	<1	1	1
Asian - Other	1	1	1
Black - Caribbean	1	2	1
Black - African	2	2	2
Black - Other	1	1	1
Chinese	1	<1	<1
Other	1	1	1
Preferred not to say	1	1	1
Missing	19	1	1
Key Stage 3 Average			
Level 3 and below	4	11	12
Level 4	15	23	18
Level 5	35	41	32
Level 6	23	22	26
Level 7 and above	4	3	9
Missing	19	1	3
Total N =	**820**	**7243**	**587,184**

Table C2   **Background characteristics of Year 10 comparison learners – responding learners, all Year 10 non-Diploma learners in schools with any Diploma students, and all Year 10 learners nationally**

Characteristic	Year 10 comparison respondents to the survey %	*All* Year 10 comparison learners (in schools with any Diploma learners) %	All Year 10 learners in England %
Gender			
Male	45	51	51
Female	55	48	49
Missing	1	1	1
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	74	83	85
Eligible	16	17	14
Missing	10	1	1
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	72	75	76
School Action/Plus	17	22	19
Statement	1	3	4
Missing	10	1	1
English as an additional language			
No EAL	79	87	88
EAL	12	12	11
Missing	10	1	1
Ethnicity			
White - British	71	78	79
White - Other	3	4	4
Gypsy/Roma	0	<1	<1
Mixed	3	3	3
Asian - Indian	3	2	2
Asian - Pakistani	3	3	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	1	1	1
Asian - Other	1	1	1
Black - Caribbean	1	2	1
Black - African	2	2	2
Black - Other	<1	1	1
Chinese	1	<1	<1
Other	1	1	1
Preferred not to say	<1	1	1
Missing	10	2	1
Key Stage 3 Average			
Level 3 and below	10	13	12
Level 4	17	20	18
Level 5	32	34	32
Level 6	25	24	26
Level 7 and above	5	6	9
Missing	10	3	3
	1118	106,133	587,184

Table C3   **Background characteristics of Year 12 Diploma learners –
responding learners, all Year 12 Diploma learners registered on
DAS, and all Year 12 learners nationally**

Characteristic	Year 12 Diploma Respondents to the survey %	*All* Year 12 Diploma learners (from DAS data) %	All Year 12 learners in England %
Gender			
Male	57	54	51
Female	42	47	49
Missing	1	0	0
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	23	85	88
Eligible	2	15	13
Missing	76	0	0
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	17	75	78
School Action/Plus	5	22	18
Statement	2	3	4
Missing	76	0	<1
English as an additional language			
No EAL	23	89	90
EAL	2	11	10
Missing	76	<1	<1
Ethnicity			
White - British	21	78	81
White - Other	1	3	3
Gypsy/Roma	0	<1	<1
Mixed	0	3	3
Asian - Indian	0	2	2
Asian - Pakistani	0	2	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	0	3	1
Asian - Other	1	1	1
Black - Caribbean	0	2	1
Black - African	1	3	2
Black - Other	0	1	<1
Chinese	1	<1	<1
Other	1	1	1
Preferred not to say	0	<1	<1
Missing	76	1	1

Key stage 4 achievement			
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	13	60	64
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	11	37	28
Achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent at grade A*-G	1	2	5
Achieved any passes at GCSE or equivalent	0	0	1
Achieved no passes at GCSE or equivalent	0	1	2
Missing	76	0	<1
Total N =	**176**	**1805**	**597,337**

The missing data for the responding sample is because of a low match to NPD, caused by learners' transition between institutions at age 16.

Table C4   Background characteristics of Year 12 comparison learners – responding learners, all Year 12 non-Diploma learners in schools with any Diploma students, and all Year 12 learners nationally

Characteristic	Year 12 comparison Respondents to the survey %	*All* Year 12 comparison learners (in schools with any Diploma learners) %	All Year 12 learners in England %
Gender			
Male	59	50	51
Female	40	50	49
Missing	1	0	0
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	57	87	88
Eligible	7	13	13
Missing	36	0	0
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	59	79	78
School Action/Plus	4	19	18
Statement	1	2	4
Missing	36	<1	<1
English as an additional language			
No EAL	63	89	90
EAL	1	11	10
Missing	36	<1	<1
Ethnicity			
White - British	58	81	81
White - Other	2	3	3
Gypsy/Roma	0	<1	<1
Mixed	1	3	3
Asian - Indian	1	2	2
Asian - Pakistani	<1	3	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	<1	2	1

Asian - Other	<1	1	1
Black - Caribbean	0	1	1
Black - African	0	2	2
Black - Other	0	1	<1
Chinese	0	<1	<1
Other	<1	1	1
Preferred not to say	1	<1	<1
Missing	36	1	1
Key stage 4 achievement			
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	56	64	64
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	6	29	28
Achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent at grade A*-G	0	5	5
Achieved any passes at GCSE or equivalent	0	<1	1
Achieved no passes at GCSE or equivalent	<1	1	2
Missing	37	<1	<1
Total N =	**225**	**136,770**	**597,337**

The missing data for the responding sample is because of a low match to NPD, caused by learners' transition between institutions at age 16

Amongst the responding Diploma learners, all lines of learning were represented (see Table C5).

Table C5a   Diploma respondents, by line of learning

	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
Creative and Media	26	17
Engineering	23	22
Construction and the Built Environment	14	11
Society, Health and Development	17	23
Information Technology	18	27
No response	1	-
N =	**820**	**176**

A single response item
Based on unweighted data/actual response
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

As shown in Tables C5b and C5c, almost all responding learners who were taking an Engineering Diploma or a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma, pre- and post-16, were male. However, this reflects take-up of these lines of learning nationally, based on information on the take-up of Diplomas in Gateway 1 (2008/09) recorded on the DAS in April 2009. Response from males and females doing an Information Technology Diploma also closely reflect take-up nationally, as around three quarters of learners doing an Information Technology Diploma nationally are male.

Almost all learners taking a Society, Health and Development Diploma nationally are female, pre- and post-16, and therefore the survey respondents reflect the national picture. Those taking Creative and Media nationally are most likely to be female (61 percent compared with 39 percent pre-16, and 54 per cent and 46 per cent respectively post-16); thus, males doing Creative and Media are slightly over-represented in the post-16 responding sample.

Table C5b   Year 10 Diploma respondents, by gender and line of learning

	Males %	Females %	Total N*
Creative and Media	41	59	208
Engineering	86	14	187
Construction and the Built Environment	97	3	115
Society, Health and Development	6	94	142
Information Technology	71	29	150
N = 802**			

Based on unweighted data/actual response
*Total number of learners providing information on line of learning
**Total number of learners providing information on both line of learning and gender
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2009

Table C5c   Year 12 Diploma respondents, by gender and line of learning

	Males %	Females %	Total N*
Creative and Media	52	48	29
Engineering	87	13	39
Construction and the Built Environment	95	5	20
Society, Health and Development	3	98	40
Information Technology	68	32	47
N = 175**			

Based on unweighted data/actual response
*Total number of learners providing information on line of learning
**Total number of learners providing information on both line of learning and gender
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

'Atypical' learners could be described as those who belong to a small minority group. With this in mind, the responding sample included the following 'atypical' learners:

- 27 girls in Year 10 and five in Y12 doing Engineering

- three girls in Year 10 and one in Y12 doing Construction and the Built Environment

- eight boys in Year 10 and one in Year 12 doing Society, Health and Development.

The line of learning taken by responding learners in single sex schools was explored to investigate whether they could be classed as 'atypical'. Amongst the Year 10 sample, there were 58 boys across four boys' schools. Of those, 23 were doing

Construction and the Built Environment, 21 were doing Engineering, 13 were doing Creative and Media, and one was doing Information Technology. None were doing Society, Health and Development so they were not 'atypical'. There were also 38 girls across four girls' schools. Of those, 20 were doing Creative and Media, so were not 'atypical'. Eleven girls were doing Information Technology, but girls doing this Diploma line nationally are not in a *small* minority so are arguably not 'atypical'. Amongst the Year 12 responding sample, there were eight girls in one girls' school doing Information Technology; again, they are arguably not 'atypical'.

As might be expected, given take-up of Diplomas nationally, responding learners in Year 10 were most often taking a Level 2 Diploma, and those in Year 12 were most often taking Level 3.

Table C6   Diploma respondents, by level

	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
Foundation/Level 1	7	9
Higher/Level 2	89	22
Advanced/Level 3	N/A	76
No response	1	1
N =	**820**	**176**

A single response item
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2009

C2   The responding teacher sample

A total of 166 teachers from 74 institutions across 28 of the 30 consortia responded to the teacher survey. Of those 166, 112 taught Diplomas to pre-16 learners and 57 taught post-16 learners (19 taught both and 16 did not give information). Tables C7-C10 below give details of their characteristics. Most were usually based in schools, although almost a fifth were based in FE colleges. Amongst those who taught Diplomas to pre-16 learners, Creative and Media teachers were most represented and those who taught Construction and the Built Environment were least represented. Amongst post-16 teachers, those who taught Level 3 were most represented, and across the lines of learning teachers who taught Construction and the Built Environment were least represented. Teachers were most likely to teach the principal learning element of the Diploma, but all other elements were represented.

Table C7   Type of institution in which teachers were normally based

	%
School (11-18)	45
School (11-16)	30
Further Education College	18
Sixth form college	5
Training Provider	1
Other	1*
N = 166	

A single response item
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009
*Includes one City Learning Centre and one school for learners aged 13-18

Table C8   Line of learning taught pre-16

	Level 1 N*	Level 2 N*
Creative and Media	14	41
Information Technology	5	28
Engineering	6	20
Society, Health and Development	4	20
Construction and the Built Environment	6	7
N = 112		

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A filter question: all those who taught a Diploma pre-16
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009
*Numbers are given instead of percentages, as the number of respondents is small

Table C9   Line of learning taught post-16

	Level 1 N*	Level 2 N*	Level 3 N*
Engineering	-	2	11
Creative and Media	2	6	10
Information Technology	-	4	10
Society, Health and Development	1	10	8
Construction and the Built Environment	-	6	2
N=57			

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A filter question: all those who taught a Diploma post-16
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009
*Numbers are given instead of percentages, as the number of respondents is small

Table C10   Elements of the Diploma taught by responding teachers

	Pre-16 N*	Post-16 N*
Principal learning	90	44
Project/Extended Project	65	23
Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills	65	25
Functional Skills	42	16
Specialist Learning	29	15
Additional Learning	23	15
No response	4	2
N =	**112**	**57**

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
Filter questions: all those who taught a Diploma pre-16 and/or post-16
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009
*Numbers are given instead of percentages, as the number of respondents is small

C3   The responding parent sample

A total of 70 parents/carers of learners who selected to study for a Diploma and 24 of those who did not decide to take a Diploma (a comparison group) took part in a telephone survey in July 2009.

Among the 'Diploma parents', most (61 of the 70) were parents of learners in Year 10 (nine were parents of learners in Year 12). Most (44) were parents of boys. As shown in Table C11, those interviewed included parents of learners who were taking each of the five lines of learning. Most were either parents of learners studying for a Diploma at Level 2 or those unsure of the level of the qualification (see Table C12).

Table C11   Line of learning taken by child

	N*
Engineering	24
Creative and Media	16
Information Technology	12
Society, Health and Development	8
Construction and the Built Environment	10
N=70	

A single response item
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009
*Numbers are given instead of percentages, as the number of respondents is small

Table C12   Level taken by child

	N*
Level 1	9
Level 2	32
Level 3	4
Not sure	25
N=70	

A single response item
Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Teacher Survey, 2009
*Numbers are given instead of percentages, as the number of respondents is small
Amongst the 24 'comparison parents', most (21) were parents of learners in Year 10. Most (18) were parents of boys.

Appendix D: Case-study Sample

D1   The case-study sample of *consortia*

A sub-sample of 15 consortia was selected from the sample of 30 for more in-depth case-study work. The sample was selected to ensure that the following were included:

- **Lines of learning and levels** – to ensure that all lines of learning, at all three levels, were represented.

- **Number of lines of learning** – to include consortia offering different numbers of lines of learning in Phase 1.

- **Geography** – to ensure a geographical spread across the GORs, including rural and urban areas.

- Different **types of institutions** involved in delivery Diplomas.

- **Partnership structure and delivery models** – to ensure that the sample included different types of institutions involved in delivery, different partnership structures and models of delivery (for example, pre-existing and new partnerships and different types of institution involved in delivery).

Further details of the characteristics of the 15 case-study consortia are provided in Table D1.

Criteria	Number of consortia in sample
Government Office Region	
East	0
East Midlands	2
London	2
North East	1
North West	2
South East	2
South West	2
West Midlands	2
Yorkshire and the Humber	2
Urban/rural[48]	
Urban	10
Rural	3
Mixed	2
Lines of Learning [note that all levels offered by consortia are represented]:	
Engineering	11
Creative and Media	10
Society, Health and Development	8
Information Technology	8
Construction and the Built Environment	6
Number of lines of learning:	
Five	3
Four	1
Three	4
Two	5
One	2
Type of Authority:	
Unitary	5
Metropolitan	4
County	4
London Borough	2

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[48] Urban/rural/mixed categories were based on an analysis of census data relating to the number of homes in hamlets in an LA.

D2   The achieved sample of institutions

Across the 15 consortia, 52 institutions were included in this phase of the in-depth case-study research. Table D2 summarises the type of institution.

Table D2   Total numbers of case-study institutions

Type of institution	Number visited
School with sixth form	21
College* (including FE and sixth form colleges)	17
School without sixth form	12
Training Provider	2
Total	**52**

Includes 13 further education colleges, three sixth form colleges and one college of further and higher education

D3   The achieved number of interviewees

Table D3 shows the number of interviewees across the 15 consortia and 52 institutions.

Table D3   Numbers of staff interviews achieved

Type of interviewee[49]	Number of interviews completed
Consortium leads/strategic managers	16*
Total number of line of learning leads	31
Engineering leads	*8*
Creative and Media leads	*7*
Society, Health and Development leads	*7*
Information Technology leads	*6*
Construction and the Built Environment leads	*3*
Senior institution managers	48
Total number of teachers	59
Creative and Media teachers	*16*
Society, Health and Development teachers	*15*
Information Technology teachers	*15*
Engineering teachers	*11*
Construction and the Built Environment teachers	*2*
Employers	13
Higher Education Institutions	3

* Includes one area where the consortium lead and 14-19 strategy manager were interviewed

Tables D4-D8 below illustrate the number of Diploma learners interviewed, pre- and post-16, by line of learning and level.

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[49] Consortia staff have been grouped in this way as interviewees often had dual roles.

Table D4　　Number of learners interviewed, by line of learning

Line of learning	Pre-16		Post-16			Total
	Foundation/ Level 1	Higher/ Level 2	Foundation / Level 1	Higher/ Level 2	Advanced/ Level 3	
ENG	3	27	-	2	16	48
SHD	2	28	-	7	11	48
IT	2	30	2	5	11	50
CAM	2	32	-	8	10	52
CBE	3	8	-	-	-	11
Total	12	125	2	22	48	209

D5　　Pre-16 interviewees, by gender

Line of learning	Pre-16				Total
	Foundation/Level 1		Higher/Level 2		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
ENG	3	0	26	1	30
SHD	0	2	1	27	30
IT	2	0	25	5	32
CAM	1	1	8	24	34
CBE	3	0	6	2	11
Total	9	3	66	59	137
	12		125		

D6　　Post-16 interviewees, by gender

Line of learning	Post-16						Total
	Foundation/Level 1		Higher/Level 2		Advanced/Level 3		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
ENG	0	0	2	0	16	0	18
SHD	0	0	1	6	0	11	18
IT	2	0	4	1	11	0	18
CAM	0	0	3	5	4	6	18
CBE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	0	10	12	31	17	72
	2		22		48		

In relation to gender, Appendix C defines 'atypical' learners as those who belong to a small minority group (for example, girls who do Engineering or Construction and the Built Environment, or boys who do Society, Health and Development. Tables D5 and D6 indicate that only five learners interviewed were 'atypical' and thus this number was not large enough to conduct separate meaningful analysis of the experiences of 'atypical' learners.

Table D7   Number of learners interviewed, by level

Foundation/Level 1	Higher/Level 2	Advanced/Level 3
14	147	48

Table D8   Number of learners interviewed pre-16 and post-16

Pre-16	Post-16
137	72

Appendix E: Tables

The tables below summarise the consortia's approaches to delivery of Diplomas as discussed in Chapter 3.

Table E1: Planned delivery compared with actual delivery in the 15 case-study areas (pre-16)

Consortia	ENG		SHD		IT		CBE		CAM	
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2
1	*	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	*
2	-	-	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	*	*	X	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	X	*	-	-	-	-	*	*	-	-
5	*	*	-	-	-	*	-	-	X	*
6	-	-	X	*	-	-	-	-	X	*
7	-	*	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	*
8	*	*	X	*	X	*	*	*	-	*
9	*	*	-	*	*	*	-	*	*	*
10	-	-	-	-	X	*	-	-	*	*
11	*	*	-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
12	-	*	-	-	-	*	-	*	X	*
13	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	-
14	*	*	-	-	-	-	*	*	*	*
15	X	*	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-

Key:
X   Originally planned, but did not start in September 2009
*   Started delivery in September 2009
-         No original plans to deliver

Table E2:   Planned delivery compared with actual delivery in the 15 case-study areas (post-16)

Consortia	ENG			SHD			IT			CBE			CAM		
	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L3
1	-	-	*	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	-	*	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	*
6	-	-	-	-	*	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	*
7	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	*
8	-	-	X	-	-	*	*	*	*	-	-	*	-	X	*
9	*	*	*	X	X	*	-	-	*	-	*	X	-	-	*
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	*
11	X	-	*	*	-	*	*	-	X	X	-	X	-	-	*
12	-	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	X	-	-	X
13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	X	X	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	*	X	X	*
15			*	*	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Key:
X   Originally planned, but did not start in September 2009
*   Started delivery in September 2009
-         No original plans to deliver

Table E3:   Delivery models in the 15 case-study consortia

Models	Number of consortia pre-16	Number of consortia post-16
Model A Learners travel between their own school and a FE college or training provider for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	9	3
Model B Learners study *all* of their Diploma in a FE college Or training provider (outside their 'home' institution	3	-
Model C All Diploma learning takes place within thlearners' own school	10	5*
Model D** All Diploma learning takes place in a partner 'host' School	2	1
Model E Learners travel between their own school and another/other school(s) for their Diploma learning; delivery occurs in both locations	6	1*
Model F All Diploma learning takes place within the learners' own school or college	N/A as pre-16	10

*School sixth forms
**Model not included as an option in the survey

Table E4: Prevalent delivery models by line of learning (case-study consortia)

Line of learning	Models pre-16*	Models post-16*
ENG	A	F
SHD	A/C	F
IT	C	F
CBE	A	F
CAM	C	F

*See Table E3 above for a description of the models

Appendix F: Summary of findings relating to Diploma line of learning and level

Where particular issues or differences emerged that related to a specific line of learning or level, this has been discussed in the main report. For ease of reference, this appendix draws together the evidence that relates to each individual line of learning. In considering the evidence it is worth noting that this draws on quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data from the case-study visits. Consequently, an issue that emerged from the analysis, or in the qualitative interviews, in relation to one line of learning may not have emerged for another and there is not always comparable evidence available for each of the lines of learning. In addition, while data was collected for each of the lines of learning, in some cases (in particular Construction and the Built Environment) the number of survey respondents or interviewees is small and the evidence should therefore be viewed as indicative rather than conclusive.

F1: Diploma line of learning

Construction and the Built Environment

Diploma delivery	**Common structural models:** Most often, learners' own school and a FE college or training provider collaborated due to the facilities and equipment available in partner institutions. **ASL:** Amongst the sample, ASL was most likely to have included (for Year 10 learners) another construction- related vocational qualification or product design. Year 12 learners were more likely to have been doing graphics / graphic design or a surveying qualification. **Barriers to work experience:** Health and safety issues associated with learners being on construction sites. **Involvement of Employers:** The economic situation was specifically said to have affected employer capacity for involvement in this line of learning.
Learner choice	Year 10 learners were attracted by the subject matter. Year 12 learners commonly chose this Diploma as they felt it would *help them to get into HE/university.* Learners were likely to have family in the construction industry and related trades and wanted to do something practical.
Satisfaction with the Diploma course	Across all lines of learning, the majority of learners were satisfied with their Diploma course and no significant difference emerged between lines of learning. Many, across all lines of learning, enjoyed the applied or *'hands-on approach'* to learning although there was some evidence that a greater proportion of the learners taking Construction and Built Environment, in contrast to the other lines of learning, appeared to value this aspect.
Attitudes to learning in general	Students were significantly less positive (as were those doing Information Technology and Society, Health and Development) in terms of their attitudes to education in general then those young people *not* taking a Diploma. Overall students lacked confidence in speaking in class discussions.

Future progression	Year 10 learners on this Diploma were likely to be considering a work-based route and were least likely to consider a course-based route compared with other progression options.
Future take-up (referring to September 2009)	The current economic climate was expected to impact negatively on learners choosing to take this Diploma in the future due to publicised unemployment in these industries.

Creative and Media

Diploma delivery	**Common structural models:** Delivery was most often in-house without any support from partners, most often because of no perceived need to collaborate, although there were examples of unwillingness. **ASL:** Amongst the Year 10 survey sample, ASL was most likely to have included media studies, art/ art and design, and drama. Year 12 learners were also likely to be doing photography. **Employer engagement:** The economic situation was specifically said to have affected employer capacity for involvement, particularly as many organizations in the sector are SMEs.
Teaching, learning and assessment	Considered to facilitate innovative teaching and learning approaches by staff.
Learner choice	Learners in both year groups were more likely than other Diploma students to have chosen it because *the course sounded interesting*, or because they wanted to *do something different to the other courses they were taking.* Year 10 learners doing Creative and Media were also more interested in doing a Diploma than those doing other lines of learning because they wanted to *try a different way of* learning, although this was not such a concern for those in Year 12. Creative and Media students were the least attracted, at the time of taking their options, by the possibility that the Diploma might *help them to get into HE/university.* These learners were less clear about their plans for the future at the time of their option choices.
Satisfaction with the Diploma course	Across all lines of learning, the majority of learners were satisfied with their Diploma course and no significant difference emerged between lines of learning. In general learners indicated that the course was '*as expected'.*
Attitudes to learning in general	There was no significant difference for those studying Creative and Media (or those doing Engineering) and those *not* studying for a Diploma in the level of their positivity towards education.
Future progression	Year 10 learners were less likely than those on other lines to know whether they would be working or studying in a similar subject area to their Diploma in the future. Year 12 learners on this line of learning were particularly keen to want to go on to higher education, and generally planned to continue in this area of study.

Engineering

Diploma delivery	**Common structural models:** Most often, learners' own school and a FE college or training provider collaborate for pre-16 delivery, due to the facilities and equipment available at the partner institution. **Involvement of Training Providers and Employers:** The economic situation was specifically said to have affected both trainer provider and employer capacity for involvement in this line of learning. **Barriers to work experience:** Health and safety issues associated with learners being on construction sites were noted. **ASL:** Amongst the survey sample of learners, ASL was most likely to have included art/art and design, resistant materials and mathematics qualifications.
Teaching, learning and assessment	The engineering line was considered to facilitate innovative teaching and learning approaches by staff.
Learner choice	Learners were attracted by the breadth of the qualification within the area of engineering, which they felt would enhance the marketability of their qualification and enable them to progress into careers with, what several of the learners termed as, '*good prospects'*.
Satisfaction with the Diploma course	Across all lines of learning, the majority of learners were satisfied with their Diploma course and no significant difference emerged between lines of learning. Where there was dissatisfaction with this line of learning, a prevalent reason was the view that the course did not include enough practical or active learning opportunities.
Attitudes to learning in general	There was no significant difference between those studying Engineering and those *not* studying for a Diploma in the level of positivity towards learning (this was also the case for those doing Creative and Media). Engineering was the only line of learning in which learners were *not* significantly *less* committed to learning in general than the comparison group of learners not doing a Diploma.
Future progression	Year 10 learners taking this Diploma (or a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma) were more likely than learners doing other lines to be considering a work-based learning route post-16 (such as an Apprenticeship). In addition, over half of the Year 10 learners studying Engineering intended to go on to study a course or start a job in the same subject as their Diploma. Those Year 10 learners doing Engineering who wanted to go on to study a Diploma in the future most often cited a desire to widen their skills base in order to progress to university. Year 12 learners taking Engineering Diplomas were particularly keen (along with those doing Creative and Media) to go onto university after their course and continue in this subject.
Future take-up (referring to September 2009)	The current economic recession was expected to impact negatively on learners choosing to take this Diploma in the future due to publicised unemployment in these industries.

Information Technology

Diploma delivery	**Common structural models:** Most often delivered in-house without any support from partners, usually because there was no perceived *need* to collaborate. **ASL:** Amongst the survey sample of learners, ASL was most likely to have included business studies, graphics/ graphic design, or product design.
Teaching, learning and assessment	There was a widespread view amongst teaching staff that opportunities for avoiding a linear approach and for enlivening learning were restricted by the assessment model.
Learner choice	Learners were attracted by the breadth of the qualification within the area of IT, which they felt would enhance the marketability of their qualification and enable them to progress into careers with, what several of the learners termed as, '*good prospects'*. Many also welcomed the opportunity to study content relating to business (although some who had not been informed of this reported dissatisfaction with too much business-related content). IT students suggested that potential Diploma students should be made aware that the IT Diploma includes a significant element of business studies.
Satisfaction with the Diploma course	Across all lines of learning, the majority of learners were satisfied with their Diploma course and no significant difference emerged between lines of learning. Diploma learners studying IT had a less positive *attitude* towards their Diploma course than students studying towards any other line of learning. Prevalent reasons for dissatisfaction included the view that the course did not present enough practical or applied learning opportunities, and the extent of unexpected business content (in some consortia).
Attitudes to learning in general	Learners doing IT (along with those doing Society, Health and Development and Construction and the Built Environment Diplomas) were significantly less positive in terms of their attitudes to education in general then those young people not taking a Diploma.
Future progression	Year 12 learners were less likely to be decided on their future (than Year 12 learners taking other lines of learning) with many considering both employment and higher education, but generally wanted to continue in the area of IT.
Future take-up (referring to September 2009)	Lower than expected take-up in September 2009 was anticipated and felt to be because the name of the Diploma did not represent the course content which was described as more business-orientated than the name 'IT' would suggest.

Society, Health and Development

Preparation for delivery	Knowledge in relation to the justice element of the Diploma had proved an obstacle for some staff but this had largely been overcome by training provided at the consortium level.
Diploma delivery	Models of delivery varied and this line of learning was delivered in-house and between a school and FE college or training provider. **ASL:** Amongst the survey sample of learners, ASL was most likely to have included (for Year 10 learners) child development or sociology / social studies. Year 12 learners were likely to be doing health and social care or human physiology **Employer engagement:** This was generally felt to be less challenging for this line of learning than for others because contacts tended to be with large public service organisations as distinct from smaller businesses affected by the current economic climate. However, there were some **barriers to work experience**, such as access to the health and community justice sectors, which were said to be limited due to age restrictions and legal issues.
Teaching, learning and assessment	The large content of the Diploma, either in terms of the principal learning units, or the different components, was raised as a challenge for this line of learning. Some had found a tension between trying to use interesting teaching methods and course content, which was described as 'dry'.
Learner choice	Year 10 students were more likely than students opting for other lines of learning to have chosen the Diploma because it was *related to their career.* Year 12 students were the most likely (of all Diploma learners surveyed in this age group) to have chosen it because they thought it *would help to get into HE/university.* Learners were more likely than those on other lines to have known their exact career goals at the time of their option choices.
Attitudes to learning in general	Learners doing Society, Health and Development (along with those taking IT and Construction and the Built Environment) were significantly less positive in terms of their attitudes to education in general then those young people not taking a Diploma.
Future progression	Over half of Year 10 learners intended to go on to study a course or start a job in the same subject as their Diploma.

F2:   Diploma Level

As was the case nationally, (according to information on the take-up of Diplomas in Gateway 1/2008-09 recorded on the Diploma Aggregation Service in April 2009), Diplomas at pre-16 Level 2 were most often delivered and taken-up across the sample of consortia. Therefore, most of the data summarised in this report has reflected experiences of implementing, teaching and learning Diplomas at Level 2 pre-16. However, there are some specific messages concerning Levels 1 and 3 which are worth noting.

Level 1 was less widely offered than Level 2 pre-16, generally because teachers were uncertain about learners' progression from Level 1 once they finished their Diploma at age 16 (with Level 1 students only being able to achieve equivalent to grades D-G at GCSE, meaning they would not be able to progress on to a Level 3 course post-16). Where Level 1 courses were being delivered, there were examples of institutions combining classes of Level 1 and 2 learners, either because the number of Level 1 learners was too small to make separate classes viable, or because staff considered the learners' Diploma result to be dependent on their ability and progress throughout the course. Some interviewees felt Levels 1 and 2 should not be co-taught due to different guided learning hours and curriculum coverage. Indeed, where this was happening, some challenges with differentiation between the Levels had been encountered in class (for example, in relation to assessment). Where co-teaching was not taking place, there were reports of some Level 1 courses possibly not being sustainable in the long-term due to low take-up and thus small classes.

Post-16/Level 3 Diplomas were not always offered in a consortium, either because of a deliberate focus on pre-16 delivery, or because of uncertainty over the acceptance of Diplomas by HEIs. That said, around half of the young people who were surveyed in Year 12 and were taking Level 3 Diploma were planning to progress onto Higher Education and did not perceive their Diploma as a hindrance to this aim.

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