



A Profile of HEAR Schools 2008

UCD Geary Institute UCD New ERA
NUI Maynooth Access Programme



NUI MAYNOOTH
Oifiscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

A Profile of HEAR Schools 2008

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Contents

A Profile of HEAR Schools 2008

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	4
Section 1: General School Profile	7
1.1 Type of school	8
1.2 Teachers and pupils	9
1.3 Medical card holders	9
1.4. Contact with higher education institutions (HEI)	9
Section 2: Matriculation and Progression	10
2.1 Methodological considerations	11
2.2 Leaving Certificate Class making a CAO Application	11
2.3 Average Leaving Certificate points	12
2.4 Leaving Certificate class achieving more than 400 points	13
2.5 Leaving Certificate class progressing to higher education institutions	14
2.6 Leaving Certificate class progressing to an institute of technology	16
2.7 Factors affecting the availability of matriculation subjects	17
2.8 Further comments	19
Section 3: Barriers to Progression to Higher Education	20
3.1 School factors	21
3.2 Pupil factors	21
3.3 Other factors	22
Section 4: Comments	23
4.1 Participants comments on barriers to progression to higher education	24
4.2 Comments/Issues	24
Section 5: UCD New ERA and NUI Maynooth Services	26
5.1 New ERA: participation in access activities	27
5.2 Additional services suggested	28
5.3 NUI Maynooth's Access Programme (MAP): participation in access activities	28
5.4 Additional services suggested	29
Summary	30
Appendix 1: General School Profile Graphs	33

Acronyms

DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEAR	Higher Education Access Route
KITE	Kildare into Tertiary Education
IOT	Institutes of Technology
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
MAP	Maynooth Access Programme
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course
TAP	Trinity Access Programme
VEC	Vocational Education Committees
UCD	University College Dublin
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
NUIM	National University of Ireland Maynooth
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
UL	University of Limerick
DCU	Dublin City University
CAO	Central Applications Office
HEI	Higher Education Institution

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

The aim of this report is to build a profile of the schools who are part of the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR). The HEAR scheme is a collaborative effort between seven participating Higher Education Institutions which aims to support students from lower socio-economic groups by providing Leaving Certificate points concessions and post entry support.

The survey forms part of an evaluation of UCD's higher education access programme – New ERA.¹ This evaluation is funded by the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) and is conducted in conjunction with NUI Maynooth. The survey was completed by 158 HEAR linked schools between March-April 2008. The school profile focuses on the general characteristics of the schools, the Leaving Certificate class of 2006/2007, progression to higher education in 2007, factors considered barriers to higher level education and retrospective information on the class of 2001.

Key findings

General school profile

- The average number of teachers working in a linked school is 41
- On average 90.5 hours per month are allocated to a career guidance teacher
- On average 61 hours per month are allocated to a home school liaison teacher
- The average percentage of Leaving Certificate students taking the Leaving Certificate Applied is 11.81%
- The average percentage of students taking a Foundation Level course is 19.41%
- 60.7% of schools stated they had contact with a university before becoming linked to the HEAR scheme
- 57% stated they were involved with other outreach activities apart from the HEAR scheme
- 67.7% stated they had links with community projects

Progression

- Between 2001 and 2007 schools reported an increase in the number of students applying through the CAO system
- Between 2001 and 2007 schools reported a marginal decrease in the level of Leaving Certificate points
- Over 50% of the sample stated that there had been no change in progression rates to university and institutes of technology (I.O.T's), but more schools reported an increase in the percentage of students progressing to third level than reported a decrease from 2001 to 2007

- Pupil factors are seen as having the greatest impact on progression
- School factors are seen to have the least impact on progression
- Cultural factors were seen to play a role in facilitating progression though they were not seen as important as pupil factors

Matriculation

- Respondents reported that an insufficient number of students selecting a subject was the most influential factor in the provision of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate level
- Student ability was reported as the most important factor in the provision of Leaving Certificate Higher Level matriculation subjects
- The size of the school, staff allocation by the Department of Education and Science and student motivation, were also cited as the main factors influencing provision

Schools' comments on barriers to access

- Schools identified family factors, the under-resourcing of schools and a lack of information about third level as barriers to access
- Student lifestyle factors such as peer influences and part-time work were reported as barriers to higher level education
- Cultural/social and financial factors are the main headings under which the different barriers to higher level education can be subdivided
- Schools suggested increasing facilities and human resources as a means to tackling educational disadvantage
- Schools suggested early intervention starting from primary level in educational disadvantage
- Increased exchange between the different stakeholders in education and the mentoring of students from backgrounds with little or no history of progression were also suggested to tackle educational disadvantage

Schools' satisfaction with HEAR

- 86.1% of schools linked to the UCD New ERA Programme who participated in the survey rated HEAR as extremely beneficial
- 80% of schools linked to the NUI Maynooth Access Programme who participated in the survey rated HEAR as extremely beneficial

Introduction



Introduction

The decision to continue with education after secondary level is one of the most important decisions a young person will make. Proceeding to higher education conveys significant financial and non-financial benefits to an individual. However not everyone has the same chance to avail of this opportunity and there is a significant socio-economic gradient in higher education as demonstrated by numerous studies.

So while the numbers of students attending higher level education has increased across the board, the increase in students attending from lower socio-economic groups has not kept pace with those attending from other socio-economic groups. This inequity has endured despite Ireland's recent economic changes. Reducing this inequality is a major challenge for all stakeholders in the education process.

Several governmental acts and policy documents have been developed to address this inequality including *The Higher Education Authority Act (1971)*, *The Universities Act (1997)*, *The Education Act (1998)* and the *Report of the High Level Group on University Equality Policies (2004)*.² The Green Paper: *Education for a Changing World's* (1992) stipulated that direct links between third level institutions and selected schools should be developed, with designation of an appropriate staff member in each third level institution to oversee this and that support and access programmes should be developed to increase access and improve retention.

Third level access programmes were developed as a response. The White Paper '*Charting our Educational Future*' (1995) recognized the effectiveness of securing a set number of places for those from disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of tackling educational disadvantage. In 2001, NUI Maynooth, University College Dublin, Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin City University, Trinity College Dublin, University of Limerick and University College Cork coordinated their access programmes and created 'the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) Scheme' which was established as an alternative route of entry to third level education. The scheme allows students under the age of 23 from linked schools to apply for reduced point entry to any participating higher education institution. Schools linked to participating institutions are also part of an extensive pre-entry schools programme run by each of the participating institutions with the financial support of the HEA (Higher Education Authority) and in some cases, private sponsorship.

In 2006 the Strategic Innovation Fund provided resources for an evaluation of the UCD New ERA Widening Participation Initiative in conjunction with NUI Maynooth's Access Programme (MAP). As part of this evaluation which is being conducted by the UCD Geary Institute, a survey of schools linked through the HEAR scheme was conducted in 2008.

The numbers of students attending higher level education has increased across the board, the increase in students attending from lower socio-economic groups

The aim of the school survey is to build a profile of the HEAR schools and to document changes in Leaving Certificate outcomes and progression rates over time, in addition to capturing the schools involvement with third level access programmes. Principals and career guidance teachers were also asked to describe the factors that encourage or hinder access to third level for their students. The report examines the importance of both student and school factors in progression to higher education.

Sections one, two and three presents the results of the survey in terms of the general school profile, matriculation and progression rates, and barriers to progression. Section four summarises comments made by respondents on barriers to access and other more general comments. Section five deals with perceptions of NUI Maynooth services and UCD New ERA services. The final section concludes the report.

Methodology

A postal survey was conducted of the 308 schools linked to the HEAR scheme. The survey was posted on the 31st of March 2008. The questionnaire was addressed to the school principal and the career guidance counselor. Each questionnaire was given an interview code in order to facilitate identification of schools that completed the survey.³

A total of 158 schools responded which resulted in a response rate of 51 percent. This included 25 (45%) schools linked to the New ERA access programme, 34 (69%) from schools linked to NUI Maynooth and 100 (48%) schools linked to the five other institutions participating in the HEAR Scheme. Out of the total number of respondents this can be broken down as follows: Trinity 4.4%, DCU 12.6%, DIT 11.9%, UCC 17% and UL 17%. For the New ERA schools an effective response rate of 40% was calculated based on the number of students sent to UCD by each of the schools that participated in the survey⁴

As the evaluation is funded through the Strategic Innovation Fund and is a joint project between UCD and NUI Maynooth three different versions of the survey were administered. The basic survey was sent to all schools linked to HEAR, while an additional section focusing on UCD New ERA's services was sent to schools linked to UCD and an additional section focusing on MAP's (Maynooth Access Programme) services was sent to schools linked to NUI Maynooth.⁵

The statistics derived from the survey provide an insight into the issues that are relevant to the HEAR schools and therefore to the work of access programmes participating on the HEAR scheme. The response rate for schools linked to the New ERA programme was low. While questions on the timing of the project were addressed in the pilot study, the administration of the questionnaire coincided with the Whole School Evaluations conducted by the Department of Education and with school exams. It is recommended that the survey become a regular part of the HEAR programme, taking place every two years, at a time of year when the burden on the schools is lowest.

1: General School Profile



1 General School Profile

The first aim of the survey is to create a picture of the schools participating in the HEAR scheme. This involved gathering data on the general characteristics of the schools, such as the number of hours allotted to career guidance and home school liaison, and whether the schools are rural or urban. The survey also examines the percentage of students who came from families with medical cards in order to provide an estimate of the percentage of students in the school who were eligible for the HEAR scheme. Although the medical card was not a qualifying criteria for the HEAR scheme it is useful in determining the proportion of students who may meet income criteria.

1.1 Type of school

There are approximately 772 post-primary schools in Ireland. The majority of schools (406) are classified as secondary schools. These schools are privately owned, yet are run by boards of governors and are heavily subsidized by the state. The largest number of boy only/girl only schools can be defined as secondary schools. A small minority of secondary schools charge fees.⁶

263 schools are classified as vocational schools. These schools are publicly owned and funded, and are administered by VEC's (Vocational Education Committees). 103 schools are classified as community and comprehensive schools which combine academic and technical education.

There are 203 schools currently listed as DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools.⁷ These schools are identified as DEIS for the purposes of *'qualifying for resources, both human and financial, according to the degree of disadvantage experienced'* (Department of Education and Science, 2005).⁶ The HEAR scheme works closely with all 203 DEIS schools. The UCD New ERA programme works with 53 schools located in Dublin, Wexford, Laois and Mayo. NUI Maynooth works with 49 schools located in Donegal, Kildare, Dublin, Westmeath, Meath and Offaly. All designated disadvantaged schools are linked to the HEAR scheme. In addition, some schools which may not have DEIS status but are located in a designated disadvantaged area, are also linked to HEAR. For example NUI Maynooth is linked to all schools in Donegal based on geographical disadvantage. In total HEAR works with 308 Schools (in 2008). In the sample of schools that responded to the survey 104 schools were classified as DEIS and 54 schools were classified as non-DEIS (Appendix 1, Fig 1.11).

The majority of the schools which responded to the survey were co-educational (84.9%) with one-fifth catering for less than 200 students and one fifth catering for between 300 and 399 students. 92% catered for less than 700 students. Half the schools classified themselves as vocational, 26.4% as secondary schools and 7% classified themselves as community-comprehensive (Appendix 1, Fig1.12, Fig 1.13).

38.6% of the sample felt that they catered for a predominantly urban population, 22.8% stated that they catered for a mixed population and 38.6% stated that they catered for a predominantly rural population (Appendix 1, Fig 1.14).

1.2 Teachers and pupils

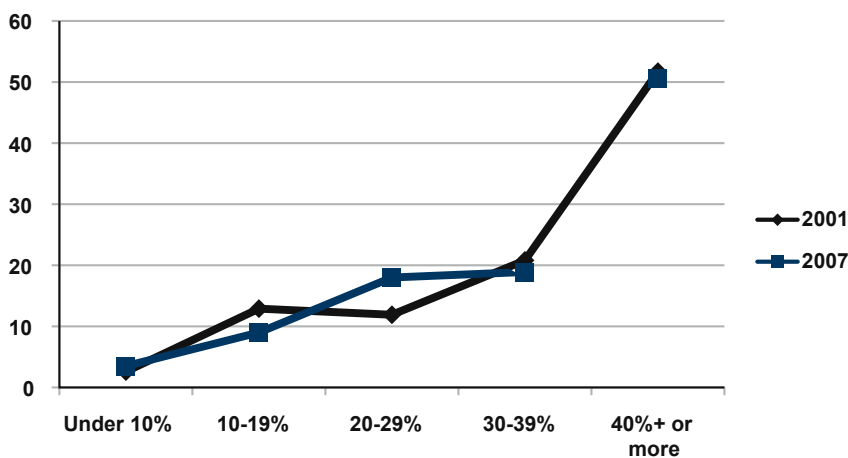
Teachers are employed by the individual schools and the number of hours worked is allocated by the school. However, the Department of Education stipulates a minimum number of 18 hours a week for a teacher to be considered whole time. Part-time teachers can work a minimum of 11 hours a week and a maximum of 22. The number of hours allocated to career guidance is calculated by dividing the number of pupils attending a school. If a school has less than 200 pupils then 11 hours per week are allocated, this increases as the number of pupils attending increases to a maximum of 47 hours per week for a school with 1000+ pupils.

Weighted by the size of the school in this sample, the average number of teachers working in a linked school is 40. The average number of hours a month allocated to a career guidance teacher and to a home school liaison teacher is 90.5, and 61 respectively. The average number of traveller children per school is 6 and the average number of immigrant children per school is 5. The average percentage of students taking the Leaving Certificate Applied is 11.81 and the average percentage of students taking Foundation Level is 19.41 (Appendix 1, Fig 1.21).

1.3 Medical card holders

The majority of schools reported that the percentage of medical card holders was greater than 30%. There is not a large difference between the number of schools reporting a particular percentage of medical card holders in 2001 and the number of schools reporting the same percentage in 2007. This suggests that the number of medical card holders has remained constant. There was marginal increase (0.9%) in the percentage of schools reporting that less than 10% of their students were medical card holders from 2001 to 2007. There was a 3.9% decrease in the number of schools reporting 10-19% as the percentage of medical card holders and a 6% increase in the number schools reporting the percentage of students with medical cards as being between 20 and 29% from 2001 to 2007 (Fig 1.31).

Fig 1.31 Percentage of Medical Card Holders



1.4. Contact with higher education institutions (HEI)

60.7% of schools surveyed stated that they did have contact with HEI's before they became part of the HEAR scheme. 57% stated that they were involved with other outreach activities before joining HEAR and 67.7% stated that they had links with community projects (Appendix, Fig 1.41).

60.7%

of schools surveyed stated that they did have contact with HEI's before the HEAR scheme

2:

Matriculation and Progression



2 Matriculation and Progression

One of the main aims of the study is to examine whether the rates of progression to third level education have changed over time. This section of the report compares the progression rates of the Leaving Certificate class of 2006/2007 to the Leaving Certificate Class of 2001. This section also examines factors that affect the availability of matriculation subjects to students taking both Ordinary and Higher Level Leaving Certificate subjects.

2.1 Methodological considerations

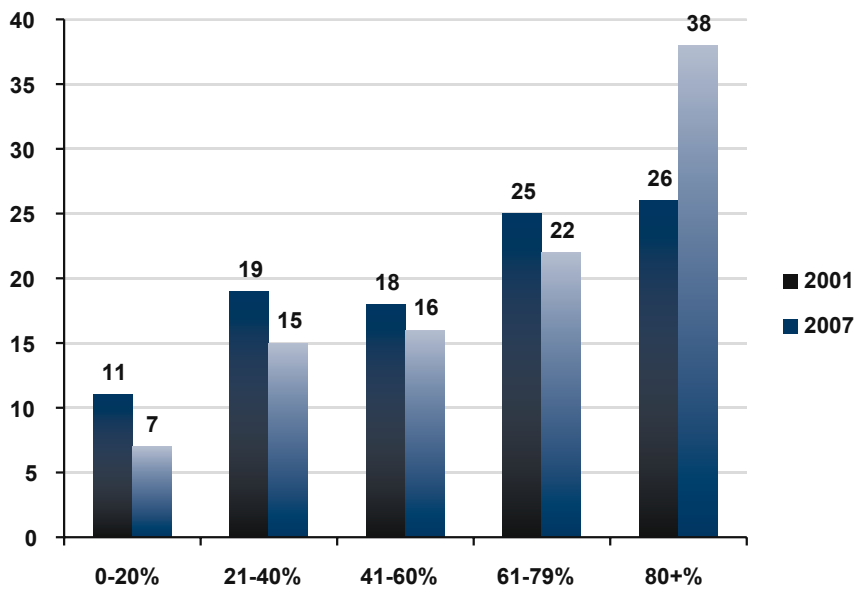
It should be noted that this information on progression rates is not necessarily based on formal statistics held by the schools on progression rates, but rather on the schools subjective assessment of the number of students progressing. As reliable records for the year 2001 were often unavailable at the school level, information on progression rates were estimated based on the closest possible year. Schools also mentioned that they found providing statistics on 2001 and 2007 difficult, as there was often a large variation of ability between different years. For these reasons it is important that these statistics are read as perceptions of progression rather than actual progression rates.

To assess how progression rates have changed from 2001 to 2007, a variable was created to measure whether a school reported an increase, a decrease or no change in: *CAO applications, students achieving greater than 400 points, progression to university and progression to institutes of technology*. It is recommended that in future HEAR surveys these questions should be reported as continuous measures to ensure that mean values can be calculated. This will make it easier to compare changes in progression from year to year.

2.2 Leaving Certificate class making a CAO application

According to the sample population, the percentage of the Leaving Certificate class making a CAO application has risen between 2001 and 2007. In 2001, 11.3% of schools reported the percentage of the Leaving Certificate class making a CAO application was less than 20%. This dropped to 7.1 % in 2007. 25.1% of schools reported that between 61-79% of students made a CAO application in 2001. The percentage of schools making the same claim dropped to 22.7% in 2007. 26.4% reported the percentage of students making a CAO application as being greater than 80% in 2001 and this figure increased to 38.3% in 2007 (Fig 2.21).

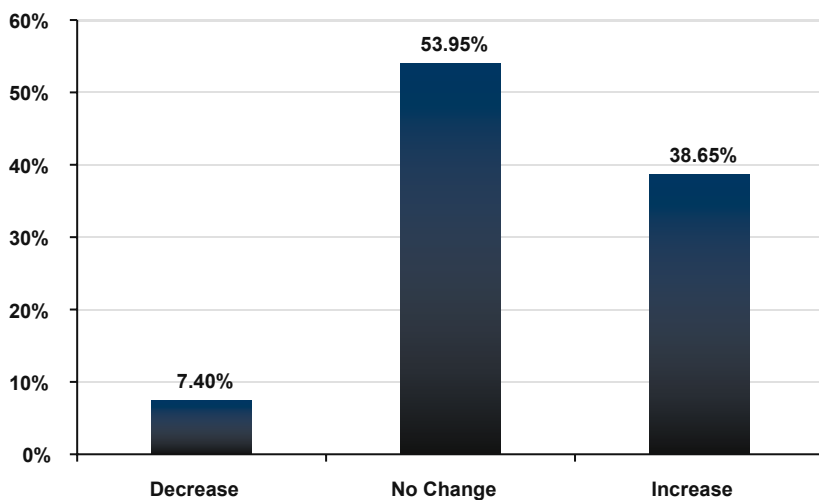
Fig 2.21 Percentage of Leaving Certificate class that made a CAO application



While 50% of schools surveyed exhibited no change in the percentage of students making a CAO application from 2001 to 2007, 38% exhibited an increase in the percentage of students making CAO applications and only 7.4% exhibited a decrease (Fig 2.22) In general the number of students making CAO applications has increased.

The number of students making CAO applications has increased

Fig 2.22 Percentage Increase or Decrease in CAO application

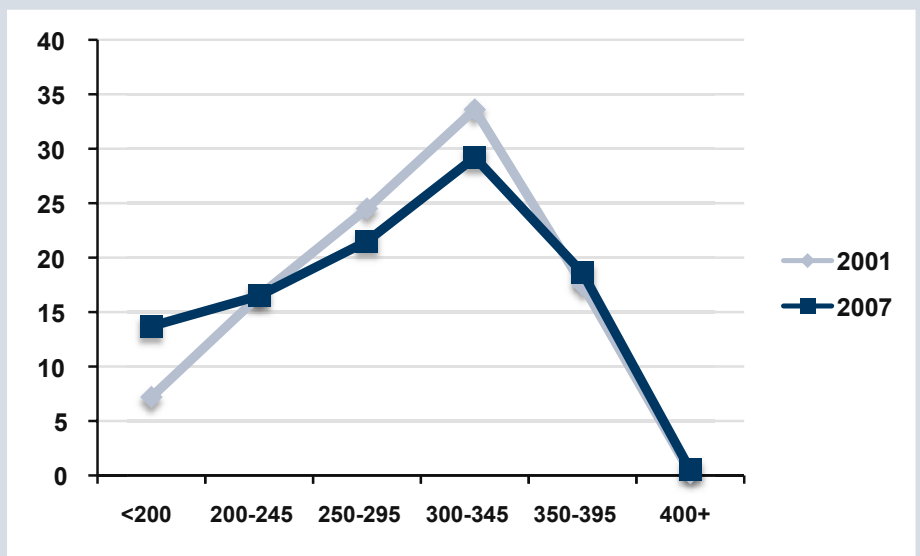


2.3 Average Leaving Certificate points

The majority of schools surveyed reported that the average Leaving Certificate points were between 250 and 350. The percentage of schools reporting students achieving 400 or more points is less than 1% for both years. Whereas in 2001 almost 34% of students were found in the 300-345 points category, this fell to 29.2% in 2007. At the same time the proportion of students in the less than 200 points range almost doubled (Fig 2.31). In general it appears that the number of points achieved by students has dropped between 2001 and 2007.

It appears that the number of points achieved by students has dropped between 2001 and 2007

Fig. 2.31 Traditional Leaving Certs Points



2.4 Leaving Certificate class achieving more than 400 points

The percentage of students achieving greater than 400 points appears to have dropped between 2001 and 2007 according to the sample population. 38.5% of the schools surveyed reported that less than 10% of the Leaving Certificate class achieved greater than 400 points in 2001. This increased to 46.4% in 2007. However this is balanced by a marginal increase in the number of schools reporting that more than 30% of their students achieved more than 400 points. (Fig 2.41)

61% of schools surveyed exhibited no change in the percentage of students achieving greater than 400 points from 2001 to 2007. 17% of schools reported an increase in the number of students achieving greater than 400 and 20% reported a decrease. (Fig 2.42).

Overall the majority of schools reported no change in the percentage of students achieving greater than 400 points from 2001 to 2007, however marginally more schools are reporting a decline in the percentage of students achieving greater than 400 than those reporting an increase.

The majority of schools reported no change in the percentage of students achieving greater than 400 points from 2001 to 2007

Fig. 2.41 Percentage of the Leaving Certificate Class achieving more than 400 Points

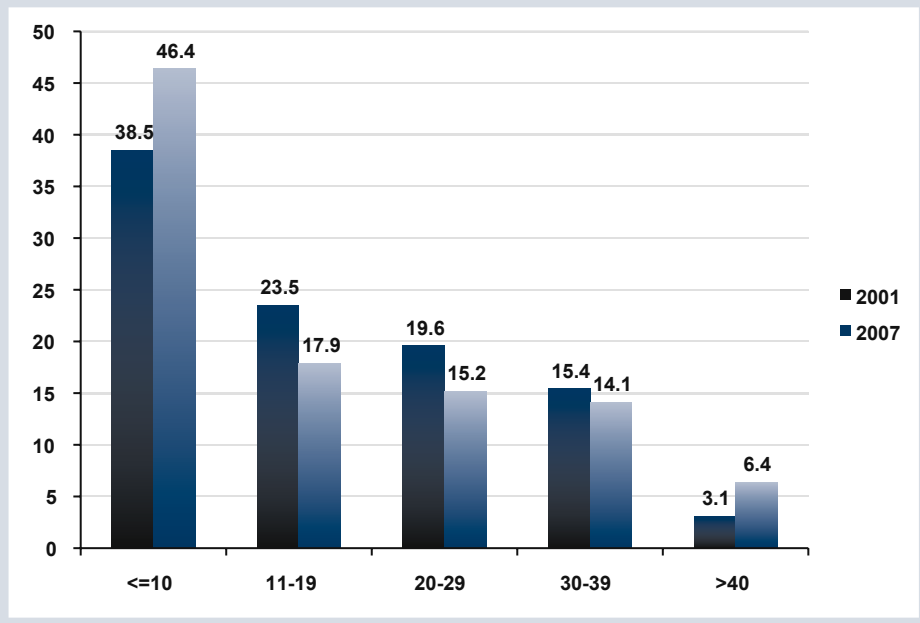
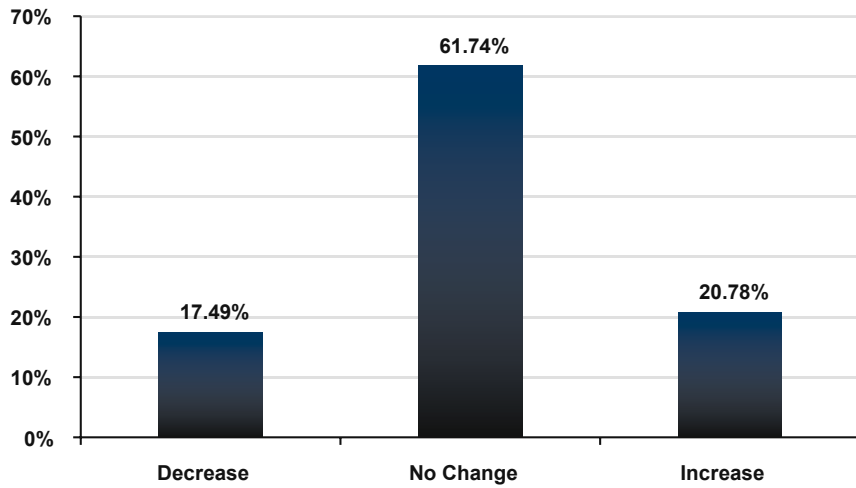


Fig 2.42 Percentage increase/decrease in the number of students achieving 400 points

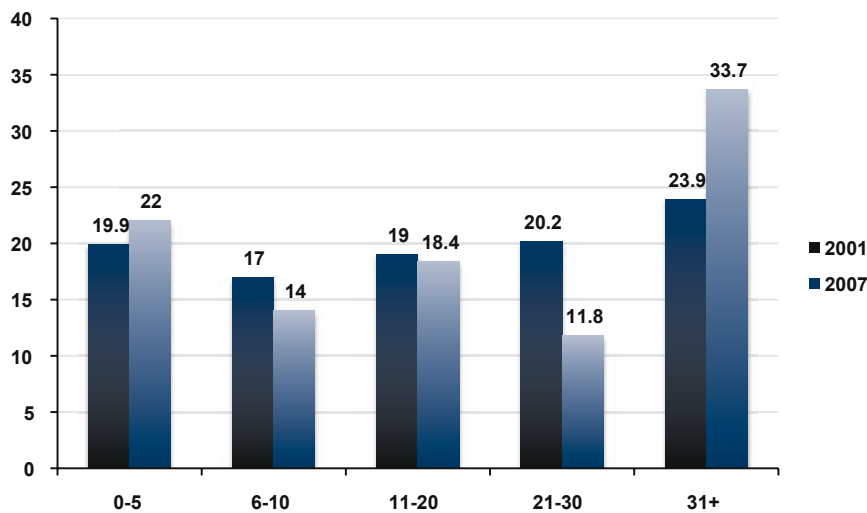


2.5 Leaving Certificate class progressing to higher education

In 2001, 20% of schools surveyed reported that less than 5% of the Leaving Certificate class progressed to a HEI. In 2007 the number of schools reporting that progression was less than 5% increased by 2%. This increase is balanced by a 10% increase in schools reporting the percentage of students progressing to higher education as being greater than 31% and above from 2001 to 2007 (Fig 2.51).

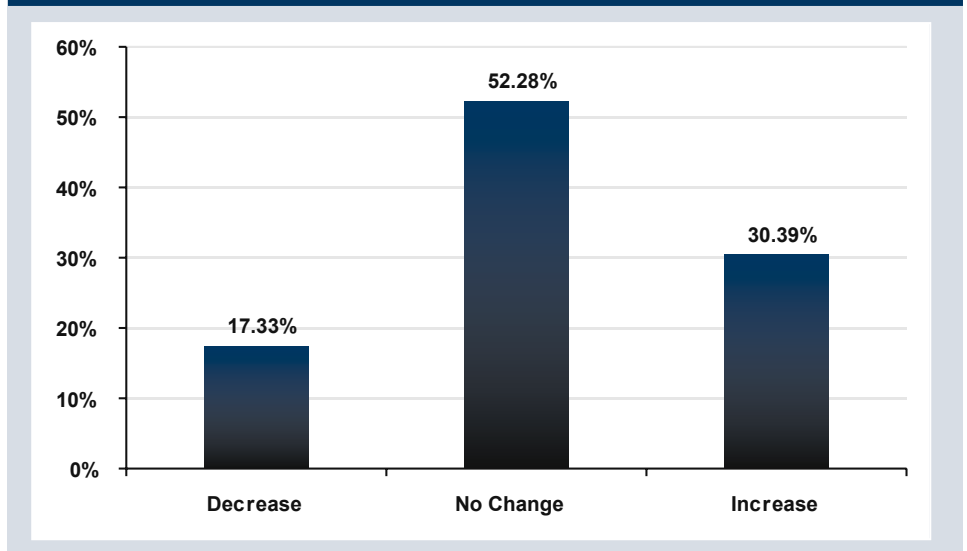
The majority of schools reported no change in the percentage of students progressing to higher education

Fig. 2.51 Percentage of the Leaving Certificate class progressing to university



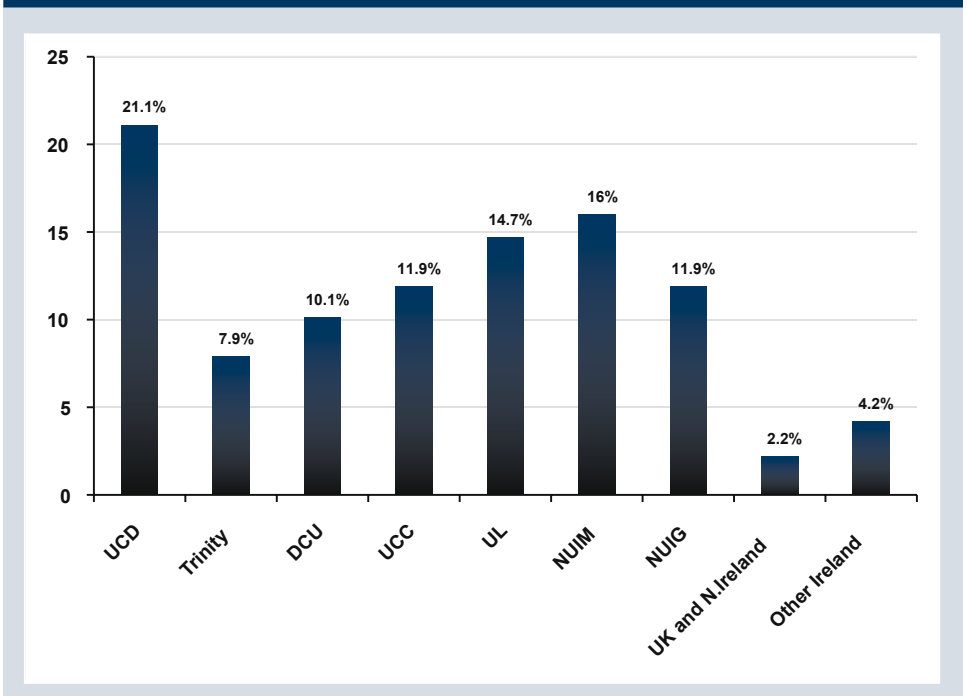
52.3% of schools surveyed exhibited no change in the percentage of students progressing to higher education. 17% experienced a decrease in progression and 30% exhibited an increase in the number of students attending higher education (Fig 2.52).

Fig 2.52 Percentage increase or decrease in progression to university



One in five schools reported UCD as one of the three main universities that students progressed to. 16% of schools mentioned NUIM and about one in ten schools reported UL, DCU and NUIG as one of the three main universities which their students progressed to. 7.9% mentioned TCD while only 2.2% mentioned UK or Northern Irish universities as one of the main universities their students progressed to. (Fig 2.53). It should be noted that the highest percentage of responses to the survey came from UCD and NUI Maynooth linked schools and therefore this may affect the results of this table.

Fig. 2.53 The main universities that students progressed to

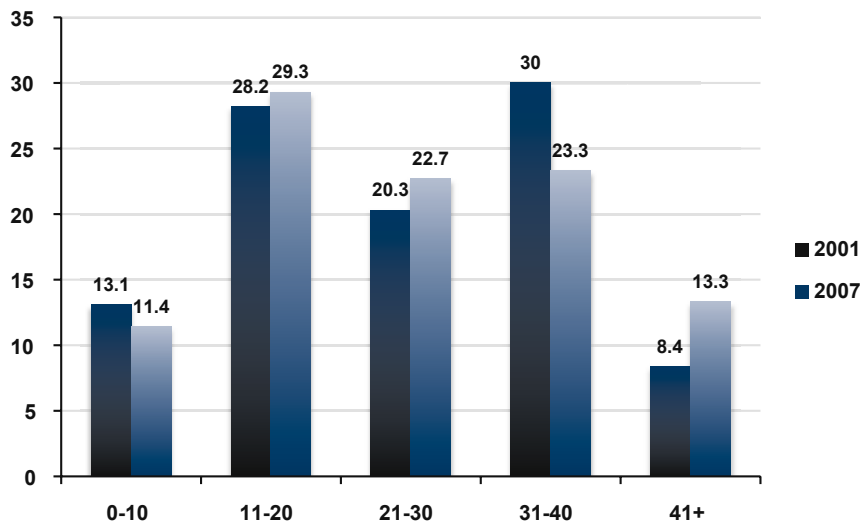


Overall the majority of schools reported no change in the percentage of students progressing to higher education, however the number of schools reporting an increase in the percentage of students progressing to HE was greater than the number of schools reporting a decrease.

2.6 Leaving Certificate class progressing to an institute of technology

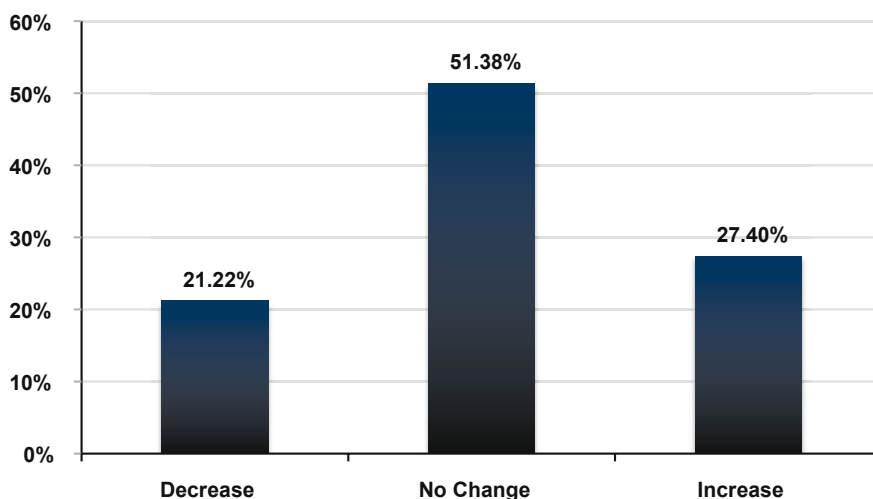
A similar trend is seen for progression to an institute of technology, with 8.4% of schools reporting a progression rate of 41+% in 2001 and 13.3% in 2007. 13.1% reported the progression rate as less than 10% in 2001 and 11.4% in 2007 (Fig 2.61).

Fig. 2.61 Percentage of the Leaving Certificate class progressing to an institute of technology



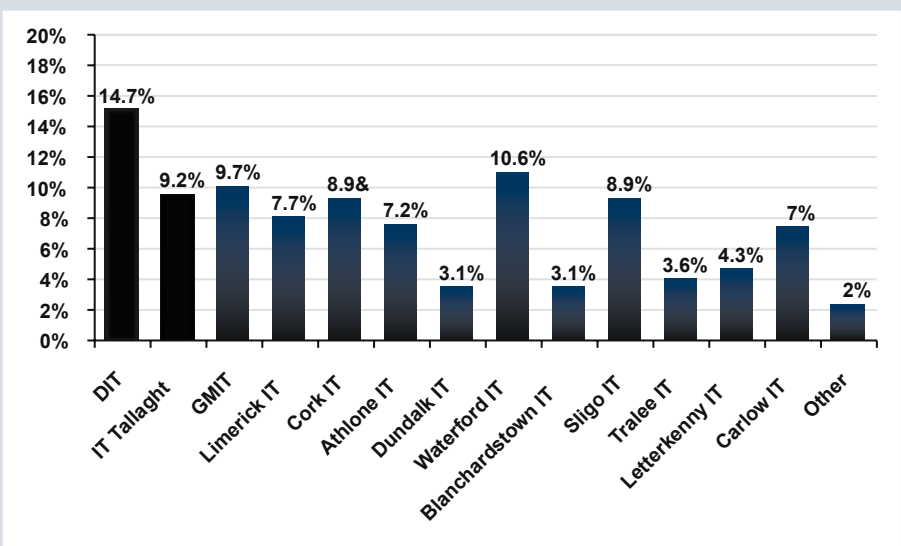
51.38% of schools exhibited no change in the percentage of students progressing to an institute of technology. 21.22% reported a decrease in progression and 27.40% an increase (Fig 2.62).

Fig 2.62 Percentage increase or decrease in progression to an institute of technology



14.7% of schools listed DIT as one of the three main institutes of technology that students progressed to. About one in ten schools listed Waterford IT, Tallaght IT, Galway IT, Cork IT and Sligo IT. About 7% of schools surveyed mentioned Limerick IT, Athlone IT and Carlow (Fig 2.63).

Fig 2.63 The main institutes of technology that students progressed to



There is very little change in progression to I.O.T.'s from 2001 to 2007

In general, there is very little change in progression to I.O.T.'s from 2001 to 2007. There are however more schools reporting an increase in the percentage of students progressing to institutes of technology than there are schools reporting a decrease.

2.7 Factors affecting availability of matriculation subjects

The aim of this section is to identify factors that affect the availability of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate Higher Level. The majority of schools responded that core matriculation subjects taught for the Leaving Certificate in 2006 and 2007 had separate Higher and Ordinary Level classes. The exception is foreign languages classes where 67.2% stated that classes were mixed (Fig 2.71). 98.3% of schools offered biology, 71.4% offered Chemistry, 78.1% Physics, 35.1% Agricultural Science and 67.6% Engineering at Leaving Certificate Level (Fig 2.72).

Fig 2.71 Percentage of Separate and Mixed Classes

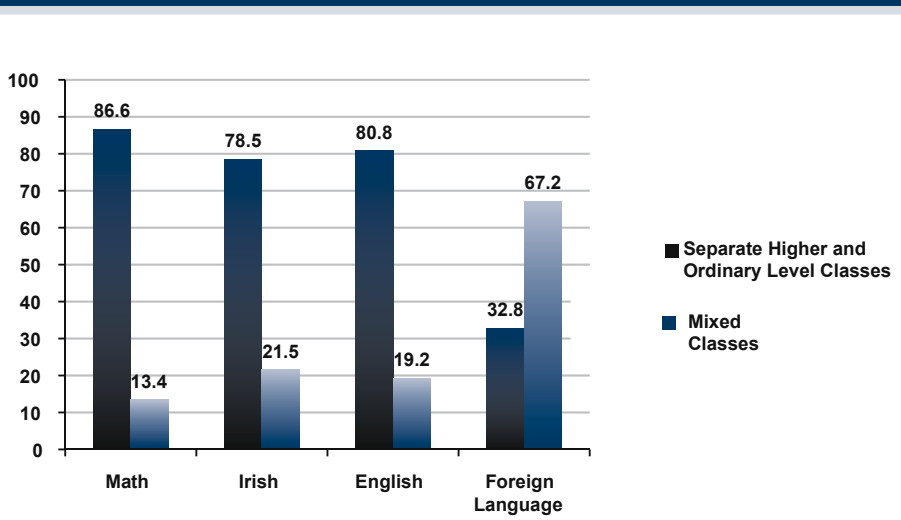
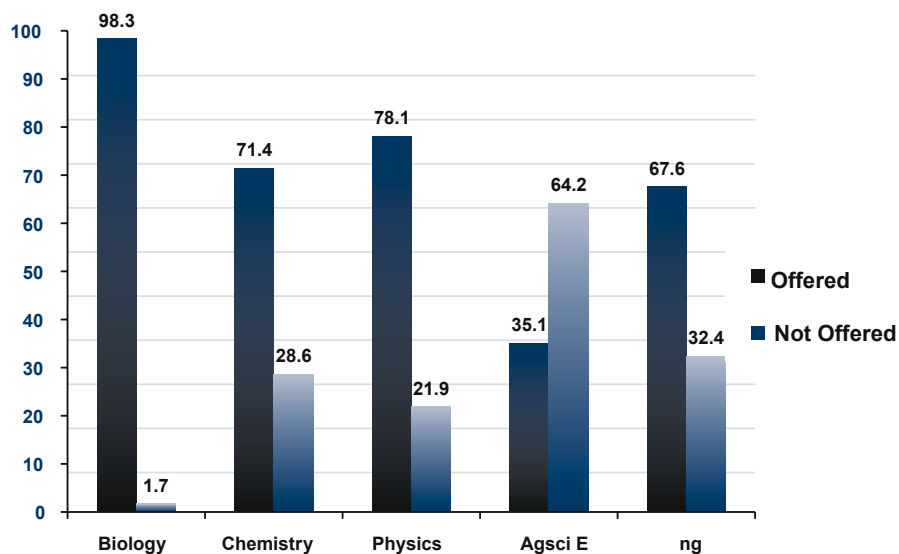
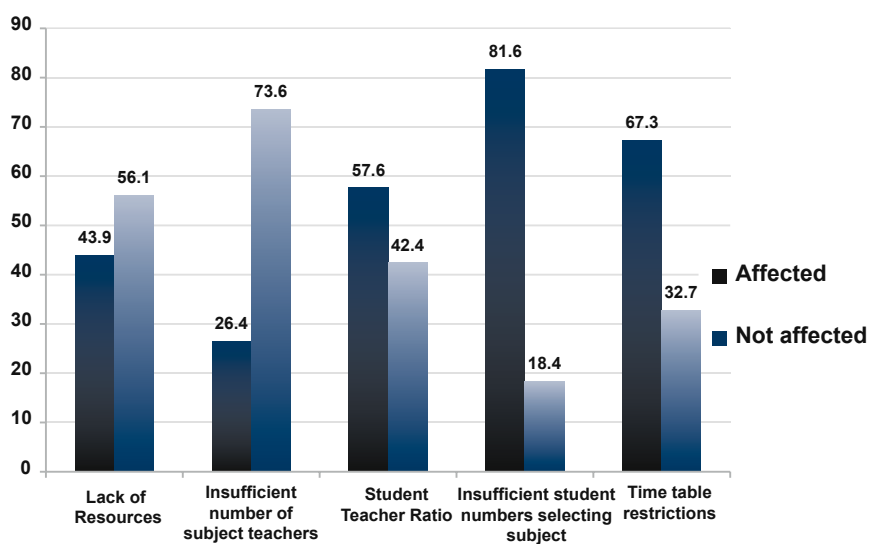


Fig 2.72 Science subjects offered in schools



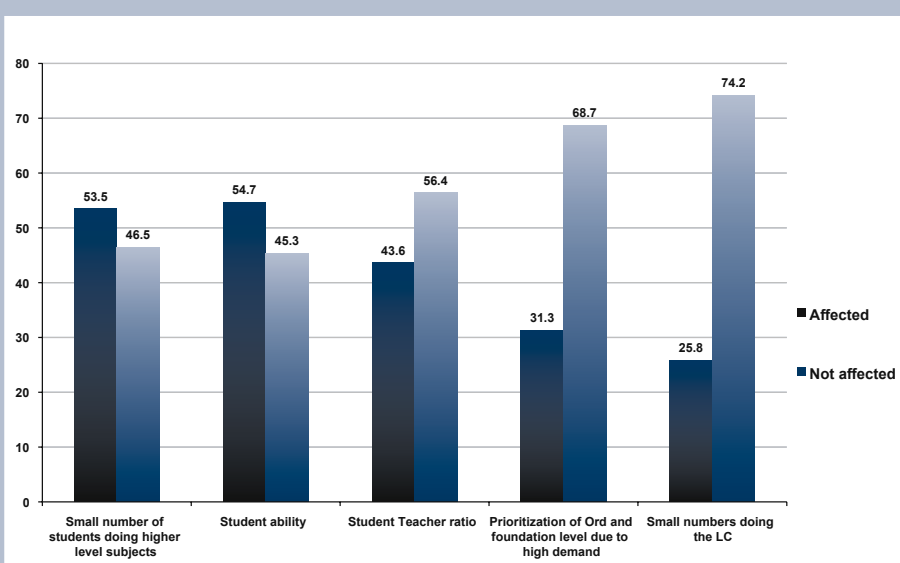
According to respondents, the most influential factor in the provision of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate level was insufficient number of students selecting the subject. This was followed by timetable restrictions and student teacher ratio. Insufficient numbers of subject teachers and a lack of resources were seen as the least likely factor to affect the provision of Leaving Certificate subjects (Fig 2.73).

Fig 2.73 Factors affecting subject opportunities available in schools



54.7% of respondents agreed that a student's level of ability was a factor in the provision of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate Higher Level. Only 31% of schools felt that the prioritisation of Ordinary Level over Higher Level was a factor in the provision of matriculation subjects and 25.8% saw small numbers doing the Leaving Certificate as important in the provision of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate Higher Level (Fig 2.74).

Fig 2.74 Factors affecting the provision of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate Higher Level



Participants believed insufficient student numbers selecting a subject followed by time table restrictions were the most important factors limiting the subject availability

The most important factors affecting the provision of Leaving Certificate higher level subjects was perceived to be student ability and a small number of students doing Leaving Certificate Higher level

Overall participants believed that insufficient student numbers selecting a subject followed by time table restrictions were the most important factors limiting the subjects available to students at Leaving Certificate Level. The most important factors affecting the provision of Leaving Certificate higher level subjects was perceived to be student ability and a small number of students doing Leaving Certificate Higher level.

2.8 Further Comments

Schools were asked to specify any other factors that they felt influenced the provision of matriculation subjects for the Leaving Certificate or the provision of subjects at Leaving Certificate Higher Level. The comments are broad and varied. In response to both questions, student numbers was the factor most frequently cited.

The range of matriculation subjects provided at Leaving Certificate level were believed to be affected by student factors such as the academic ability of a cohort, students working part-time, class attendance, student motivation and high drop out rates. Logistical problems were also mentioned, such as lack of adequate space and facilities, *Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)* subject combination demands, and staff allocation by the Department of Education and Science. Teacher motivation was not addressed as a factor – only one case mentioned teacher perceptions of success as a factor that influenced the provision of subjects.

Lack of resources, student/teacher ratio, attrition and students opting for Foundation Level were also raised, again stressing the role of the students in subject availability.

One participating school highlighted that Higher Level was available for all subjects or that it was available for all subjects but mainly in the same class that Ordinary Level was taught. Interestingly, one school mentioned that as there were fewer students doing Higher Level it was harder for good students to persist.

3: Barriers to Progression to Higher Education



3 Barriers to Progression to Higher Education

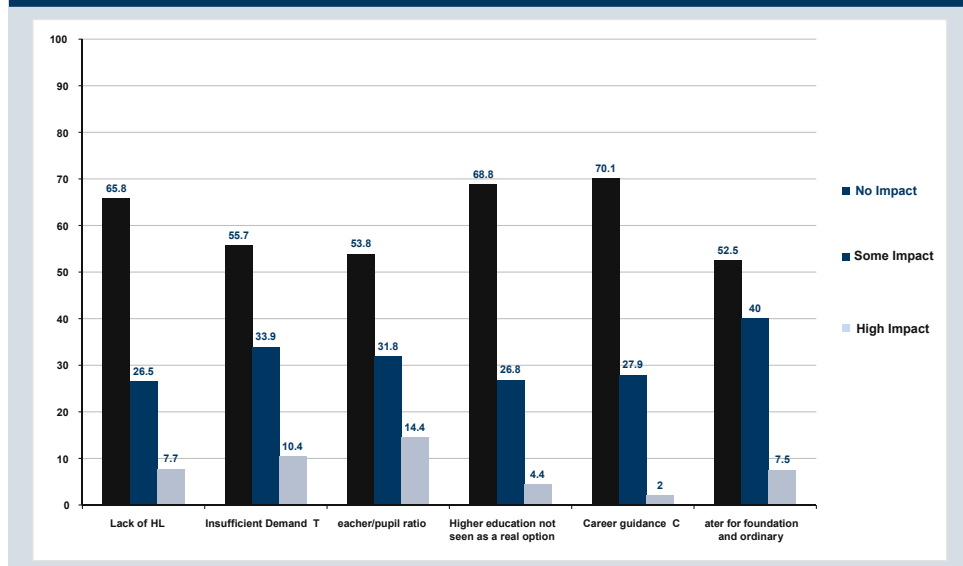
This section examines barriers to higher education and whether the schools believe these barriers have an impact on progression rates.

3.1 School factors

School factors were seen as having a low impact on progression rates with just over half of the schools stating that 'insufficient demand to justify offering a full range of Leaving Certificate subjects' and 'teacher-pupil ratios' have no impact on progression. There was fairly strong agreement among the schools that 'a lack of belief generally, within the school, that higher education is a real option' and 'insufficient time devoted to career guidance' had no impact on students progressing to Higher Level. There was fairly strong agreement among the schools that having to cater for the needs of the Foundation/Ordinary Level pupils had little impact on their progression rates. Just under two-thirds of the sample believed that a lack of Higher Level only classes at Leaving Certificate Level had no impact on progression and only 7.7% believed that a lack of Higher Level only classes had a high impact (Fig 3.11).

School factors were seen as having a low impact on progression rates

Fig. 3.11 School factors influencing progression rates



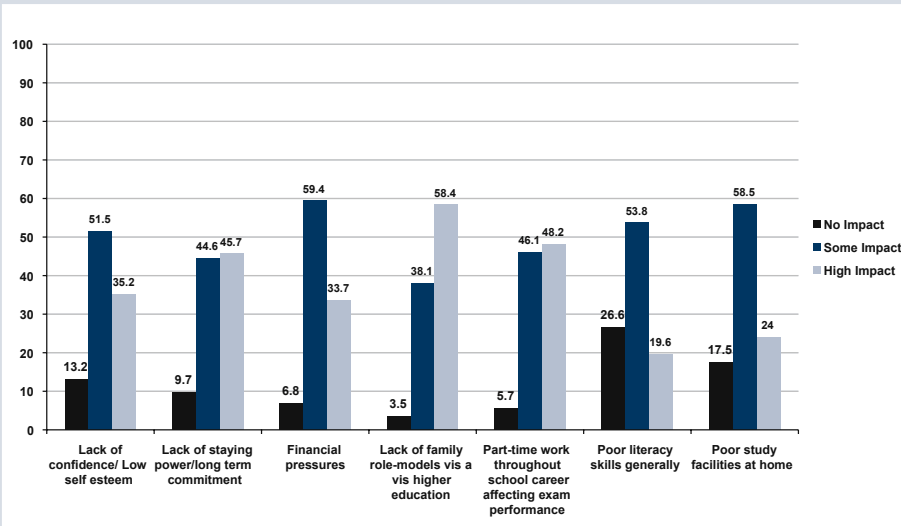
3.2 Pupil factors

The majority of schools reported that pupil factors rather than school factors had an impact on progression rates. Within the sample population, 86.4% believed a 'lack of confidence/low self esteem' had an impact on progression. 90% stated that a 'lack of staying power/long term commitment' also played a role.

88.7% agreed that financial pressures played a significant to a highly significant role. In addition, over 90% of respondents stated that 'a lack of family role models vis a vis higher education' and 'part-time work throughout school' played a role in progression. Poor literacy skills and poor study skills were also seen as having a large impact, with only 22% agreeing that poor literacy skills had no impact and 15.7% agreeing that poor study facilities at home had no impact (fig 3.21).

The majority of schools reported that pupil factors rather than school factors, had an impact on progression rates

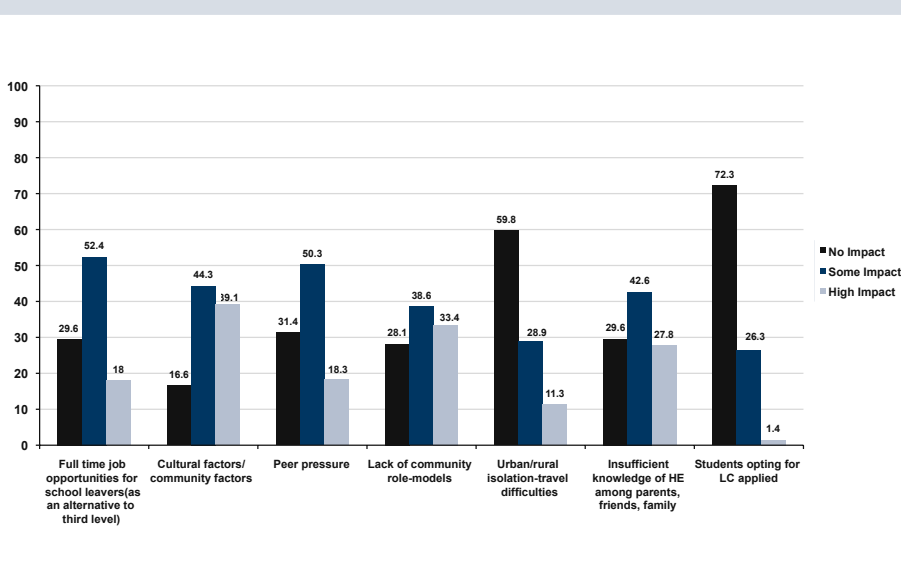
Fig. 3.21 Pupil factors influencing progression rates



3.3 Other factors

Cultural and community factors were seen as having the greatest impact on progression to higher education (44.3% some impact and 39.1% high impact). Lack of community role models (38.6% some impact and 33.4% high impact), insufficient knowledge of higher education among parents, family and friends (42.6% some impact, 27.8 high impact) and full time job opportunities for school leavers (52.4% some impact and 18% high impact) were also seen as making a significant contribution to non-progression. Factors seen as having the least impact on progression were students opting for the Leaving Certificate Applied (72.3%) and urban/rural isolation (59.8%) (Fig 3.31).

Fig. 3.31 Other social and cultural factors influencing progression rates



'Access initiatives have been of enormous benefit to students, especially those already motivated towards third level'

4: Comments



4 Comments

In conclusion, participants perceived pupil factors as having the highest impact on progression followed by socio-cultural factors. School factors were seen as having the least impact on progression.

Participants were asked whether they would like to mention any other factors that they believed were barriers to their pupil's progression to higher education. In total there were 37 responses to this question. In addition, the questionnaire concludes with a section allowing participants the chance to add any further comments. In total 47 schools provided additional comments.

4.1 Participants comments on barriers to higher education

The responses on barriers to progression to higher level education can be broadly categorised as: pupil abilities, pupil attitudes, parental attitudes, teachers' attitudes, educational disadvantage, lifestyle, culture and the scarcity of resources. Some of the most common factors influencing progression included: the location of the third level institutions, students being unable to take up grinds and being unaware of third level.

The working patterns or lifestyle of the student, a lack of resources in the schools, and finally students opting for post leaving certificate (PLC) courses and apprenticeships while possessing the potential to progress to higher education

According to one participant a '*Lack of physical accommodation in the school-no library, no sports hall, no language laboratory*' were some of the resources that were missing from the school.

A good example of the concerns raised by participants when asked to identify factors acting as barriers to progression is summarised by one schools comment:

- Geographical factors
- Parents' educational background/financial status.
- Many students work part time in order to supplement income this interferes with progress in school
- Pressures of time available to career guidance: if more resources were available students could get more direction.

This answer is quite comprehensive in capturing the main barriers to access as outlined by the sample population. It should be noted that geographical concerns were raised primarily by rural schools, yet urban isolation in terms of fewer peers accessing third level was also pointed out.

4.2 Comments/issues

Several schools stated that they found the access programme very beneficial.

'Access initiatives have been of enormous benefit to students, especially those already motivated towards third level'.

However, some schools reported that they were not defined as DEIS or were currently in the process of losing DEIS status. These schools were concerned with

the affect a withdrawal of outreach activities would have on student access. It was felt that outreach activities and programme initiatives were highly beneficial to students and that any withdrawal would affect them negatively.

There was a concern with the recognition of the role of institutes of technology and post leaving certificate courses in progression. Participants pointed out that some students who were capable of progressing to higher education often opted for post leaving certificate courses instead. One school mentioned that it would greatly benefit students from socio-economic classes under-represented at higher education if more institutes of technology were included in the HEAR scheme. post-leaving certificate courses were given as an example of programmes which could act as a useful interim stage where students could develop the maturity, motivation and skills necessary for participation in higher level education. In this way P.L.C's could act as a stepping stone to college.

'It is not too difficult to get students onto level 5 (FETAC) courses-particularly those groups traditionally unrepresented but they are more reluctant to aim higher. Opening up supports for students to progress from level 5 to levels 6/7 and 8 would prove helpful-as the level 5 can work as a pre-entry year ("sort yourself out/ grow up!!!) that many of the students need in order to progress and succeed after secondary school. Also, they are a year older which contributes to their maturity to handle third level'.

One school stated that they had a diversity of social backgrounds in their school and that those students who came from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to do the Leaving Certificate Applied and PLC courses. It was believed that these students were capable of attending third level but often lacked the skills and support to progress. The HEAR scheme was beneficial in helping these students enter third level. It was mentioned that I.O.T's and PLC's were seen by students and parents as of greater benefit in the workplace. The attractiveness of direct employment from second level was seen to impact on students choices.

The social background of students was explored by participants as a factor that affects their transition to third level. There was an awareness of the multidimensional nature of access among participants. In particular, pupil factors (such as motivation, self esteem and confidence) and parental attitudes and support were all cited as affecting progression. In one comment the view was expressed that *'widespread family-break-ups and social uncertainties have left young people insecure, shattered, unsure and ultimately under-performing in education'*. It was added that competition in the educational system represented by the battle for points, as well as the class divide disempowered those students further.

Other factors noted include no history of student progression through generations, part-time jobs, lack of a clear focus, urban isolation via a lack of peers progressing, lack of awareness from a young age of the possibility of higher education, social factors and adult life-styles. Additional human resources, infrastructural support in schools, early intervention starting from primary level, increased exchange between the different stakeholders in education and mentoring of students from backgrounds with little or no progression history were given as possible aids to enhancing access.

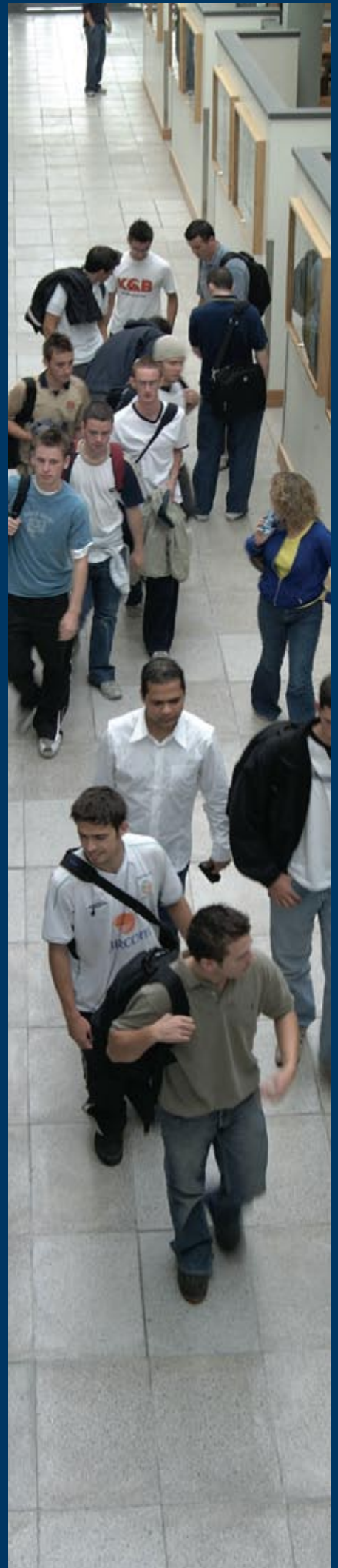
P.L.C's could act as a stepping stone to college

The attractiveness of direct employment from second level was seen to impact on students choices

There was an awareness of the multidimensional nature of access among participants

5:

**UCD New ERA
NUI Maynooth Services**



5 UCD New ERA

NUI Maynooth Services

UCD's New ERA and NUI Maynooth's Access Programme (MAP) offer outreach programmes to schools linked to their institution. These outreach programmes include activities such as 'Shadowing Days', 'Summer Schools', 'Achievement Awards', 'Open Days' and advice and information for both parents and students to schools linked to the programme. Activities such as the Voluntary tutoring targets schools in Ballyfermot and Crumlin only.

The aim of this section is to explore the availability of UCD's New ERA activities and Maynooth's Access Programme's activities to schools participating in the scheme. This section also examines how beneficial these activities are perceived to be by the schools. Additional services which participants would like to see included on the programmes is also explored. It should be noted that some schools choose to rate certain activities as beneficial even if that activity was unavailable to them.

5.1 New ERA: participation in access activities

In 2008 the majority of schools stated that they availed of the HEAR scheme. Three out of four linked schools availed of the 'shadowing day' and four out of five schools availed of 'career information for pupils'. Almost three quarters of participants stated that their school availed of the '5th year summer school' while three out of five availed of the 'miscellaneous workshops'. Over 40% of schools surveyed availed of the 'achievements award scheme', 'career information for parents' and 'Uni4U'. 28% stated that they availed of the 'student voluntary tutoring scheme' however only schools in Crumlin and Ballyfermot can avail of this scheme.

Most schools found these activities to be beneficial or extremely beneficial. Nine out of ten schools rated Uni4U as extremely beneficial, 86.1% rated HEAR as extremely beneficial and eight out of ten schools rated the 5th year summer schools as extremely beneficial.

The most beneficial activities (taking the categories of beneficial and very or extremely beneficial together) were 'career information for parents' and the 'miscellaneous workshops'. However the percentage of schools availing of these activities is small.

Less than one in ten surveyed schools found each activity to be of limited benefit except for the student voluntary scheme where 14.9% found it to be of limited benefit. Again this may be skewed by the fact that most schools were unable to avail of this service and therefore were unable to benefit from it. The achievement awards were also viewed as the least beneficial with 29.6% of the sample stating it was of limited benefit.

Most schools found these activities to be beneficial or extremely beneficial

86%

rated HEAR as extremely beneficial

Activity	Very beneficial	Beneficial	Limited benefit	N
Student Voluntary Tutoring	32.6	52.5	14.9	28%
Shadowing Day	75.4	19.2	5.4	77%
Achievement Awards Scheme	33.5	37	29.6	41%
Career Information for pupils	58.9	35.5	5.9	79%
Career Information for Parents	50.2	49.8	0	41.9%
Uni4U	91.4	0	8.6	48.3%
5 th year summer School	83.5	10.4	6.1	73%
TAKE 5	62.2	28.2	9.7	45%
HEAR	86.1	8.5	5.4	77.5%
Misc. Workshops	52.4	47.6	0	59.9%

5.2 Additional services suggested

Only eight schools responded when asked to suggest additional services that could be provided by New ERA. These services included: university students who are HEAR participants visiting the school and talking to students about their experiences, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) grants, a teacher information day, more language and math support, workshops for 5th years in core subjects, an ambassadors scheme where students in university could give tours of campus, and more student shadowing days.

5.3 NUI Maynooth's Access Programme (MAP)

The Third Year Special awards and the HEAR scheme were the most widely availed of services in the MAP linked schools (63.8% and 87.2% respectively). 32% availed of the 'Leaving Cert Oral Language Preparation' activity. 20% availed of the 'Take5' and 'school/parent/community campus visit'. Over 10% availed of the KITE scheme, 'Maths is fun activity' '6th year science practical' and 'exam support'. Less than 10% availed of the '*Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme* (LCVP) interview skills', '5th and 1st year Media workshops' and the 'second year achievement awards'.

The vast majority of schools surveyed found these activities to be beneficial or very to extremely beneficial. Over 90% of schools surveyed found the '6th year science practical' and 'Maths is fun' as very or extremely beneficial. Over 80% of schools rated the 'HEAR scheme', 'school/parent/community campus visits', the '2nd year achievement awards' and 'KITE' as very or extremely beneficial.

The majority of schools surveyed found these activities to be beneficial or very to extremely beneficial

Activity	Very beneficial	Beneficial	Limited benefit	N
Maths is Fun	90	10	0	16%
3rd Year Special Awards	49.2	38.9	12	63.8%
TAKE 5	48.1	51.9	0	20%
LC Oral Language Preparation	65.3	34.7	0	32%
6th Year Science Practical	100	0	0	18.4%
HEAR	82.3	17.7	0	87.2%
Exam Support	41.4	39.5	19.1	11.9%
School/Parent/Community Campus Visit	86.6	13.4	0	20.8%
KITE	86.3	13.7	0	10.2%
2nd Year Achievement Awards	84.9	15.1	0	8.8%
LCVP interview Skills	37.6	0	62.4	7.4%
5th and 1st Year Media Workshops	37.6	0	62.4	7%

5.4 Additional services suggested

20 schools responded when asked to provide comments or additional services that they thought would be of benefit to their schools. Additional services suggested by NUI Maynooth linked schools included: study skills and time management classes for students, extra support for reading/math, extra pre-school support for traveller children, in-career development sessions for staff, visits by past pupils who are studying at NUI Maynooth, more contact between individual colleges, students and staff, regular newsletters, and more on-site visits to schools.

Summary



Summary

The aim of this report is to create a profile of the schools attended by students who entered higher education through the Higher Education Access Route. The school profile focuses on the general characteristics of the schools, the Leaving Certificate class of 2006/2007, progression to further and higher education in 2007, factors considered barriers to higher level education and retrospective information on the class of 2001.

The sample population reported a marginal increase in the number of students applying through the CAO system; however this is tempered by the number of schools reporting slightly lower points scored during the same period. Overall, over 50% of the sample stated that there had been no change in students achieving greater than 400 points and progression rates to university and I.O.T's. However, more schools are reporting an increase in the percentage of students progressing to third level than those reporting a decrease from 2001 to 2007. UCD was mentioned most often as one of the three main universities which students progressed to. DIT was the most common institute of technology mentioned. However this may be due to the fact that more schools from UCD and NUI Maynooth responded to the questionnaire.

The majority of schools offered biology as a subject and most schools had separate Higher Level Maths, English and Irish classes. There were more mixed level foreign language classes than separate Higher Level classes.

The most influential factor in the provision of matriculation subjects at Leaving Certificate level was insufficient number of students selecting the subject, while student ability was seen as the most important factor in the provision of Higher Level matriculation subjects. This is backed up by responses in the comments section where factors affecting the provision of matriculation subjects included the size of the school, staff allocation by the Department of Education and Science, student motivations, and accommodation were the main factors believed to influence provision.

School factors were seen to have the least impact on progression rates. The majority of schools stated that pupil factors had a higher impact on progression. Cultural factors were also seen to play a more significant role than school factors, yet they are not considered as important as pupil factors.

Several key themes emerge in relation to barriers of access and participation when the participants were asked to comment further in the final section of the survey. These can be defined as:

1. Student lifestyles – part-time jobs, peer effects
2. Student psychology – feeling inadequate, low confidence, motivation and self esteem
3. Families – no history of third level uptake, parental support, need to support family
4. School factors – facilities, subject availability, access programmes
5. Information –lack of knowledge about third level and lack of knowledge about subject availability.

Schools found access programmes to be beneficial when tackling barriers to higher education. Some schools mentioned that losing DEIS status and the support of the access programmes may impact negatively on student progression. Several suggestions in relation to tackling barriers to higher education were given including: increasing facilities and human resources, early intervention in educational disadvantage, increased exchange between the different stakeholders in education and mentoring of students from backgrounds with little or no progression.

It is recommended that this survey should be repeated every two years to build up an accurate profile of the schools linked to the HEAR scheme. Statistics should be kept on progression rates and Leaving Certificate points. It is also recommended that the survey should be conducted at a suitable time of the year for schools participating on the HEAR scheme.

Appendix 1: General School Profile Graphs

Fig. 1.11 Percentage of Schools Surveyed linked to DEIS

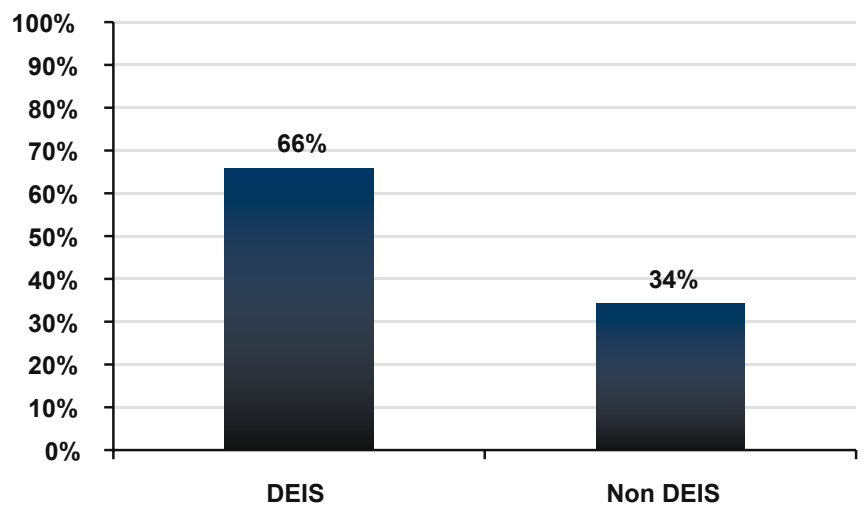


Fig. 1.12 The percentage of co-educational, girls only and boys only schools

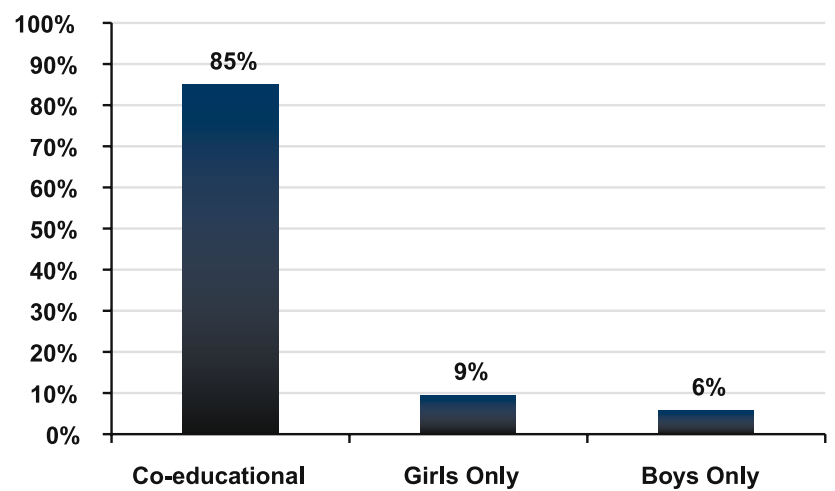


Fig. 1.13 Type of School

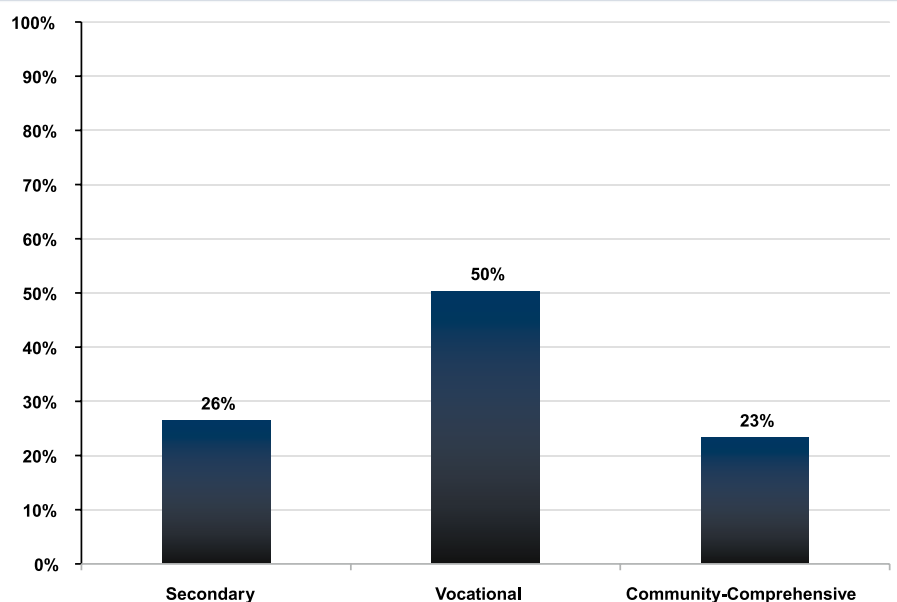


Fig. 1.14 School Catchment Area

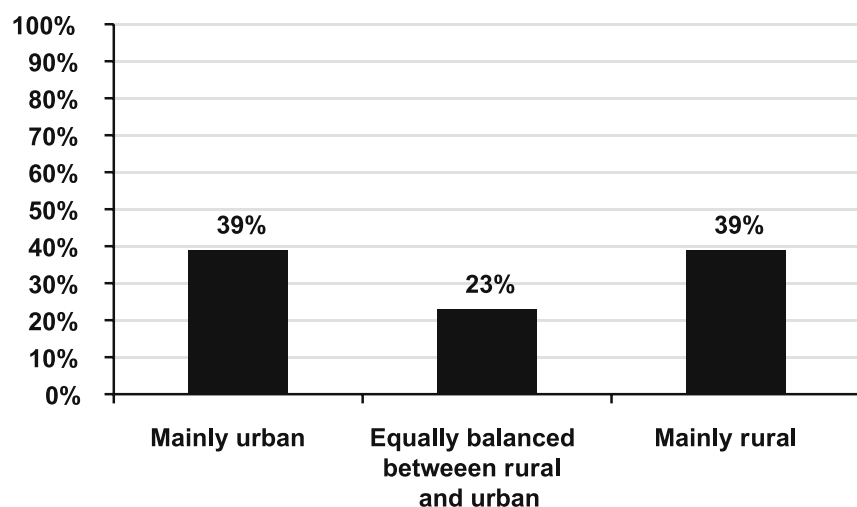


Fig 1.21 General School Characteristics

Variable	Min	Max	Mean
Number of hours a month allocated to Career Guidance	0	200	90.52
Number of hours per month allocated to a Home school Liaison Teacher	0	164	61.31
Number of Teachers working at a school	5	99	40.09
Number of travellers in the school	0	99	5.83
Number of recent Immigrants in the school	0	45.7	5.19
Percentage of Leaving Cert applied Students	0	100	11.81
Percentage of Students taking Foundation Level	0	100	19.41

Fig 1.41 Contact with University and Community

Variable	Response	Yes	No
Contact with a university before HEAR	93.8	60.7	39.3
Other outreach activities outside of HEAR	98.4	57	43
Links with Community Projects	98.1	67.7	32.3

Endnotes

1. Details of this project can be found at <http://geary.ucd.ie/newera/>
2. See P.O'Reilly (2008) "The Evolution of Access Programs in Ireland" UCD Geary Institute, Discussion papers wp/16/08 for more detail.
3. A copy of the questionnaire is available on request.
4. A logistic regression was performed in order to establish the factors which influenced whether or not a school responded. Initial results found that vocational & community/comprehensive schools were more likely to respond than secondary Schools. NUI Maynooth and University College Cork linked schools were more likely to respond than UCD Schools. However when the predicted value from this regression was used to reweight the analysis, it was found that whether or not a school responded to the survey did little to affect the results. As a consequence, it was decided to weight the dataset by the total number of students in each school in order to create a more representative sample.
5. Ethics approval for the school profile extension was sought and granted on the 25/02/08 by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC-Humanities (HS)). The Questionnaire was piloted on the 13th and 14th of March 2008. The draft questionnaire was sent in advance of the pilot study to the principals of three Dublin schools. The pilot involved the researcher conducting face-to-face interviews with the principals and the use of a topic guide to gauge their reaction to the draft questionnaire. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the questionnaire modified according to the suggestions made by the interviewees.
6. Department of Education and Science Website: General Information on Post-Primary Teaching in the Republic of Ireland Including Teacher Qualification Requirements
7. Department of Education Website
8. Department of Education and Science (2005) DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) An action plan for Educational inclusion. New Oceans, Dublin.