

AONTAS

Report

on

**Department of Social, Community
& Family Affairs**

Third Level Allowance Scheme

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Executive Summary

This study of the Third Level Allowance Scheme was commissioned by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs. It involved carrying out a survey of participants who availed of the Scheme in the 1993/94 academic year. The main aim of the study was to examine the extent to which the employment prospects of participants had improved as a result of the Scheme. The findings are based on the responses of one hundred and twenty people who participated in the survey which was conducted during July and August 1997. The main findings and recommendations are presented.

Main Findings

- The vast majority (84%) of participants graduated from college and most were either in employment (43%) or pursuing further education (24%) at the time of the survey. A further 5% were working on Community Employment Schemes and 2% were working in the home. A quarter (26%) were signing-on, however most of these had just recently completed their courses. The majority (77%) of those pursuing further education were pursuing postgraduate courses which presumably will improve their chances of obtaining employment in the future. The findings indicated that to a great extent, the main aim of the Third Level Allowance Scheme was achieved as most participants employment prospects were enhanced.
- Almost all (97%) participants felt that the Third Level Allowance Scheme was a 'good' Scheme. For many (37%), the Scheme provided an opportunity which they otherwise would not have had.
- The main reason why participants decided to go to college was to improve their employment prospects.
- The main benefit of college which almost all (94%) cited was in relation to 'Personal Development'. The increase in self confidence, self respect, a sense of status and achievement were highlighted by participants as important outcomes of their college experience.
- The majority (81%) reported being employed at some time prior to college and more than half of them had become unemployed in the two years preceding entry to college.
- Information was not easily accessible in the early 1990s when the Scheme started and was generally spread by 'word of mouth'. Lack of knowledge about the Scheme in Local Social Welfare Offices was also cited.

- VTOS emerged as an important source of information as well as an access route for people interested in third level study. Almost one third (31%) of those surveyed had completed VTOS courses.
- Participants generally had a high level of educational attainment with 71% holding Leaving Certificate or higher qualifications.
- Most participants qualified for a place at college on the basis of a combination of factors including educational qualifications, interview and/or entrance examinations. Only three out of ten (29%) claimed they qualified on the basis of their Leaving Certificate alone.
- An analysis of the type of additional funding which participants received showed that almost three quarters (74%) were in receipt of grants from Local Authorities or VECs.
- Almost two thirds (65%) felt the overall level funding received was adequate.
- The main suggestions for tackling problems of funding were increasing the Third Level Allowance payment or increasing the grant payment. The provision of extra allowances for additional expenses such as travel and meals was also proposed.
- The difficulties which participants experienced at college were in the areas of *'Managing Money'*, *'Personal and/or Family Problems'* and doing *'Coursework'*.
- The participants who availed of the Third Level Allowance Scheme in 1993/94 tended to be younger, single and not have any children and more men than women participated in the Scheme.
- Prior to starting college, most (67%) lived in Leinster with a high proportion living in Dublin. Participation by people from the Munster, Connaught and Ulster was very low.
- The majority of participants studied Degree and Diploma level courses in the Universities and Regional Technical Colleges.

Main Recommendations

- The Third Level Allowance Scheme should target the more marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society such as the long-term unemployed, lone parents, women working in the home and unemployed people living in disadvantaged areas.
- Greater provision and dissemination of information about the Third Level Allowance Scheme was required particularly among Local Social Welfare Offices. The Scheme also needed to be publicised more widely through television, radio and other media in order to inform people about this unique opportunity.
- Access routes such as VTOS, Community Based Education and Training Courses and other Access Courses needed to be further developed and supported so that they reach the more disadvantaged groups in society.
- Career Guidance Service and a Support Service should be provided to those availing of the Third Level Allowance Scheme. These services would improve participants' chances of success at college as well as their chances of obtaining secure employment in the labour market.
- Procedures and mechanisms needed to be developed to ensure greater co-ordination and co-operation between other funding bodies such as Local Authorities and the Health Boards.
- Further investigation need to be carried out on the possibility of integrating the assessment processes and payment systems of the different funding bodies including the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs, the Health Boards and Local Authorities.
- A detailed study should be conducted of the actual costs incurred by participants in attending college in order to establish a fair level of payment. This may be take the form of either increasing existing payments (Third Level Allowance, Grant, Rent Allowance or other payments); providing extra payments or changing the criteria for qualifying for these payments.

Introduction

In 1990, a new initiative was taken by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs (formerly called the Department of Social Welfare) which allowed unemployed people to study at third level colleges while continuing to receive their social welfare payments. This was later established as a separate stand-alone scheme called the 'Third Level Allowance Scheme'¹. It was one of a number of educational schemes supported by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs. The other schemes were the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Second Level Certificate Courses and Part-time Education Courses². The main objective underlying these schemes was to provide incentives for unemployed people to improve their employment prospects by gaining additional qualifications.

This study was commissioned by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs and it examined the extent to which the Third Level Allowance Scheme enabled people to secure employment on completion of their courses. The survey was conducted during July and August 1997 among a sample of 260 participants who availed of the Scheme in the 1993/94 academic year. A reasonably good response rate of 46% was attained³.

Background to the Third Level Allowance Scheme

Initially, the rationale behind the Third Level Allowance Scheme was that registering as unemployed should not act as an impediment or disincentive to people who wished to improve their employment prospects by pursuing third level qualifications. However, in 1996, there was a marked shift in emphasis by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs from a position of accommodation to one which was more pro-active. Changes were made to the Scheme to encourage unemployed people to seek additional educational qualifications.

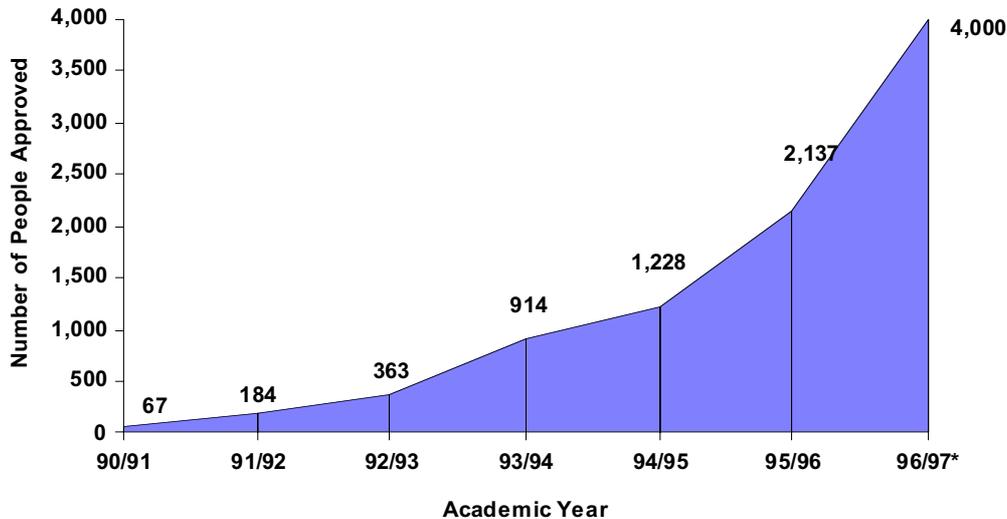
When the Third Level Allowance Scheme was introduced in 1990, the number of participants was extremely low. In 1990/91 academic year, only 67 applications were approved by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs. Since 1993, the number of participants has increased significantly and the total for 1996/97 was estimated to be around four thousand (Figure 1). The cost of the scheme in 1996 was almost £6 million and the cost in 1997 was estimated to be in the region £12 million (Figure 2).

¹ See Appendix I for further details on the Third Level Allowance Scheme.

² For further details of these Schemes, see Department of Social Welfare Brochure SW 70 (1996) *Educational Opportunities for Unemployed People and Lone Parents*.

³ See Appendix II for an outline of the Research Methodology.

Figure 1: Number of People Approved for the Third Level Allowance from 1990/91 to 1996/97



* Estimated

Source: Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs (October 1997)

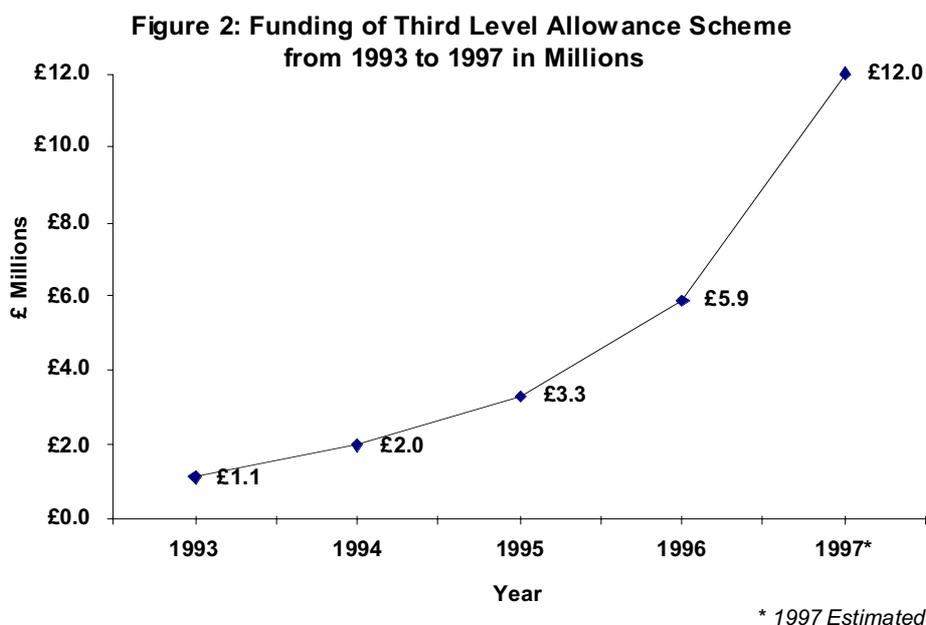
Major changes in the Third Level Allowance Scheme have occurred since 1990. In 1993, the Third Level Allowance Scheme was expanded to include people receiving Lone Parent's Allowance, Deserted Wife's Benefit, Widow's and Widower's Contributory Pension. In effect, this meant that people in receipt of these payments were now eligible to pursue courses at Third Level without their social welfare payments being withdrawn. Indeed, the title of *Third Level Allowance* was not well known among the participants in earlier years as they simply continued to receive the same social welfare payments under the same names, for example Unemployment Benefit, Unemployment Assistance and Lone Parent's Allowance.

In 1993, the eligibility criteria were also relaxed to allow people registering as unemployed (signing-on) for twelve months or more to avail of the Scheme. Prior to this, a person needed to be unemployed for fifteen months or more. Later, in 1995 the qualifying signing-on period was further reduced to six months and in addition, the age requirement was lowered to make the Scheme more accessible.

In 1996, a whole series of improvements were made by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs. One of the most important of these was the easing of employment restrictions. Participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme are now allowed to work during holiday periods without their social welfare entitlements being affected. Prior to this, any additional income from employment was means-tested⁴ and the social welfare payment was reduced accordingly. Furthermore, in 1997 the

⁴ Means-testing is the procedure used by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs which takes into account any income from sources such as employment, property, investments and the 'Benefit and Privilege' of living with parents or spouse/partner (see INOU (1995) *Working for Work*). A similar procedure is used by the Department of Education & Science, Regional Health Boards and Local Authorities in determining eligibility for payments.

rate of payment of the Third Level Allowance was standardised and made equal to the maximum standard rate of Unemployment Benefit. Before this change, some people received a lower rate of payment because they were either categorised as ‘short-term’ unemployed (less than 15 months) or else their ‘means’ affected their level of payment.



Source: Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs (October 1997)

Another advance made in 1996 was the assurance that the Third Level Allowance payment would be paid for the full duration of the course. Again, before this, some participants discovered midway that they lost entitlement to the Third Level Allowance because they had either married or had moved from Unemployment Benefit (which ended after 15 months) to Unemployment Assistance (which involved a means-test). A yearly Book Allowance of £100 pounds was also introduced in 1996 to go towards the cost of books and materials. Another improvement in the scheme was the removal of the requirement to sign-on every month at Local Social Welfare Offices as this sometimes conflicted with college commitments. The introduction of the new measures as well as the dramatic increase in the number of participants on the Scheme was reflected in the significant rise in the cost of the Scheme between 1996 and 1997.

It must be pointed out that most of the participants involved in this survey of the Third Level Allowance Scheme left college prior to 1996 and would not have benefited from the recent improvements. Indeed, some issues raised by participants have already been addressed by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs. This shows the degree to which the Department has responded positively to the needs of participants.

The emergence of the Third Level Allowance Scheme was set against a backdrop of severe unemployment difficulties in Ireland. The problem of high unemployment prompted investigations by a number of agencies on the causes, effects and the development of strategies to combat unemployment. Many issues came to the fore and the link between education and unemployment was identified as one of the most significant ones.

Education and Employment

Education has generally been recognised as an important factor in tackling the problem of high unemployment in Ireland. Many of the participants in this survey started college in 1993 when the rate of unemployment was 16%⁵. The problem of *long-term unemployment* (unemployed for one year or more) became a major issue. The National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), established by the Government in 1993, focused on this problem and developed new initiatives to combat unemployment. These were set out in the NESF report in 1994 on *Ending Long-term Unemployment*⁶. One of the initiatives implemented recently was the creation of Local Employment Services (LES) to tackle unemployment. One of the main functions of the LES was to link up with interested agencies including employers, training organisations, government departments and local groups to provide a ‘gateway’ to education, training and employment for unemployed people⁷.

The link between unemployment and poverty has also been well documented and in 1995 the development of a National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) was initiated by the government. The purpose of NAPS was to tackle issues of poverty, social exclusion and inequality in Ireland and to place these issues at the top of the national agenda in terms of government policy development⁸. Some of the key objectives identified in relation to education were:

- the need to eliminate the costs of educational participation for welfare dependent and low income families and individuals
- the need to remove other barriers to educational participation
- the need to ensure that the development of basic education skills, including literacy and new technology skills⁹

⁵ Unemployment rate based on the Labour Force Survey as opposed to the Live Register. See Office of the Tanaiste (1995) *Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p. 31.

⁶ NESF (1994) *Ending Long-term Unemployment, Forum Report No. 4*, National Economic and Social Forum, Dublin.

⁷ For further information on Local Employment Service, see Seamus Feely’s Paper (Office of the Tanaiste) entitled “The Origins & Context of the Local Employment Service” presented at INOU Conference, 21st January 1997 on INTEGRA Programme for the Local Employment Service.

⁸ National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997) *Sharing in Progress*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p. 2.

⁹ National Anti-Poverty Strategy (1997) *Sharing in Progress*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p. 126.

The core principle underpinning NAPS was that all future policies would promote equality of access, participation and benefit from the State. It was envisaged that NAPS would be incorporated in the Strategic Management Initiatives (SMI) devised by government departments.

The NESF report on *Ending Long-term Unemployment* as well as a number of other studies (Combat Poverty Agency, 1989; OECD 1989; Department of Labour, 1990) identified the link between unemployment and educational attainment. A study by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in 1992 confirmed the importance of educational qualifications as a determinant of unemployment and its duration¹⁰. In the ESRI study, educational level was identified as a significant factor affecting a person's chance of employment. Research by NESF showed that in 1992 the educational qualifications of unemployed people were generally lower than those of people at work¹¹.

However, the limitations of an education strategy as a viable option for the long-term unemployed was highlighted. While supportive of education as part of an overall strategy, NESF did not view it as being a realistic option for many long-term unemployed¹². The *Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*, setup as a result of NESF's work, also recognised that the provision of education, training and work experience options would not be enough for the most disadvantaged¹³. In the *Task Force* report, it was stated that education-based options tended to benefit the younger and better educated among the unemployed.

The rapidly changing economic climate has also focused attention on the need to develop Ireland's human resources. In 1997, the Department of Enterprise and Employment published a White Paper on '*Human Resource Development*' with the aim of securing an "upgrading of the quality" of our human resources. In the report it was acknowledged that despite the strong economic growth which was occurring in the mid-1990s, significant numbers of people remained on the margins of the labour market. The main reason for this was seen to be lack of educational attainment and skills. To solve this problem, it was stated that not only were training programmes required but it was also necessary to develop more sophisticated support structures in order to provide better access and progression into the labour market¹⁴.

Individuals needed to continually update their knowledge and skills and educational institutions had an important role to play in facilitating this process. The strengthening of the government's commitment to *lifelong learning* was also expressed in the White Paper however this was defined primarily in terms of the need for

¹⁰ Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) study cited in Office of the Tanaiste (1995) *Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p 36.

¹¹ NESF (1994) *Ending Long-term Unemployment, Forum Report No. 4*, National Economic and Social Forum, Dublin, pp. 9 - 10.

¹² NESF (1994) *Ending Long-term Unemployment Forum Report No. 4*, National Economic and Social Forum, Dublin, p. 79.

¹³ Office of the Tanaiste (1995) *Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p 25.

¹⁴ Department of Enterprise and Employment (1997) *Human Resource Development*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p 12.

individuals to obtain commercially viable skills to ensure Ireland's competitiveness in the global economy.

The importance of lifelong learning has been well established both at national and in particular at European level¹⁵. The philosophy underlying the term 'lifelong learning' is the idea that people should be motivated and actively encouraged to learn throughout life¹⁶. OECD in its 1996 report on *Lifelong Learning for All*, viewed lifelong learning as encompassing several objectives - "to foster personal development, to strengthen democratic values, to cultivate community life; to maintain social cohesion and to promote innovation, productivity and economic growth"¹⁷. It is an approach which would benefit not only individuals themselves but also society in general. Therefore it was vital to promote and develop lifelong learning among all groups in society.

This study of participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme looked not only at the employment outcomes but also other benefits which resulted from participation in the Scheme. The study also examined the background of participants; the courses they pursued; how they accessed college initially and their experiences of studying at third level. Their opinions of the Scheme and suggestions for improvement are also presented.

¹⁵ See WRC Social and Economic Consultants Ltd (1997) *Count Us In: Equality & Access in Lifelong Learning*, Papers from the EMPLOYMENT Conference November 1996 Royal Hospital Kilmainham, WRC Social and Economic Consultants Ltd, Dublin.

¹⁶ OECD (1996) *Lifelong Learning for All*, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Paris, p. 15.

¹⁷ OECD (1996) *Lifelong Learning for All*, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Paris, p. 15.

Chapter 1

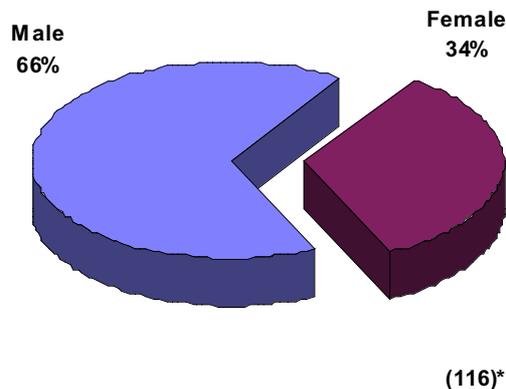
Profile of Participants

The information presented in this report is based on the responses of one hundred and twenty people who were approved for the Third Level Allowance Scheme in 1993. Participants were asked to provide information about their personal circumstances when they applied for college initially such as age, marital status, parental status, residence, educational qualifications, socio-economic status. Details about the courses pursued at third level were also sought.

Background Characteristics

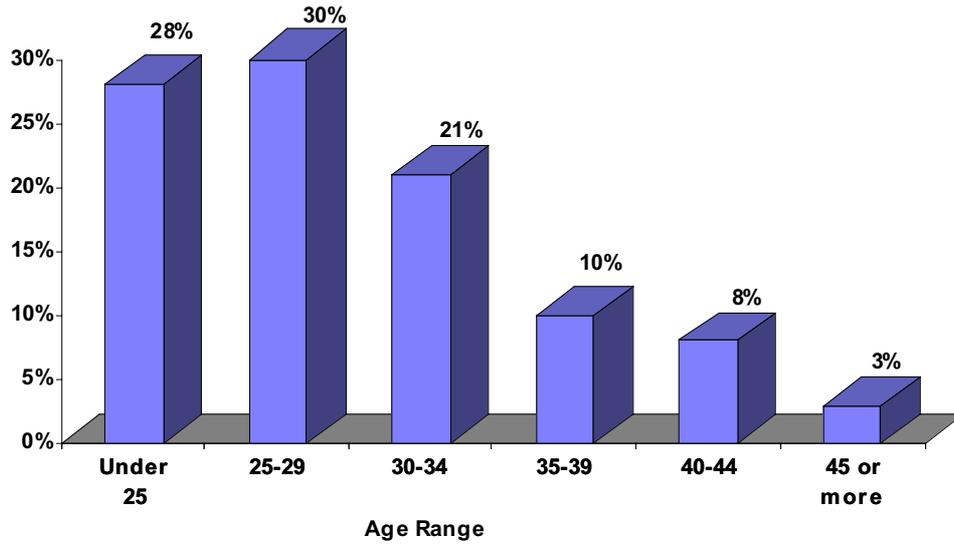
It emerged that people who availed of the Third Level Allowance Scheme in 1993 were typically under 35 years of age, single and had no children. In addition, two out of every three were male (Figure 1.1). Four out of every five were less than 35 years old (Figure 1.2). Approximately three quarters were 'single' and did not have any children and most of those who were married or living with a partner had children.

Figure 1.1: Gender Breakdown



** This number represents the participants who answered the question and it appears in all Figures and Tables*

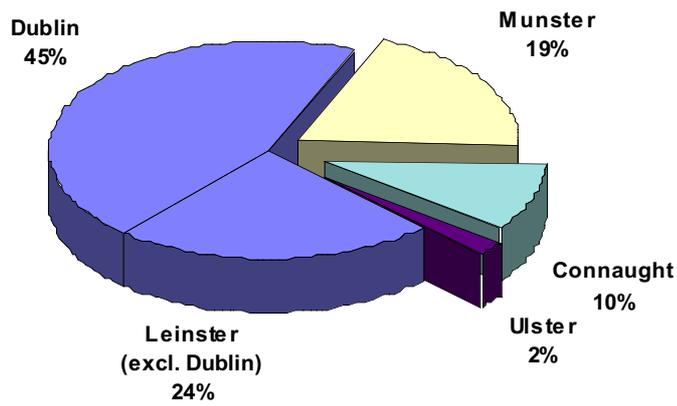
Figure 1.2: Age Breakdown



(116)

Participants were asked to state where they were living when they applied to college (Figure 1.3). Just under half lived in Dublin and another quarter lived in other Leinster counties. Participation by people in Munster and particularly Connaught and Ulster was extremely low and altogether accounted for less than one third.

Figure 1.3: Where Living Prior to College

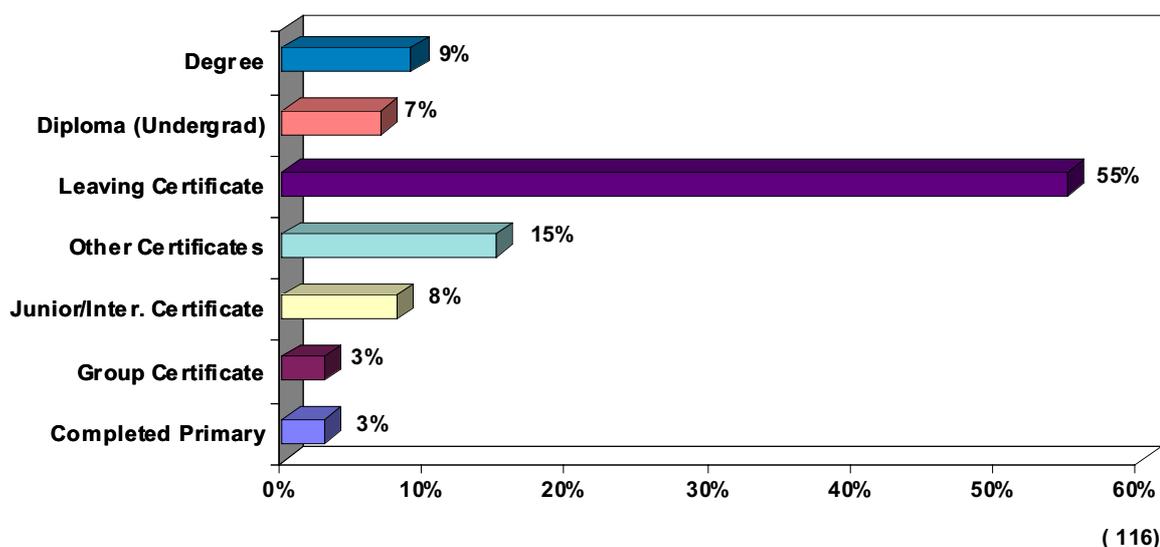


(114)

Educational Attainment

In general, participants had a relatively high level of educational attainment prior to college (Figure 1.4). Seven out of ten had either a Leaving Certificate, Undergraduate Diploma or Degree. Another 15% had completed either Foundation courses, National Certificate or Post Leaving Certificate courses. 14% had a comparatively low level of educational attainment which ranged from Primary to Junior/Intermediate Certificate level.

Figure 1.4: Level of Educational Attainment Prior to College



Almost half gained qualifications between 1980 and 1989 and a further quarter had obtained qualifications after 1990 (Table 1.1). Only a quarter had qualifications obtained before 1980.

Table 1.1: When Qualification Obtained

	%
Between 1990 and 1993	27%
Between 1980 and 1989	47%
Between 1970 and 1979	19%
Between 1955 and 1969	7%
	(85)

Socio-Economic Status

Participants were asked to specify the last occupation held prior to attending college and to indicate when they had finished working. The vast majority (81%) reported having worked prior to college. Almost one in five either did not specify any previous occupation or stated they had worked on FAS schemes (Community Employment Schemes (CES) or Community Youth Training Programmes (CYTP)).

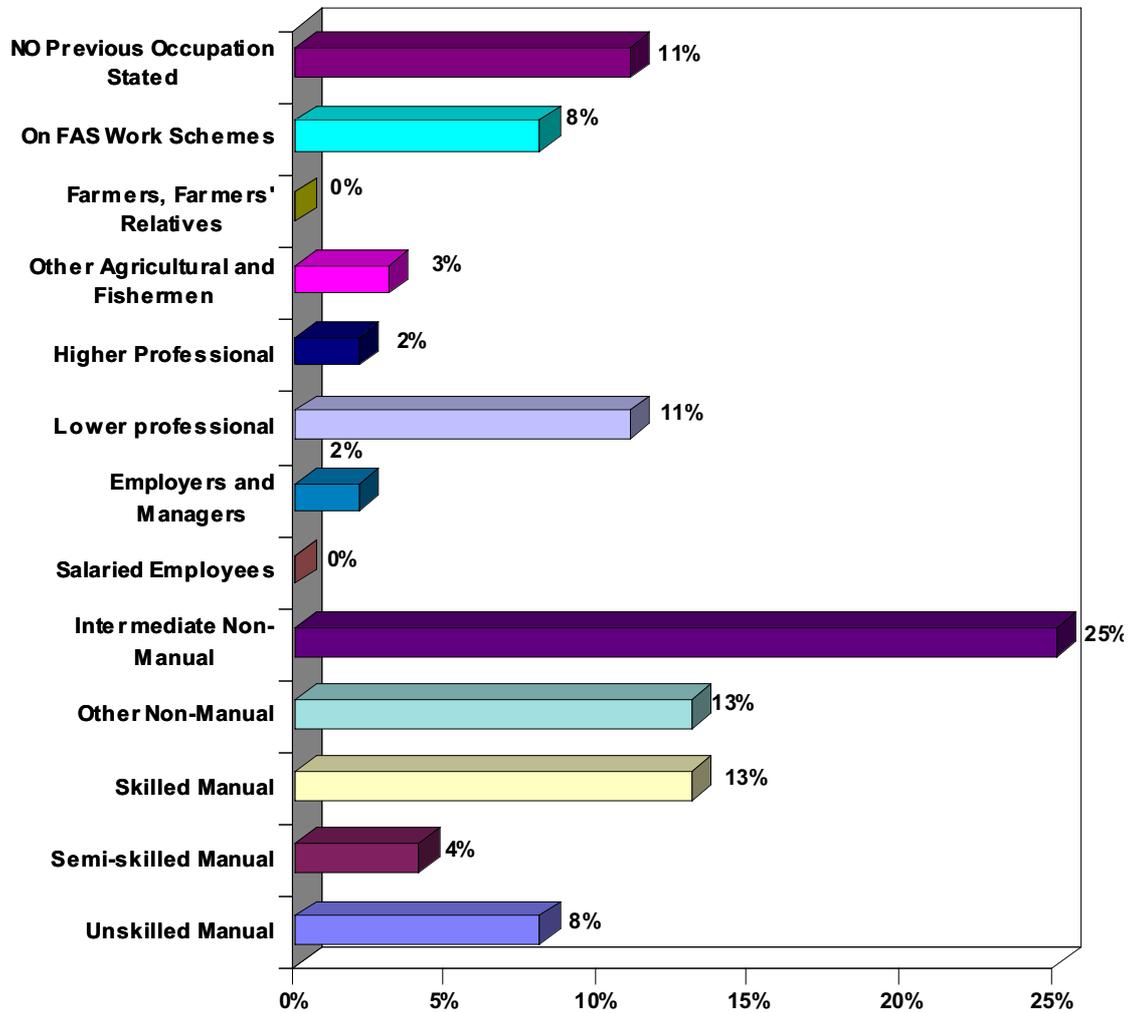
Participants' occupations were categorised according to the 'Socio-Economic Groups' classification used in the *Census of Population in Ireland 1981*¹⁸ (Figure 1.5). This classification was used in a number of other studies on mature students in Ireland (Lynch (1997), Higher Education Authority (1995a, 1995b), Clancy (1995)).

It was found that those availing of the Third Level Allowance Scheme were drawn mainly from the following four Socio-Economic Groups:

<u>Socio-Economic Group</u>	<u>Participants' Previous Occupation</u>
Intermediate Non-Manual	<i>Clerks, Shop Assistants, Barmen, Self-Employed</i>
Other Non-Manual	<i>Chefs, Waitresses, Storemen, Caretakers</i>
Skilled Manual	<i>Mechanics, Welders, Carpenters, Foremen</i>
Unskilled Manual	<i>Factory Workers, Cleaners</i>

¹⁸ See Appendix III for description of occupations in the Socio-Economic Groups.

Figure 1.5: Previous Occupations Categorised by Participants Socio-Economic Group



(114)

Duration of Unemployment

A rough estimate was made of how long participants who had worked previously were unemployed¹⁹ (Figure 1.6). Of those who had worked, three out of five had become unemployed in the two years preceding college. This implied that those unemployed for three years or more tended not to avail of the Scheme.

¹⁹ See Table 1 in Appendix IV.

Figure 1.6: Estimated Number of Years Unemployed Prior to Starting College



(76)

Courses Pursued

The vast majority (76%) attended courses in Universities and Regional Technical Colleges (RTC)²⁰ (Table 1.2). Over half (56%) attended courses in Universities in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and 20% attended RTCs. Of those who attended Universities, one third attended St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. The remainder attended Dublin Institute of Technology, Colleges of Education and institutions such as the National College of Art & Design, the National College of Industrial Relations (NCIR), All Hallows College and the National Botanic Gardens.

Table 1.2: Type of Third Level Institutions Attended

	%
Universities	56%
Regional Technical Colleges	20%
Dublin Institute of Technology	7%
Colleges of Education	4%
Other (Colleges of Art & Design, NCIR, All Hallows,..)	13%
	(116)

Over half the participants studied at Primary Degree level in 1993 and 11% studied at Higher/Postgraduate Diploma or a Masters Degree level (Table 1.3). The remaining one third pursued NCEA Diploma and Certificate level courses.

²⁰ See Appendix V for Classification of Colleges.

Table 1.3: Type of Course Pursued

	%
Master Degree	3%
Higher Diploma or Postgraduate Diploma	8%
Primary Degree	54%
Undergraduate Diploma	20%
Certificate	14%
Other - Preliminary Engineering, Qualifier	1%
	(116)

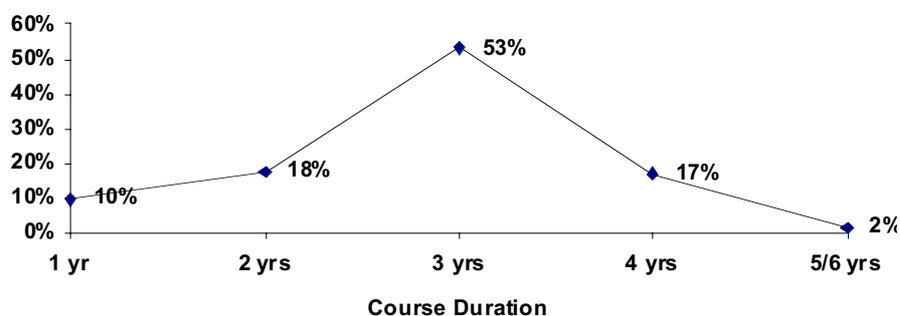
The field of study of participants varied extensively but by far the most popular area of study was Arts (Table 1.4). Two out of every five studied courses in the Arts. Another 40% took courses in areas such as Education, Engineering, Commerce, Science and Social Science. The remaining participants took courses in areas such as Art & Design / Graphic Design, Information Technology, Horticulture, Medicine/Health Sciences, Fine Art, Theology, Architecture, Law, Music and Broadcasting.

Table 1.4: Field of Study

	%
Arts	40%
Education	9%
Engineering	9%
Commerce	8%
Science	7%
Social Science	7%
Art & Design/Graphic Design	4%
Information Technology	3%
Horticulture	2%
Medicine/Health Sciences	2%
Other - Fine Art, Theology, Architecture, Law, Music, Broadcasting	9%
	(116)

As most participants studied courses at primary degree level, the duration of the courses was three years for just over half (53%). Another 19% pursued courses of four to six years duration.

Figure 1.7: Duration of Courses Pursued



(116)

In 1993, most participants (59%) were starting the first year of their courses. Another 25% were going into their second year in 1993. The remaining 16% were entering the third or fourth year of the course.

Summary

The participants who availed of the Third Level Allowance Scheme in 1993/94 tended to be younger, single and not have any children. More men than women participated in the Scheme and prior to starting college, most (67%) were living in Leinster with a high proportion living in Dublin. Participants generally had a high level of educational attainment with most (71%) having the Leaving Certificate or higher qualifications. The majority (81%) reported having jobs at some point before college and more than half became unemployed in the two years preceding college. Participants studied mostly Degree and Diploma level courses in the Universities and RTCs mainly. Getting onto these courses was for many a long and involved process and this aspect of the Scheme is examined in the Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

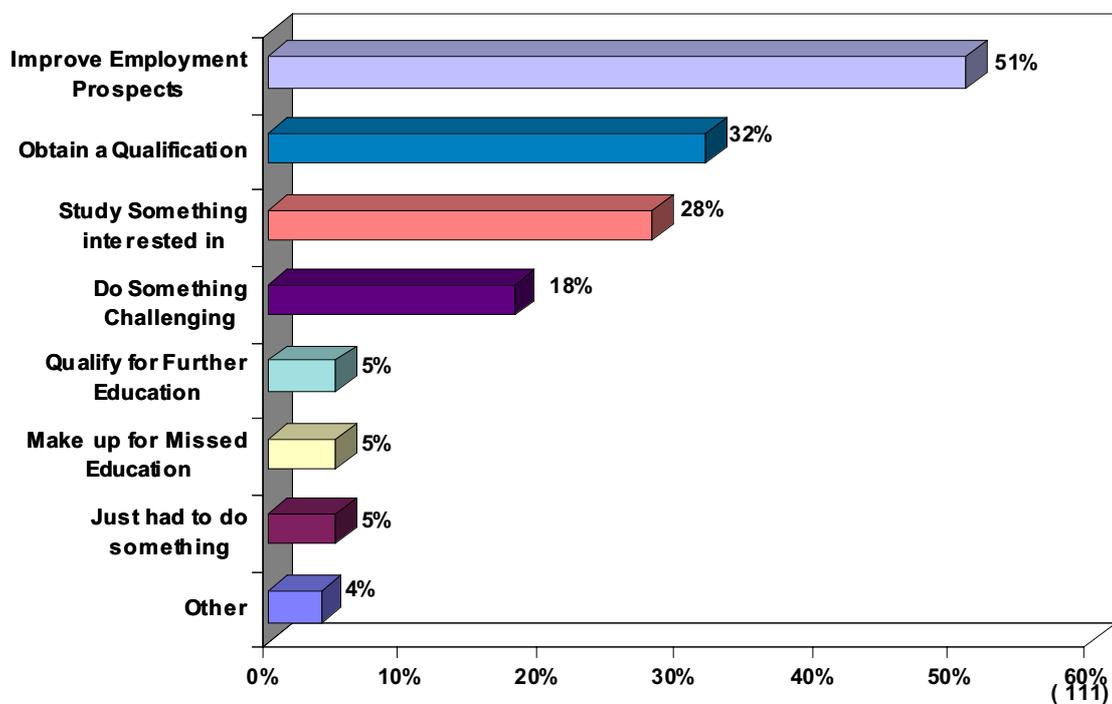
Experience of College

This chapter looks at the ways in which participants obtained information about attending college and how they qualified for entry onto courses. The difficulties which they encountered are examined with special consideration given to the issues which arose around funding. Before looking at these, the reasons why participants chose to go to college initially are presented.

Reasons for Going to College

The main reasons for going to college centred around employment. Just over half reported they returned to college in order to improve their job prospects (Figure 2.1). Some wanted to get a better or more interesting job than the one they held previously and to get more secure employment. Some wanted to obtain work which was full-time and longterm rather than part-time and temporary in nature:

Figure 2.1: Main Reasons for Starting College Initially*



* Percent ages add to over 100% as more than one reason given

My main objectives were to further my education; access the labour market and secure a career.

My main reason for starting college initially was retraining for work. I needed these skills to start my own business.

I had lived abroad and learnt languages. I wanted to further my knowledge of them and I also felt that I could improve my employment prospects.

Some were motivated to return to college in order to benefit their families:

My main reason for starting college initially was to give myself and my family better opportunities by broadening my employment prospects.

Another one third gave the main reason for going to college initially to be their desire to obtain a qualification and for most this was a pre-requisite to securing employment:

A degree is now required if you want anything worthwhile.

In order to get full-time work in Community/Youth work, a qualification such as the one I gained is essential.

I wanted a third level qualification to improve my work prospects/career. Working, as I had experienced it in office jobs seemed to be "dead-end" jobs with no real job satisfaction.

After completing the Leaving Certificate [through VTOS], I felt that I could achieve more by obtaining a Third Level degree. By pushing my level of education further, I might obtain employment which was appealing to me.

I had been working as a volunteer with the Samaritans and I became interested in the area of counselling. In order to qualify as a Counselling Psychologist, I had to first obtain an Honours Degree in Psychology.

Despite achieving a high level of educational attainment outside the formal education system, the importance of having a recognised qualification was stressed:

I was an avid reader of Romantic and Classical Literature but I felt, irrespective of how fluent I was in Irish or well read, that I would never be "accepted" or officially recognised unless I had a degree.

For just over a quarter, one of the main reasons for going to college was the desire to study an area which was of interest to them. In this way, they could fulfil an ambition or realise their potential:

I wanted to study a skill-based and creatively challenging course that would lead to a specific job area.

Third level study was seen as a challenge for under one fifth and represented a means by which they could improve themselves or take a new direction in their lives:

I felt I was in a dead-end job and I knew that I had the intellectual ability to finish a course that would lead to a better job. When this job finished, I found it difficult to find an interesting job so I decided to do what I always wanted to do and go back to college.

Some wanted to go to college in order to qualify for further education or training. Others wanted to make up for missed educational opportunities when they were younger and a small number were simply fed up with their situation and wanted to do something to change it:

I didn't fancy life on the Dole!

A temporary part-time teacher was dissatisfied with the working conditions and wanted to change career:

My main reasons for starting college were because the teaching positions were so bad - there was only 'hours' available all over the place and I wasn't happy living out of a suitcase.

Obtaining a qualification was seen a route out of jobs which were not challenging and where career development was limited.

Sources of Information

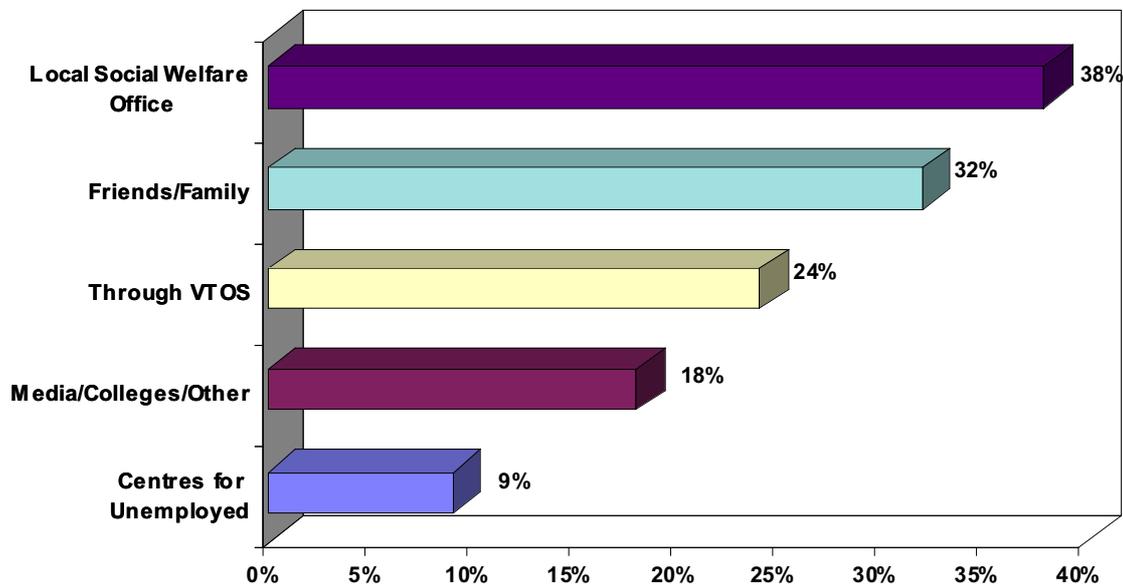
The ways in which people found out about the opportunity to attend college while continuing to collect their unemployment payments varied. The main ways in which people found out about the scheme was through their Local Social Welfare Office (38%) or through their family or friends telling them about it (32%) (Figure 2.2).

Information at the time was not readily available - most was obtained through friends who knew about services available.

I had no idea that this Scheme existed and only for my friend, I would not have known.

My mother who is involved in the ICA had received information on 'Returning to College for Women at Home'.

Figure 2.2: Sources of Information on the Third Level Allowance Scheme*



* Percentages add to over 100% as more than one source given by

(116)

The lack of information at Local Social Welfare Offices in the early years was frequently cited:

I had to go four times to the local Social Welfare Office before I saw someone who knew what the TLA Scheme was. In saying this, I have seen improvements (advertising) over the year but it could be improved further.

Information on recent improvements in the Scheme were still not adequately disseminated:

I discovered recently that Townsend Street [Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs] have sanctioned that it is possible for TLA students to work during the Summer holidays and retain their payments. No-one told me - when I could have looked for a job sooner, a job that would have helped reduce my overdraft. There's nothing in writing about this and the Local Social Welfare Office denied any knowledge of it when I told them. Absolutely crazy and frustrating!

Many were quite determined in their efforts to seek out information themselves and some went to great lengths:

I wrote to the then Taoiseach in Irish and shortly afterwards a reply came from both him and Dr. M. Woods [Minister for Social Welfare at the time] regarding the potential implementation of a Third Level Allowance Scheme.

Other sources of information were television, newspapers, Third Level colleges and to a lesser extent, Citizens Information Centres and libraries. Unemployment Centres and the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) were cited by a small proportion (9%). However, many secured information from a variety of sources:

I was sent information on TLA by my cousin who got it while he attended college. I went to the local Citizen's Advice Centre and they reckoned it possible. The Dublin Corporation Community and Youth Information Centre clarified by ringing Social Welfare.

A number of participants had obtained qualifications while on the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and a quarter cited VTOS as a source of information on the Third Level Allowance.

Link with VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme)

A significant proportion of participants had progressed from the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) to the Third Level Allowance Scheme. VTOS is a scheme which allows unemployed people to obtain 'second level' qualifications such as the Leaving Certificate, Junior Certificate, City and Guilds, NCVA (National Council for Vocational Awards) and GCE/GCSE/SCE certification. Accreditation by a number of other bodies such as the RSA (Royal Society Arts), Pitman Institute, Institute of Accounting Technicians of Ireland are also awarded under VTOS. VTOS is funded by the Department of Education & Science²¹ and delivered by local Vocational Education Committees (VEC)²².

A significant proportion (31%) of participants had completed courses on VTOS with most of these (80%) studying Leaving Certificate subjects (Table 2.1):

I improved my grades in two subjects - French and History - to complement my 1980 Leaving Certificate, RSA Wordprocessing and RSA Business French.

²¹ Department of Education & Science was called the Department of Education prior to July 1997.

²² For detailed information on VTOS, see WRC Social and Economic Consultants (1994) *A Report to the Minister for Education on An Evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme*, Department of Education [Renamed in July 1997 to Department of Education & Science], Dublin.

One fifth of those who were on VTOS courses had taken City and Guilds exams as well as PLC (Post-Leaving Certificate) courses, Pitman and computer courses.

Table 2.1: Qualifications Obtained Through VTOS

	%
Leaving Certificate	65%
Leaving Certificate plus other courses	15%
City and Guilds	11%
Other - PLC, Pitman, Computer Courses	9%
	(34)

VTOS was an important route into Third Level and for some it was pivotal in helping and encouraging them to achieve a lifelong ambition:

I went on a VTOS course which is the best thing I did. The teachers gave me the confidence I lacked during my primary years and early secondary school years.

Being on VTOS, the RTC were happy that I was back in the education system as it was pointed out that some people cannot make the adjustment.

VTOS was an important source of information on the Third Level Allowance Scheme. In an *Evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme* by the WRC it was reported that one out of five people on VTOS transferred to further education courses²³. Indeed, the vast majority of venues offering VTOS courses provided information and advice on training and education opportunities such as the Third Level Allowance Scheme²⁴. VTOS also provided practical support with accessing education opportunities as well as one-to-one counselling. These types of support were mentioned frequently by participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme who had also been on VTOS:

My Dad died when I was very young - 13, so I left school very early. I decided to go back to school, i.e. VTOS. They encouraged me to go

²³ WRC Social and Economic Consultants (1994) *A Report to the Minister for Education on An Evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme*, Department of Education, Dublin, (p 84).

²⁴ WRC Social and Economic Consultants (1994) *A Report to the Minister for Education on An Evaluation of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme*, Department of Education, Dublin, p 37).

forward towards the occupation I thought was mine. So I did and here I am a qualified Horticulturist.

VTOS arranged an interview with the college Director and gave details on courses that I could apply for.

Lack of Written Information

The lack of information was reflected in the finding that only 40% reported receiving any *written* information. This was generally supplied by the Local Social Welfare Office or by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs in Dublin. Participants were asked to identify who or which organisation was most helpful to them in their efforts to go to college. The Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs was identified by three out of every ten (31%) as the organisation which was most helpful:

The Local Social Welfare was most helpful to me - if they had not told me about the Allowance, I may not have availed of it.

VTOS was cited by 20% as being most helpful and colleges were cited by another 10%. A number of other organisations were also identified and these included FAS, Unemployment Centres and Area Partnerships. However, 15% said that no organisation was particularly helpful and they had to find out everything themselves:

I didn't feel there was any specific organisation which was 'most helpful' as I had to look into everything and all aspects myself.

Despite the lack of help, over three quarters (78%) said they were *reasonably* satisfied with the process involved in applying to college. Some of those who found the process somewhat complicated remarked:

There was nobody able to explain to me the correct process in applying for college. I lost my place in two colleges as I did not send all the documents needed.

It was a bit haphazard at the time - grants, the TLA and all that financial side was very hazy. I think there is more clarity now.

Different universities use different methods for mature students. Greater direct contact between universities and administrators of the TLA would help.

Some felt that information was vague and ambiguous. Applying to colleges seemed to involve rather arbitrary admissions procedures:

Trying to gain a Third Level place was very difficult and only I had been there at Night Class before, I would not have got in. They just did not want Mature Students.

Qualifying for a Place at College

Despite the high level of educational attainment, only three out of ten (29%) reported that they qualified solely on the basis of their Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) results (Table 2.2). In most cases, it was a combination of qualifications, interview and entrance exams which were considered:

I had a one-to-one interview, a group interview and written work to do also which was part of the application.

I applied as a Mature Student. I got references, made an appointment with the Dean and gave him my CV.

Table 2.2: How Participants Qualified for a College Place

How Participants Qualified	%
Interview and/or Entrance Exam	42%
Leaving Certificate Only	29%
On basis of work experience, other qualifications etc.	16%
As 'Mature Students'	13%
	(114)

Submitting a letter of application and/or Curriculum Vitae to colleges was cited by some participants. Two out of every five attended for interview and/or sat an entrance exam and some found the whole process somewhat stressful:

I had to attend for (inappropriate) aptitude tests with hundreds of other hopefuls and had to sit gruelling interviews. I didn't believe I'd gotten the place when I received the letter - I was so stressed out by the process.

In the case of those doing Art & Design, an interview with portfolio was compulsory. Another 16% cited their work experience and completion of other courses such as Foundation and Access courses as the way in which they qualified. Another 13% said

they gained a place by applying as ‘Mature Students’. Some were unsure as to how they qualified as it was not always made clear to them afterwards:

I qualified apparently by means of my letter of application. This is a grey area for all mature students.

Some colleges have an very arbitrary admissions process for “mature” applicants.

Difficulties at College

Participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had encountered difficulties in the following areas while at college:

- 1. Coursework - e.g. studying, essays, exams etc.**
- 2. Managing Money**
- 3. Getting Maintenance/ESF Grants**
- 4. Getting Social Welfare Payments**
- 5. Personal and/or Family Problems**
- 6. Other**

Two areas emerged as being sources of *some* or *a lot* of difficulty. These were ‘Managing Money’ and ‘Personal and/or Family Problems’. Over three quarters (76%) said they experienced *some* or *a lot* of difficulty with money management (Table 2.3). Many participants remarked that having money problems adversely affected their studies. One participant conveyed this quite vividly:

Grinding poverty did make it difficult to give my complete attention to the course work at the time.

Over half (58%) identified ‘Personal and/or Family Problem’s as a source of either *some* or *a lot* of difficulty to them while in college.

I was supporting a family while attending college. Perhaps it would be possible to make allowances for people who find themselves in such a position as at times decisions arose as to whether college needs or family finance should take priority.

More than half (56%) specified the actual coursework as the cause of *some* or *a lot* of difficulty. This included studying, writing essays and doing exams. Obtaining grants and payments from Social Welfare were identified as causing the least difficulty for participants while in college.

Table 2.3: Extent of Difficulties with a number of areas while in College

	A lot of Difficulty	Some Difficulty	No Difficulty	Total
Managing Money	26%	50%	24%	(105)
Personal and/or Family Problems	26%	32%	42%	(101)
Getting Maintenance/ESF Grants	14%	27%	59%	(85)
Coursework - eg studying, essays, exams..	9%	47%	44%	(104)
Getting Social Welfare Payments	2%	26%	72%	(98)

Other difficulties cited by a small number were the problems of travelling long distances to college and not being able to mix well with younger students. The following participant who dropped out after failing first year exams remarked:

The students in my group were the most unfriendly people I ever met. They would not talk to you because you didn't fit in with their attitudes. There was another mature student who found it the same.

For some it was a combination of factors such as lack of good accommodation; lack of money and feelings of isolation:

Living in a small bedsit and trying to manage on a small amount of money and having no back-up from anyone - I felt a bit isolated.

While these may seem to be minor difficulties, they represented serious obstacles for some students and were identified as reasons for dropping out of college.

Participants were asked to identify one particular area which they felt caused the *greatest* difficulty for them. 'Managing Money' was prioritised by over one third (34%) and 'Personal and/or Family Problems' were mentioned by over a quarter (27%) (Table 2.4). Completing the coursework caused the greatest difficulty for one fifth of the participants.

Table 2.4: Area Which Caused the Greatest Difficulty

	%
Managing Money	34%
Personal and/or Family Problems	27%

Coursework - eg studying, essays, exams..	20%
Getting Maintenance/ESF Grants	10%
Other - travelling long distances, mixing with other students, getting good accommodation..	9%
	(89)

Level of Funding

The Third Level Allowance Scheme allowed people in receipt of certain social welfare payments to study at a Third Level College in which they secured a place. In 1993, this included people in receipt of:

- Unemployment Benefit
- Unemployment Assistance
- Lone Parent's Allowance
- Deserted Wife's Benefit
- Widow's and Widower's Contributory Pension

Participants also continued to receive any secondary benefits such as Fuel Allowance, Christmas Bonus, Butter Vouchers and Rent/Mortgage Assistance to which they were entitled.

In addition to receiving social welfare payments from the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs, participants could also receive funding, if eligible, from other sources including:

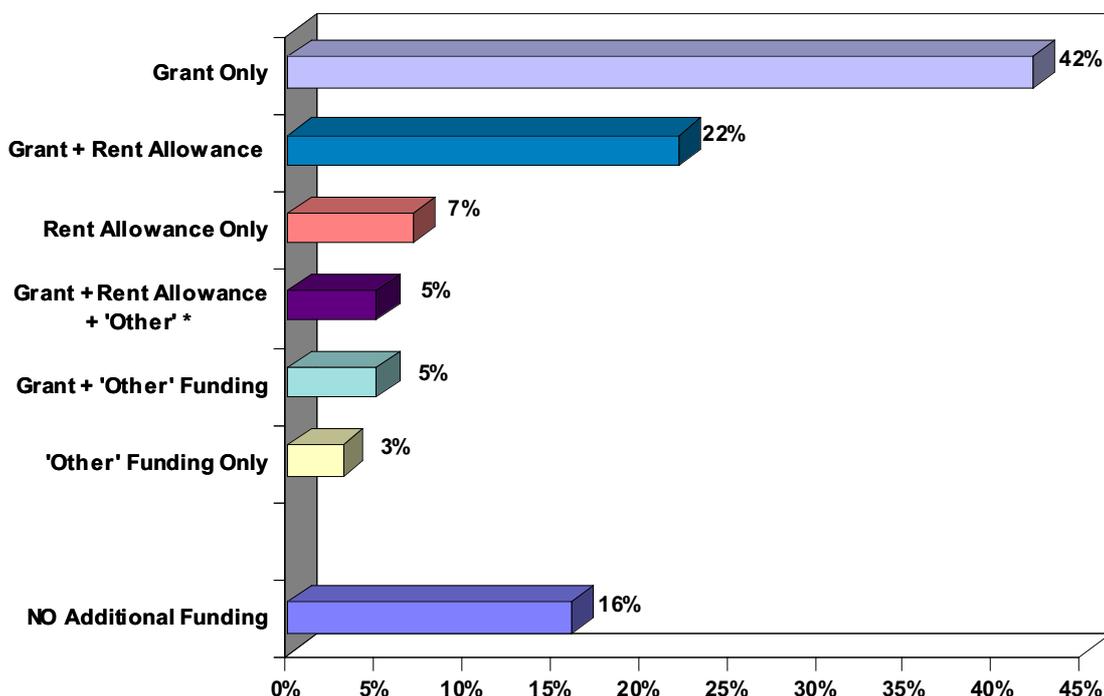
1. Grants from Local Authorities or Vocational Education Committees (VECs)
2. Rent Allowances from the Regional Health Boards
3. Funding from Local Area Partnerships²⁵
4. Funding from College 'Hardship' Funds.

Some of these payments were 'means-tested' while others were given at the discretion of the agency concerned. An example of some rates of payments given in 1993 and 1997 are presented in Table 2, Appendix IV and indicates the varying levels of payment which may be made.

A breakdown of the level of additional funding received by participants is presented in Figure 2.3. While exact figures were not obtained, it gives some indication of the extent of additional funding.

²⁵ Twelve Local Area Partnerships were established in the early 1990s in designated disadvantaged areas to tackle unemployment and social exclusion. They are funded by the government and the European Union under the European Support Framework. As of 1997, there are 38 Area Partnerships (see Report of Area Development Management Ltd. (1997a and 1997b)).

Figure 2.3: Level of Additional Funding Received



*'Other' refers to College Hardship Funds, Area Partnership funding, ...

(116)

Four of every ten received a *Grant Only* and another two out of every ten received a *Grant + Rent Allowance*. Indeed the vast majority (74%) were in receipt of a Grant. A small proportion (10%) received either the *Rent Allowance Only* or '*Other*' Funding such as College 'Hardship' funding or Area Partnership funding. However, one of every six received no additional funding at all and some stated they were never even aware of the existence of these funding sources:

I didn't know there was any other sorts of financial funding.

While most (70%) said they experienced little or no difficulty in applying for additional financial support, just under a third (30%) experienced some difficulties. The main problems emerging were related to

- (i) *Entitlement to Rent Allowance*
- (ii) *Qualifying for a Grant*
- (iii) *Completing Complex Forms*

(i) Entitlement to Rent Allowance

Establishing entitlement to Rent Allowance posed considerable difficulty for some participants. Ordinarily, full-time students are not entitled to Rent Allowances and since the Third Level Allowance Scheme was initiated there was some confusion around the eligibility of those on the Scheme:

When I started on the TLA there was a lot of confusion between various offices as to the nature of the TLA. In one rent office, they had never heard of TLA and assured me that as a student, I couldn't receive Rent Allowance.

I was informed by my Community Welfare Officer that as I was now a full-time student, I was no longer entitled to Rent Allowance and this was stopped.

This highlights the importance of communication and co-ordination among the different agencies. The lack of basic information on entitlement was also identified:

I was in college for two years before I became aware that I was entitled to Rent Allowance.

I recall spending £1,200 in my first year on rent payments, unaware that I could get a Rent Allowance. As such, I now have to repay that amount which I borrowed.

Some complained about the problems of getting landlords and landladies to let out flats to people receiving Rent Allowances:

My main problem especially in first year was in obtaining accommodation, particularly when in need of a Rent Allowance. If you could not get the Landlord/Landlady to sign the form, the Health Board would not give you the allowance for the rent.

One participant who dropped out of college for personal reasons experienced particular difficulties with obtaining the Rent Allowance:

I moved house during college and I had nowhere to live. My rent allowance was cut off and they would not give me money for a hostel or anywhere to live.

Another participant who received a grant but could not get a Rent Allowance dropped out after three months due to financial difficulties:

By the time I paid my rent and bus fares, I only had approximately £11.00 per week to live on.

One participant who qualified for the *Rent Allowance Only* and subsequently dropped out and remarked:

I simply couldn't manage financially and, after paying fees until the second year, I was unable to finance myself any further and had to leave.

(ii) Qualifying for a Grant

Some participants felt that it was grossly unfair and even ridiculous that when applying for a grant, adults living at home with their parent(s) were means-tested on the parents income:

It should be accepted that adults are not dependent on their parents even if they live in the same house. Recipients of Social Welfare payments should automatically qualify for full maintenance grants.

In one instance the process of being means testing was seen as humiliating:

I felt that it was an intrusion to have to get a statement of my mother's financial affairs and was not being assessed on my own circumstances independently. This was somewhat humiliating.

There was also great dissatisfaction among people who only qualified for the lower 'adjacent' or 'living at home' grant and many felt that this lower rate was totally inadequate:

As a mature student resident in Dublin, I receive only an adjacent rate grant in spite of the fact that I am not supported by my parents.

A participant who did not qualify for any additional support was forced to take out bank loans at particularly high interest rates:

I received no support - or even helpful advice - from any agencies. I had to take out bank loans as I couldn't afford to make ends meet. My circumstances were profoundly difficult. Rent Allowance would have helped, so would a maintenance grant - but both were denied me. I was in dire straits for all three years.

(iii) Completing Complex Forms

Another problem was the complexity of completing application forms for a grant and also applying to CAO/CAS. Some found it a very difficult and time-consuming process:

There seemed at the time to be an endless amount of form filling and provision of information, but I accepted this as usual.

The maintenance grant form was overly long and tedious and required certifying by a solicitor!

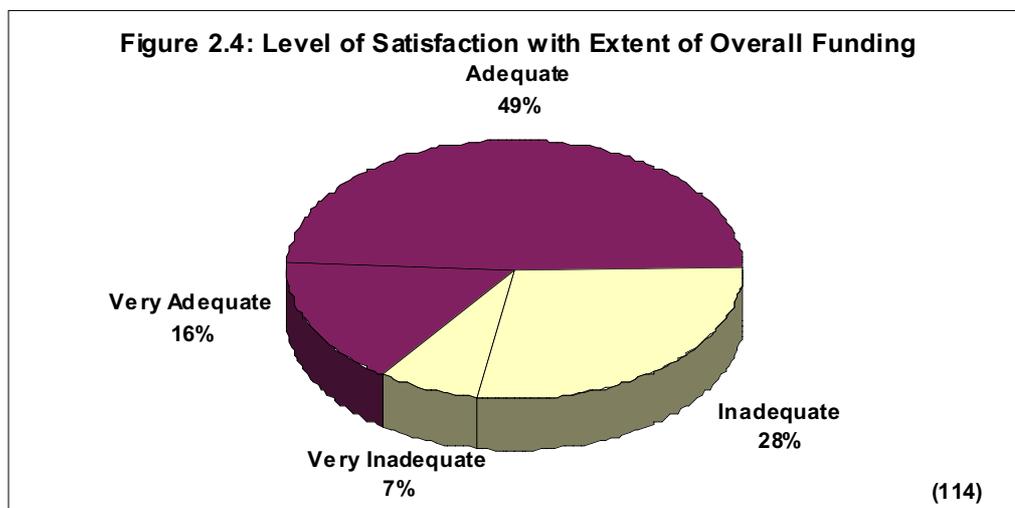
The application form to CAO/CAS is a ludicrous minefield for all applicants.

Satisfaction with Overall Level of Funding

When asked how they viewed their own *overall* level of financial support, including the Third Level Allowance, Maintenance Grant, Rent Allowance or funding from Area Partnerships - two out of three (65%) reported it to be either 'Adequate' or 'Very Adequate' (Figure 2.4). A participant in receipt of a *Grant Only* stated:

The financial support I received - though not a fortune - did allow me the basic needs to complete my studies.

The remaining one third found their overall level of funding to be either 'Inadequate' or 'Very Inadequate'.



Tackling Problems of Funding

Participants were asked how they thought problems of personal funding could be tackled. Over a quarter suggested that payment levels should be increased (Table 2.5). Either the Third Level Allowance payment should be raised or the grants improved:

The Third Level Allowance just about covers the costs of living while at college but there are the added costs of books, stationery, travel etc. So the maintenance grants could be improved in addition to the rent allowance. I only received £4.00 per week towards my rent of £37.50 because my partner was on a CE Scheme.

In 1996, the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs improved the financial position of some participants standardising the rate of payment to the maximum rate of Unemployment Benefit.

Table 2.5: Ways in Which Problems of Funding Could be Tackled

	%
Increase either Third Level Allowance or Maintenance Grant	26%
Provide Extra Allowances - for books, travel, meals, etc	26%
Allow part-time and/or holiday employment	10%
Have Single Information Source	9%
Provide Special Low Interest Loans	8%
Change basis of means-testing	5%
More flexible signing arrangements	4%
	(80)

A quarter of participants suggested the provision of adequate book and travel allowances. Again, in 1996, a yearly Book Allowance of £100.00 was introduced and many participants appreciated this new development even though it arrived too late for some.

The main reason for not continuing with my education was I could not afford the books that the college required I get. I mentioned this to the college and was told there was no money available for this.

Social Welfare payments are set at subsistence level only with no margin for extra expenditure.

However, a few people still felt that amount of the Book Allowance was inadequate to cover their costs. For example, those doing Art & Design cited the high cost of paint, canvas and other equipment needed on their course. A travel allowance was also frequently cited as some believed that if VTOS students were eligible for a travel allowance, then Third Level Allowance students should also be eligible.

Another suggestion was that people should be allowed to work part-time or work during holidays. Again, the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs have sanctioned working during holiday periods. This has been perhaps the greatest improvement for participants as it allows them to supplement their income instead of being almost obliged to remain unemployed during holiday periods:.

It's a known fact that most TLA people won't work during the holidays so as to avoid the possibility of losing the payment for the next year.

Prior to this, any work was means tested and the Third Level Allowance was reduced respectively. This often acted as a deterrent to many students to take up work. A small proportion also felt that they should be able to work part-time during term periods as well. For example, a postgraduate student remarked that if they worked for a small number of hours each week as a Tutor in the college they would be means tested and this was seen to be unfair.

Other suggestions as to how problems of funding could be tackled included the provision of special low interest loans or interest free loans. Some participants found that lending institutions would not extend loans to them:

As I did not get any fees or maintenance I approached the banks but each of them would not even consider me for a loan.

Some people did however take out loans which they were still paying off after finishing their course:

I had to take out a personal Credit Union loan which now stands at over one thousand pounds, having paid £10.00 weekly since the beginning of the course.

It was suggested by a number of people that deferred interest free loan funds should be set-up like those operating in the United Kingdom:

The Irish Government and the Banks should get together and study the UK's system of being able to offer interest free loans to students. I got a £2,000 interest free loan [to do a postgraduate course in the UK - after the TLA] with no problems and I don't have to pay it back until I get employment.

Having a 'single information source' was also proposed where people could be advised of their financial entitlements given that there were so many different agencies involved. The creation of a unified service to administer the grant, social welfare and rent allowance payments was also suggested in order to make it more streamlined and easier for people to avail of their entitlements:

There should be a centralised funding source for participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme. This would make administration manageable and meet Mature Students' needs.

There should be a place to go to find out what grants are available so it is clear how much will be available. Information on banking and managing finances.

I would like TLA, Health Boards and Local Authorities to group together to, from the outset, inform 'confirmed' and 'accepted' 3rd level mature students just what payment(s) they are entitled to.

TLA, Grant Authorities and Health Boards could join together to 'care' more for the financial needs of mature students so that they are not worrying whether their benefits are safe and won't be taken from them at any time. It seems ridiculous that all the above (TLA, Grant and Rent) have to be applied for separately.

The following experience of one participant indicates some of the problems encountered with finding out information:

Staff who are responsible for TLA customers should be briefed on all aspects of their management and not have to excuse themselves and go ask several of their colleagues before returning with a brief synopsis of the answer. I've had to request to see supervisors on several occasions and eventually resorted to dealing with the Central Office in Townsend Street. I knew more about the Scheme and my entitlements than the staff did!

The problem of having to re-apply every year for the Third Level Allowance was also mentioned as well as having to re-apply to the Health Boards for the Medical Card:

When I was at college, I had to provide proof that I was still attending college. I found this awkward and time consuming. Also, a college Student Card was not acceptable to Social Welfare as proof yet this is the very basis on which the College Administration issue the letter.

More flexible signing arrangements were also called for and the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs again have been progressive in eliminating the need to sign-on. Since 1996, those on the Third Level Allowance Scheme do not have to register with their local employment office on a monthly basis. The need to change the basis of 'means testing' was also proposed. The treatment of adults as dependants of their parents if they were living at home was criticised and some participants called for this to be changed.

Summary

The main reason why participants decided to go to college was to improve their employment prospects. Obtaining information about the Scheme in the early 90s when the Scheme started was somewhat haphazard and for many it was a matter of chance. Information was not easily accessible and was generally spread by 'word of mouth'. Lack of knowledge about the Scheme in Local Social Welfare Offices was also cited. VTOS emerged as an important source of information as well as an access route for people interested in third level study. Almost one third (31%) of participants had completed VTOS courses.

Most participants qualified for a place at college on the basis of a combination of factors, which included educational qualifications, interview and/or entrance examination. Only three out of ten (29%) said they qualified on the basis of their Leaving Certificate alone.

The difficulties which participants experienced at college were in the areas of 'Managing Money', 'Personal and/or Family Problems' and doing 'Coursework'. An analysis of the type of additional funding which participants received revealed that almost three quarters (74%) were in receipt of grants from Local Authorities or VECs. 65% felt the overall level funding received was adequate. The main suggestions for tackling problems of funding were increasing the Third Level Allowance payment or increasing the grant level. Providing extra allowances for additional costs such as travel and meals was also proposed.

Most of the participants completed their courses and the benefits and outcomes of participation on the Third Level Allowance Scheme are examined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

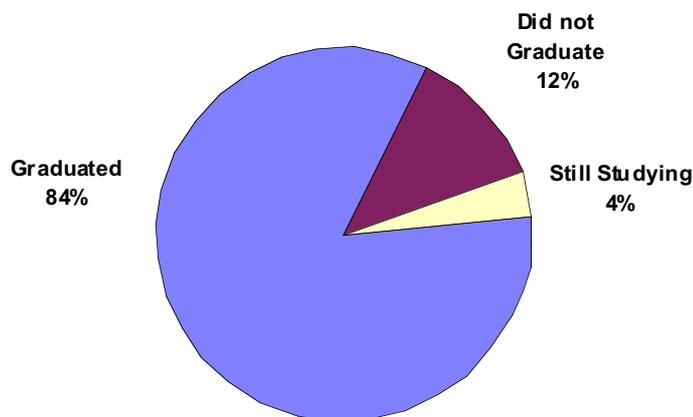
Outcomes of the Third Level Allowance Scheme

The benefits of college which participants experienced were examined in terms of their level of success in obtaining qualifications, securing employment or further education and the personal benefits which they felt they gained.

Level of Success at College

There was a very high success rate with four out of five participants graduating (Figure 3.1). Those who did not graduate or left college midway accounted for 12% of all participants. A small proportion (4%) were still studying and expected to complete either by the end of 1997 or sometime in 1998.

Figure 3.1: Whether Graduated From College

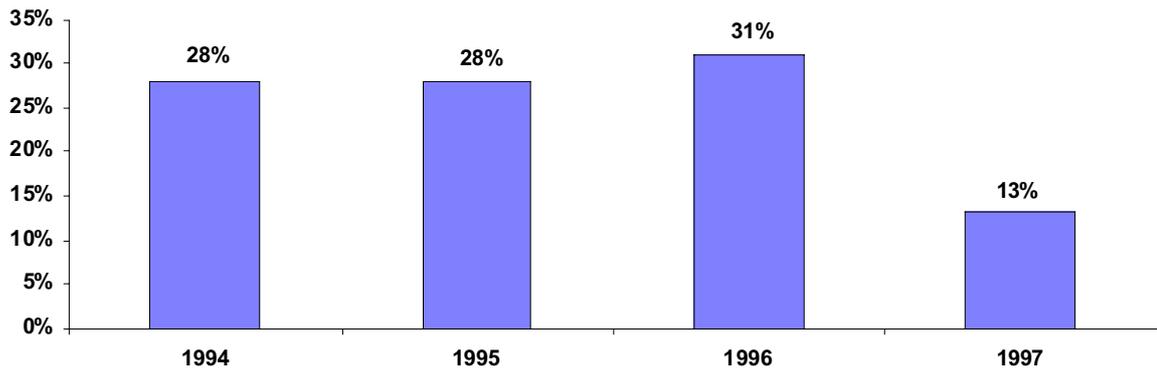


(116)

It is possible that people who did not graduate or left very soon after starting college may have been less inclined to take part in the survey. Some of the participants who did not graduate expressed their initial reluctance to complete the form for this very reason but nevertheless participated.

Of those who graduated, more than a quarter (28%) completed their course in 1994, another quarter (28%) finished in 1995, 31% completed in 1996 and 13% finished in 1997 (Figure 3.2). The vast majority (87%) had graduated one or more years ago.

Figure 3.2: The Year in which Participants Graduated



(96)

A breakdown of the exam results by the type of course shows that the majority (74%) studying at Degree level or Higher Diploma level achieved honours (Table 3.1). This contrasts significantly with the type of awards given to those studying Diploma and Certificate courses where only half received awards for 'Merit' or 'Distinction'.

Table 3.1: Exam Results Breakdown by Course Type

Degree and Higher Diploma	%	Diploma, Certificate and Other	%
1st Class Honours	8%	Pass with Distinction	18%
2nd or 3rd Class Honours	66%	Pass with Merit	32%
Pass	26%	Pass	50%
	(61)		(34)

From among the 12% of participants who left college without graduating a variety of reasons were given as to why they left college. Some simply did not like the course they were studying or the way in which subjects were taught (Table 3.2). Some could not continue due to lack of finance and others left college because they were offered jobs. Failing exams was also another reason given and a small number cited personal problems as the main reason for leaving college.

Table 3.2: Reasons for Leaving the Course Prior to Completion

	%*
Did not like course/college	31%
Lack of Finance	23%
Offered a Job	23%
Failed exams	15%
Personal Reasons	15%
* Percentages add to over 100% as more than one reason given	(13)

Of the fourteen who did not graduate, five left during the first year, another five left during second year and the remaining four left in the third or fourth year of the course.

Status of Participants

All participants, whether they graduated or not, were asked to indicate what they were doing six months after leaving their courses. They were also asked to specify what they were doing at the time of the survey (Summer 1997).

Status of Participants Six Months Later

Of those who graduated from the courses two out of five (38%) were working six months afterwards (Table 3.3). Another two out of five (38%) were pursuing further education or training. This included people who had completed Certificate courses and progressed onto Diploma courses and then perhaps Primary Degree courses. Others had completed Primary Degree courses and were pursuing Masters Degrees or Higher Diplomas six months later. So for many participants (38%) more than one qualification was obtained under the Third Level Allowance Scheme. A small proportion (16%) were signing-on six months after leaving college and another 5% were working on Community Employment Schemes. A small proportion (3%) were working in the home caring for their families.

Table 3.3: Situation of Graduates Six Months After Completing Course

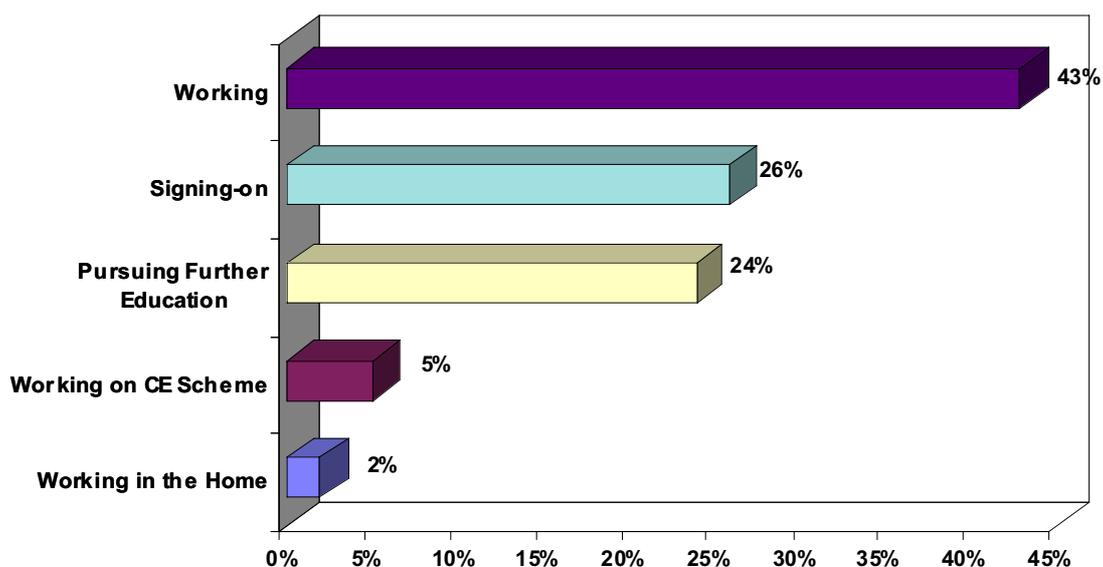
	%
Working	38%
Pursuing Further Education or Training	38%
Signing-on	16%
Working on CE Scheme	5%
Working in the Home	3%
	(86)

Of the fourteen people who did not graduate, over one third were working six months after leaving the course, another one third were signing-on and a small number were pursuing further education or training.

Current Status of Graduates (Summer 1997)

The situation of graduates at the time of the survey (Summer 1997) showed two fifths (43%) were working (Figure 3.3). Another quarter (26%) were signing-on and another quarter (24%) were pursuing further full-time education. The remaining 7% were working either on Community Employment Schemes or working in the home.

Figure 3.3: Current Status of Graduates



Graduates in Employment

Two thirds (65%) of graduates who were working had obtained full-time jobs and the remaining one third were working part-time. Over half (52%) believed their qualification was 'extremely important' in helping them obtain jobs. Many of the others viewed it as being either 'very important' or 'important'. The qualifications which participants obtained under the Third Level Allowance Scheme were an important factor in helping to secure employment:

I successfully landed a teaching post within one week of final exams.

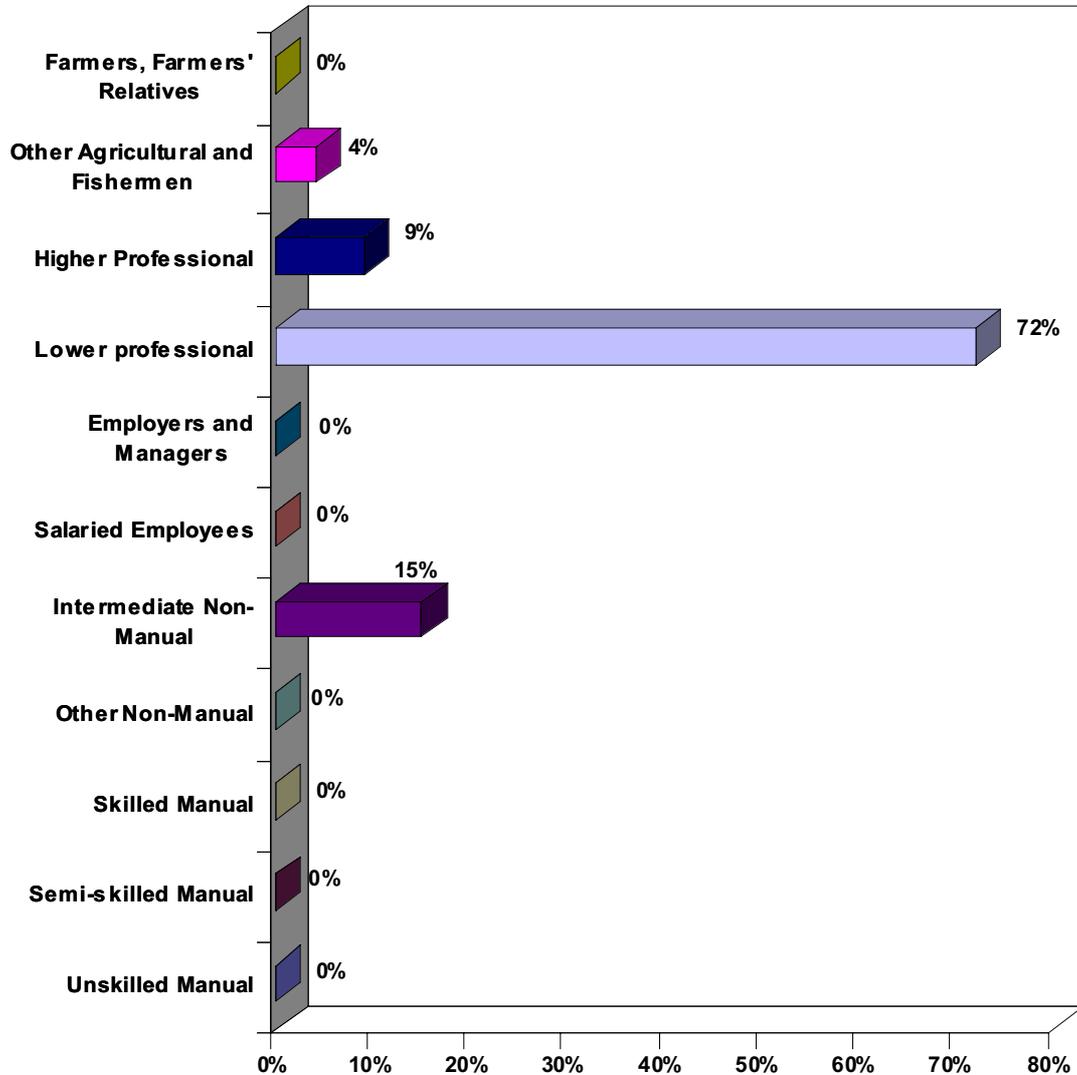
The type of occupations which graduates gained were predominantly in the 'Lower Professional' category (Figure 3.4). Around three out of every four (72%) obtained work in this category which included quite a lot of teachers as well as journalists, technicians, commercial artists, social workers and community development workers. A further 15% gained jobs in the 'Intermediate Non-manual' category. This included people doing clerical and administrative work and those working as salespersons. A small number (9%) gained jobs in the 'Higher Professional' category including lecturing and medicine. A few graduates in the 'Other Agricultural Occupations' were working as Horticulturists.

One participant related a story which demonstrated the kind of impact which the Third Level Allowance Scheme had peoples' lives:

My boyfriend had a Diploma in Engineering and he also went back to college in '92 [under the Third Level Allowance Scheme]. He went to Waterford to do a degree in Computer Aided Manufacturing and got 1st Class Honours. He then got accepted to do his Masters in Information Technology where he got 1st Class Honours once again. He now has his own business which is very successful - one year later - thanks to 'Back to Work Allowances' and Area Enterprise Allowances'²⁶. Thanks to Social Welfare we both have a much brighter future with better job prospects and a confident outlook.

²⁶ 'Back to Work Allowance Scheme' is another Scheme operated by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. It allows unemployed people and lone parents to take-up employment or self-employment while retaining a percentage of their social welfare payment and their secondary benefits for up to three years. The Area Partnerships also provide Enterprise Allowances to assist people wishing to set-up in business.

Figure 3.4: Socio-Economic Status of Graduates in Employment



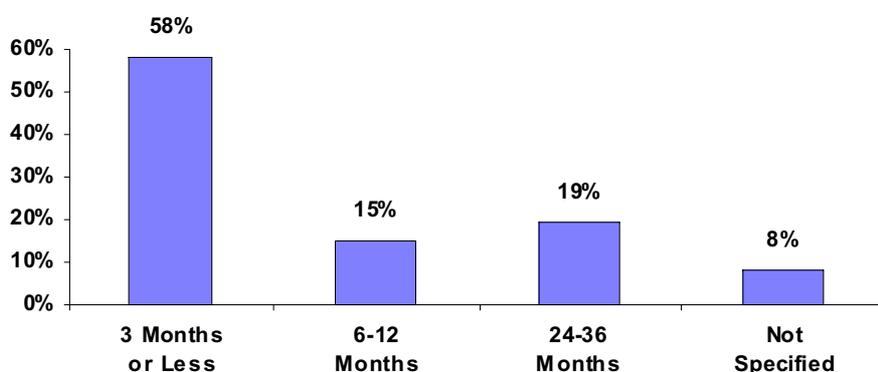
(46)

Graduates Signing-On

Just over a quarter (26%) of those who graduated were signing-on. However the majority had only finished their courses relatively recently (Figure 3.5). Three out of five were signing-on for three months or less and 15% were signing-on for six to twelve months. Some graduates stated they found it difficult to obtain employment:

I now have a H.Dip. and am available for work - if I could only find it!

Figure 3.5: Number of Months Signing-On Since Graduating



(26)

One fifth had not gained employment for the last two to three years and a small number did not specify how long they were signing-on. Some participants commented on the special problems which older graduates encountered even though they had a qualification:

Many mature graduates can still find difficulty in obtaining employment due to their age. Employers should be encouraged to employ the more mature graduates, perhaps through government funding. There has to be some backup scheme for successful students.

A course adds two, three or four years to the time since you last worked, tending to make you a less attractive employment prospect.

The following participant was pursuing a Masters Degree despite anticipating problems because of their age:

At 50 plus, I quite realise that my age could be a deterrent in securing full-time employment. Nevertheless, I feel that my college experience has give me a fresh start in life. In truth, if the Scheme were not in place this would not be possible.

Graduates Pursuing Further Education

A quarter (24%) of all graduates were either already pursuing further education or waiting to be accepted onto courses for the 1997/98 academic year.

I now have a Certificate and a Diploma in Business Studies. I am waiting to see if I get offered a place on the Degree Programme in Galway RTC.

[After completing my Degree course] I hope to either proceed to a postgraduate course or to do a degree in a related course e.g. B.Sc. in Industrial Computing.

Three out of every five graduates (59%) in further education were studying at Master Degree level. Another 18% were studying for Higher or Postgraduate Diplomas and 14% were studying for Primary Degrees. The vast majority (81%) were pursuing further education in Universities and nearly all (91%) continued to avail of the Third Level Allowance Scheme.

The main field of study chosen by participants in further education were the Arts, Social Science and Education (Table 3.4). Three out of every five pursued further study in these areas with smaller proportions taking courses in Commerce, Science and Engineering.

Table 3.4: Field of Study of Participants in Further Education

	%
Arts, Social Science and Education	58%
Commerce	14%
Science and Engineering	14%
Other	14%
	(21)

Of those in further education, it was estimated that 67% would complete their courses either in late 1997 or sometime in 1998. The remainder should complete their courses by the year 2000.

Most (86%) participants pursuing further education reported that their first qualification gained under the Third Level Allowance Scheme was 'extremely important' or 'very important' in securing a place on a further education course. When asked what they hoped to do after completing the course they were currently taking, half said they wanted to obtain employment and the other half said they would

like to go on to even further study. For instance, some expressed the ambition to study to Ph.D. level in order to secure employment in colleges and universities.

Benefits of College

When asked if their experience of college had helped them in any way, the overwhelming majority (94%) of participants felt that it had. The ways in which it had helped them varied but the greatest benefit reported was in terms of ‘Personal Development’ (Table 3.5). Personal development issues were mentioned by almost three quarters (72%). Their experience at college helped them enormously in terms of feeling better about themselves and about their future. The increase in participants’ self confidence was most frequently voiced:

It has given me a greater insight in myself and more confidence in my own ability.

It has improved my confidence, opened doors - jobs, and opened my eyes.

It has really developed me as a person in an intellectual way. It has increased my confidence in myself and in dealing with people. It has opened up new opportunities for me.

It has given me new confidence, a feeling of self worth and hope for the future. Mixing with a younger generation helped me to understand their problems in a different world than that of my youth.

Table 3.5: Benefits of College Experience

	%*
Personal Development	72%
Improved Employment Prospects	29%
Gained new knowledge/broadened horizons	24%
Obtained a qualification	11%
Helped to qualify for further study	9%
Opened up new opportunities	7%
Other	3%
* Percentages add to over 100% as more than one reason given	(97)

A sense of achievement, a sense of ‘status’ and a sense of purpose was expressed by some. People felt better about themselves and felt that they could communicate and interact with others more easily:

I feel more fulfilled in my personal life because of the friendships and acquaintances I made while attending college. I have a deeper understanding of people.

I have my qualification which I set out to get and a good sense of achievement. It introduced me to new people, interesting ideas and hard work.

It has given me a sense of purpose to my life.

It helped to promote my self-esteem - now I am studying for my M.A.

Some remarked that their college experience helped them regain their self respect and others were more optimistic about the future, not only for themselves but also for their families. Personal development was undoubtedly one of the most important benefits of studying at third level. It seemed that the experience of college gave people a long-term view of things and a sense of being able to cope with problems:

I am more confident to tackle problems. I used to feel that people who were educated were above me, but not anymore. I see everyone as an equal.

My thinking is more constructive and analytical in all spheres. I am more fulfilled within and feel optimistic about my future career prospects.

It has helped me to develop both personally and professionally. I enjoy the work I do now and feel more complete as a person.

It has helped me feel better about myself.

The benefit of improved employment prospects was cited by over a quarter (29%). Some participants had obtained better jobs or expected to obtain good jobs. Some had or intended to set up their own business:

I'm in the process of taking a long-term lease on a premises and expect to start up before the end of next month.

My experience in college has given me a qualification which has led to my current employment which is interesting and challenging. My prospects have improved dramatically.

The Third Level Allowance Scheme is a positive move in helping unemployed people access the labour market. It has worked for me and has given me a good career path in life as well as a new perspective on education.

I have more self-confidence, am more socially aware and have more to offer employers.

Almost another quarter (24%) said they had gained new knowledge and their college experience had broadened their minds:

It has given me more confidence; has greatly broadened my knowledge base and impressed my kids no end!

I was exposed to a whole range of subjects which gave me a real understanding of what is involved in Community/Youth work. I went on two work placements and gained employment from the second one.

Some felt they had a better understanding of world affairs and others said they it showed them that they were *able* to learn - that learning was not something that was either beyond them or somehow lost to them:

At the end of my first year, I was left with a powerful sense of my "worldview" being stretched and expanded, that I now had language and concepts to help me articulate my experience of self like I never had before. And so it has grown from there with the slow "shaking off" of debilitating beliefs around my learning capacity that I had held so strongly from my childhood.

Another 11% saw the benefit of their experience at college in terms of obtaining a qualification which they particularly wanted and one which had led, or would lead to, a good job:

I could not have afforded to attend college without the Scheme and here I am, four years later with a degree. Only for the scheme I would still be at the same desperate position with no prospects.

A small proportion (9%) said their college experience had benefited them by helping them to qualify for further study. It also motivated them to continue their education:

It has provided me with the opportunity of gaining part-time employment in Primary School teaching and given me the will to pursue a further course.

Although for others it must be said, quite the opposite was the case:

After four years as a mature student, I have exhausted myself! I am in my forties now so I have no interest in further education.

A smaller proportion (7%) spoke in terms of how it had opened up new opportunities for them.

It has opened up possibilities which previously didn't exist, i.e. my first solo show of paintings and directing my first film.

I'm more adventurous and foresee wider and more unusual opportunities ahead.

Summary

The vast majority (84%) of participants graduated with most finishing their courses by 1996. Of those who graduated 43% were in employment at the time of the survey (Summer 1997). A quarter (26%) were signing-on and another quarter (24%) were pursuing further education. A further 5% were working on CE Schemes and 2% were working in the home. Most of the graduates (58%) signing-on had just recently completed their courses. 77% of those in further education were pursuing postgraduate courses. The main benefit of college which almost all (94%) cited was in relation to 'Personal Development'. The increase in self confident, self respect, a sense of status and achievement were highlighted by participants as important outcomes of their college experience.

Chapter 4

Assessment of the Third Level Allowance Scheme

Participants were invited to give their views on the Third Level Allowance Scheme and indicate why they felt it was, or was not, a good Scheme. Their suggestions as to how the Scheme could be improved were also sought.

Participants' Assessment of the Scheme

The general perception of the scheme among participants was overwhelmingly positive, despite the difficulties encountered. Almost all (97%) felt that the Third Level Allowance Scheme was a 'good' scheme:

It's one of the best Schemes ever to come out of Social Welfare. I and thousands like me have been given the chance to get a third level education. Without the TLA this would have been impossible.

It gave me back my determination and self-confidence and stopped me from feeling a sense of worthlessness.

Participants cited a number of reasons as to why they felt the Third Level Allowance Scheme was good (Table 4.1). One of the main reasons given by over one third (37%) was that it provided them with an opportunity which they otherwise would not have had:

It gives those who might not have had a chance to go to college to get a qualification and being able to survive independently. It motivates people on the dole to consider further education.

I feel it offers an opportunity to mature people to return to college, knowing that their family will not suffer too much financially.

Table 4.1: Reasons Why Participants Think Third Level Allowance is Good

	%*
Opportunity which otherwise would not have had	37%
Could not afford to do it otherwise	34%
Allows studying while unemployed	25%
Benefits the individual and society	16%
Other	10%
* Percentages add to over 100% as more than one reason given	(103)

The Scheme was also seen as good because it gave some participants a second chance at gaining an education which they had missed out on in their youth. The ‘points system’ was also seen as a unfair system which acted as a barrier to entry to third level:

It allows people access to Third Level based on potential rather than ‘points’. The ‘points system’ is crazy.

I wanted to prove to myself that I had an academic ability, as my school days were blighted by being sent to a lousy school!

It is crucial for anyone who, for whatever reason, may have dropped out of school years earlier or failed the Leaving Certificate and needs to break out of the unemployment trap.

For other participants, the Scheme represented an opportunity for them to pursue personal ambitions and dreams and allowed them to fulfil their potential:

I always wanted to study archaeology but did not have the points to do so when I finished my Leaving Certificate in 1982. The opportunity to return as a mature student and the financial support from TLA was the incentive I needed to go back to college in 1992 and do my degree in the subject I most wanted to study.

One third (34%) stated they could not have afforded to take up a course otherwise. The Scheme allowed a person to ‘survive’ financially at college and provided good basic support on which one could live. A quarter felt the Scheme was good because it allowed people to study while unemployed. People could do something useful instead of wasting their time:

It allows people to use time that would otherwise be wasted - to gain qualifications they otherwise would not get.

You can sign on and be learning at the same time and not sitting in a bed on your own all day, cracking up, and you have learnt something even if you don't qualify in it and it keeps you occupied like going to work.

Being on the dole is lethargy-inducing because there is very little direction in your life. With the TLA Scheme you get to use your 'unemployed time' with (dare I say it) pride, and an eye to the future.

It has made me aware of the emptiness in signing-on and how studying/working is much more satisfying and character building than doing nothing except wait for a weekly welfare payment.

One realises how soul-destroying signing-on is and one is less inclined to return to this type of life.

The Third Level Allowance Scheme seemed to give people an incentive to study and motivated them to "improve themselves" as remarked by some participants. Another 16% said the Third Level Allowance Scheme was good because it benefited both the individual and society. On an individual level, people obtained qualifications and jobs which they otherwise would not have obtained and this increased their self-esteem:

It gives everybody a chance at a decent education and hopefully a decent job. This is not just good for the person themselves but for society in general.

Most of my class were from a Working Class background and having the TLA available I'm sure made it much more possible for them and I to attend college - no question.

I feel that it is an excellent incentive for people to at least take a chance at attending college as they have in a sense nothing to lose.

The Scheme is good because of the opportunity it offers for people to increase their learning experience and broaden their experience of themselves. Self-esteem and self-belief can replace doubts and fears that only serve to limit the individual.

The stigma of being unemployed was alluded to often and most graphically described by one participant:

Unemployment for me is like social leprosy. When I was studying I felt rescued from it. I am now really trying to get out and back into the workforce.

In addition, education helped to broaden people's outlook on life and the world in general. One participant remarked that the Scheme helped "disadvantaged and marginalised groups". Among the other reasons cited as to why the Scheme was good was the fact that being a 'student' was more attractive to employers than being 'unemployed'. Being a student helped restore people's dignity to some extent:

It restores the dignity lost by being in unemployment ranks.

Employers like to take on students or those just left college. The Long-term Unemployed find it very hard to get work. This scheme allows them to get a second chance, not only from gaining extra education but also it avoids the problem of being considered an 'unemployed person'.

Many participants expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs for providing such a Scheme:

The future of myself, my wife and children has been totally changed by the TLA. Without it I could not have gone to college. I cannot express my gratitude enough for the TLA.

I am extremely grateful to the Department of Social Welfare for the assistance I have received through the Third Level Allowance Scheme.

I was very grateful for the opportunity to go to college and without this Scheme, I would not have been able to do so.

It is an excellent idea and I hope that it continues.

I enjoyed the Scheme very much and find it has been a great benefit to me.

A person has absolutely nothing to lose since they will still have all their welfare entitlements and everything to gain. I think it is an absolutely excellent Scheme.

Gratitude was also extended to the colleges, VTOS and the Local Employment Services for their part in the elaborate process which enabled participants to pursue further education and obtain employment subsequently:

I have only good things to say about this brilliant opportunity. Furthermore, the help I have received from such places as the Local Employment Services since I left college such as interview skills, CV presentation etc. are just too good to be true.

I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude to VTOS and Maynooth College, as well as the Social Welfare Scheme that facilitated my further education. I would not be in the position I am today without their help and encouragement.

One participant described what they would not have gained:

If it wasn't available, I wouldn't have gone to college. I wouldn't have "B.A. Th. H.Dip. Ed." after my name. I wouldn't be able to look forward to doing something I enjoy, making a difference in young peoples' lives and getting well paid for it!

Only a small number (3%) felt that the scheme was not good. One reason given was that the Scheme was not administered well and another participant stated that they were still in debt as a result of attending college.

Suggested Areas for Improvement

While many thought the scheme was good, four out of five felt that it could be improved and a wide variety of suggestions were made (Table 4.2). These are listed in order of importance:

- 1. Increase Third Level Allowance Payment***
- 2. Publicise Scheme More Widely***
- 3. Provide Extra Allowances***
- 4. Improve Signing-on and Payment Arrangements***
- 5. Provide Career Counselling and Backup Support***
- 6. Have Less Restrictive Eligibility Criteria***

Table 4.2: Suggested Improvements to the Third Level Allowance Scheme

	%*
Increase Third Level Allowance Payment	27%
Publicise Scheme More Widely	23%
Provide Extra Allowances (for books, travel, childcare)	20%
Improve Signing-on and Payment Arrangements	17%
Provide Career Counselling and Backup Support	17%
Have Less Restrictive Eligibility Criteria	15%
More Mature Student Places and Access Courses	9%
Changes in Operation of Grant System	7%
Allow Students to Work	5%
Other	11%
* Percentages add to over 100% as more than one reason given	(75)

1. Increase Third Level Allowance Payment

The main area where improvements were suggested was in relation to funding. Increasing the Third Level Allowance amount was cited by over a quarter (27%) of participants.

My course was away from home. I had to rely on financial support from my family for food, transport, accommodation and books.

If money problems were not a persistent irritant, then studying could be easier. If textbooks or food or other things like shoes or jeans have to be bought, then something else has to be done without. But beggars can't be choosers. Still, work at college is heavy and having personal problems are not a great help.

It was felt the payment level should be raised to match the rates of those on Community Employment Schemes. The difficulty of managing on the Third Level Allowance and a Rent Allowance was not sufficient according to one participant who was still at college:

The Allowance of £67.50 a week is fine in so far as I can live week-to-week on this. However, ESB, Gas and Telephone bills are very difficult. I simply don't have the money to meet these and so I am in a constant circle of borrowing and paying back from family and friends.

2. Publicise Scheme More Widely

Almost another quarter felt that the scheme should be publicised more widely as many people did not know about it. Some suggested that there should be a designated person in each Local Social Welfare Office who could provide all the information needed. The lack of information was seen to be creating regional disadvantage as one participant remarked:

People in neglected rural areas have very few educational options - due primarily to economic disadvantage. The Third Level Allowance Scheme can help to redress this trend - but information on this scheme is still not readily available. Most of the Social Welfare Officers in my area are unaware of its existence - I myself found out by good luck!

It was also felt that people participating on the Third Level Allowance Scheme should be informed in much greater detail of their rights and entitlements.

3. Provide Extra Allowances

One fifth felt that the extra allowances should be paid in respect of books, travel, childcare, photocopying, typing, writing materials, special materials for Art courses. While the recently introduced Book Allowance has addressed this issue to some extent, some people still felt the amount was inadequate. The cost of textbooks were sometimes as high as £30.00 or £50.00 and one participant estimated that they spent around \$450.00 on books per year. One suggestion was a system whereby students could be reimbursed on presentation of receipts for texts certified as required. Consideration needed to be given to the varying nature of the courses undertaken and special requirements catered for.

In relation to the Rent Allowance, it was also suggested that the full Rent Allowance should be given instead of the discretionary partial amount currently granted.

4. Improve Signing-on and Payment Arrangements

The next issue cited by 17% was the need to improve signing-on and payment arrangements. The issue of signing-on was addressed by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs in 1996 whereby Third Level Allowance recipients no longer needed to sign-on every month.

Collecting payments however remained problematic for some participants. The Third Level Allowance had to be collected on or before a certain day and this interfered with the course commitments of some participants:

I collect my payment on a Wednesday morning. This means that every Wednesday I miss two lectures. If the money could be posted out it would be much handier.

There were also difficulties for those who wanted to return home during holiday periods. The present payment arrangements meant that they could not do this easily. Another person also cited payment difficulties which they encountered while on 'work experience' in locations far from where they collected their payments. Many participants suggested that either payments be paid directly into bank accounts or else payments should be allowed to accumulate. It would also enable people to seek work abroad during the Summer if they desired:

I would have preferred if my payments could have been credited to my bank account because sometimes it was inconvenient to get to the GPO as I was studying in Maynooth.

Combining the payment of both the Rent Allowance and the Third Level Allowance was also proposed to ease the problems associated with collecting payments.

5. Provide Career Counselling and Backup Support

Another 17% also suggested the need for career counselling and backup support for participants. Career counselling was needed to help people choose the right type of course and to ensure that they were prepared to do what was expected of them. One suggestion made was:

An initial workshop-type set-up for applicants in the local area to reflect and discuss the move to further education, offering basic skills on studying, how to do an essay etc. And have people who have partaken in the Scheme to talk to applicants telling them of the plusses and minuses ahead etc.

In some areas where VTOS was in operation, this was already happening:

I have been returning to VTOS to give a course called 'Preparation for Third Level for Mature Students'. This is something which could be looked at more fully and done very well with few enough resources. The aim is to try to give prospective mature students the benefit of the wisdom of those of us who have gone through the system. It seems to help a lot.

In addition to Career Counselling, some form of backup support was requested. Participants needed help not only with difficulties with studying but also help with personal/family difficulties and financial problems:

You need to make sure that you can budget and that it is possible to budget on the amount allocated and if not then seek additional support.

Some of the personal experiences at college were traumatic. I wouldn't go through them again for anything on earth.

One participant who dropped out of college cited the lack of support from families and other mature students while studying away from home:

There should be contact with other adults doing the same Scheme (a social group or something). A lot of people are not in contact with their families when living a long way from them except by post and they need this support.

A few people mentioned feeling isolated at college and expressed difficulties in trying to mix with younger students in particular. One participant mentioned this as the main reason why they dropped out of their course:

As one of the only mature students on the course, I felt isolated and as a result there was no friends of my age to communicate with about the course.

Another participant remarked:

Myself and others on this Scheme often felt quite isolated until we met up and provided some mutual support.

6. Have Less Restrictive Eligibility Criteria

Some 15% suggested that eligibility criteria should be changed to allow greater access to the Third Level Allowance Scheme. It was suggested that the required six month signing period should be reduced and the age restriction be lowered:

Being a member of a Mature Students Society in my college, I meet a lot of students who find it difficult to make ends meet. These are students who may be assessed on their parents income or not qualify for the Third Level Allowance Scheme for one reason or another - e.g. coming home to study from abroad or not being six months unemployed.

One person suggested that the scheme should be operated in conjunction with employers to allow people to take up full-time and part-time education. For example,

a person sponsored by an employer to pursue further study could contract to work for that sponsor for a certain time period after graduation:

Perhaps sponsorship from private/semi-private industry in exchange for a number of years working after getting qualification may provide more opportunities as well as work experience.

Some participants suggested extending eligibility to people who were working:

The Scheme is restricting to those who might be working and would like to go back to college and can't afford it.

It is essential to remove any bureaucratic obstacles in the welfare system which may prevent anyone from further education or training.

Everyone should be entitled to 3rd level training, either academic or practical or both

Another problem arose with the eligibility of married people. Some participants married while on the Third Level Allowance Scheme and found they lost their entitlement. The income of the new spouse affected the participants entitlement to payment.

Lost of entitlement also occurred when people came off Unemployment Benefit and then found that they were not eligible for Unemployment Assistance. As already mentioned, this anomaly was addressed by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs in 1996. Since then, participants have been entitled to the Third Level Allowance for the full duration of their course. One participant also called for spouses to be allowed to earn more than currently allowed in order to ease financial problems.

Other Suggested Improvements

A small proportion (9%) proposed that more mature student places needed to be allocated to meet the demand. The provision of more Access Courses to encourage people lacking the standard entry requirements to go to college. Setting up a specific quota of places in colleges for unemployed people was also proposed as a way in which the Scheme could be improved.

Another 5% mentioned improvements in the operation of the grants system. This included the request for grants to be at the start of the first college term instead of Christmas or Easter as sometimes happens:

The waiting time for grants cheques is disgraceful! My final grant cheque for 1995/96 arrived the Monday before term ended at the end of May.

It was also suggested that grant payments should be spread more evenly over the academic year, such as a monthly payment into a bank account to help people manage their money better.

A small number (5%) suggested that they should be allowed to work. This included participation on the Student Summer Jobs Scheme and working part-time while at college. As already stated, working during the holiday periods was introduced in 1996 and was viewed as a major improvement. However, part-time work during term times has not been sanctioned. Indeed, some participants mentioned that working was not a realistic option because the course demanded most of their time and energy.

Other suggestions for improving the scheme included allowing Third Level Allowance students to study more than one postgraduate course. The following participant had completed a B.A. and in order to pursue a career in Social Work, they needed to do two postgraduate courses but would only be funded for one of them:

In order to qualify for a two year Social Work Course, I have to do a H.Dip. in Social Policy. For me it would make sense to get the grant for the dearer two year course. However, I can only get the grant for the H.Dip. leaving me and my mother to try to scrape fees together for the two year course. This is an issue I feel needs addressing to the Department of Education.

This issue also arises for people who complete a primary degree and a masters degree and find that they do not qualify for a grant to do a Ph.D.

Some people also remarked on the fact that there was an a lot of paperwork involved in applying for everything - applying for the Third Level Allowance, applying to the colleges and applying for the Grant and that this whole process should be made much easier.

One participant felt that the Scheme should cover a wider range of courses and colleges. For instance, the Scheme should be extended to include courses in areas such as Homeopathy and Reflexology rather than restricting participants to study courses in mainstream colleges. One participant called for courses to be made available in their local area as living away from home was expensive:

I would like to see courses becoming available in my local home area. This would cut down on the cost of living away. In Dublin, accommodation was expensive.

Some participants praised the way the Scheme was operated and could not suggest any areas for improvement:

I am happy with the Scheme.

I don't think I could have expected any more. It was run efficiently and I was treated with respect.

There was one humorous suggestion as to how the scheme might be improved further:

The only improvement I could see is if someone in the Social Welfare Department did the exams for us!

Summary

Almost all (97%) participants felt that the Third Level Allowance Scheme was a good Scheme. For many (37%), the Scheme provided an opportunity which they otherwise would not have had. For others, it was something which they could not have financed themselves. The Scheme allowed people to study while unemployed instead of wasting their time doing nothing. The suggested areas for improvement were varied with most (27%) prioritising an increase in the Third Level Allowance payment. The need to publicise the Scheme more widely was suggested by 23% and again, in relation to funding, the provision for extra allowances for additional expenses were proposed by 20% of participants.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The effectiveness of the Third Level Allowance Scheme in improving participants employment prospects is examined and recommendations for the further development of the Scheme are presented.

Effectiveness of the Third Level Allowance Scheme

The main objective of the Third Level Allowance Scheme was to encourage unemployed people to improve their employment prospects by obtaining additional educational qualifications. The findings tend to show that this aim was to a great extent achieved. Most participants (84%) graduated from their courses and obtained 'honours' level qualifications. Of these the majority were either in employment (43%) or pursuing further education (24%) at the time of the survey.

A comparison between the socio-economic status of participants before and after college indicated a move by participants from occupations in the lower *Non-Manual* and *Manual* categories to occupations in the *Lower Professional* category. It would generally seem that, with the possible exception of those moving from *Skilled Manual* occupations, the Third Level Allowance Scheme was availed of mostly by people who previously held jobs in lower income categories (*Non-Manual* and *Manual*).

An important effect which participation on the Third Level Allowance Scheme had on participants was fostering personal development. Participants related feelings of increased self confidence and self respect. For many, the experience at college brought with it a feeling of accomplishment and of being given the opportunity to fulfil one's potential. There was a strong sense of participants moving from a situation of boredom, pessimism and emptiness to one of creativity, challenge and optimism.

The general perception of the Third Level Allowance Scheme among participants was extremely positive with 97% indicating they thought it to be a 'good' Scheme. A number of difficulties were identified in relation to the level of overall funding which participants received but close to two thirds felt it met their needs adequately.

There were a number of issues which emerged from the study and should be considered in developing the Scheme in the future. These include:

- 1. Which Groups Were Not Availing of the Scheme**
- 2. What Type of 'Access' Routes Need to be Further Developed**
- 3. The Provision of Career Guidance and Support Services**
- 4. Changes Needed in the Operation of Statutory Services**

1. Which Groups Were Not Availing of the Scheme

One of the main issues emerging from the study was identifying marginalised and disadvantaged groups which were not participating in the Third Level Allowance Scheme. It was beyond the scope of this study to fully investigate the social, cultural and economic background of participants however some of the findings are useful in looking at this issue.

The profile of participants indicated that the Scheme was availed of mostly by younger people who were 'single' and had no children. They also generally had a high level of educational attainment. This seems to confirm the findings of the *Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*²⁷ which stated that education options tended to benefit the younger and better educated among the unemployed. It was estimated that only two out of every five participants were unemployed for more than two years so those who were unemployed for longer periods availed of the Scheme to a lesser degree.

Lone parents did not figure prominently in this study of participants of the Third Level Allowance Scheme in 1993. Only a quarter of participants surveyed were married or living with a partner and most had children.

Women working in the home who are not allowed to register as unemployed because of their marital status were also excluded from availing of the Scheme. AONTAS has worked extensively with women's groups and accessing education has emerged as an urgent issue which needs to be addressed in order to improve their employment prospects. The Third Level Allowance Scheme as it currently operates effectively excludes women not registered as unemployed from this unique opportunity.

The distribution of participants by county of residence prior to college indicated extensive regional disparity (Figure 1.3). Participation by people living in Leinster and particularly Dublin was much higher than in other areas of the country. The importance of disseminating information about the Scheme more widely through Local Social Welfare Offices, through television, radio and other media, in order to inform people about this opportunity.

²⁷ Office of the Tanaiste (1995) *Report of the Task Force on Long-term Unemployment*, The Stationary Office, Dublin, p. 25.

2. What Type of ‘Access’ Routes Need to be Further Developed

An important access route identified in the study was VTOS. Around one third of those surveyed had gained qualifications through VTOS and this indicated the importance of developing programmes to facilitate access to the Third Level Allowance Scheme.

Another access route which needs to be considered is the formal recognition of community based education and training courses. This issue is being examined currently by the *Community and Voluntary Accreditation Forum (CVAF)*. One of the objectives of CVAF is the development of non-formal accreditation routes and progression routes into formal education for those learners usually marginalised by society²⁸. There is a need for certificates and awards obtained on community training and education programmes to be formally recognised and accepted as meeting the entry requirements for further education. As this study indicated, the Leaving Certificate still seemed to be regarded as a standard entry requirement for college.

Some colleges and universities have developed their own access programmes through which people can gain entry to third level colleges. Two examples are NCIR’s Access Studies Courses and UCD’s Return to Learning Courses. In general students on these access courses, in most cases, have to pay college fees. However, these type of courses are provided by all third level institutions.

These different routes of access to third level require further development and support as they represent important mechanisms by which disadvantaged groups can access third level.

3. The Provision of Career Guidance and Support Services

The provision of Career Guidance was suggested by many participants in the study. This was needed to ensure that people chose the most appropriate course and career path for themselves. This could perhaps go some way towards reducing the failure rate among people who avail of the Third Level Allowance Scheme and would also be more cost effective in the long run.

With a Career Guidance Service, participants could be informed of the future employment prospects of those areas in which they wish to work. For example, the Government White Paper on *Human Resource Development* identified the leading edge segments of industry as “telecommunications-based services, software, financial services, data processing and other knowledge-based areas”²⁹. Therefore, those

²⁸ Community and Voluntary Accreditation Forum, (1997) *A Framework Document*, CVAF, Dublin, p. 4.

²⁹ Department of Enterprise & Employment (1997) *The White Paper on Human Resource Development*, The Stationary Office, Dublin (p 111)

pursuing courses in these areas can be confident of finding employment on completion of the courses.

However, this study indicated that participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme are not pursuing courses in the growth areas of technology, finance and science to any great extent. A large proportion of participants studied courses in the Arts and many are still studying at these at postgraduate level. Indeed, a substantial number of graduates were working as primary and secondary school teachers and according to demographic projections, the demand for school teachers is declining. Therefore, it would seem that participants are entering professions for which the future is not particularly secure. The provision of a Career Guidance Service could assist people in making informed choices which would not only benefit them personally in the long run but would also serve to meet the skill requirements of the Ireland's business and service sectors.

Participants in the study also suggested the provision of a Support Service to help them with some of the difficulties which they encounter while at college. This included help with managing finances and in particular help with securing payments to which they were entitled. The provision of a Counselling service was also suggested to help participants deal with family and/or personal problems they had. Providing advice and guidance on completing the actual coursework (studying, writing essays, examinations etc) was also suggested as an important support service which participants required. The provision of Career Guidance and Support Services by VTOS staff were frequently cited as importance factors in encouraging participants to pursue third level courses. A similar service could work equally well for those availing of the Third Level Allowance Scheme.

4. Changes Needed in the Operation of Statutory Services

The process involved in applying for college was quite complex. One of the main problems was that participants could be dealing with a wide variety of agencies including:

Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs
Department of Education & Science,
Local Authorities
Health Boards
Central Applications Office (CAO/CAS)
Third Level Colleges

Participants were required to complete a number of different applications forms to avail of the Scheme. Applying for a grant from Local Authorities or applying for a Rent Allowance from Health Boards in some instances caused particular anxiety. Participants called for greater co-ordination between the different agencies whereby one application form could be used to obtain all the payments to which a person was entitled. This suggestion was made in a separate study by government departments in 1996 in the *Inter-Departmental Report on the Development of an Integrated Social*

Services System. Recommendations were made in this report to streamline the process by which people were assessed. In particular, a centralised system was proposed to deal with the much maligned issue of ‘means-testing’. Under such a system, once an application was made, the person’s entitlement to the Third Level Allowance, grant, Rent Allowance and any other allowances would be automatically established. Some participants also suggested combining the payment of all entitlements so that for example, the weekly payment would include the Third Level Allowance, Rent Allowance and weekly grant amount. This would also help people to budget more easily.

While most participants felt that the overall level of funding was adequate, some called for an increase in payments, either in the Third Level Allowance or the grant amount or the Rent Allowances. They felt that the grant should be standardised to equal the highest rate of payment and that the lower ‘adjacent’ rate be abolished. It was also suggested that the full amount of the Rent Allowance should be allocated instead of the partial rate currently given.

The lack of information about not only the Third Level Allowance Scheme but also other entitlements to which people were eligible was a frequent complaint. Detailed information needed to be disseminated to all Local Social Welfare Offices as well as to other statutory bodies and locally based organisations such as the Local Employment Services.

Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations suggested to improved the effectiveness of the Third Level Allowance Scheme.

- The Third Level Allowance Scheme should target the more marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society such as the long-term unemployed, lone parents, women working in the home and unemployed people living in disadvantaged areas.
- Greater provision and dissemination of information about the Third Level Allowance Scheme was required particularly among Local Social Welfare Offices. The Scheme also needed to be publicised more widely through television, radio and other media in order to inform people about this unique opportunity.
- Access routes such as VTOS, Community Based Education and Training Courses and other Access Courses needed to be further developed and supported so that they reach the more disadvantaged groups in society.
- Career Guidance Service and a Support Service should be provided to those availing of the Third Level Allowance Scheme. These services would improve

participants' chances of success at college as well as their chances of obtaining secure employment in the labour market.

- Procedures and mechanisms needed to be developed to ensure greater co-ordination and co-operation between other funding bodies such as Local Authorities and the Health Boards.
- Further investigation need to be carried out on the possibility of integrating the assessment processes and payment systems of the different funding bodies including the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs, the Health Boards and Local Authorities.
- A detailed study should be conducted of the actual costs incurred by participants in attending college in order to establish a fair level of payment. This may be take the form of either increasing existing payments (Third Level Allowance, Grant, Rent Allowance or other payments); providing extra payments or changing the criteria for qualifying for these payments.

Appendix I

Qualifying for the Third Level Allowance

The following information was extracted from the Department of Social Welfare's Brochure SW 70 on *Educational Opportunities for Unemployed People and Lone Parents* (1996).

In order to qualify for the Third Level Allowance in 1997 for an undergraduate course (i.e. Certificate, Diploma, Degree), a person must:

- be aged 21 years or more
- registered as unemployed for 6 months (at least 156 days) before starting the course. Periods spent on VTOS, FAS and Community Employment Schemes (CES) can count towards the 6 month qualifying period
- have secured a place on a course approved by the Department of Education for Higher Education Grants purposes

In order to qualify for the Third Level Allowance for a postgraduate course (e.g. Higher or Postgraduate Diploma, Masters, PhD), a person must:

- be aged 23 years or more
- registered as unemployed for 6 months (at least 156 days) before starting the course. Periods spent on VTOS, FAS and Community Employment Schemes (CES) can count towards the 6 month qualifying period
- have secured a place on a course approved by the Department of Education for Higher Education Grants purposes

Those in receipt of One-Parent Family Payments (Lone Parents), Deserted Wife's Benefit, Widow's and Widower's Contributory Pension and who satisfy the above criteria are also eligible.

Appendix II

Research Methodology

The survey of participants on the Third Level Allowance Scheme was carried out between July and August 1997. It was decided to take a sample from the 914 people who applied and were approved for the Third Level Allowance in 1993 as this was the first year in which a large number of applications were approved. However, the information for some applicants could not be traced due primarily to the fact that the data was originally held on a separate manually-based system in 1993. As a result, names and addresses were obtained for 777 of the 914 applicants. Information for the missing 137 could not be traced because in most cases, the RSI numbers were invalid (109) or the RSI numbers were missing (23). In addition, there were no addresses on record for another 5 applicants.

Table 1: Number of Participants on TLA Scheme Since 1990

Academic Year	Participants
1990/91	67
1991/92	184
1992/93	363
1993/94	914
1994/95	1,228
1995/96	2,137
1996/97	3,153

Source: Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs

A relatively large sample of 33% was selected for the study mainly because it was felt that some people who had left college would no longer be at the addresses held by the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs. From the population of 777, a sample of 260 was selected randomly and the sample was chosen to ensure it was representative of the target population (914) in terms of gender, age and the number of years attending college in 1993. The sample included mostly people who were entering the first year of their courses but it also included some people who started college in 1990, 1991 and 1992 and who were still studying in 1993/94.

In order to encourage participation, the questionnaire was designed with mainly 'closed' questions whereby respondents could simply tick boxes. A small number of

'open-ended' questions were also included in order to obtain more descriptive data. The focus of the survey was on peoples' experiences before, during and after college.

Questionnaires were sent at the beginning of July and by the 23rd July, 30% of the sample had responded. A second copy of the questionnaire was sent to encourage those who had not replied to do so and a final response rate of 46% (120 out of 260) was achieved by August. Four questionnaires were received too late to be added to data presented in the Tables and Figures but they were included in the qualitative analysis. Out of the sample of 260, 19 questionnaires were returned because people were no longer living at the addresses used and in addition, the parents of a couple of participants replied stating their son/daughter was working abroad.

Sample: 260

No Longer at Address: 19

Working Abroad: 2

Number of Respondents: 120

Response Rate: 46%

Appendix III

Socio-Economic Groups

**This list of Occupations was used by the Central Statistics Office in the
*Census of Population of Ireland 1981***

- 1. Farmers, Farmers' Relatives and Farm Managers**
Farmers; Farmer's Sons and Daughters (assisting on the farm); Farmer's Other Relatives (assisting on farm); Farm Managers; Market Gardeners and Nurserymen (landholders).
- 2. Other Agricultural Occupations and Fishermen**
Agricultural Labourers; Jobbing Gardeners; Groundsmen and Gardeners' Labourers; Livestock Workers (not on farm); Other Agricultural Workers; Foresters and Forestry Labourers; Fishermen.
- 3. Higher Professional**
Professed Clergymen and Nuns; Other Religious Occupations; University Professors and Lecturers; Medical Practitioners; Dental Practitioners; Engineers; Surveyors and Architects; Chemists and other Scientists; Accountants; Judges, Barristers and Solicitors; Veterinary Surgeons; Professional Workers (not elsewhere specified).
- 4. Lower Professional**
Teachers; Nurses; Pharmacists and Dispensers; Other Medical Workers; Authors, Journalists and Editors; Actors, Entertainers and Musicians; Painters, Sculptors and Commercial Artists; Social Workers; Technical and Related Workers (not elsewhere specified).
- 5. Employers and Managers**
Proprietors (employers only) and Managers in Wholesale or Retail Trade; Garage Proprietors (employers only) and Managers; Proprietors (employers only) and Managers-services; Senior Officials - Civil Service and Local Authority; Directors, Managers and Company Secretaries.
- 6. Salaried Employees**
Inspectors and Supervisors (transport and communication); Aircraft Pilots, Navigators and Flight engineers; Ships' Officers; Commercial Travellers and Manufacturers' Agents; Insurance Agents; Insurance Brokers and Financial Agents; Auctioneers, Valuers and Other Salesmen; Armed Forces - Commissioned Officers.
- 7. Intermediate Non-manual Workers**
Clerks; Typists; Proprietors (self-employed - without paid employees only) in wholesale or retail trade; Garage Proprietors (self-employed - without paid employees only); Shop Assistants and Barmen; Proprietors (self-employed - without paid employees only) - services; Garda Sergeants and Lower Ranks; Draughtsmen; Armed Forces Other Ranks.
- 8. Other Non-manual Workers**
Signalmen and Level Crossing Keepers; Ticket Checkers, Collectors or Inspectors; Drivers of Buses; Drivers of other road passenger vehicles; Drivers of road goods vehicles; Bus Conductors; Postmen and Post Office Sorters; Telephone, Telegraph and Radio Operators; Other Transport and Communication workers; Warehousemen and Storekeepers; Roundsmen; Street Vendors, Hawkers and Newspaper Sellers; Housekeepers and Matrons of Schools, etc.; Chefs and Cooks; Waiters and Waitresses; Maids and Related Workers; Barbers and

Hairdressers; Caretakers; Watchmen and Related Workers; Hospital and Ward Orderlies, Hospital Porters and Attendants; Other Service Workers; Sportsmen and Related Workers.

9. Skilled Manual Workers

Mine and Quarry Workers; Turf Workers; Telephone Installers and Repairers; Linesmen and Cable Jointers; Electricians and Electrical Fitters; Radio and Television Mechanics; Fitters and Mechanics; Vehicle Builders and Assemblers; Plumbers and Gas Fitters; Sheet Metal Workers; Structural metal and Metal Plate Workers; Welders and Cutters; Machine Tool Setters and Operators; Precision Instrument and Watch and Clock Makers; Goldsmiths, Silversmiths and Jewellery Makers; Metal Coaters, Benders, Platers, etc.; Carpenters, Joiners and Cabinet Makers; Sawyers and Woodworking Machinists; Other Woodworkers; Boot and Shoe Makers (factory); Boot and Shoe Makers and Repairers (not factory). Other Leather and Leather Substitute Workers; Weavers and Related Workers; Bleachers, Dyers and Finishers; Tailors and Dressmakers; Cutters; Upholsterers and Coach Trimmers; Millers; Bakers; Pastrycooks and Biscuit Makers; Makers of Beverages; Compositors, Monotype and Linotype Operators; Printers (so described); Printing press Operators; Other Paper and Printing Workers; Glass and Ceramics Workers; Workers in Metal Manufacture; Workers in Rubber and Rubber Products; Craftsmen (not elsewhere specified); Builders, Contractors and Clerks of Works; Bricklayers; Masons and Stone Cutters; Plasterers; Other Tradesmen; Painters and Decorators; Crane and Hoist Operators; Earth Moving and Other Construction Machinery Operators; Foremen and Supervisors of Manual Workers; Railway Engine Drivers; Sailors.

10. Semi-skilled Manual Workers

Other Electrical and Electronic Workers; Other Engineering and Related Trades Workers; Spinners, Doublers, Winders and Reelers; Knitters and Knitting and Hosiery Machine Operatives; Sewers, Embroiderers and Machinists; Other Textile and Clothing Workers; Makers of Sugar and Chocolate Confectionery, Jams and Jellies; Milk Processors and Makers of Dairy Products; Meat Curers, Canners and Preservers; Other Makers of Food. Makers of Tobacco Products; Makers of Paper and Paper Products; Gas and Chemical Workers; Workers in Plastics; Other Workers in Other Products; Gas and Chemical Workers; Workers in Plastics; Other Workers in Other Products; Gas and Chemical Workers; Stationary Engine Operators, Boiler Firemen and Stokers; Dock Labourers; Lorry Drivers' Helpers; Messengers; Packers and Bottlers; Charwomen and Office Cleaners; Laundry Workers, Dry Cleaners and Pressers.

11. Unskilled Manual Workers

Porters (transport); Labourers and Unskilled Workers (not elsewhere specified).

12. Unknown

Gainfully occupied but occupation not stated.

Appendix IV

Supplementary Tables

Table 1: Estimated Number of Years Unemployed*

Number of Years	%
1 year	33%
2 years	26%
3 years	12%
4 years	5%
5 years	5%
6 years	1%
7 years	4%
8 years	1%
9 years	7%
10 years	4%
11 years	1%
13 years	1%
	(76)

* The number of years unemployed was estimated from information supplied by participants about the last year of their employment and the year of the course which they were studying in 1993/94. It is a rough estimate of the length of time which participants who held jobs previously had registered as unemployed. Excluded from the table were those who did not state any previous occupation; those working part-time up to and during their years at college and those working on FAS schemes prior to college.

Table 2: Example of Approximate Rates of Payments for a Single Person with No Children in 1993 and 1997

	Approximate Rates	
	1993	1997
Third Level Allowance Weekly Rate <i>(based on Long-term Unemployment Assistance rate)</i>	£59	£67
Dublin Corporation <u>Full</u> Maintenance Grant (paid annually): - Adjacent Rate - Non-adjacent Rate	£582 £1,461	£647 £1,625
Eastern Health Board Rent Allowance <i>(based on a <u>maximum</u> weekly rate which would not always be given and this rate varied among different Health Boards)</i>	£25	£30

*Sources: Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs,
Dublin Corporation Higher Education Grants Section and
Eastern Health Board (August 1997)*

Appendix V

Classification of Colleges

This classification is based on one used by Clancy in his study on *Access to College: Patterns of Continuity and Change*.³⁰

1. University Sector

University College Dublin
University College Cork
University College Galway
Trinity College Dublin
St. Patrick's College Maynooth
Dublin City University
University of Limerick
Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

2. Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs)

Athlone RTC
Carlow RTC
Cork RTC
Dundalk RTC
Galway RTC
Letterkenny RTC
Limerick RTC
Sligo RTC
Tallaght RTC
Tralee RTC
Waterford Institute of Technology (formerly called Waterford RTC. It was renamed in May 1997)

³⁰ Clancy, P. (1995) *Access to College: Patterns of Continuity and Change*, Higher Education Authority, Dublin, pp.180-181

3. Dublin Institute of Technology

College of Technology, Bolton Street
College of Technology, Kevin Street
College of Music, Adelaide Road
College of Commerce, Rathmines
Dublin College of Catering, Cathal Brugha Street
College of Marketing and Design, Mountjoy Square

4. Colleges of Education

St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
St. Catherine's College of Education for Home Economics, Blackrock
Froebel College of Education, Blackrock
Mater Dei Institute of Education, Drumcondra
St. Mary's College of Education (Colaiste Mhuire), Marino
Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines
St. Angela's College, Sligo

5. Other Colleges

National College of Art and Design, Thomas Street, Dublin
Crawford College of Art & Design, Cork
Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design
National College of Industrial Relations
Shannon College of Hotel Management
Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy
All Hallows College, Drumcondra

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³¹ The Department of Social Welfare was renamed in July 1997 to the Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs.

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³² The Department of Education was renamed in July 1997 to the Department of Education & Science.