



LEARNING INSIGHT

MALES AGED 16-24

Prepared for ELWa by Ci Research
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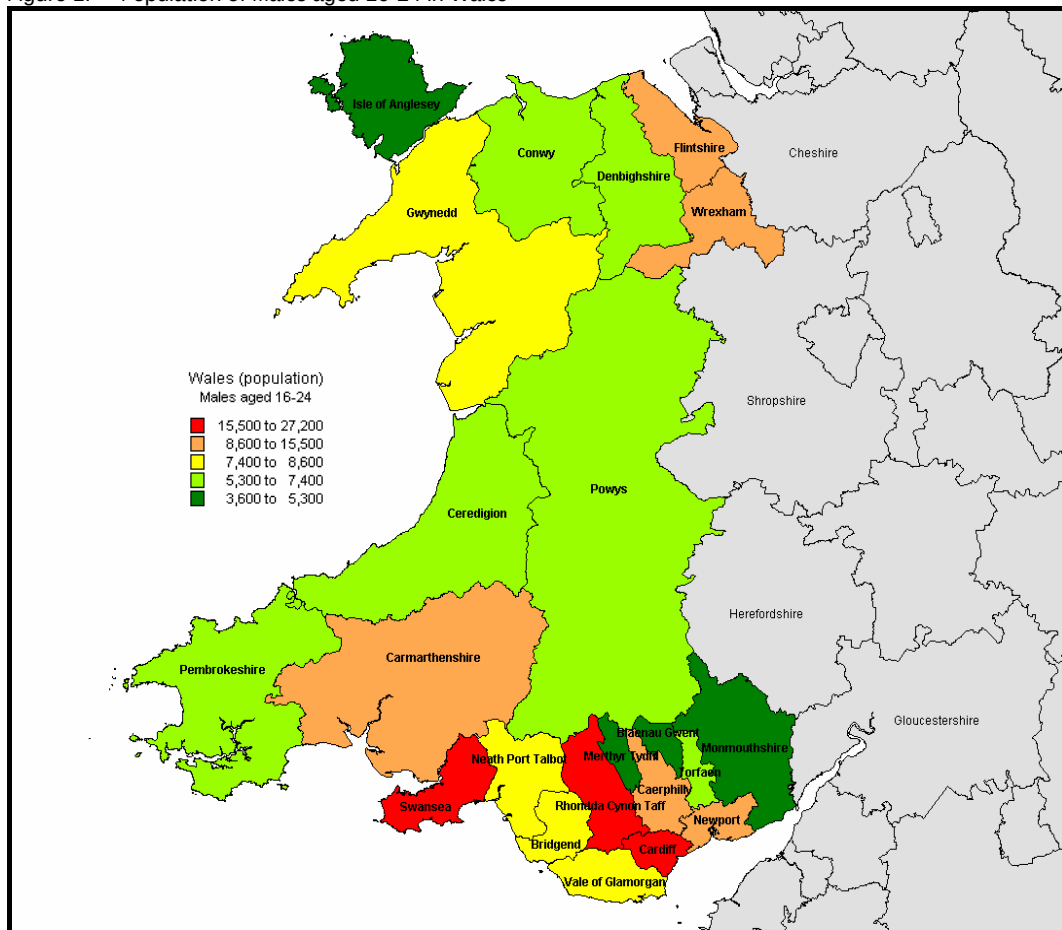
Executive Summary

This section looks to detail the key findings that can be found within this Learning Insight. The points contained here should provide a clear indication of the core themes to be covered.

Demographics

The general population of Wales consists of just over 177,500 young males aged between 15 and 24. The majority of these young males are located in the south east part of Wales suggesting that the majority of ELWa focus should be on this area.

Figure 1. Population of Males aged 16-24 in Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics (2003) Midyear Population Estimates, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

The Government Actuary's Office's data makes it possible to make short term predictions concerning the overall population demographics of young males in Wales. The results of such analysis indicate that the population of young males will increase to around 404,000 in 2008/09 and then will decline to 377,000 by 2016. Analysis of

the younger population suggests that the number of males will increase at around twice the rate of that of females.

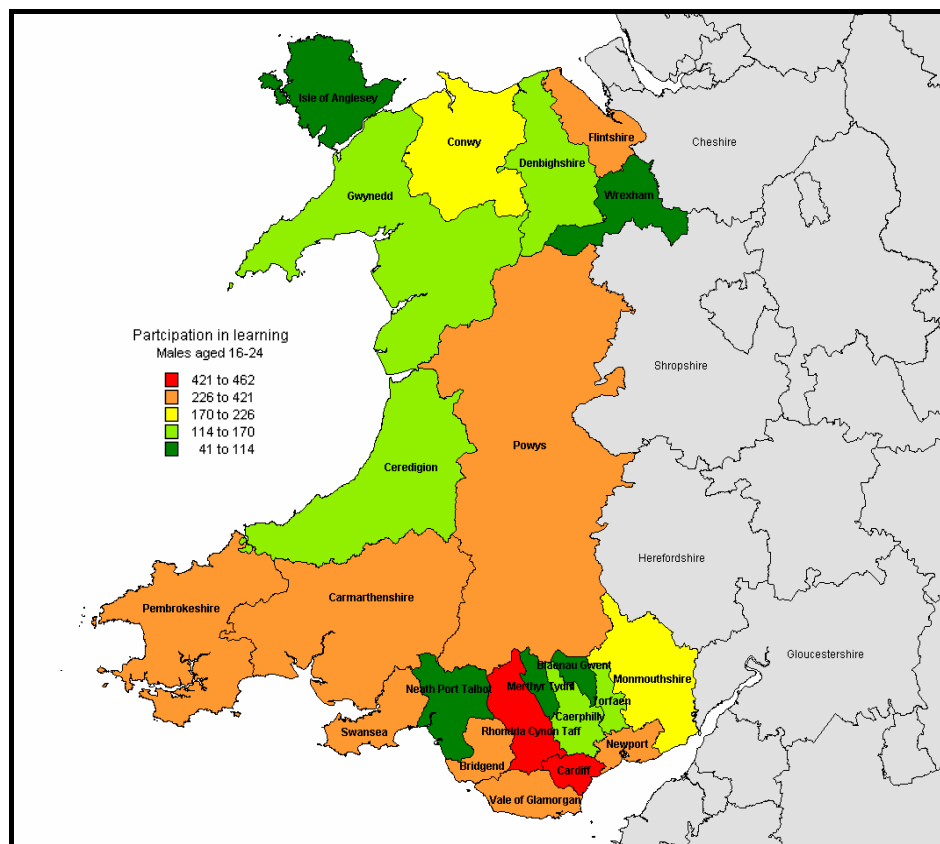
Education and Training

In schools and sixth forms it is clear that females are outperforming males in all areas of key stages 1,2,3 and 4 with the gap increasing with age. Over the past five years there has been a marked increase in the number of students in Wales, mainly achieved through a significant increase in the number of part-time HE and FE students (ELWa: Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics in Wales: 2002/03).

While analysis indicates that the number of males enrolled on courses has not declined, the number of females enrolling on courses has increased dramatically. This has led to concerns about the participation in learning and education of young males, and the impact this could have on skill levels within the population as a whole. The destination data of school leavers show a greater percentage of boys than girls leave with no qualification. In 2003 the percentage of males continuing in full time education fell to a 5 year low.

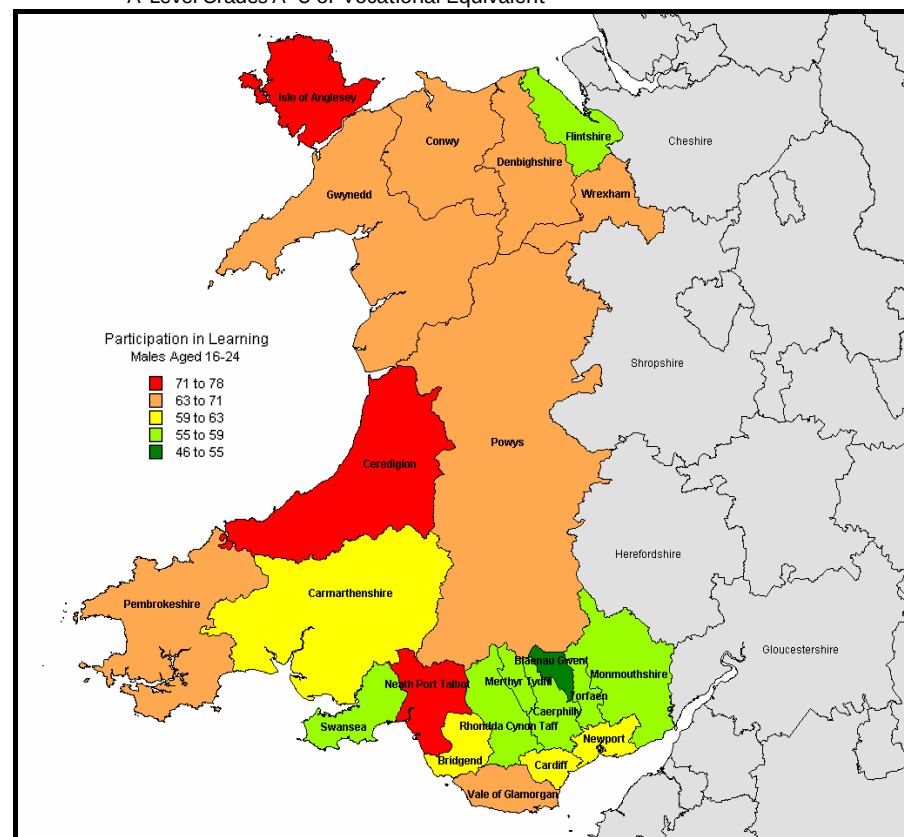
In 2003 over 80% of students completing compulsory education continued in full time education or went into Work Based Learning. ELWa reports that slightly more males than females aged up to 24 enrolled at FE institutions. The maps on the following page illustrate the trends in participation and achievement in A-Level and NVQ's by LEA.

Figure 2. No. of Males Aged 16-24 Entering 2 or More A-Levels or Entering Vocational Equivalent



Source: National Assembly for Wales, Learning Wales, Local Education Summary Table A-Level, 2003, http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details_printable.asp?NewsID=1097

Figure 3. Percentage of Males Aged 16-24 Entering 2 or More A-Levels Who Achieved 2 or More A-Level Grades A-C or Vocational Equivalent



Source: National Assembly for Wales, Learning Wales, Local Education Summary Table A-Level, 2003, http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details_printable.asp?NewsID=1097

The number of trainees starting training programmes has increased by 31% since 1997/98. Of this group, 57% are male and 83% are aged 16-24. Subject distribution of NVQ's has seen an increase in traditionally female subjects and a corresponding decrease in traditionally male subjects.

A higher proportion of Higher Education student enrolments came from the female population which can be traced back to performance at GCSE and experiences of Further Education. This highlights a need to understand the barriers faced by young males when considering raising aspirations.

Skills

Whilst there has been a major improvement in the qualification levels of young females, there has been significantly less improvement amongst young males. The Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey (2003) reports that 7% of Welsh employers have hard to fill vacancies attributed to skills shortage. The worst affected area is the traditionally male construction sector.

Related to the problem of skills shortage is the unwillingness of males to train in traditionally 'female' sectors despite the decline of traditionally male sectors. As such the skills gap increases as young males refuse to match the changing profiles and needs of the work force. This highlights an ever increasing need to challenge the entrenched stereotypes in Welsh society.

In terms of economic inactivity it is reported that Wales has the third highest rate in the UK with 975,000 people aged 16 or over classified as economically inactive. However, this is not necessarily a problem specific to young males.

NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

Estimates of the proportion of NEETs approximate 6-10% of the total of all young males and the reasons given for being NEET are many and varied. It is reported that the average NEET was 11 times more likely to leave school with no qualifications. However, it is also highlighted that rather than focusing on young NEETs in general, resources maybe employed more efficiently if focused on young males.

Barriers to Learning

In terms of barriers facing young males four categories have been established. These are dispositional, informational, institutional and situational. The main barriers to learning were practical or financial in nature with lack of motivation being the second single largest barrier.

Dispositional barriers found include the negative attitude of males towards education and learning and the low motivation of male students. It was reported in ELWa's School Sixth Form Survey (2004) reported that 29% of young males classed themselves as 'not very' or 'not at all' motivated compared to 23% if young females. Lack of motivation was also a factor where students did not get on their first choice of course. Research highlighted getting to University and improved job prospects as strong motivators to learn.

From a young age, not adhering to cultural roles can result in ridicule and bullying, and can therefore present a barrier to participation in particular areas or subjects. The negative labelling of males who work hard is another dimension of this issue. The breaking down of the 'lad' culture is required to overcome these barriers. This again highlights an inflexibility of many young males.

Informational barriers include lack of appropriate advice, knowledge or guidance. Primarily a lack of parental knowledge of the available options was highlighted. There also appears to be a lack of awareness of labour market opportunities and of the link between education and future prospects.

Institutional barriers to learning include teaching methods and the classroom environment, with increasing recognition being given to the need for flexible methods of teaching that can be adapted to suit the learners. The preference of young people for a taught course that leads to either a qualification or a specific skill for a job was highlighted in the Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey.

Transport also acts as an institutional barrier due to the ability to drive and own a car being seen as necessary to work but the costs involved were prohibitive and public

transport unreliable and expensive. Financial barriers to continuing education are vast and it is important that people who are keen and willing to learn are not deterred by these barriers which are where schemes such as EMA (16-18) and ILA (18+) proved beneficial.

Situational barriers include time pressure and family. Within this barrier the importance of studying your first choice course at your first choice provider is highlighted. Timetabling and course availability where seen as major barriers to learning.

1. Introduction

In December 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government issued their annual remit letter to ELWa asking for continued commitment to the reform of post-16 learning across Wales. This was to ensure that all residents in Wales are equipped with the right skills to become active citizens and to be able to contribute effectively to the labour market.

In its final year before merger with the Welsh Assembly Government, ELWa is keen to deliver its £544 million budget based on informed strategic decisions in order to achieve its objectives. To do this, ELWa needs a thorough understanding of their key target groups. This paper is one in a series of Learning Insights into specific populations within Wales, which are seen to be of strategic importance within ELWa's delivery remit.

ELWa's mission is: "To promote lifelong learning and provide world class learning opportunities for all in Wales to fulfil their potential". Linked to this are two key challenges within ELWa's Corporate Plan 2004-07, firstly the need to stimulate higher demand for skills amongst learners and secondly to use education to build a more inclusive society.

For Welsh males aged 16-24, these two objectives have particular resonance and are a crucial target group which ELWa need to engage, in order to meet targets for participation and achievement. However, in order to achieve these objectives with the constraints of budgets, ELWa needs to be able to make targeted interventions to achieve maximum impact. As such, this Learning Insight is designed to provide:

- An overview of the current position of 16-24 year old males within Welsh society,
- Future projections for how their representation in society may change,
- Recommendations for how ELWa can work most effectively with a potentially disillusioned and hard-to-reach cohort.

In 1998, Chris Woodhead, the then Chief Inspector of Schools in the UK, stated that:

“Underachieving boys are one of the most disturbing problems facing the education system.” (Smith, 2003)

A number of academics, professionals, journalists and education providers have begun to talk in terms of a ‘moral panic’ regarding the underperformance of young males in education. This has largely come about because of the examination results at GCSE which suggest that the performance of girls has overtaken that of boys.

The explanations for this are varied and range from problems arising from the changing definition of masculinity in society and the changing job market to alternative methods of assessment and pedagogy. Therefore, there is considerable scope for ELWa to investigate this issue further, specifically in terms of its implications for the post-16 education and training market in Wales.

2. Demographics

At the time of the 2001 Census of Population, just over 10% of the Welsh population was aged between 15 and 24 representing over 354,000 individuals. Of that population just over 177,500 were males, 50% of the population. Population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics for 2003 illustrate that the population of males aged 16-24 is distributed across Wales as follows:

Trend analysis of the Census data predicts a rise in the proportion and numbers of those aged 15-24 across Wales with an extra 27,000 residents entering this age band in the ten years till the next Census date in 2011.

Table 1. Proportion of Males and Females in the Welsh Population

Age	Total	Males	% of Population	Females	% of Population
5-9	185,325	94,750	51.1%	90,575	48.9%
10-14	195,976	100,975	51.5%	95,001	48.5%
15-19	184,707	93,175	50.4%	91,529	49.6%
20-24	169,493	84,342	49.7%	85,111	50.2%

Source: Census of Population 2001, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

At regional level there are variations in population density amongst males aged 15-24 with the population of males aged 15-24 in the south eastern unitary authorities being much greater than in other unitary authorities in Wales. Across the unitary authorities there is generally an equal split between males and females aged 15-24 with the exception of Gwynedd where only 33% of the male population is males and in Newport where the majority of the population is male at 65%.

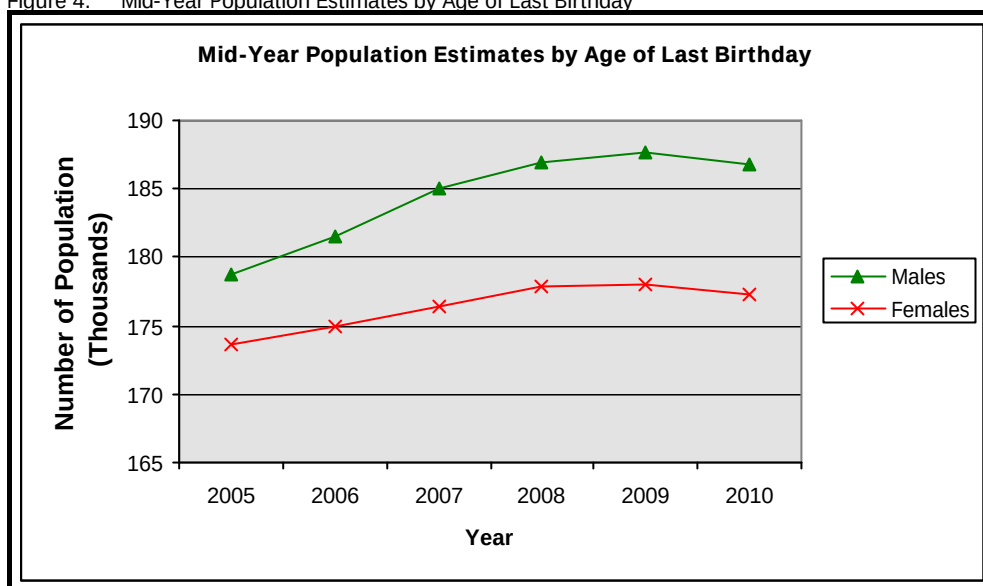
Table 2. Population of Males and Females by Unitary Authority Area in Wales

Region	Total Population	Males Aged 15-24	Females Aged 15-24
Anglesey	68,400	3,900	3,700
Blaenau Gwent	69,000	4,200	4,300
Bridgend	129,900	7,600	7,300
Caerphilly	170,200	10,600	10,400
Cardiff	315,100	27,200	29,300
Carmarthenshire	176,000	10,100	10,000
Ceredigion	77,200	6,800	7,100
Conwy	110,900	6,000	5,500
Denbighshire	94,800	5,300	4,900
Flintshire	149,400	9,100	8,400
Gwynedd	117,500	3,800	7,700
Merthyr Tydfil	55,400	3,600	3,500
Monmouthshire	86,200	4,600	4,100
Neath Port Talbot	135,300	8,200	7,800
Newport	139,300	8,800	4,800
Pembrokeshire	116,300	6,500	6,200
Powys	129,200	6,900	6,100
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	231,600	15,500	15,300
Swansea	224,700	16,600	15,600
Torfaen	90,700	5,600	5,400
Vale of Glamorgan	121,300	7,400	7,100
Wrexham	129,700	8,600	7,900
Percentage of Population	100	6	6
Total	2,938,100	190,700	186,000

Source: Mid Year Population Estimates 2005, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

Population projections produced by the Government Actuary Department in 2003 predict that the Welsh population aged 16-24 will go through a period of growth between 2005 and 2010 growing from 352,000 to 364,000, a growth rate of 3%. This age group will then decline to 322,000 by 2020. Within this, the male population aged 16-24 is predicted to grow from 179,000 in 2005 to 187,000 in 2010, a growth of 4%. This population is then predicted to decline to 165,000 by 2020. In comparison, the female population of 16-24 years olds is predicted to increase from 174,000 in 2005 to 177,000 in 2010, a growth of 2%.

Figure 4. Mid-Year Population Estimates by Age of Last Birthday



Source: Population projections by the Government Actuary, Principal Projection, Single Age Group 2003, © Government Actuary's Department, <http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/index.asp>

This information is not available by Unitary Authority area however the National Assembly for Wales have released sub-national population projections for areas within Wales and these are included in the table below.

Table 3. 2003 Based Sub-National Population Projections for Areas within Wales

Areas	2003	2008	2013	2018	2023
North Wales Authorities	670,800	682,700	688,100	692,500	695,000
Mid Wales Authorities	206,400	211,600	213,600	215,200	216,100
South East Wales	652,300	664,000	673,000	682,600	691,000
South East Wales	1,408,500	1,436,700	1,472,300	1,491,400	1,518,700
Wales	2,938,000	2,995,100	3,036,900	3,081,700	3,120,700

Source: National Assembly for Wales, Statistical Bulletin 40/2005, <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypublicationsforwalesfigures/content/population/subnational.htm>

3. Education and Training

This section of the report will cover issues such as identifying the participation in education and training, the impact of gender and the implications of full time vs. part time learning by strand, i.e. Schools and Sixth Forms, Further Education (FE), Work Based Learning (WBL), and Higher Education (HE).

3.1 Achievement at Schools

Based on data contained in the Skills & Employment Action Plan released by the Welsh Assembly in 2004, pupils in Wales are achieving better grades compared to previous years. This suggests that young people entering the labour market are better qualified than previous cohorts and in the long term this will have a positive impact on meeting employers skills needs. This is supported by analysis of GCSE results across Wales as produced by the National Assembly for Wales in April 2005.

Table 4. Examination Entries and Qualifications in Wales

	1991/92	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Percentage of 15 year old pupils who entered at least one ELQ*, GCSE short course, GCSE or vocational awards (a) (b)	94 %	97 %	97 %	97 %
Percentage of 15 year old pupils who achieved GCSE or vocational equivalent to at least (a) (b):				
1 GCSE grade A* - G	87 %	92 %	93 %	93 %
5 GCSE grades A* - G	75 %	85 %	85 %	85 %
5 GCSE grades A* - C	35 %	50 %	51 %	51 %

* Entry Level Qualification

(a) The academic year 1991/92 does not include GCSE short course examinations or vocational awards.

(b) Pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year.

Source: The National Assembly for Wales (2005) Key Education Statistics Wales 2004

However, the 2003 Welsh Assembly Statistics for Welsh Schools' Key Stage Teacher Assessments indicate that male students are outperformed by girls in all areas at Key Stage's 1, 2 and 3 with the gap widening by age. As can be seen from Table 5, by Key Stage 4 girls are still out performing boys at the highest grades (A*-C) across all unitary authority areas. This could be a product of early disaffection and the start of males distancing themselves with learning and their doubt with what the education system can offer them.

Table 5. GCSE Achievement Across Wales 2003/04 by Unitary Authority

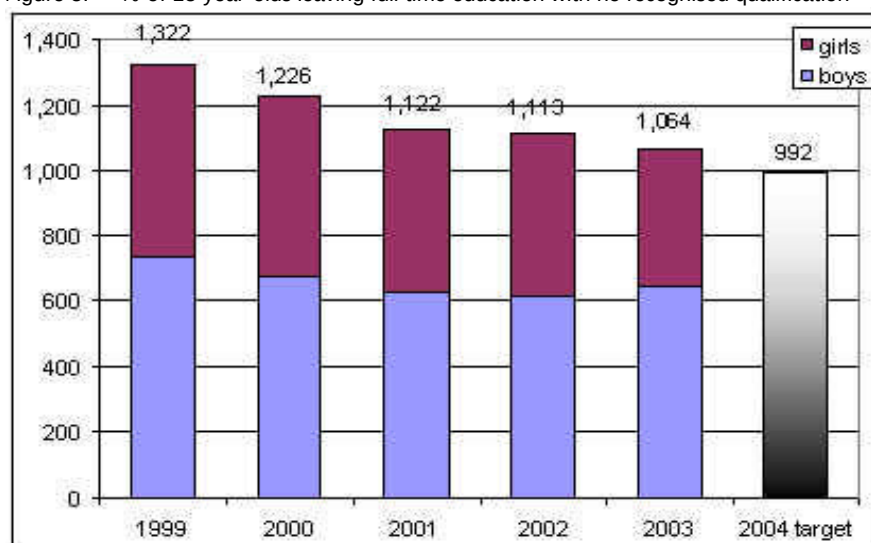
Region	Percentage Achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A* -C or equivalent			Percentage Achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A* -G or equivalent		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Anglesey	56	50	62	91	91	90
Blaenau Gwent	43	35	51	83	79	88
Bridgend	48	43	54	85	82	87
Caerphilly	45	39	51	82	76	87
Cardiff	48	43	53	83	81	86
Carmarthenshire	54	48	62	85	82	89
Ceredigion	63	51	73	89	85	92
Conwy	52	48	56	86	83	88
Denbighshire	47	44	49	83	82	85
Flintshire	53	47	59	88	86	90
Gwynedd	61	56	67	91	89	94
Merthyr Tydfil	43	36	50	83	80	85
Monmouthshire	52	45	59	87	87	88
Neath Port Talbot	52	44	59	85	81	89
Newport	46	42	50	88	86	90
Pembrokeshire	52	46	58	88	86	90
Powys	63	57	68	89	87	92
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	46	40	52	81	76	87
Swansea	48	44	52	82	79	85
Torfaen	49	42	55	86	82	90
Vale of Glamorgan	62	59	64	90	88	91
Wrexham	42	37	48	81	77	85
Wales	51	46	57	85	82	88

Source: Welsh Assembly Government (2004) National Curriculum Assessment and Public Examination Results In Wales 2003, http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details.asp?NewsID=874

3.1.1 Destinations from Schools

The Welsh Assembly's Skills and Employment Action Plan (2003) reports that in 2003 a greater percentage of boys than girls left with no qualification (3.4% and 2.2% respectively). 1,579 15-year-olds in mainstream LEA schools achieved no recognised qualification, 4% of pupils in cohort. 67% of these left full-time education (67% of the boys, 69% of the girls). Notably the proportion of boys leaving with no qualifications declined at a slower rate than that of the girls.

Figure 5. % of 15-year-olds leaving full time education with no recognised qualification



Source: Welsh Assembly (2004) Skills & Employment Action Plan (2)

Analysis of Pupils Destinations data published by Careers Wales indicates that in 2004 the proportion of males who continued in full-time education was less than in 2000 and 2001. This was in contrast with an increase in the number of females staying on in full-time education which had risen from 78.9% in 2000 to 80.7% in 2003, falling slightly to 79.6% in 2004.

Table 6. Trend Analysis of Year 11 Continuing in Full Time Education

% of Year 11 Continuing in Full Time Education	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Male	70.1%	69.9%	68.9%	68.6%	69.4%
Female	78.9%	78.8%	78.0%	80.7%	79.6%
Total	74.5%	74.3%	73.3%	73.8%	74.4%

Source: Careers Wales (2004) Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales

Analysis across Years 11 and 12 reveals that the proportion of Year 12 students continuing in full time education has increased across both males and females between 2000 and 2004. The percentage of Year 11 known not to be in education, training or employment has increased for both males and females and remains higher amongst the male population.

Table 7. Trends in Destinations in Years 11 and 12 Across Wales

			Continuing in full time education	Work based training – non employed status	Work based training – employment status	Employed – other	Known not to be in education, training or employment	No response to survey	Left the are	Total number in cohort
Year 11	Male	2004	69.4	6.7	3.2	8.3	7.7	2.8	2.0	19,934
		2003	68.6	7.3	3.5	8.5	7.0	2.8	2.7	19,383
		2002	68.9	7.6	3.5	7.5	7.1	3.9	1.6	18,631
		2001	69.9	6.6	3.2	7.9	6.2	6.1	-	18,769
		2000	70.1	6.3	3.3	7.7	6.7	5.9	-	17,851
	Female	2004	79.6	4.2	1.2	4.5	6.3	2.4	1.8	19,170
		2003	80.7	4.7	1.2	5.1	5.6	2.6	2.2	18,692
		2002	78.0	5.2	1.1	4.9	5.8	3.2	1.7	17,814
		2001	78.8	4.5	1.0	5.0	5.2	5.5	-	18,155
		2000	78.9	3.9	1.1	5.1	5.6	5.4	-	17,595
	All Pupils	2004	74.4	5.4	2.2	6.5	7.0	2.6	1.9	39,104
		2003	73.8	6.0	2.4	6.8	6.3	2.6	2.3	38,075
		2002	73.3	6.4	2.3	6.2	6.5	3.6	1.6	36,445
		2001	74.3	5.6	2.1	6.5	5.7	5.8	-	36,924
		2000	74.5	5.1	2.2	6.4	6.2	5.6	-	35,446
Year 12	Male	2004	86.0	1.4	1.2	5.8	2.5	2.3	0.8	6,921
		2003	85.1	2.3	1.8	5.8	2.1	1.8	1.1	7,108
		2002	85.9	2.4	1.3	5.0	2.2	2.6	0.7	6,827
		2001	83.5	2.3	1.2	5.6	3.0	4.3	-	6,781
		2000	83.7	2.1	1.5	5.0	2.6	5.1	-	6,457
	Female	2004	88.3	1.4	0.6	4.8	2.0	2.0	0.9	8,183
		2003	87.9	2.1	0.9	4.9	1.7	1.5	1.1	7,975
		2002	86.9	2.2	0.6	4.4	2.4	2.5	0.9	7,748
		2001	86.6	1.8	0.7	4.0	3.1	4.0	-	7,517
		2000	85.6	2.3	0.7	4.0	2.6	4.8	-	7,314
	All Pupils	2004	87.2	1.4	0.9	5.3	2.3	2.2	0.8	15,104
		2003	86.6	1.8	1.1	5.7	2.1	1.8	0.9	15,083
		2002	86.4	2.3	0.9	4.7	2.3	2.6	0.8	14,575
		2001	85.1	2.0	0.9	4.8	3.0	4.1	-	14,298
		2000	84.7	2.2	1.1	4.5	2.6	4.9	-	13,771

Source: Careers Wales (2004) Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales

The Year 12 data shows that the number of males entering the labour market either through work based training or employment continues to be higher than the number of females, whilst significantly more girls choose to continue in full time education. That said, the number of Year 12 males continuing in full time education has increased from 83.7% in 2000 to 86% in 2004. At a more local level there are some

significant variations according to the Careers Wales Destinations data. Key differences are provided below:

For Year 11 males:

- In Powys 79.6% of males were staying in full-time education, as compared to 62.2% in North East Wales
- In North East Wales, 14.7% of males opted for employment without government supported training, as compared to 5.3% in West Wales and 6% in Powys.
- In North East Wales, 5.3% of males opted for employment with government supported training, as compared to 1% in Powys
- In Cardiff & Vale, 9.5% of males became NEETs, as compared to 3.8% in Powys.

For Year 12 males:

- In Powys 90.7% of males were staying in full-time education, as compared to 79.6% in North East Wales
- In North East Wales, 11% of males opted for employment without government supported training, as compared to 2.4% in West Wales and 2.3% in Powys.
- In North East Wales and West Wales, 2.8% of males opted for employment with government supported training, as compared to 1% in Powys and North West Wales
- In Gwent, 3.2% of males became NEETs, as compared to 1% in Powys.

In terms of the trends in Year 13 Destinations, there was a fall of 4.2% between 2003 and 2004 of the number of students continuing in full time education. While the percentage of males continuing in full time education remained lower than the percentage of females, the gap in 2004 was slightly smaller than the gap in 2003 (5.1% vs. 5.6%). The percentage of males entering the NEET group after Year 13 increased between 2003 and 2003 by 2.2% and was 0.9% higher than the female rate of 6.3%. The percentage of Year 13 males entering employment without training had also increased from 12.6% in 2003 to 14.0% in 2004.

Table 8. Trends in Destinations in Year 13 Across Wales

			Continuing in full time education	Work based training – non employed status	Work based training – employed status	Employed – other	Known not to be in education, training or employment	No response to survey	Left the area	Total number in cohort
Year 13	Male	2004	73.1	0.3	1.6	14.0	7.2	2.8	1.0	5,342
		2003	77.1	0.5	1.4	12.6	5.0	2.3	1.0	5,302
		2002	79.5	0.6	1.0	9.0	5.9	3.1	0.9	4,886
		2001	76.0	0.5	1.6	9.8	8.0	4.0	-	4,847
		2000	74.8	0.4	1.4	10.9	7.3	5.2	-	4,862
	Female	2004	78.2	0.3	0.4	10.9	6.3	3.1	0.8	6,291
		2003	82.7	0.2	0.7	9.2	4.1	1.7	1.4	6,091
		2002	83.2	0.4	0.3	7.9	4.2	2.9	1.1	5,825
		2001	79.6	0.5	0.6	7.9	7.8	3.6	-	5,686
		2000	77.8	0.5	0.6	9.8	6.5	4.8	-	5,758
	All Pupils	2004	75.9	0.3	1.0	12.3	6.7	2.9	0.9	11,633
		2003	80.1	0.4	1.0	10.8	4.5	2.0	1.2	11,393
		2002	81.5	0.5	0.6	8.4	5.0	3.0	1.0	10,711
		2001	77.9	0.5	1.1	8.8	7.9	3.8	-	10,533
		2000	76.4	0.5	1.0	9.6	5.7	4.3	-	10,705

Source: Careers Wales (2004) Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales

At a more local level, for Year 13 males:

- In Cardiff & Vale 82.2% of males were staying in full-time education, as compared to 71.3% in North East Wales. In Powys, the figure was 74.4%, but the 12.4% NEETs in Powys included 11% who were on a Gap year.
- In North East Wales, 18.1% of males opted for employment without government supported training, as compared to 8.8% in Cardiff & Vale and 9.4% in North West Wales.
- In North East Wales, 3.2% of males opted for employment with government supported training, as compared to 0.9% in Cardiff & Vale,
- In Mid Glamorgan, 7.7% of males became NEETs, as compared to 1.9% in Cardiff and Vale.

3.2 Further Education

According to Welsh Assembly (2004) figures in the 2002/03 academic year, Wales had close to 260,000 Further Education students studying at 25 Further Education Institutions. Around 30% of these students were aged up to 24. Overall, the number of students had increased by 26% since 1997/98, within which the number of students enrolling on part-time courses increased by 35%.

The ELWa report highlights that slightly more males (41,005) than females (39,891) aged up to 24 enrolled at FE Institutions. However, whilst of those aged up to 20, there are 3,500 more males enrolled than females in contrast, regarding students aged 21-24, there are 2,300 more females than males, with the latter gap mainly explained by 2,200 more females than males on part-time courses. Male participation as part-time students falls away by age whereas female participation increases. Course completion rates of young males and females were on average similar to one another.

Table 9. FE Students by mode of attendance, age & sex 2002/03

	Under 16	16-18	19-20	21-24	Aged up to 24
FT Male	547	15,033	1,711	1,029	18,320
PT Male	3,230	7,476	4,668	7,311	22,685
Total Male	3,777	22,509	6,379	8,340	41,005
FT Female	315	14,672	1,442	1,241	17,670
PT Female	2,438	6,067	4,212	9,504	22,221
Total Female	2,753	20,739	5,654	10,745	39,891
Total	6,530	43,248	12,033	19,085	80,896

Source: Welsh Assembly (2004) Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics in Wales: 2002/03

Table 9 shows the general analysis of achievement patterns by LEA produced by the Welsh Assembly in. Looking at the percentage of Welsh 17 year olds who entered 2 or more A-Levels and achieved 2 or more A-Level grades A-E (or the vocational equivalent), females outperformed males in all LEAs except Denbighshire. Male candidates in Cardiff, Blaenau Gwent and Swansea recorded the weakest male performances.

In terms of those who achieved 2 or more A-Levels grades A-C (or the vocational equivalent), the gender gap was even larger. Female candidates outperformed males

in all LEAs, the smallest difference being in Denbighshire, while Carmarthenshire recorded the weakest male performance.

Table 10. General Analysis of Achievement patterns by LEA

Region	17 year old pupils			Number entering 2 or more A-Levels or entering vocational equivalent			Percentage of 17 year olds entering 2 or more A-Levels who achieved 2 or more A-Levels grades A-C or vocational equivalent			Percentage of 17 year olds entering 2 or more A-Levels who achieved 2 or more A-Levels grades A-E or vocational equivalent		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Blaenau Gwent	221	89	132	183	67	116	50	46	52	89	87	91
Bridgend	596	275	321	515	231	284	68	62	73	94	90	97
Caerphilly	472	190	282	413	151	262	65	56	70	91	89	92
Cardiff	1,145	540	605	968	462	506	65	59	70	90	87	93
Carmarthenshire	649	289	360	566	236	330	71	61	78	96	93	98
Ceredigion	674	155	219	338	136	202	77	75	79	97	96	98
Conwy	461	189	272	512	170	242	71	68	74	95	94	96
Denbighshire	430	174	256	367	141	226	66	65	67	92	92	91
Flintshire	585	285	300	475	226	249	64	57	70	92	88	94
Gwynedd	287	142	145	262	132	130	67	64	71	97	95	98
Isle of Anglesey	255	107	148	236	98	138	77	71	80	98	98	99
Merthyr Tydfil	297	142	155	222	99	123	61	55	66	95	91	98
Monmouthshire	402	193	209	363	171	192	60	56	64	91	89	94
Neath Port Talbot	122	60	62	97	45	52	81	78	85	98	98	98
Newport	605	312	293	496	247	249	64	59	68	94	92	96
Pembrokeshire	551	278	273	490	240	250	69	65	73	95	93	96
Powys	535	245	290	504	228	276	67	64	69	96	96	96
Rhondda Cynon Taff	1,183	515	668	965	421	544	61	55	65	93	90	95
Swansea	574	284	290	472	228	244	66	56	75	92	87	96
The Vale of Glamorgan	612	323	289	558	294	264	75	68	83	96	95	97
Torfaen	367	164	203	269	114	155	63	57	68	94	91	96
Wrexham	120	68	52	74	41	33	70	63	79	96	95	97
Wales	11,568	5,395	6,173	9,848	4,468	5,380	68	62	72	94	92	96

Source: National Assembly for Wales, Learning Wales, Local Education Summary Table A-Level, 2003,
http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/scripts/fe/news_details_printable.asp?NewsID=1097

3.3 Work Based Learning

Work Based Learning programmes aim to provide competence based skills required by those in employment to enhance their employability and career progression. They also aim to provide young people not in employment with the skills to increase their employability, and provide employers with a workforce that has the skills necessary to compete in a global economy.

Preparatory Training (youth/adult) known as Skill Build :

- Offers an opportunity to gain basic skills that are useful for many different types of jobs and that prevent immediate access to vocational learning at NVQ level 1 and above
- Normally lasts for no longer than 13 weeks
- Offers participants an opportunity to learn at their own pace
- Chance of work experience
- Eligible participants may receive a learners allowance
- Regular support and advice concerning their future
- Targeted at unemployed learners who are vocationally unfocussed, lack confidence, have poor motivation and poor basic skills
- Participants must be referred by either Careers Wales (16-18) or Jobcentre Plus (19+)

Skills Training (youth/adult) known as Skill Build +

- Offers participants the opportunity to develop more advanced skills that could lead to a nationally recognised qualification (NVQ Level 1, 2 and 3)
- Updates existing skills and provides opportunities to learn new skills needed by employers
- If eligible, help with the cost of travelling to learning may be offered
- Allowances to pay for childcare offered if participant is a single parent
- Eligible participants may receive a learners allowance
- Regular support and advice concerning their future

Foundation Modern Apprenticeship

- Training up to NVQ level 2 in a chosen area to people already employed
- Gain key skill qualifications such as communication, team working, problem solving and IT
- Offers a regular wage or training allowance
- Offers quality training and support including individual learning plans and written agreements with employers
- Participants referred by the Youth Access Initiative, Youth Gateway (19-19) and School and FE Institutions
- Frameworks developed by the relevant Sector Skills Council and approved by the Approvals and Advisory Group (AAG)¹ which specifies the learning, including key skills and technical certificates, required by the relevant industrial sector.

Modern Apprenticeship

- Similar to a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship but more advanced
- Offers training up to NVQ level 3 or 4 in a chosen area to people already employed with 4 GCSE's, A-Levels or NVQ level 2
- Gain an industry specific qualification and key skill qualifications such as communication, team working, problem solving and IT
- Offers a regular wage (paid by employer) or training allowance (if the trainee is in a placement but does not have employed status)
- Offers quality training and support including individual learning plans
- Participants sometimes move on to HE sponsored by their employer
- Frameworks developed by the relevant SSC and approved by the AAG

Modern Skills Diploma

- Employment based programme for employed status learners
- Provides opportunities to advance to NVQ level 4
- Entrants usually expected to hold technician and/or people management positions
- Currently in a transitional phase, whilst MSD sector specific frameworks are developed

¹ http://www.elwa.org.uk/doc_bin/Workbased%20learning/Annex%204%20Changes%20to%20Work%20based%20learning%20programmes.doc

In the 2002/03 academic year, Wales had almost 54,600 trainees, almost all of which were regarded as being in full time training, spread across approximately 150 training providers (ELWa: Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics in Wales: 2002/03).

The number of trainees starting training programmes (including Modern Apprenticeships) has increased by 31% since 1997/98 reflecting an increase in provision and in the marketing and promotion of work-based opportunities. The average composition of trainees for whom data showed that 83% were aged between 16 and 24 and 57% were male.

Further analysis of enrolment on work based learning courses using the ELWa National Trainee Database Dataset (2005) shows that 56% of 16-24 years olds in work based learning are male. This proportion was noticeably higher on Modern Apprenticeships where 63% of learners are male, and on SkillBuild Level 1 where 68% of learners are male.

Table 11. Participation on WBL Schemes by Gender, Age and Programme

Age	16		17		18		19 - 24		16-24		
Programme Type	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Modern Apprenticeship	828	115	1,144	228	1,207	485	2,951	2,755	6,130	3,583	9,713
Foundation Modern Apprenticeships	1,190	922	1,500	1,117	1,018	886	2,508	2,610	6,216	5,535	11,751
Skillbuild Preparatory	232	146	159	100	11	11	3	1	405	258	663
Skillbuild Level 1	278	126	243	125	36	13	8	5	565	269	834
Modern Skills Diploma for Adults	0	0	0	0	0	1	21	30	21	31	52
WBLA endorsed	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	4	5
WBLA non-endorsed	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	2	5	2	7
Other WBL programme	0	0	2	1	0	2	22	18	24	21	45
Preparatory Learning	639	390	311	250	20	10	17	13	987	663	1,650
Skills Learning	261	181	184	155	22	13	11	29	478	378	856
Total In WBL Schemes	3,428	1,880	3,544	1,976	2,314	1,423	5,546	5,465	14,832	10,744	25,576

The figures shown are not necessarily fundable learners but are a count of learners doing worked based learning courses according to provider supplied information. There could be double counting of learners if a learner is at more than one provider, because the count is not based on unique learner identifier.

Source: ELWa National Trainee Database (2005)

In terms of the individual qualifications obtained, reflecting the fact that more males than females enrol on work based learning courses, there are more males than females achieving work based learning qualifications. This would support the research findings by Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey (2003) that states that learning through doing is the preferred learning method for males.

Table 12. WBL Provision in Wales 2003-2004

	Individual Qualification Outcomes Awarded										
Leaving Age	16		17		18		19-24		16-24		
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Total
Employability Training					1	1	96	12	97	13	110
Modern Apprenticeships	2	5	30	53	82	144	1,956	3,120	2,070	3,322	5,392
Modern Skills Diploma									0	0	0
Foundation Modern Apprenticeships	78	139	833	847	1,891	1,227	5,241	5,082	8,043	7,295	15,338
Recruit and Train							6		6	0	6
Skillbuild	2,368	3,650	3,617	5,220	1,065	1,720	187	432	7237	11,022	18,259
Skills Training						1	93	12	93	13	106
Other Youth Programmes				3		3	2	4	2	10	12
All Programmes	2,448	3,794	4,480	6,123	3,039	3,096	7,581	8,662	17,548	21,675	39,223

Source: ELWa National Trainee Database 2005

The Skills & Employment Action Plan 2 (Welsh Assembly 2004) shows that the number of vocational qualifications awarded in Wales fell by 5%, to around 54,600 in the year to 2001/02. Of particular concern was that the biggest decline was among young people aged 16-20. In 2001/2002 there was a 15% drop in awards to those in the largest age group, namely 16-20. Meanwhile, awards to age groups over 21 increased by 7%, suggesting that those who take up vocational qualifications are continuing to diversify beyond the traditional FE age group (who represent 40% of qualifications awarded). This tallies with a longer-term pattern of decline in year 11 school leavers taking up work based learning, which had fallen from 9.6% in 1996 to 7.3% in 2003.

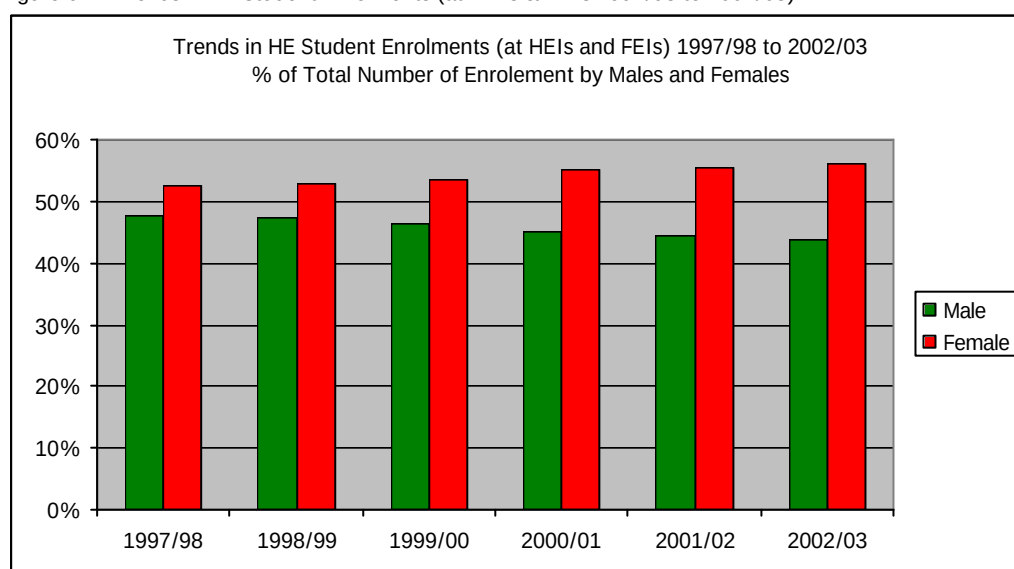
There have been a number of changes in the subject distribution of NVQs taken – following broader employment trends, with an increase in traditionally female subjects, and a decrease in traditionally male subjects. However, there also seems to

have been a decrease in take-up of Business/Management, Sales/Marketing and IT routes.

3.4 Higher Education

Despite the fact that mid-year population estimates suggest that the male and female populations of 15-25 year olds in Wales are equal in terms of numbers, the graph below demonstrates that a higher proportion of Higher Education Student Enrolments come from the female population. This proportion has been increasing over the last six years, suggesting that ELWa's concern that there appears to be an issue in encouraging males aged 16-24 to engage in higher level learning is founded.

Figure 6. Trends in HE Student Enrolments (at HEI's & FEI's 1997/98 to 2002/03)



Source: ELWa (2004) Higher Education, Further Education and Training Statistics in Wales: 2002/2003,

It appears to be possible to trace the difference in participation in higher education between males and females back to performance at GCSE and experiences in further education. The data would suggest that such trends place males at a disadvantage in entering the workplace and as such has implications for the future skills available to employers. There is therefore a need to obtain a better understanding of the barriers to learning within this group and to outline what can be done to raise aspirations.

Analysis of the UK population as a whole undertaken by the Higher Education Policy Institute (2005) has used UK population predictions to predict the changing numbers of students in Higher Education up to 2016. The report concluded that the projected

increase in the number of full-time undergraduates between now and 2010-11 is 52,400, but between now and 2015-16 the increase is only 13,800, as a result of the sharp fall in the under-21 population between 2010-11 and 2015-16. However, in considering these figures it will also be important to appreciate that changes in performance at A-Level may influence these figures.

Table 13. Increases in part time numbers due to demography

Age group	Estimated numbers in 2004-05	Percentage population growth to 2010-11	Resulting increase in numbers in 2010-11	FTE equivalent increase in 2010-11	Percentage population growth to 2015-16	Resulting increase in numbers in 2015-16	FTE equivalent increase in 2015-16
<21	51,000	5.47	2,790	976	-1.3	-663	-232
21-24	56,500	9.6	5,424	1,898	9.8	5,537	1,938
25-29	77,000	9.24	7,115	2,490	17.36	13,367	4,679
30+	328,500	3.36	11,038	3,863	7.06	23,192	8,117
Total			26,366	9,228		41,433	14,502

Source: Higher Education Policy Institute, 2005, Higher Education Demand to 2015-16

Although these figures are for the UK as whole, given the population projections available for Wales it is possible to assume that these trends will also be replicated within Welsh Higher Education Institutions.

3.5 Training at Work

Skills & Employment Action Plan 2 (2004) as published by the Welsh Assembly reports that formal training at work was very unevenly distributed in terms of industrial sectors. Once again, traditionally male sectors like mining, agriculture and distribution, have been associated with low levels of off-the-job training. The position is improved if on-the-job training and development are included, but whilst 86% of health, administration and education employers provided off-the job training (2003 figures), the comparable figure for the hotel and distribution sectors (joint) was 42%, and agriculture 21%.

3.6 Defining and Measuring Underachievement in Wales

In 2001, Cardiff University released a report investigating the patterns of differential attainment of boys and girls at schools in Wales (Gorard et al., 2001). The report details differential attainment by gender for all students in Wales over 6 years and at every level of assessment from Key Stage 1 to A Level. The research has revealed an interesting variant to other literature in terms of defining underachievement.

The research concludes that there are few significant gender differences in mathematics and the sciences, whilst for all other subjects there are no significant gender differences at the lowest level of any assessment. However, the gap in attainment between boys and girls then rises with every grade or level in an assessment, leading to the conclusion that the problem, if there is a problem, it is one mainly facing mid-to high-attainers. Therefore, this report challenges the notion of low achievement and under achievement and also suggests that other variables may be more important in determining academic performance than gender.

In 2003, the Cardiff University School of Social Sciences published a report into pupil underachievement in secondary schools involving over 2,000 pupils from two local education authorities in the South Wales valleys during the academic year 2000-2001 (Smith, 2003). This study uses a wider definition of underachievement than mental ability as measured by grades in order to capture other factors that may explain differential educational performance at school including social class and pupil attitudes.

The South Wales valleys were selected as an area dominated by the former mining communities which have since seen high unemployment and social deprivation. However the area has also seen significant inward investment, mainly from foreign electronics companies. Another benefit of conducting the study in this area was that it included a range of school types, including Church schools and schools that taught through the medium of Welsh.

In terms of the low achievers in the study, analysis by gender revealed mixed results. There were no significant differences between male and female pupils in terms of the Cognitive Ability Tests and there were no significant difference between

the performance of boys and girls in Key Stages 2 and 3 in mathematics and science. However, there was a highly significant difference in favour of the performance of girls in English at both Key Stages.

Analysis of the underachievers identified in the study revealed that they were not predominantly working class boys when measured against their predicted performance, but instead raised concerns about the relative performance of working class girls. Therefore, in contrast to a number of other academic papers released at the same time, this report concluded that for this sample of school children gender was not a key factor in influencing the academic achievement of pupils. Instead it was pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds that appeared to be most disadvantaged.

In conclusion, both of these studies pose interesting questions about the definition of achievement and the role of gender in determining performance. As such, ELWa is faced with a complex issue which warrants further investigation.

4. Skills

4.1 Analysis of Qualifications

Compared with the UK as a whole, Wales has a similar proportion of the employed workforce qualified at each level. However, Wales' unemployed are far less qualified than the UK average. 28% (19,200) of the unemployed in Wales have no qualifications, compared with the UK average of 21 per cent, and 28% of the unemployed have qualifications Level 3 or above, as compared to the UK average of 34%.

Wales has a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications (17 per cent compared with 15 per cent) and a lower proportion with NVQ levels 4 or 5 (23 per cent compared with 25 per cent). Forty-nine per cent of the Welsh workforce is qualified at level 2 or below; the CBI regards level 2 as being the minimum requirement for workers in today's labour force 148,500 (34 per cent) of the inactive in Wales have no qualifications. This is higher than the UK average of 31 per cent.

Table 14. Qualification profile (% of respondents)

	Total population (%)		In employment (%)		Unemployed (%)		Inactive (%)	
	UK	Wales	UK	Wales	UK	Wales	UK	Wales
None	15	17	10	11	21	28	31	34
Level 1	10	9	10	8	14	11	11	9
Level 2	28	29	29	30	31	31	26	27
Level 3	21	20	22	21	18	15	18	19
Level 4 or 5	25	23	29	29	16	13	12	10
Weighted Base	37,127,164	1,774,388	27,772,736	1,269,057	1,526,803	68,797	7,827,624	436,534

Base: All of working age

Note: Column percentages do not sum to 100 as they exclude respondents who 'don't know' or give 'no answer'

Source: Labour Force Survey, 4-quarter average (June to August 2002, September to November 2002, December to February 2003 and March to May 2003), ONS, Crown Copyright

Labour Force Survey figures for 2001 indicate that females in the workforce are more likely than males to be qualified to less than level 2 and slightly less likely to be qualified at Level 4 and above.

Table 15. Qualification Profile of Working Age Males and Females

Highest Level of Achievement	Mar 2000-Feb 2001		Mar 2001-Feb 2002		Mar 2002-Feb 2003		Mar 2003-Feb 2004	
	Males	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
% with NVQ4+ (Degree)	11.3	10.5	10.7	10.1	11.1	10.7	11.3	11.3
% with NVQ3 (A-Level)	7.3	4.6	7.2	5.2	7.7	5.6	8.3	6.1
% with trade apprenticeships	5.6	1.3	5.9	1.1	5.8	1.3	5.6	1.1
% with NVQ2	7.0	9.2	6.5	9.5	6.7	10.0	6.9	9.8
% with NVQ1	5.8	9.4	6.0	8.5	6.1	8.2	5.9	8.0
% with other qualifications	4.6	2.7	4.7	3.1	5.0	3.2	4.9	3.1
% with no qualifications	9.6	10.8	10.2	11.3	8.9	9.8	8.4	9.4
Percentage Gender Split	51.2	48.4	51.3	48.7	51.2	48.8	51.3	48.7

Source: Office for National Statistics (2005) Labour Force Survey, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved

Table 16. Qualification profile by Age

	None (%)	Level 1 (%)	Level 2 (%)	Level 3 (%)	Level 4 and 5 (%)	Weighted base
All ages	21	16	21	17	25	6,025
16-24	14	18	27	25	16	1,105
25-39	15	20	19	17	29	1,792
40-54	24	14	21	14	28	2,206
55-64	33	12	19	14	22	922
Workless Households	37	18	16	14	15	1,043
Note: Row percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding						
Base = All respondents						

Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

4.1.1 Regional Variations

Across the different regions in Wales, Mid Wales boasts the most residents having the highest level of qualifications (27 per cent having level 4 and 5). This region also reports the fewest number of residents without any formal qualifications (15 per cent). South East Wales, on the other hand, has the highest incidence of those without qualifications (23 per cent) and the lowest amount qualified to level 4 and level 5 (24 per cent).

Table 17. Qualification profile (% of respondents) by Region

	None (%)	Level 1 (%)	Level 2 (%)	Level 3 (%)	Level 4 and 5 (%)	Weighted base	Unweighted Base
All Wales	21	16	21	17	25	6,025	6,025
Mid Wales	15	15	22	21	27	467	502
North Wales	17	18	22	17	26	1,313	1,350
South East Wales	23	17	20	16	24	2,926	2,949
South West Wales	23	13	22	16	26	1,320	1,224
Note: Row percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding							
Base = All respondents							

Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

4.2 Employment Patterns

In the Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey (2003), those out of work were asked which industries they would like to work in. The most popular for males were Construction (18%), Manufacturing (13%), Wholesale & Retail (13%) and Transport & Communications (11%). A number of which, are sectors that are currently seen to be stagnated or in decline. In contrast, the most popular destinations for unemployed females were Health & Social Work (29%), Wholesale & Retail (19%), Social & Personal Service activities (17%), Education (14%), predominantly areas of job growth. These trends are mirrored in terms of participation by students in compulsory education, which could cause a problem as it would result in the young male workforce looking to pursue work in areas which are seen to be declining, leading to higher levels of unemployment and disenchantment amongst the cohort.

The additional stream of young adults into the workplace has to be able to match the changing occupational profiles and needs of the workforce. It is therefore vital that males and females are encouraged to challenge the gender stereotypes that exist in British society in order to overcome what is seen as traditionally male/female occupations. In Wales some of these stereotypes seem particularly strong, based on multi-generational patterns of behaviour which will need to be overcome.

It is important that learning provision meets the needs of changing demographics, and that the increased supply of young labour into the workforce meets the needs of employers, in terms of changing skills patterns and occupational profiles. Over the last generation there has been a shift in employment patterns across Wales. The

industrial fabric of the country has undergone a transition, as well as the nature of job-roles. The patterns of employment have changed resulting in 'a job for life' no longer being the norm, and whilst the traditionally male dominated occupations are experiencing a decline, traditionally female dominated occupations, such as working in Health and Social Care, Administration, Retail and Hospitality, are experiencing an increase in job opportunities.

Experian Business Strategies have produced data which confirms these trends and predicts that they will continue in the period up to 2008 (ELWa, 2005). This highlights the need to provide education and training which can respond to these changing skills demand, but it also requires the supply of Information, Advice and Guidance which can support young people in entering this changing economic environment, which is substantially different to the labour market their parents were part of.

Table 18. Changing Sectoral Structure of Employment in Wales, 2003 to 2008

	Employment level (000s)		Share of Employment (%)		Location Quotient
	2003	2008	2003	2008	2008
Agriculture	33.8	27.3	2.7	2.2	2.2
Mining and Quarrying	2.9	1.9	0.2	0.2	0.7
Manufacturing	188.8	179.5	15.3	14.3	1.2
Energy and Water	5.9	4.4	0.5	0.4	1.0
Construction	91.1	85.9	7.4	6.9	1.1
Wholesale and Retail	202.7	212.0	16.5	16.9	1.0
Hotels and Restaurants	79.7	77.7	6.5	6.2	0.9
Transport and Communications	54.9	53.2	4.5	4.3	0.7
Banking and Insurance	30.1	29.4	2.4	2.4	0.7
Other Business Services	117.6	131.7	9.5	10.5	0.6
Public Admin and Defence	76.8	73.7	6.2	5.9	1.3
Education	109.0	110.3	8.9	8.8	1.1
Health	167.4	184.9	13.6	14.8	1.3
Other Services	71.3	79.0	5.8	6.3	1.0
Total Employment	1,232.0	1,251.1	100.0	100.0	
Note: A location quotient greater than 1 means the sector is more important in Wales than in the UK (calculated by the sector's share of employment relative to the UK's sector share of employment)					

Source: ONS, Crown Copyright/ELWa (2005) Learning and Labour Market Intelligence for Wales National Report

Table 19. Changing Occupational Structure in Wales, 2003 to 2008

Standard Occupational Classification	Occupation Level (000s)		Share of Employment (%)	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
1. Managers and Senior Officials	135.1	134.9	11.0	10.8
2. Professional	125.6	129.6	10.2	10.3
3. Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	154.5	163.7	12.5	13.0
4. Administrative and Secretarial	149.6	157.5	12.2	12.6
5. Skilled Trades Occupations	176.5	164.4	14.4	13.2
6. Personal Service	112.3	123.2	9.1	9.8
7. Sales and Customer Service	97.4	103.8	8.0	8.4
8. Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	122.4	116.5	10.0	9.3
9. Elementary Occupations	155.3	154.9	12.7	12.5
Employees in Employment	1,228.7	1,248.5	100%	100%

Source: ONS, Crown Copyright/ELWa (2005) Learning and Labour Market Intelligence for Wales National Report

4.2.1 Economic Inactivity

In the paper, Economic Inactivity in Wales, 2003, the Statistical Directorate, Welsh Assembly Government outlined levels of and reasons for economic inactivity (based on the Annual Labour Force Survey). It highlighted that Wales had the third highest inactivity rate in the UK after Northern Ireland and the North East with 975,000 people aged 16 or over in Wales classified as economically inactive, equivalent to an inactivity rate of 42.2 per cent (37.5 per cent for the UK as a whole). In terms of the working age population, 448,600 people in Wales were classified as economically inactive, equivalent to an inactivity rate of 25.8 per cent (22.0 per cent for the UK as a whole).

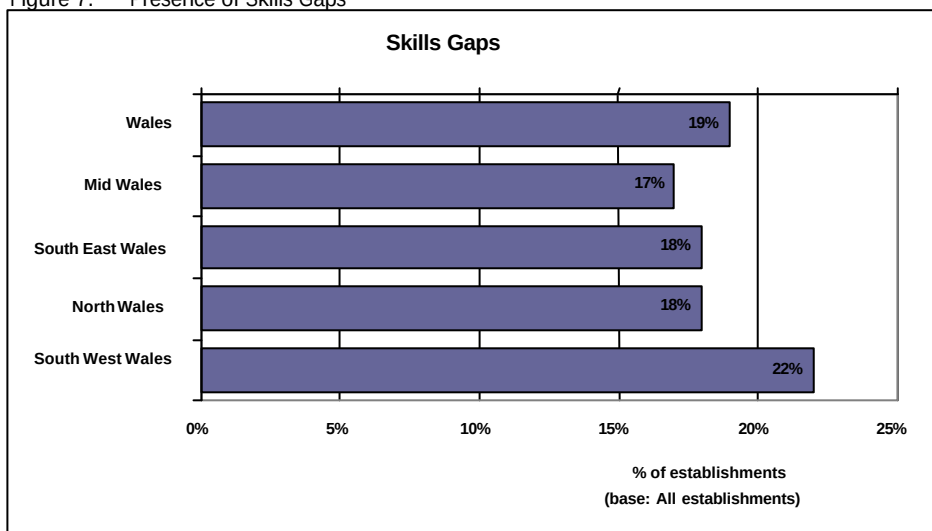
The report estimates that if inactivity in Wales could be reduced to the same level as the UK average, Wales would have an extra 55,000 in employment. However, the report does not suggest that the problem lies with male 16-24 year olds. The inactivity of young males is slightly higher than the UK, however this is mainly explained by Wales having a higher proportion of students. Wales's excess over the UK is largely amongst those aged 35 and over, perhaps suggesting a legacy of the country's industrial past. What is important is that such a high rate of inactivity may set a precedent amongst the next generation and as such the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners such as ELWa are keen to break the cycle.

Males aged 16-24 are slightly more likely to be full-time students or on long-term sick than females of the same age. In contrast, young females are more likely to be economically inactive because they are looking after the family home, than their male counterparts, and more likely than their female counterparts in the rest of the UK. Males in particular should be encouraged to consider other areas of employment other than those that are seen as traditionally male occupations. This would help alleviate the problem caused by unskilled males trying to enter industries that are seen to be in decline.

4.3 Skills Needs and the Gap in Skills Supply

The Future Skills Wales Generic Survey (2003) defines skills gap as the difference between the skills employees have now, and those needed to meet current business objectives. Across Welsh employers, the general trend has been an increased demand for higher skilled workers.

Figure 7. Presence of Skills Gaps



Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

The problem of economic inactivity in Wales is worse than the UK as a whole and is greater for men than women. According to the Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales 2005 a key factor causing low activity rates is the collapse in demand for unskilled labour as a result of technological change. The higher proportion of people in Wales with low skill levels exacerbates the problem

ELWa has identified action to improve skills levels and help more people in sustainable employment as crucial to the economic success of the country. Young people with low levels of qualifications and a lack of work experience are particularly vulnerable in a labour force characterised by strong competition for jobs and job security whilst at the same time they represent a significant resource for the Welsh economy which needs to be developed to improve the performance of the country as a whole.

Whilst there has been a major improvement in qualification levels of young females, there has been significantly less improvement amongst young males and this can be

placed within the context of the most recent Employers' Skill Survey in Wales which reports that 7% of Welsh employers had hard-to-fill vacancies which they attributed to skills shortages. This compares the 4% of employers in England. The primary cause of hard to fill vacancies remains a lack of suitably skilled applicants, which is the case for 32% of establishments. In Wales, 19% of establishments report skill gaps. This is higher than Scotland (16%) and Northern Ireland (13%) but below England (22%).

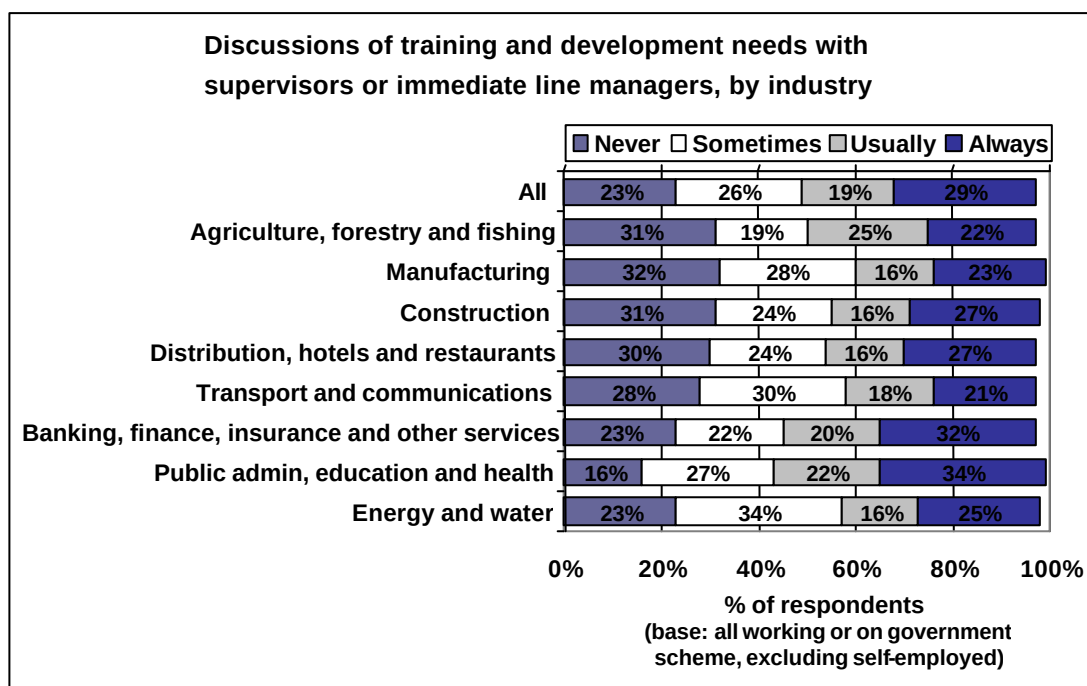
Other estimates indicate, for example, that 85% of the 'traditionally male' construction sector's employers in Wales experience difficulty in recruiting skilled staff. Recruitment of carpenters, joiners and bricklayers was worst affected, followed by plasterers, managers and professionals. 25% of manufacturing/engineering employers surveyed in the UK reported a skills gap in their own firm. This suggests that an improvement is needed in the development of young males skills, if the skills gap present in the majority of Wales' 'traditionally male' construction sector is to be filled.

The Future Skills Wales 2003 Survey found that nearly half of all establishments in Wales recruiting school and college leavers reported that there is a significant skills gap between the skills school and college leavers have and those that employers need. The existence of skills gap among graduates is less than that for school and college leavers.

4.4 Learning and Skills in the Workplace

In general, attitudes to learning, training and meeting skills gaps appear weakest in the traditionally 'male sectors' of Manufacturing and Engineering. The Future Skills Wales Survey 2003 asked those in work about management attitudes to training. Of all the sectors, those seen as traditionally employing mainly female staff such as Public Administration, Education, Health Care and Financial Services showed the most favourable response to discussing training needs.

Figure 8. Frequency of Incidence of Training and Development Discussions by Sector



Source: Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003

According to the Future Skills Wales 2003 Equal Opportunities Report, 58% of residents of working age in Wales received some form of learning or training in 2003. However, this figure increased to 70% amongst 16-24 year olds. Encouragingly there were no differences between the genders in terms of experience of receiving learning or training.

5. Young People Not In Education, Employment or Training

There has been a great deal of political concentration on those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and/or economically inactive. This group includes a proportion of young people who are available for work and are actively seeking employment, those who are not available or not seeking work, the long-term sick or disabled or those with responsibilities for the care of children or relatives that may not be available for work. Those not seeking work may be pursuing other interests, resting, developing artistic skills in an unpaid capacity or taking time to travel. Results from the 2004 Pupils Destinations Survey undertaken by Careers Wales show that 7.7% of the male Year 11 cohort entered the NEET group on leaving school, equivalent to 1,530 males.

However, the usefulness of NEET as a category is compromised through the ways in which disadvantaged people who occupy different positions in relation to the labour market are combined with more privileged young people who are able to exercise a significant degree of choice about the ways in which they manage their lives. For example, Destinations' survey results gave 12% of Powys young males leaving Year 13 in 2003 as NEET yet most of these were on a gap year.

Research undertaken in Scotland found that 36% of their respondents were NEET for over a period of 16 months, reflecting job instability, temporary contract working, fluidity and youths finding places in the labour market compatible with their stage of development (Anderson et al. 2003). Of those who were NEET in such a period, many went on to find new employment without huge problems. For many young people, NEET is a short temporary phase matched by being 'in between jobs'. For example, figures for NEETS rise sharply in the summer months, as students leave college and search for employment. Therefore, it is important to consider emphasis on NEET within this context as too much attention could be considered a misallocation of resources. Some have suggested that this is the case with the New Deal programme (Furlong et al, 2003).

Analysis by the Department for Education and Skills suggests that NEETs are far more likely to come from broken homes and to have spent time in care. Many also have disabilities or special needs that have not been properly dealt with and have

hindered their time at school. Once reaching their teenage years, the study found, the average NEETs were 11 times more likely to leave school with no qualifications.

The research of Furlong et al (2003) led them to suggest that young people experiencing long-term (over 6 month's) unemployment were a more legitimate and fruitful area for concern and governments' interventions. Specifically, they singled out:

- Young people experiencing over 6 month's unemployment beginning in the first year of their entry into the labour market
- Young people who experience cumulative unemployment of over a year at any stage

If efforts in Wales were concentrated on people with complex career histories (as mentioned above), rather than focusing on young NEETs in general, and young males in particular, it would result in resources being employed more efficiently.

An article in the Sunday Times (March 2005) reported that aged between 16 and 24, NEETs number 1.1m and are responsible for a social and economic drag on society that is vastly disproportionate to their numbers. A study by the Department for Education and Skills (2002) conservatively estimates that each new NEET dropping out of education at 16 will cost taxpayers an average of £97,000 during their lifetime, with the worst costing more than £300,000 apiece.

Their impact on crime, public health and antisocial behaviour was so marked that the study found that a single 157,000-strong cohort of 16 to 18-year-old NEETs would cost the country a total of £15 billion by the time they died prematurely in about 2060. Even without the dramatic headlines it is clear to see that NEETs as a group are problematic and initiatives need to be established targeting young people before the age of 16, to engage them in learning and preventing them dropping out of the system at the first legitimate opportunity.

5.1 Characteristics of the NEET Group

According to a report published by the Department for Education and Skills (2004) the characteristics of the NEET group are as follows:

- The size of the NEET group has remained stable at around 10% of 16-18 year olds for the last decade.
- There are more male than female NEETs overall, but by 18, the number of mothers caring for their children means that there are more NEET females.
- The NEET rate is higher at 18 than at 16 or 17 due to larger numbers of NEET females and the rate varies by region. Rates are highest in the North of England.
- NEET rates tend to be higher in the summer months, but there is a great deal of 'churning' as young people move in and out of the group. Because of this NEETs are made up of several, often overlapping, groups and only a very small number are categorised as long-term NEET.
- There are certain characteristics more commonly associated with NEETs. They are more likely to be low attainers, to have played truant or to come from lower socio-economic classes.
- However, the NEET group also includes high achieving young people on gap years. Around 15 per cent of NEET 18 year olds are likely to be on gap years.
- The NEET rate is nearly twice as high for those young people with disabilities as for those without.
- Recent evidence suggests that both the Education Maintenance Allowance and the work of the Connexions service are effective in reducing numbers of NEETs and it seems numbers have begun to fall slightly.

According to the Department for Education and Skills (2000), once a young person becomes disengaged from learning or work, they begin to face a number of barriers to re-engagement including offending, drug abuse and financial problems, making their return progressively more difficult. Also the NEET group appears to be more affected by financial considerations and feeling the need to earn money or have a part time job, which may be where schemes such as EMA would be beneficial.

Long spells outside education, training, and employment between the ages of 16-18 can have serious longer-term consequences for both the individual and society, including increased risk of unemployment, low incomes, teenage motherhood, and health problems. Intergenerational cycles of deprivation are thus clearly evident - many young people who are excluded from learning or work grew up in homes with just these features - and their children are likely to follow in their footsteps.

Other research conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000) has suggested a variety of reasons why some young people become 'disaffected' and marginalised in society. Their disaffection is frequently associated with dysfunctional family relationships, emotional and behavioural difficulties, educational failure, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse and criminal activity.

6. Barriers to Learning

The identified gender gaps in academic performance and learning taken up by males may lead to a decrease in employment opportunities for the future. An understanding of the barriers to learning that face young males will enable ELWa to more clearly focus on methods by which young males may be motivated to remain in, or return to, education. If young males are to become more determined to make learning a central part of their career pathways then a holistic view of their perceived barriers is required.

In the Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey, residents were asked what barriers they faced in undertaking some form of learning and training. The main barriers to learning were practical or financial in nature (i.e. situational), as identified by 39% of all residents. Lack of motivation was the second single largest barrier, accounting for 9% of the sample.

Regarding categorising barriers to learning, the method used in this report is the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) model of Dispositional, Informational, Institutional, Situational barriers:

- Dispositional - e.g. negative attitudes to education, seeing learning as irrelevant
- Informational - e.g. a lack of appropriate information
- Institutional - e.g. the use of application forms or traditional classroom settings
- Situational - e.g. not enough time, childcare problems and expense

Categorisation in this way provides a means where the issues facing young males in education can be approached. However, it should be noted that issues may cross over categories depending on where the analyst places responsibility, for example, self exclusion and inclusion may be considered from a dispositional view i.e. of the learner, or as institutional i.e. of the provider.

6.1 Dispositional

Dispositional barriers to participating in learning cover issues such as negative attitudes to education, seeing learning as irrelevant and lacking the motivation or aspiration to engage in learning. Few people do not have some dispositional barriers to learning. Focused learning is constantly faced with competition from other activities. Lack of motivation is the most important and generic of dispositional barriers. However, high motivation can overcome not only other dispositional barriers, but also can reduce the perceived size of some situational and informational barriers.

With a particular male focus Hodgson (2002) reported that boys tend to have a more negative attitude to school and study, have lower standards of behaviour in class and, are less willing to take on extra work with a view to passing exams rather than doing well. A key factor in this is that the link between achievement in school and success in the labour market is not clear-cut for many young males, particularly the working-class.

A study undertaken by the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne (Nayak, 2003), in an area similar to the South Wales Valleys, examines the consequences of the decline of the industrial sector on job opportunities for young males and the link between school and work. The study reports that masculinity must be contextualised within the local labour environment and not just in terms of what happens at school or college. Here masculinity was linked to a pride in the regions heritage with the young males seeing hard, manual labour as an aspirational work ethic. As such the young males repeatedly commented that the school curriculum did nothing to help them prepare for the physical labour they hoped to find in the work place.

However, these ambitions are set in the context of a situation where unemployment in manual occupations is the norm and without being able to 'prove' their masculinity through hard labour, the young males use other routes to preserve their identity e.g. football, drinking and going out. The young males interviewed express little desire to leave the region and treat both further and higher education with a degree of derision unless it was linked to a trade and can offer 'real life' work experience. In contrast mental labour and office jobs were described as 'soft and babyish'. An

important point to note here is that in rejecting the values of the school system the young males did not see themselves as 'failing' or as unsuccessful. Many of the boys had already achieved some form of employment and a certain level of educational attainment which they felt was sufficient for their chosen pathway. As such this made it difficult for this group to give up the values of the past and look to a new labour market with different job opportunities.

6.1.1 Motivation

A number of research studies have revealed lower levels of motivation and satisfaction of young males in education. In the National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales released by ELWa in 2004, it was reported that 29% of male students as opposed to 23% of female students described themselves as 'not very' or 'not at all' motivated concerning their learning. The results of the survey indicate that maintaining motivation is the most widespread issue for students facing problems with their education. The results are significant as those respondents that declared high levels of motivation also reported high levels of satisfaction, indicating that well motivated students were more likely to get the most out of their overall learning experience, and vice versa.

There was also a link where motivation appeared higher when students had taken advice on where and what to study. Just 15% of students declared themselves highly motivated in their studies, whilst 58% were fairly motivated, leaving one in four in each class lacking motivation. Motivation was lower where students had not managed to get on their first choice of course. Less than half those who felt they had no choice of course declared themselves to be motivated.

The research reported that the prospect of getting to university and improving job prospects appeared to be strong motivators. Others spoke of being additionally motivated by the support of teachers/friends/parents etc and peer status. Barriers to motivation were reported as more fragmented. Heavy workloads featured highly, however less so for males, as did bad grades and lack of recognition/encouragement for work. Year 12 were more likely to be motivated by interest in their chosen subject, and a general desire to do well, though more likely to find the workload heavy, as they step up from GCSE to A Level. Year 13 students were much more

motivated by the need to get good exam grades, to lack interest and feel under stress. Maintaining motivation was equally a problem for males and females, and this issue was more widespread in year 13 than Year 12.

Levels of motivation were generally lower in English-Medium schools (27% not motivated) than Welsh-Medium schools (22%), and maintaining motivation was reported to be a more widespread problem in English schools (59%) than Welsh (47%). Indeed, almost one in three (32%) students in Welsh schools stated that they had no problems with their education, compared to just one in five (19%) in English schools.

Lack of motivation was the second single largest barrier according to the Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey. Young people aged 16-24 were the most likely (59%) to offer no reason as to why they were not accessing education.

These results are also supported by research undertaken outside Wales. In 2000, the University of Cambridge undertook a study into student attitudes, images and the gender gap (Warrington et al., 2000). The interviews with students revealed that in schools across Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Lincolnshire both sexes in all schools felt that in general girls put more effort into their work. It was felt that girls had more of a work ethic, got more involved in their work, were better organised and more interested, conscientious and self-motivated. In contrast boys were widely said to be more laid back, working less hard and being more easily distracted from the task in hand.

The research also revealed that despite widespread evidence that competition is more effective as a motivational spur with boys than with girls, boys withdrew from competition rather than be seen to fail.

6.1.2 Gender Roles and Stereotyping

For most high school young men the rules and guidelines of masculinity are well established and routinely affirmed by social practices (Frank et al., 2003). As such society has a set of constructed norms for male behaviour which define patterns of interaction both at home and at school.

Gender stereotyping has been identified as a barrier to learning for male pupils in a number of research studies (Burns & Bracey (2001); Delamont (1999); Gillborn & Kirton (2000)). Gender roles are seen as being very pervasive in society and not adhering to these stereotypes can be difficult for young people who feel they will be victimised or scorned for not following the norm. Particularly at the vulnerable school ages, not adhering to cultural roles can result in ridicule, and even bullying. Therefore, as a teenager/young adult it is often easier to fit in by resigning to the role that society assigns to them. If the Education System in Wales, (as well as the rest of the UK) could challenge the sex stereotypes that presently exist, this would lead to people expressing less prejudice, of what is considered traditionally male or female occupations, and eventually this would benefit the labour market resulting in a positive outcome for society.

Jackson and Salisbury (1996) argue that boys' identification with macho values and relations, where school learning is seen as unmanly, often leads to significant, academic underachievement, particularly in working class males.

The negative labelling of males who work hard in school is yet another dimension of this issue. Jackson (1998) found that boys who work hard are labelled as 'swots', whilst schoolwork is dismissed as being a feminine occupation: 'The work you do here is girls' work. It's not real work. It's just for kids' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Boys may deliberately act indifferent so as to avoid the jibes of their peers, therefore placing more importance on being accepted than on achieving academic success.

Views that schoolwork is a 'girly' undertaking, inappropriate for 'men' to spend their time on are common, and Mac an Ghaill's (1994) research identified different pupil sub cultures, such as 'the academic achievers', who aimed to succeed within the education system, and the 'macho lads' who rejected school as irrelevant to the real world of working class masculinity.

However, there is also evidence to suggest that this gender stereotyping comes not only from peers but also from teachers, particularly male teachers. In a review of the evidence undertaken by Frank et al (2003) it was found that boys had to deal with harassment from members of teaching staff if they did not 'measure up' to male

ideals in physical education and also where they demonstrated 'abnormal' levels of interest in English and the Humanities. As Jackson & Salisbury (1996) argue there is a need for a new approach to be taken to gender work in schools which avoids the situation where teachers accept too readily the assumption that boys will be boys and where school routines normalise the disruptive behaviour of boys.

Therefore, to break down the barrier of gender roles and stereotyping we have to challenge the British culture's view of gender roles. As long as our culture does not reject the 'macho lad' stereotype, who resists schooling, the under achieving male will be a problem for the education system and eventually for the rest of society, as there will be a lack of substantial skills and qualifications for a large group of the population. However, evidence from a study of working class males in Newcastle (Nayak, 2003) suggests that this needs to be done sensitively as a significant proportion of these males define themselves and their futures by using traditional stereotypes and therefore challenging these roles also means challenging their identity.

This is a view repeated in a report published by Martino & Berrill in 2003 who include the quote:

“...belonging to the culture of manhood is important to almost every boy. To impugn his desire to become 'one of the boys' is to deny that a boy's biology determines much of what he prefers and is attracted to. Unfortunately, by denying the nature of boys, education theorists can cause them much misery.”

In the Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey, 2003, those out of work were asked which industries they would like to work in. The most popular for males were Construction (18%), Manufacturing (13%), Wholesale & Retail (13%) and Transport & Communications (11%), a number of which are sectors which are currently seen to be stagnated or in decline. In contrast, the most popular destinations for unemployed females were Health & Social Work (29%), Wholesale & Retail (19%), Social & Personal Service activities (17%), Education (14%), predominantly areas of significant job growth.

The motivation for young males to enter traditionally female dominated occupations appear to be low partly due to perceived negative connotations of working in a 'female' profession, but also due to the prospect of having to accept lower wages than traditionally commanded by males. According to the British Government's Women & Equality Unit (2005), the British full-time gender pay gap currently stands at 14.4% of average hourly earnings, meaning that women who work full-time are paid on average 85.6% of men's hourly earnings. While the Welsh gender gap average for women was slightly higher, average earning for women in Wales were less than in Northern Ireland and every English region, except the East Midlands.

A report produced by Ofsted in 1996 found that girls were more likely to be taking traditional boys subjects' however the contrary was not founded, confirming an inflexibility of many young men in dealing with a changing world. This may be related to the ongoing expectations of young males to follow in their fathers and grandfathers footsteps, but the decline of the mining industry has left many feeling let down by the state and with little willingness to adapt.

6.1.3 Role Models

Contained within Lumby et al's (2003) research is the concept of fashionability: "Fashionability in this context is seen as the primacy of particular choices on the basis of their perceived acceptability to specific social groups, where that primacy is based on subjective judgements of value rather than, necessarily, objective measures of value". Here, belonging to a specific social group is paramount and may involve the active rejection of alternative social values or social groups, including participating in learning.

What is fashionable is often ephemeral and may change over short or long time periods, but once fashionable choice patterns become established within particular social groupings, positive feedback processes may lead to substantial reinforcement of those patterns. It is here that Lumby et al. suggested that appropriate Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) could play an important role in transmitting alternative messages, especially if IAG could be incorporated within popular culture and media.

There is in particular a use of role models to increase or counter fashionability, as what is considered fashionable changes rather frequently. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that if 'fashionability' increases motivation to learn then it should be harnessed to play a positive role, especially where it can be used to reinforce messages about the value of education in terms of access to future employment opportunities.

6.2 Informational

Informational barriers, such as the lack of appropriate knowledge, advice or guidance, may restrict young people taking up available training. Research below appears to indicate that these barriers tend to be generic to both genders of those aged 16-24.

Barriers appear at different levels, with differing importance for young learners. IAG from providers, such as Careers Wales, teachers and tutors, is in constant interaction with IAG from the learners' world of peers, family etc. The best way to impart this knowledge seems to be informally as can be seen through the success of services such as Connexions in England, which was established in 2001 to replace the careers service. One major problem is that those who are most disaffected are often amongst the hardest to reach making the task of imparting information and advice a difficult one. Information and advice therefore needs to be packaged in such a way that it does not resemble school based learning and young people do not feel like they are being lectured.

The National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales 2004, and National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003, offer a useful guide to current IAG issues for young students, and their choice making.

Around one fifth of students were not studying their first choice of course. This may be a de-motivating factor. The survey revealed that 73% of students were studying at their first choice of learning provider, and 77% were studying their preferred course. 19% were not studying their first choice of course. Students in Mid Wales were least likely to be studying at their first choice provider (65% as against 80% in

South West Wales), and least likely to be studying their preferred course (72% as against 80% in South West Wales).

More students sought advice on what to study (58%) than on where to study (34%). A significant 27% of students did not seek any advice. As mentioned in the Dispositional section above there is a high correlation between students seeking advice and high levels of motivation and satisfaction. The link between seeking advice and motivation is unclear, it could however be argued that that motivated students would be more likely to seek advice than those less motivated, as the search required effort.

Male sixth form students were less likely (58%) to use parents/family members for advice regarding their education than were female students (70%), suggesting that males require more guidance from the educational system. In addition, focus group feedback indicated that 'middle class' parents had a greater involvement in their children's education than those from working class backgrounds. The main sources of advice for males and females as a whole were Teachers at School (70%) and Careers Wales (69%). The main sources of advice for learners at FE were Teachers/Tutors (59%) and parents/family members (59%), though Careers Wales (55%) was almost as important.

For those making learner and career choices, not being provided with reliable careers advice could lead to de-motivation. Research conducted by Lumby et al (2003) discovered layers of student dissatisfaction with the advice given by schools to students. Common complaints included;

- Variable provision across establishments
- Poor timing of IAG
- Limited ranges of post-16 choices, which generally focused on staying at school and taking A Levels
- Lack of curricula range within schools
- Limited knowledge of advisors
- Selective and impartial dissemination of marketing materials
- Inadequate marketing of apprenticeships
- The possibilities of role conflict between internal and external providers of IAG

Lumby et al. (2003) noted that educational staff reported that the learning advice may be distorted by teachers genuinely believing that staying in school was the best option for young people and by responding to market pressure to retain as many pupils as possible.

They recommended:

- Counter the current perception of higher education as the preferred choice by promoting the advantages of alternative pathways more forcefully
- Consider means to counter the current market competition, which exerts pressure on education and training providers to seek to retain/attract young people for institutional interests. Current sixth form funding arrangements are a disincentive to the development of provision and the provision of choice
- Consider innovative methods of communicating Modern Apprenticeships, which are currently poorly understood by young people, employers and educators
- Adjust the National Curriculum to counter current gender stereotypical option choices, particularly in design and technology

Feedback from the sixth form survey focus groups recommended:

- More tailored advice regarding career options
- Ongoing advice in year 12 and Year 13
- More detailed advice about courses in the sixth form (e.g. course workloads)

6.2.1 Awareness of Labour Market Opportunities

The additional stream of young adults into the workplace has to be able to match the changing occupational profiles and needs of the workforce. Traditional male occupations, such as in Skilled Trades or as Process; Plant and Machine Operatives, Transport, Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives, or in Elementary Trades, Plant and Storage Related occupations are expected to experience continued decline. “Female” occupations such as in Health & Social Welfare, Personal Caring Service, Administration and Secretarial occupations are set to gain in importance.

Young males may have initial success in accessing jobs involving unskilled work offering the minimum wage but no training. This success may prejudice them against taking up learning opportunities, but leave them priced out of the market when they reach adulthood and the minimum wage rises. It will also leave them in a shrinking area of the labour market (Furlong et al. (2003) highlight this layer as one of the most at risk of marginalisation).

6.2.2 Awareness of Link between Education and Future Prospects

In the Labour Force Survey, Spring 2004, it was reported that a British male with no qualifications would earn an average of £7.58 per hour. In contrast, a male who had GCE A Level or equivalent as his highest qualification would earn an average £10.88 per hour, and a degree or its equivalent would earn £17.91 per hour. More recently it has been reported that a gender differential has arisen within graduate earning potential. An article published by the Guardian (May, 2005) based on a research report by the University of Wales Swansea estimates that the wage gap between those who study at university and those who do not is greater for women who can expect to earn £158,000 more than non-graduates, for males the expected benefit of graduating is £143,000.

How much students are aware of these figures is uncertain, and how much they should be is debatable however as career pathways today are increasingly extended and uncertain some fixed milestones may prove more inspirational. Therefore it may be advantageous to promote the potential income benefits of learning and qualifications.

6.3 Institutional

Back in the 1980s a popular view amongst academic researchers was that boys low achievement levels could be directly connected to external forces such as the institution, teachers and text books (Frank et. al., 2003). According to these accounts girls achievement was due to the style of teaching and the extra assistance they received from teachers while boys underachievement could be linked to the same

practices which had a detrimental impact on their ability to perform, therefore attributing males achievement to institutional factors.

A major institutional barrier to learning is the traditional classroom setting and the teaching methods used. There is an increasing recognition that there are no universally correct methods of delivering learning, and that some methods may disadvantage some learners, however Sadker and Sadker (1986) describe schools as institutions that systematically produce and reproduce gender inequalities. In a more positive light, recent research by Gray and Leith (2004) suggests that despite being low on their list of priorities, teachers generally believe that they have a responsibility to challenge stereotypes (70% of teachers surveyed) and most report countering stereotyped behaviour when it arises (86%).

The recent British Government's White Paper (14-19 Education and Skills, February 2005) recognises the need to overcome some of these barriers, common to traditional learning methods. The White Paper looks to allow young people more choice, both of what to study and where to study, and for every young person to be motivated by a curriculum which allows them to learn in a style that suits them, and to achieve qualifications as soon as they are ready, rather than at a fixed age.

According to Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey, young people aged 16-24 are most likely to prefer taught courses that lead to a qualification (45%) or taught courses designed to develop a skill in a job (39%), but whilst the levels of preferences are higher than the average for all ages, they still constitute a minority of young learners. On the other hand, 19% of young people aged 16-24 prefer studying for a qualification without taught courses. The survey showed that there were minor gender differences to course-style preferences. Such as, males are less likely to prefer being taught as a group and preferred to work independently.

One of the biggest barriers to continuing education appears to be the turbulent transition period between Key Stage 3 at age 14 and post compulsory education at 16. One of the easiest strategies therefore is to ensure a smooth and clear learning route providing less opportunity to disengage. By providing significant and flexible options throughout this transition period continuing education will become a viable option for more young people. Part of the problem is the number of important

decisions that young people are faced with at a time when they may have little idea what they intend to do in the future and what qualifications they may need. Also decisions regarding subject options or further course choice are rarely based on rational thought and more typically depend on what 'mates' are doing and the reputation of the teacher

Unhappy experiences at school typically culminating in exclusion, exclusion from school closely related to exclusion from many other opportunities later on. Research conducted by Anderson et al (2003) found a strong link between exclusion and absenteeism from school, and future prospects of long term unemployment. Of those 17 year olds in their sample who had been regular school truants, 37% were NEET (not in education, employment or training) and of those expelled or suspended, 28% were NEET. The research found that at 17, those excluded or absent were three times as likely to be unemployed and NEET as their counterparts.

Boys are four times more likely to be permanently excluded or face a fixed-term exclusion lasting more than a week than girls. Such exclusions from educational establishments pose very real physical and psychological barriers to learning which have key implications when considering the success of the males in education. With violent, disruptive behaviour and bullying being amongst the most commonly stated factors leading to exclusions, the underlying causes of this rebellion against the rules needs to be considered carefully. Possible underlying causes could include poverty, unstable home, peer pressure and/or earlier learning difficulties. Precipitating causes may include in-school factors such as bullying, teacher attitudes, inappropriate curriculum, irrelevant qualification system or out of school factors such as poor job prospects, drug abuse and criminal behaviour.

6.4 Situational

Situational barriers, such as not enough time (19%), childcare (16%) and the costs (8%) and too much pressure at work (10%) are the most common reasons given for not taking up learning (Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey). Whilst 16% of women say they are not in work due to caring for family or children, this also applies to 5% of males. Males cite less practical/financial barriers to learning than females, as do those aged 16-24.

According to the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (2002), the causes of disengagement are many, complex and inter-related, and unique to each individual. Unsettled family circumstances play a big part in disrupting education and hindering achievement. Peer group pressure and culture remain powerful factors in determining young adults' decisions about returning to learning and as such any advancements need to take place beyond the individual.

6.4.1 First Choice Courses and Providers:

Data from ELWa via the National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales (2004) and the National Learner Survey for Wales (2003) appears to indicate that sixth form students (77%) are less likely to be studying their first choice courses than learners in FE (89%) and WBL (85%). However the proportion of those studying at FE with their first choice provider fell away with age from a high of 88% for learners aged 16-18, to 77% for those aged 19-24. Achieving ones first choice of provider or course influences overall satisfaction with the learning experience. Notably, males aged 19-24 (73%) were less likely to state that they were with their first choice than females (82%)

Timetabling (47%) was the biggest barrier to sixth form students taking their preferred subjects. In addition, non availability of subject/course (36%) was a major barrier. These barriers are clearly linked to the limited range of course and timetabling offers available to smaller schools using traditional methods of school delivery. Sixth forms with less than 150 students suffered this problem the most, mainly rural Mid Wales, which had the highest proportion of students unable to access their chosen course, 52% declared that this was due to the course not being offered by their provider.

Educational factors, like low attainment, can play a part. Or young people may simply not find a suitable course available locally. If they take up a place on an unsuitable course instead, they may drop out early and become discouraged from continuing with further education.

It is vital that ELWa makes information concerning learning and training courses widely available to young males. This task is facilitated when the target group are already in a place of learning, training or work. The young males who slip out of education, employment and training, and suffer long-term unemployment will be harder to reach, and may require dedicated personal resources to maintain the flow of IAG.

6.4.2 Cost Of Living and Economic Climate

The number of students taking on full-time and part-time paid work over the last decade in response to the cost of living and economic climate has been seen as an increasing problem for educational institutions who are trying to persuade students to spend more time on their studies and less time in employment. However, it is a difficult balance, especially when many parents promote the value of employment and self-sufficiency to their children.

Rowney (2003) argues that students are individuals with different aspirations, tolerances and capabilities, trying out different work patterns and ranges of working hours. The challenge for all the stakeholders; families, teachers, employers, colleges and schools, is whether to arbitrarily try and stop this process or whether to take part in the process and offer a forum for informed discussion, debate and exchange of information. She recommended opening up a wider debate so that students felt included rather than fugitives, and where employers and teachers got together to see how employment could be further linked to benefits for learning.

One way of combating student's financial difficulties, as a barrier to learning, could be to highlight the Individual Learning Account scheme, and its benefits. I.e. by offering people on a low income a higher incentive, those least able to afford to pay for learning will be given the most help. ILA Wales provides financial help to those with no or low qualifications, those people who for whatever reason have missed out on learning opportunities.

By providing information, about the ILA scheme and its benefits, more readily to students at GCSE level, this could lead to a higher participation rate in post 16 education and training. Measuring attitudes toward education and training before

awareness of the ILA scheme and after, as well as monitoring the number of enrolments to further education where students are utilising the ILA scheme could provide data and valuable insight of the importance placed on financial reward for students.

ILAs can potentially play an important role in the overall strategy to boost skills, knowledge, personal fulfilment and economic progress in Wales, by reaching a large group of people who might otherwise ignore learning opportunities

6.4.3 Transport

Research by Anderson et al. (2003) carried out in West Scotland found that transport may be a barrier for NEETs, with one in ten males, and twice the rate of females, stating transport costs and difficulties as the reason for their not being in employment or learning.

In 2002, a pilot study was undertaken by Sara Middleton for the Community University of Wales which involved males aged 13-23, who were part of youth projects in Blaenau Gwent and Tredegar. Within the Community University Project, lack of transport was cited as a barrier to work. The ability to drive, and own a car was seen as necessary. However, the costs involved in gaining a driving licence and purchasing a car were cited as prohibitive, and public transport unreliable and expensive. Participants claimed that the jobs on offer did not pay enough to cover transport and lunch costs. Most participants felt that they would never realistically be able to afford and maintain their own car under present circumstances.

This is where schemes such as EMA should prove beneficial and make staying on in education a viable option. Financial barriers to continuing education are vast for a number of young people and it is important that people who are keen and willing to learn are not deterred by these financial barriers. The Government scheme was piloted in 1999 and rolled out nationwide in 2004. The scheme which offers weekly payments direct to the young people and potential bonuses of £100 to those who work hard and show consistent attendance aims to provide incentives to those people who would previously have left school at 16 seeking employment and immediate cash reward. The Government projects that by 2006/7 the scheme will

have led to 72,000 more young people staying on in education every year, based on statistics from the Institute of Fiscal Studies (2005). However more needs to be done to raise awareness of EMA and also to support students with the application process.

A qualitative evaluation of the first year of the EMA pilots undertaken by the Department for Education and Skills in 2001 found that the scheme had considerable impact on attendance and motivation and the external reinforcement was enough to motivate people to do well. In a follow up report published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2003 three key factors of the scheme were found to increase participation: i) financial incentives, ii) access to suitable provision to help overcome negative experiences and iii) ongoing holistic support. However the scheme needs to be sensitive to the needs of those young people not eligible for EMA who may become demotivated to work hard as they get no financial incentive to attend or do well.

7. Solutions and the Way Forward

7.1 Learner Satisfaction

Learner satisfaction amongst males in sixth forms tends to be lower than that for females. This appears to be linked to lower levels of motivation. In the National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales 2004, 49% of male sixth form students were extremely/very satisfied with the quality of teaching, a similar proportion to the females (52%). However, 16% of males were less than satisfied, as compared to 11% of females.

There were differences between males and females in how they rated the quality of aspects of the teaching. Males were more likely than females to rate the quality of teaching as less than good in:

Listening to your needs	Males 31% vs. 23% females
Dealing with disruptive learners	Males 43% vs. 36% females
Making your subject interesting and enjoyable	Males 32% vs. 26% females
Understanding you and how you like to learn	Males 42% vs. 36% females

In the National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales (ELWa, 2003), male FE students aged 16-24 were as likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the quality of teaching as were females. However, 36% of those males aged 16 to 18 were less than extremely or very satisfied, compared to 30% of females of the same age range.

The survey highlighted several areas for action in regard to improving teaching aspects for learners. The first three listed were all areas where males were much less satisfied than females:

- Listening to your needs
- Making your subject interesting and enjoyable
- Understanding you and how you like to learn

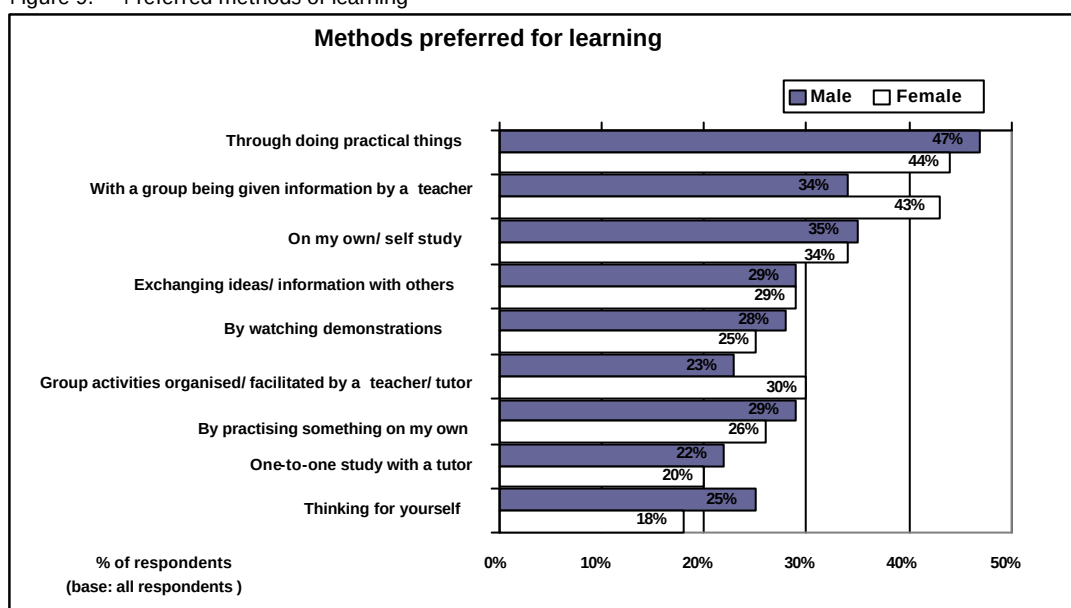
The students surveyed clearly wanted a good 'client manager' relationship with the teachers, just as many people when dealing with a company want a named contact, who understands their needs, is enthusiastic about meeting their needs, selling them the right products and offering good customer support services, so the students expressed similar wishes in the language of the classroom. In the qualitative research the students made it clear that good teachers:

- Established a relationship with their sixth form students, based on mutual respect
- Used this relationship to understand students' needs and vary teaching styles e.g. more discussions, debates, use of diagrammatic notes etc
- Showed a real interest in their subject and showed they cared how students progressed
- Recognised that some students needed support and positive encouragement

7.2 Learning Methods

As can be seen from the chart below, learning through doing is the method that is the most preferred method for both males and females (although it is slightly higher for males). It could therefore be beneficial to review the methods of learning presently used, and try to adapt the learning methods according to the chart.

Figure 9. Preferred methods of learning

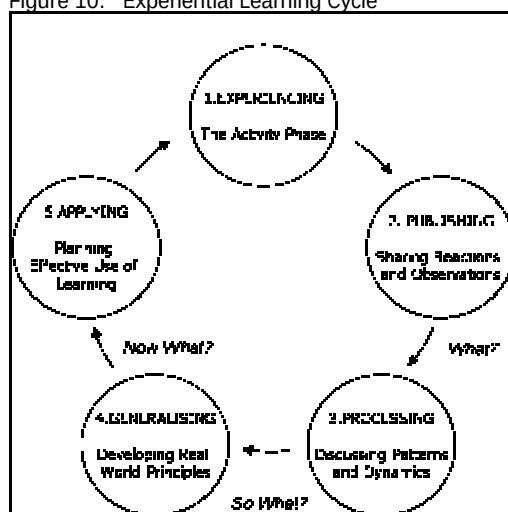


Source: Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003

By teachers facilitating the learning process rather than presenting lectures, shifts the focus away from the teacher and on to the learner. According to Bentley (2000) the advantage of this approach to teaching/learning is that the learner gets a sense of being in control of their own learning, enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning process. This way of teaching is referred to as learner centred learning as opposed to information centred learning (Lawson, 1998). The teacher acts more as a coach to the learner and the focus is on skill development, confidence building and application, rather than presenting the information in a lecture. Methods used by teachers/facilitators are: the use of questions, discussions, self study, group work, and other techniques to lead the learner to conclusions, but allow the learner to make the commitments on their own.

A way of incorporating the learner centred learning methods into teaching can be done by application of the experiential learning cycle (see illustration). Lawson (1998) argues that if any step in the cycle is left out this will probably not result in the desired outcome of the activity, and points out that it is in the processing, generalising and applying steps of the cycle that the real learning takes place. This may help to explain why young males have been experiencing dissatisfaction with the process and leaving education without concluding the cycle.

Figure 10. Experiential Learning Cycle



Source: Lawson 1998

Lawson (1998) argues that when developing skills and understanding learner centred learning is the most effective. Research shows that people understand concepts better and retain information for longer when they are actively involved in the

learning process. The teacher's role in learner centred learning is to facilitate the learning process, therefore lectures should be kept to a minimum and if necessary presented in shorter 'lecturettes'. It is also essential to vary the learning methods so that there are activities that fit every learning style i.e. activist, pragmatist, theorist, pragmatist and reflector (Kolb, 1981).

While it is not appropriate to assign genders to each of the learning styles the important point to note is that one size does not fit all. Appreciating the individual learning styles of young males and ensuring that there are appropriate pathways available; using teaching styles which meet their needs is an important part of the learning mix that needs to be on offer to encourage them to participate in education.

In a report on young males in Newcastle, Nayak (2003) refers to a scheme by a local micro-electronics firm to break the cycle of the 'pit-mentality' amongst young males by setting up centres of excellence in conjunction with local colleges. These colleges offer a curriculum that is centred upon the needs of the micro-electronics industry and as such offer a vocational learning package with specific links through to the local jobs market. However, the report comments that encouraging take up of the course has been hampered by a parochial view and concerns amongst young people about the sustainability of the industry.

7.3 Policy

In general, reports have suggested that in terms of policy the curriculum is generally perceived as having failed to deliver gender equality (Gray & Leith, 2004). Additionally it has failed to offer teachers guidelines on how equality issues should be addressed in the classroom.

As a report by Hodgson (2002) concluded, literacy and language have been emphasised as key in raising attainment and typically boys lagged behind girls in this major aspect of learning. It was also suggested that recent curriculum and assessment changes tended to favour the traditional strengths of girls. Boys tend to do better in multiple choice assessments and less well in coursework and essays.

The existence of disillusioned and demotivated unemployed young males is negative for society and there is concern that this group is growing, leading to a loss of productive potential and a rise in anti-social behaviour. There are general concerns regarding the high costs to society of the inactive. Costs can be measured in terms of lost production, government benefits paid out, increased crime, and an increased role of the black economy leading to lost state revenues. Taking an average cost of around £20,000 a year for imprisonment, the total financial costs for total failure with this layer can reach £1 million per person

In 2002, a pilot study was undertaken for the Community University of Wales (Middleton) which involved males aged 13-23, who were part of youth projects in Blaenau Gwent and Tredegar. This work uncovered high levels of de-motivation amongst the participants' and highlighted that in order to re-engage this group of society the key was raising aspirations rather than just proving more access to education.

The study showed that the participants had become disillusioned with the job opportunities in their local area, believing the most they could expect would be low paid, intermittent work, or a life time claiming benefits. Few of the respondents showed any motivation to improve their overall quality of life, believing such a change would be beyond reach, particularly as most of the participants would not consider leaving the area to improve their work options.

Whilst most participants said their primary school experience was positive, they claimed that the structure and size of secondary school had alienated them from learning. The participants felt that traditional courses were not relevant or able to provide them with skills they could use in work and in their social lives. They expressed interest in manual and/or semi-skilled work

The findings would suggest that most of the young males' interests lie in manual and practical skills, rather than formal accreditation. By providing courses leading to NVQs in an informal setting, this might help achieve credit for practical work. In turn this may lead to increased confidence and aspirations in the long run.

A number of financial incentive schemes are currently employed in Wales, as outlined in the Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales 2005. These include Assembly Learning Grants for students in FE and HE, Career Development Loans for vocational learners, ILA's and since September 2004, EMA's.

7.4 Evidence of best practice

There follows a breakdown of a number of different schemes employed throughout the United Kingdom that could be used by ELWa to increase male participation in further learning and training post 16.

Several barriers to learning specific to males 16-24 have been highlighted in this report:

- A lack of motivation
- The predominance of a 'lad' anti-learning culture pre 16
- Gender Stereotyping
- A lack of positive role models
- Informational problems concerning the lack of sufficient advice and guidance
- Institutional problems concerning the teaching methods used within schools and colleges
- Situational problems arising from the cost of living and the economic climate

Some of the schemes outlined below can be used to tackle more than one of the above barriers to learning, either as an additional main aim, or as a secondary benefit of the scheme.

7.4.1 The BeWEHL Project

The BeWEHL Project (Bettering Women's Education Health and Lifestyle) illustrates how it is possible to get women back into the learning process, and it is argued that a similar strategy could be applied to young males in Wales. The project is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government under the Sustainable Health Action Research Programme (SHARP). The project commenced in November 2000 and the University

of Wales, Newport manage and direct the work of the project in addition to delivering and facilitating learning and research.

The primary aim is to identify the impact of learning on the general confidence and well being of the project's participants and, within phase two of the project, to evaluate the role and impact of action research on participants and the broader community in Bettws, near Newport.

The participants are involved at all stages of the project development and work. The project uses a co-learning approach to the development of the learning that takes place, in that course content is designed to fit the needs of the projects participants. The main purpose of the project is focused on emplacing strategies for individuals which will help them improve their self confidence, self awareness, aspirations and, therefore, improving their general sense of well being, which will eventually provide pathways through to higher education. The project aims to provide a strong support mechanism for each individual, while at the same time enabling the individual to determine their own long and short-term goals and means of achieving them.

By adapting elements from the BeWEHL project it should be possible to create a similar project for young males where an alternative approach towards learning, offered in a local setting, with the student being surrounded by people with similar attitudes and experiences, would lead to an increase in participation in education, and in turn to a better qualified and skilled workforce.

7.4.2 Initial Teaching Training at the University of Wales, Bangor

In terms of addressing institutional barriers to learning, a study by Daniel (1996) has demonstrated how gender issues can be addressed in initial teacher training. A one-year Post Graduate Certificate Course at the University of Wales, Bangor adopts a developmental approach with the issues of gender revisited a number of times during the course both before and after periods of classroom practice. This strategy is considered effective in raising student awareness and in helping them identify the complexities of the situation. This course is accredited by the Welsh Assembly Government.

7.4.3 Raising Boys Achievement Project

The Raising Boys' Achievement Project was set up as a research project by the Cambridge University Faculty of Education and funded by the Department for Education and Skills. It aims to assess the different methods employed by key schools across the country perceived to have strategies in place concerned with the raising of standards of both genders but particularly young males. A number of important results were drawn from the project that could be applied to courses and schemes run by ELWa.

Several important results were drawn from the project, which have been outlined below. Only those that could be adapted or used are outlined.

- Increased engagement coupled with higher levels of achievement can be produced by focussing on teaching and learning, where teachers think specifically about how to adapt their teaching methods to make learning more accessible to students, and students are encouraged to understand and appreciate how they learn.
- Target-setting and mentoring were found to have a strong potential to raise achievement for boys when framed within a tutorial system that focused on academic issues and was given high priority by staff. By placing more pressure on boys to do the work, they feel like they can do the work without compromising their image.
- Providing a strong culture within a school or college that encourages boys to get involved in their environment and to raise their self-esteem for learning.
- Socio-cultural approaches were successful in challenging the dominant images of masculinity and anti-learning culture by creating an alternative culture within the school.

The strategies outlined need to be adapted to suit sixth forms and other further education establishments if they are to be successful. Individual institutions need to be encouraged to adapt these ideas to their needs, as each will have different circumstances.

In order for these strategies to be successful it is recommended that a suitable amount of time is set aside by staff to concentrate on these issues. It is also necessary for every member of the institution to be in full support of the strategies employed. Both the staff and students should feel both valued and involved with the strategies with the emphasis being on the individual student.

One of the most effective methods of raising boys' achievement in schools was the use of 'leading pupils' or 'image-makers.' By identifying pupils who had considerable influence over their peers, and providing those pupils with either the encouragement or discipline they needed to succeed, it was found that exam results improved, not just for the leading pupils but for the other pupils as well. This could be used by ELWa to tackle the problems associated with an anti-learning culture. By encouraging certain pupils to continue with their education rather than leave school at 16, then the attitudes to work and education throughout the school could be changed leading to an increase in the desire to do well and continue in education.

7.4.4 Lads and Dads Project

Lads and Dads projects run across the UK and are a generic label for a number of schemes which vary from anything from sport through to reading, for example the North East Lincolnshire project which links reading and literacy with basic sports skills (<http://www.nelincs.gov.uk/leisure/sports/ssi-lads-dads.htm>). However, they all have a common feature in that they all encourage lads and dads to specifically get involved together to increase young males' learning.

By involving dads in the learning process the scheme hopes to tackle the problems linked with boys' underachievement.

It is important that there is sufficient provision for the people who complete these initiatives, if they successfully complete a course but then have no opportunity to use their skills they are likely to retreat to their old ways.

7.4.5 Ofsted Recommendations

In 2003, the School Standards Minister David Miliband welcomed Ofsted's two reports on boys' achievement and boys' writing – 'Boys Achievement in Secondary Schools' and 'Yes He Can – Schools Where Boys Write Well' and in a press notice released by the Department for Education and Skills stated "We have to crack the lad culture that stops too many young boys doing well at school. This culture tells boys that it is fine to play around and not work hard, but this harms their chances of doing well, getting their exams and fulfilling their potential."

Mr Miliband outlined how the Government is already addressing boys' underachievement:

- Playing for Success uses football and other sports to boost skills and motivation among pupils. Four national evaluations have found significant improvements in literacy and numeracy levels, information and communication technology (ICT) skills, attitudes to learning and self-esteem. Feedback from teachers, parents and pupils is overwhelmingly positive.
- The Key Stage 3 National Strategy. The Strategy aims to promote more active and more independent learning. This means fast-paced, lively lessons which use an interactive style and are rich in oral work; texts and topics which will sustain boys' interests and cater for diverse tastes; and role models such as male writers.
- The National Literacy Strategy tackles underachievement through projects such as Reading Champions and Reading the Game. Reading Champions uses male role models such as fathers and uncles as well as police, the Royal Navy and football teams to engage boys in literacy. Reading the Game uses football and professional footballers as a vehicle to motivate boys' into developing their language skills.
- Collaborative Working - The Department is working in partnership with Kemnal Technology College and Sir John Oldham, head of the National Primary Care Development Team, on a pioneering project to improve educational outcomes for boys through collaboration between groups of schools.

In the 2003 Ofsted report 'Yes He Can: Schools where Boys Write Well' Ofsted inspectors visited fifteen schools where the gap between boys' and girls' GCSE attainment was less than usual, or where boys were improving faster than girls. The report concludes that in the best schools there is a "non-macho culture of learning" in which pupils feel valued by an ethos that celebrates achievement, regardless of gender. Also teachers provide prompt and detailed feedback in marking pupils' work, pupils are set short-term tasks that can be tackled in clear stages and teaching is enthusiastic with good use of humour. Also important is a balance between support and independence with pupils always expected to be as independent as possible.

Ofsted's 2003 report 'Boys' Achievement in Secondary Schools' highlighted the relationship between the ethos of the school and the achievement of its pupils. Boys respond well to an ethos that encourages and stimulates high standards, engages their interest and commitment and insists upon good behaviour. Boys perform better in schools with a strong learning culture and sense of community. Boys respond best to a consistent and fair minded approach to discipline backed up by effective pastoral systems and learning support.

The Raising Boys' Achievement Project led by the Department for Education and Skills (2005) examined the strategies employed by specific schools with regard to raising boy's achievement. Similar strategies as those suggested by the report could be considered when combating dispositional problems in young males. Strategies such as the individual monitoring of pupils and the targeting of individual pupils with influence over their peers could help to encourage young males to continue with their education rather than leaving school at 16. They could also help by removing negative attitudes to education and instead encourage a positive attitude to learning. It seems this needs to be done by building better relationships between teachers and young males and by providing a more flexible programme of learning that is deemed relevant to their future careers.

7.4.6 Other Recommendations

- Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (2002) published a review of models that can be used to engage young men in learning. They highlighted five themes that were successful:
 - Outreach – Since disaffected young adults are a particularly difficult group to attract to formal learning programmes, outreach work with informal contacts is a good way to reach them. It's strength lies in building up trusting relationships with individuals, as well as incentives and attractions. It requires publicity, targeting, patience and persistence on behalf of the project and its workers.
 - Bringing In – Projects need to be as different from school as possible. Successful projects consist of practical, vocational and life skills relevant to the young people's lives and interests. They have a focus on doing rather than just listening.
 - Putting Across (Teaching and Learning Methods) – The right people are needed with the right personalities to teach and lead young people. Qualities identified for successful teaching included the need to be caring, enthusiastic, genuine, trustworthy, have perseverance, commitment, respect, belief in the young people, sense of humour, ability to listen and provide constructive non-judgemental responses.
 - Achieving Together – Recognition and accreditation of achievement is important, although any assessment is often seen as a barrier by young people. There should be no focus on winners and losers; any achievement should be followed up with individual support. In-house accreditation is often used, alongside flexible external variations.
 - Working With – This refers to partnership and inter-agency support. Support networks for any programme are important to cater for issues such as social services, careers, housing and employment.

- Bradford City Council makes use of men only introductory childcare courses and Bedfordshire City Council believe that employing men as childcare trainers and mentors may improve application and retention of males.

8. Summary and Conclusions

Throughout this insight the gender differential between young males and females has been demonstrated most prominently in regard to satisfaction and motivation in terms of their learning experiences. The important area of focus for ELWa is therefore motivation and harnessing methods that will captivate and motivate young males not only to stay on in education but to thrive in the learning environment. This will entail breaking down various aspects of 'lad' culture and societal stereotypes of male and female roles in the work place, especially as inspiration for male learning may be low due to the decline in 'male' industries.

Motivation is an ongoing issue and needs to be addressed as such. Primarily the young people need to associate themselves with the education system and feel it is relevant to their individual goals and needs, this brings a sense of ownership and a sense of responsibility over the learning experience. Secondly the young people need to be inspired to act which may be achieved through the use of positive role models but may also be aided through the provision of money and support to make education a viable alternative to unskilled/ low paid work. As an ongoing process it is important to confirm and commend efforts as both relevant and important. Achievable goals and the possibility of success at regular intervals (eg graduation at 19 years) are ways of maintaining motivation and encouraging continued effort, alongside regular feedback from key figures in the learning process.

With the current emphasis on league tables and statistics it is easy to see how individuals may become lost in the system, however, respecting individuality and different pathways to success appears to be amongst the main criteria for reengaging disenfranchised young males. The use of programmes such as the 'Raising Boys' Achievement project and the Lads and Dads schemes highlight what can be done to raise boys achievement both pre 16 and post 16. By targeting pre 16 males, future problems based around socio-cultural factors such as anti-learning cultures can be reduced.

It seems that much positive action has taken place in Wales with regard to improving skills and training, Wales outperforms the rest of the UK in widening participation in learning from non traditional backgrounds, however, more needs to be done to

reduce the basic skills deficit and challenge Wales' entrenched economic activity. However, it is important to remember that not all boys are underachieving and policy therefore needs to be careful not to alienate those young males who are doing well, by focusing on underachievers high achievers may start to do less well.

8.1 SWOT Analysis

In order to summarise these findings it is possible to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that face ELWa in dealing with this group:

STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES:
- Information available at local level allows targeted intervention and support. - Experiences of primary education generally positive. - ELWa's commitment to provide world class learning opportunities.	- Trends of decline of male participation in learning. - Males remain linked to "traditional" industries which face continued decline. - Employers' commitment to training is weakest in these sectors. - Strong cultural forces of gender stereotypes and multi-generational behaviours. - Proportion of young males leaving school with no qualifications has been increasing. - Decline in number of 16-24 year olds moving into work based learning.
OPPORTUNITIES:	THREATS:
- Growing male within the 16-24 age group population represents opportunities for economies of scale, for learning provision and potentially increased resources. - Addressing current male inactivity could have positive impact on the labour force skills. - Changing occupational profile represents opportunities for new learning and skills provision tailored to the needs of males. - Political attention focused on skills agenda and reform of education. - Increasing numbers of graduates entering the workplace driving up the demand for skills.	- ELWa's merge with the Welsh Assembly may constrain activities. - Job market is not perceived to offer opportunities to young males, providing the motivation to learn. - The compulsory education system is not able to reform at the speed needed to engage males 16-24. - Resources not available to prioritise specialised support for males.

8.2 Recommendations for ELWa and Partners

ELWa is committed to ensuring everyone in Wales has the generic skills needed by employers for a sustainable and competitive economy. Of particular relevance to this Learning Insight, the Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales (2005) emphasises some key actions for young people:

- The development of a new flexible programme offering a comprehensive employability teaching package to unemployed young people and adults
- Better progression opportunities and flexible options through 14-19 Learning Pathways and workplace learning programmes
- Significantly increasing the opportunities for graduates to take up employment in Wales through the GO Wales Programme.

Within this commitment tackling the issue of underachieving young males is a valid and necessary endeavour. However, in order to address the issue it is clear that ELWa needs to work in collaboration with other organisations such as Careers Wales, the Welsh Assembly, curriculum authorities, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to confirm the causes of this underachievement and produce a joint plan for action.

As the proportion of males aged 16-24 is predicted to grow in the period up to 2010, putting plans for intervention in place is important not only to support those already in the education system but also to ensure that young people currently at earlier key stages are also able to reach their full potential. This is key to delivering personal fulfilment and also ensuring that the Welsh economy has the skills it needs to compete in the global economy.

Although achievement rates at Key Stage 4 and beyond are improving across Wales important differences still exist, especially in terms of the relative underachievement of males in certain subjects and at medium to high levels of qualifications. Therefore some research has suggested that the efforts of organisations such as the local education authorities and the education providers themselves should be focused on raising achievement of those in the system rather than raising participation.

However, this needs to be seen in the light of challenging targets to reduce the number of young people, especially young males, who are not leaving school to a positive destination.

Other research conducted by Cardiff University suggests that gender may not be the key issue in determining achievement but instead social economic background may play a major role. However, in terms of developing recommendations for action males are still regarded as an important group for intervention as data from Careers Wales shows that in Wales males represent 56% of the NEET group at the end of Year 11. However, as the NEET group is a diverse group in order to have maximum impact recent studies elsewhere in the UK suggest that ELWa should concentrate on:

- Young people experiencing over 6 months unemployment beginning in the first year of their entry into the labour market,
- Young people who experience cumulative unemployment of over a year at any age.

Long spells outside education, training and employment between the ages of 16-18 can have serious long-term consequences for both the individual and society including the risk of unemployment, low incomes and health problems. Therefore it is for ELWa to work with Careers Wales in order to target early intervention and also to work with JobCentre Plus to target those individuals who have been claiming JobSeekers Allowance for over a year.

However, in tackling unemployment it is important to look at the other options available to young people particularly in terms of barriers to learning and employment. Clearly a lack of motivation is a key theme in terms of developing recommendations for change however it is important to look at the causes of this dissatisfaction rather than just dealing with the outcome.

Therefore it is important that ELWa continue to work with the Sector Skills Councils and Skills for Business Network in their role as secretariat to the Network in order to identify skills needs and opportunities across key sectors in Wales in order to allow a more tailored curriculum to be developed in conjunction with the Higher Education Council Funding for Wales and other curriculum bodies. This links to the need to

contextualize learning within the labour market in order to provide clear pathways for progression and to allow Careers Wales to be able to develop more specific literature linking education and training with 'real life' employment opportunities.

The higher proportions of males in vocational and work based learning programmes demonstrates the importance of a link between learning and work for young males. Evidence suggests that young males on these courses do achieve their qualifications and therefore the challenge is for ELWa to collaborate with the Sector Skills Councils and work based learning providers to further develop these opportunities. This needs to be backed up with tailored marketing campaigns by Careers Wales, preferably with case studies and testimonials from both students and employers demonstrating the value of the schemes.

Evidence has shown that satisfaction levels are higher where there is high quality information, advice and guidance available. Most important within this is that young people are aware of the choices available to them, particularly young males who may feel that their traditional routes to employment no longer exist. Within this, giving support to those boys who want to challenge the stereotypical image of the macho male is a major issue for schools, particularly during the early stages of development.

Teacher training programmes such as the one delivered by the University of Wales in Bangor show how ELWa can work with these agencies and their awarding bodies (including the Welsh Assembly) to raise awareness of gender as an issue and to support further research into tackling the perceptions and realities of male stereotyping. While some of this must be done in the classroom there is also scope for developing case studies and marketing materials focused on positive male models from outside the education system. These role models need to be local, realistic and inspirational.

Programmes of reform need to be backed up not only by the formal work of Careers Wales but also by the informal networks of support that young people also use. In the case of young males peer pressure is important but so too is the pressure from closer family members to conform to social norms. Therefore programmes of intervention which seek to change the attitudes of communities as whole also have

an important role to play. For example, the Lads and Dads scheme which run across the UK are designed to break down barriers between fathers and sons and challenge perceptions of masculinity and traditional stereotypes.

As suggested in Warrington (2000) there is a need to enable boys to deal with their gender identity, their concepts of masculinity, their attitude and behaviour, however this may mean concentrating on individuals rather than groups which has obvious resource implications both in terms of time and money. However, as the disaffected are often the hardest to reach this investment may be a necessary one. Therefore ELWa needs to look at what funding is available for these initiatives.

Part of the challenge of offering effective IAG is that it needs to be delivered at the right time and in the right place, advising people both on what is available and where. As such research highlights the need to work with schools in particular in order to broaden the knowledge of teachers about the options available to young people, especially where continuing in school may not be the most appropriate action.

It is important to young people that they are treated with respect and that they are able to make decisions on their own. As such marketing of post-16 options needs to be appropriate in its tone and content to engage with young people effectively. This may mean tailoring literature and resources to appeal to young males particularly in terms of illustrating the link to employment and also clearly stating what opportunities for future support are available.

A key challenge for ELWa and its partners is to encourage young people, especially young males, to engage in more long term planning. Seeing the link between education, training and future job prospects is key to motivating young males to see the importance of academic achievement. However, thinking in this way is difficult especially when faced with more recent, negative experiences of education and the lure of immediate gratification of paid work, even if it is low skilled or manual labour.

Therefore it is also important that ELWa work with schools to address institutional barriers to learning such as classroom settings and teaching practices in order to tackle the underlying causes of inappropriate behavior amongst young males,

particularly in terms of providing focused support between Key Stages 2 and 3. This work needs to be about looking at the relationship between teachers and their pupils. Work undertaken by the Department for Education and Skills as part of the Raising Boys Achievement program demonstrates the importance of clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students in order to build up trust in the relationship and develop a culture of respect.

However, of equal importance is tackling practical barriers to continuing in education, for example the cost of transport. This may involve looking at more flexible timetabling of provision to allow young people to take on part-time employment and also requires ELWa to continue to support the ILA and EMA financial assistance schemes in Wales which have been shown to make a real difference to staying on rates.

All of these changes need to be backed up by appropriate policy and as such it is important that ELWa continues to develop close links with the Welsh Assembly to work through curriculum changes. To date curriculum developments and school policy changes have been perceived to be weighted in the favour of girls and therefore there is a need to use current research by bodies such as the University of Wales on gender imbalances to inform future developments, particularly in terms of target setting and approaches to discipline.

Across all of these recommendations there is the need for ELWa to act as a lynchpin in both coordinating and facilitating the activities needed to encourage more young males to succeed in education. Producing this Learning Insight is the first step in this process and should be used as the basis for discussion amongst partners in order to stimulate future action to meets the needs of both young males and the Welsh economy.

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