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THE QUALITY OF THEIR EDUCATION

School Leavers' Views of Educational Objectives and Outcomes

D. F. Hannan
and
S. Shortall

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GENERAL SUMMARY

Modern educational systems have very important and complex objectives. Socialisation into the highly complicated cultural, and ever evolving "technical-rational", characteristics of the economic, social and political arrangements of their societies are amongst the most important objectives. But individual and personal development, preparation for work and adult life, and the classification and certification of individuals' attainments are almost equally important. This study investigates the success of the Irish educational system in achieving some of its more important stated objectives, as measured by school leavers' assessments of the effectiveness of their own education.

Extensive interviews were carried out in late 1987 with a large sample of school leavers who had first left school in 1981/82, most being between 15 and 18 years old at that time. In these interviews we asked ex-pupils to assess the quality and effectiveness of their education for post-school life. Over thirty questions were asked which covered six aspects of educational preparation: basic education and cognitive development; preparation for work, and for other adult roles; personal and social development; civic education; and preparation for third-level entry. By late 1987 most respondents had already spent at least 5 years in the labour force. So their views about the adequacy of their education had been extensively "reality tested" by their adult life experiences. Nevertheless their priorities and assessments conform closely to those of previous studies of students within schools (Raven *et al.*, 1975).

This study is the first to look at young people's assessments of their education since the work of Raven *et al.*, (op. cit.) in the mid-1970s, and the first ever in Ireland to examine the "mature judgements" of ex-pupils after spending some time out of education. These young people are particularly well-placed to assess their education, having spent 5 years out of school in the labour market. So, unlike earlier studies, we can compare ex-pupils' assessments to their actual labour market experiences on leaving school. Remarkably, however, their priorities and satisfaction levels conform closely to those of Raven *et al's.* (op. cit.) respondents a decade and a half earlier.

Highest educational priority is given by school leavers to basic education and cognitive development goals, but preparation for work and other adult

roles is given almost equally high priority – over 90 per cent saying they are "very important" to attain. Almost equal priority, however, is placed on personal and social development goals; while civic education is given rather low priority.

Assessments are most positive for "basic education", ranging from moderately to highly satisfied, with over 3 out of 4 respondents saying the "3Rs" are very satisfactorily provided for. There is only moderate to low satisfaction with most other aspects of educational preparation. Only between 17 to 55 per cent of respondents are highly satisfied with most aspects of preparation for work and adult life, and with education for personal and social development. Civic education is given the lowest satisfaction rating of all, but it is also given the lowest priority. It is a troubling finding for the development and nature of our civic culture, that both schools and pupils attach so little importance to civic/political education.

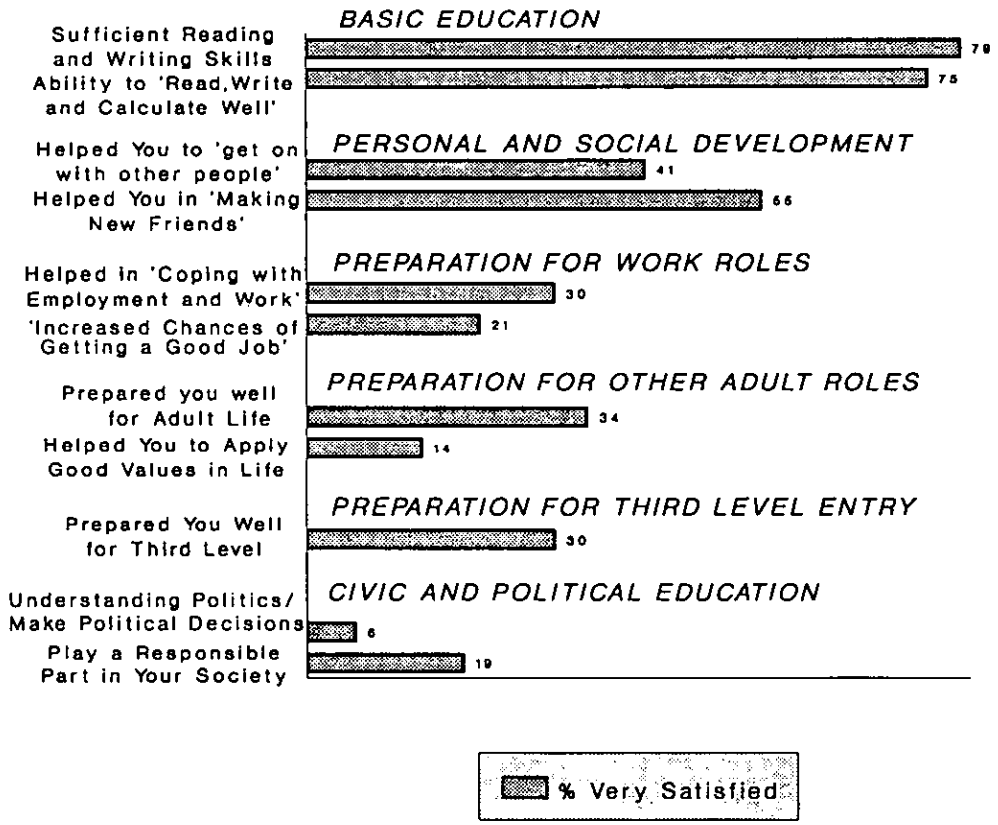
The following illustrative results show the quite distinct differences in the evaluation of education by the kind of objective, or programme, pursued. The 11 items used are the most characteristic of the 27 used to measure the 6 dimensions.

The results show a high level of satisfaction with basic education, moderate satisfaction with personal and social development – even though the responses to these two questions show the highest ratings for this dimension, somewhat lower satisfaction with preparation for work and other adult roles, and extremely low satisfaction with civic/political education.

These are the average results, but both individual school leavers, and schools in the collective judgement of their ex-pupils, varied widely in the adequacy of the education they received or provided.

Certain aspects of the individual's education do have clear positive effects on assessed educational effectiveness across all dimensions: level of education received; curricular "track" chosen or allocated to, and the extent to which one had taken within-school Vocational/Technical courses. The most dissatisfied clients are those who left without taking any examinations, and the most satisfied tend to be the most qualified. There are two exceptions to this general linear trend. Those specialising in "Vocational/Technical" subjects, particularly boys taking those options in the Group and Intermediate Certificates, tend to be almost as satisfied as those taking the Honours level Academic subjects in the Leaving Certificate. But almost as equally dissatisfied as the early school leaver, or as those who leave early having experienced educational "failure", are those who took, or were assigned, the broad and general – or non-specialised,

Figure GS.1: Overall Satisfaction with the Provision of Six Main Educational Objectives



Pass level, Academic courses. Those who leave school without any qualifications are most dissatisfied along all dimensions, even with their basic education (see Figure GS.2), a finding which must cause serious concern.

The high level of dissatisfaction of early school leavers across all dimensions is clearly reflected in most school leavers' actual experience of the labour market. The early employment experience of most school leavers emphasises the importance of educational qualifications – the lower the level the higher the unemployment rate; and the longer the period in the labour force the greater the relative advantage to the better qualified.

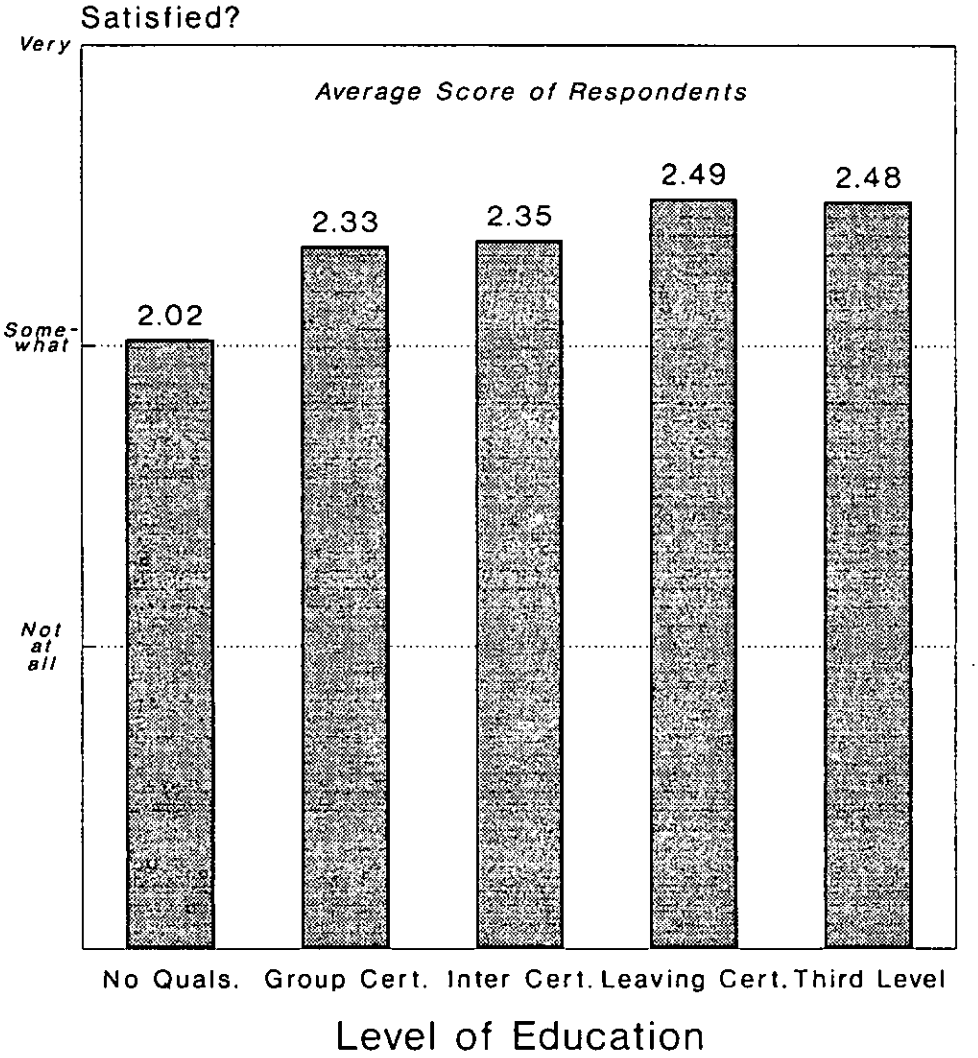
This actual labour market outcome is clearly reflected in school leavers' own views about the importance of educational qualifications and examination results in gaining employment. The predominant view is of its great significance in employment decisions with the unemployed being, in fact, more likely to regard qualifications as significant. For the least qualified, however, this recognition of the importance of educational or training qualifications does not lead to any intention to go back to school and correct the deficit – even if the opportunity existed. The early leavers, and most poorly qualified – or those who have failed in or been failed by the school system – appear to be so alienated from schools as institutions that they do not intend to go back for second chance education, even if the opportunity existed. Their alienation from the conventional schooling system, or their feeling of being hurt by it, is so high that even when they recognise the wisdom of getting further educational qualifications the conventional school would certainly not attract them back to education.

Besides the school level variables already described as important, coeducation tends to be a very important predictor of educational effectiveness for personal and social development. And for many of the dimensions – particularly work and adult life preparation, both Vocational and Comprehensive schools tend to get a better evaluation on average than Secondary schools. However, most of the between-school variance remains unexplained and it appears that Secondary schools are just as likely as the former to vary in the quality and effectiveness of the educational programmes they provide. Future research work should, therefore, concentrate on what it is that effective schools do that makes them effective.

There are four main policy implications of this study:

The first is the need to intervene actively to reduce the high alienation levels and failure rates amongst early school leavers – both those who leave before taking any examination, and those who leave having failed junior cycle examinations. Both combined appear to be about 10 to 12 per cent of the total school-leaving cohort – a figure which is not very high by

Figure GS.2: Respondents' Satisfaction with their Basic Education, by the Level of Education they attained



European levels (Hannan, Hovels, Van Den Berg, White, 1991, forthcoming). Three policy approaches appear necessary: programmes to reduce the failure rates, programmes to reduce pupil alienation – like "Home-School Liaison" and the development of post-school programmes – like "Youthreach" – to provide second chance education. If even the alienation levels from schooling could be reduced it would make it much easier to intervene later to correct the original educational deficit.

Secondly, there is the need to considerably improve the content and quality of personal and social development education and pastoral care programmes in schools. These goals are given very high priority by school leavers, and rather low satisfaction marks result for their schools. Much the same situation holds for preparation for work and for other adult roles. But in this case there has been considerable expansion of Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) courses in recent years, which generally appear to have been positively evaluated.

Thirdly, given the significance of curricular "tracks" in student assessments and in employment outcomes, there is the apparent overusage of the general, Pass level, Academic course "tracks" by many schools for their average to below average performing pupils. This would suggest a significant underusage of curricular specialisations – whether Vocational-Technical, Languages, Sciences, Arts, Mathematics, Social Sciences, etc. – all at either Pass or Honours levels, so as to maximise the achievements of pupils who vary widely in their aptitudes and abilities across the curriculum. It appears from our results that too many schools base the management of their curricular and teaching resources on single-dimensional ability/curricular assumptions – ranking both pupil "abilities" and subjects/levels along one dimension; and that they do not use the full range of ability/teaching/curricular resources available to them. There is, in any case, a clear and dysfunctional overusage of the general, Pass level, Academic subject "specialisation". This needs to be corrected. What schools do with their teaching and curricular resources is at least as important as the range and content of the curriculum available to them; yet state policy seems to be almost exclusively concerned with the latter.

Finally there is the necessity to correct for the disturbing level of both pupil and school disinterest in civic-political education. As our society becomes more complex, and it becomes more difficult and complicated to devise and negotiate economic and political solutions to our very serious problems, it is disturbing to find that the main institution that could increase the knowledge and competencies of our young people in their civic and public roles places such little emphasis on this objective.

Chapter 1

THE OBJECTIVES AND EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATION

Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to assess the extent to which recent graduates of our second-level schools are satisfied with the effectiveness of their education, or the extent to which, given their post-school experiences, it has provided them with the knowledge and skills they feel it should have. The extent to which the educational expectations of these clients correspond to the nationally stated (or clearly implied) objectives for education, will also be examined. Essentially, therefore, the report deals with past pupils' assessments of the effectiveness of their schooling, and of the relevance of both national and schools' educational goals and provision arrangements to clients' priorities, experiences and assessments.

This is a study, therefore, of past pupils' views of the kind of education they had, and felt they should have received; as well as their assessments of how effective their education had been. These assessments of educational effectiveness, however, varied considerably, so we also attempt to explain why client satisfaction varied. There are two general reasons why this might occur: what it was their schools were attempting to do – their objectives and programmes – might have been significantly different from what their clients had wished them to do; or, given shared goals and objectives, schools were ineffective in achieving these objectives. The objectives and priorities of educational decisionmakers and providers – mainly schools and the Department of Education – may, therefore, have been different from those of clients; but also the content of schools' programmes of study, as well as the effectiveness of programme implementation, may not have corresponded to these objectives. Clients are likely, therefore, to vary both in their educational expectations and in the standards they use in judging the adequacy of the education provided them. Given equal standards of evaluation, schools too may vary in how well they themselves actually provided for respondents' education. For instance, university entrants are likely to apply higher standards to judging literacy provision, and to have somewhat different priorities for educational provision than people entering apprenticeships, or those aspiring to unskilled manual occupations. These

distinctions in expectation standards applied by clients, and in provision effectiveness, will be maintained in the analysis.

In this chapter, therefore, we first review the evidence available on the objectives pursued by Irish second-level education, in the context of a review of the general research literature on modern educational objectives. There appear to be four broad objectives pursued which are, to varying extents, represented in Irish state documents on education: (i) national cultural and ideological objectives (cultural transmission); (ii) modern rational-technical knowledge transmission and skill development (cognitive and technical rationality development); (iii) the measurement, ordering and certification of ability, skill and knowledge attainment differences amongst pupils; (iv) personal and social development of individuals. These objectives tend to be differentiated by the origin and kind of pupil being taught and the broad economic and social destination toward which they are journeying.

Within this broad and rather abstract statement of general educational goals and values we focus on six applied educational objectives. A large sample of recent school leavers were extensively questioned about the achievement of these objectives in a recent nationwide survey: (i) development of basic educational skills and cognitive development; (ii) preparation for adult work roles; (iii) preparation for adult gender and related roles; (iv) preparation for adult civic and public roles; (v) personal and social development; (vi) preparation for third-level entry. These questions on the very specific and applied outcomes of education do include extensive assessments of 3 of the 4 main educational objectives referred to above but, because of resource limitations, do not include questions on the broader cultural and ideological objectives of education. The function of selection, sorting and certification, is also examined in some questions to respondents, and level of attainment and certification plays a central role in our analysis.

In the rest of this chapter, therefore, having first briefly reviewed the general research literature on educational objectives we then examine in detail the stated objectives of Irish educational policy at second level, select an important subset of these for detailed assessment by clients, and put forward certain hypotheses as to why clients would vary in their assessments.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of some of the most important post-school outcomes of differential educational achievement: the effects of how well – in market terms – people have been educated over the 1980s. It is against this background of markedly unequal market outcomes that people's views and assessments of the quality of their education is assessed in later chapters. Chapter 3 provides the results of analysis of the main

structure of respondents' attitudes towards and assessments of their education. Later chapters provide an analysis of school leavers' assessments of the effectiveness of their educational preparation for: (i) work and associated adult roles (Chapters 4 and 5); (ii) basic educational skills and cognitive development (Chapter 6); (iii) personal and social development (Chapter 7); and (iv) an overall assessment of general educational provision by one's own school (Chapter 8).

Educational Objectives

The aims or objectives of education – those educational outcomes that are aimed at, intended or even clearly implied, can be analysed at a number of levels of analysis.

At the level of the nation state these objectives refer to the intended or clearly implied effects of the total educational system on the entire society, hence they can only be stated at a broad and somewhat abstract, or very general, level. The main agent here is the state, or others acting for the state or the whole society: in our case mainly the Department of Education, although the Churches, and particularly the Catholic Church, are also very important.

At an individual school level, or for an organisation of schools, such as the Vocational Educational (County) Committees or religious orders, these national objectives may be quite variably interpreted and implemented. Vocational schools, Comprehensive schools and Secondary schools have different objectives and priorities and provide different types of education. Even within the Secondary school sector religious orders vary in their educational priorities and in their educational provision arrangements. (See Hannan, Breen *et al*, 1983; Hannan with Boyle, 1987.) So, within the broad remit of societal objectives, schools' educational goals and priorities vary widely though systematically.

At a nation state level two broad reasons were advanced for the modern development of mass educational systems; (i) the increasing inadequacy of traditional socialisation arrangements in modern societies; and (ii) the growth of the modern "democratic" state system.

Cultural and Ideological Objectives

The conventional sociological view was that such educational provision expanded to provide effective socialisation for each youth cohort into the increasingly more complex and technically more sophisticated cultures of modern societies – functions which had become more and more beyond the competency of individual families. The increasing division of labour,

rapid technical and organisational change, and rising rates of migration and social mobility made it more difficult for families to adequately prepare their children for adult life; and such preparation proved inadequate for the needs of a rapidly changing society. In addition the decline in the dominance of kinship and communal systems as the division of labour proceeded, and the growing cultural heterogeneity of rapidly expanding urban societies, meant that states had to intervene to guarantee the continued presence of common values and identities (Durkheim, 1956; Parsons, 1951). So the dominant, more conservative, view was that educational systems had expanded both to take over technical educational functions from an increasingly inadequate family socialisation system as the knowledge and skill requirements for adult roles both expanded and changed rapidly, as well as to guarantee sufficient common ideological commitment to political arrangements as shared communal identities declined. As Parsons (1951) puts it "it is, of course, about this complex cultural content that the process of formal education comes to be organised" (p. 237). The increasing complexity of modern society has gradually rendered the nuclear family an inadequate socialisation agency. Schools have gradually become a more effective method of socialisation into the common norms, values and beliefs of the society; and the shared vision of "society" is both legitimised and reproduced by this type of agreed agenda of socialisation.

Modern school systems, however, not only attempt to socialise their pupils into the "accepted shared culture" of the society, but also communicate the values of citizenship such as "equality" – in that everyone is perceived as having "equal access" to education and equal opportunity to compete. But the educational process itself, based on ideas of meritocratic achievement, results in highly stratified outcomes – mainly by level of education and certification. The actual reality of "equality of access" and "equality of treatment" may, of course, be quite different from the stated values. This modern educational process, therefore, paradoxically both legitimises the values of "equality" and the concepts of unequally rewarded meritocratic achievement, and also contributes to the cultural and ideological stability of modern societies (Bourdieu, 1983). Durkheim (1956) neatly summarises this type of objective when he says: "Of what use is it to imagine a kind of education that would be fatal for the society that put it into practice?" (p. 64).

However, the differential timing and pace of development of modern mass educational systems in different countries conforms more closely to the stages of development of more highly organised levels of (state) collective authority than it does to differential levels of development of

industrialisation or urbanisation in those countries (Ramirez and Robinson, 1979; Ramirez and Meyer, 1980: Boli and Ramirez, 1988). Modern mass educational systems arose most rapidly in those societies which first developed modern highly organised patterns of state or collective authority. So, the development of modern states and the promotion of the modern concept of citizenship underlies the development of modern compulsory mass schooling – at least in western societies. Schools promote qualities in students that are appropriate for modern citizenship – an appreciation of individual rights, the values of meritocratic treatment, social justice (the duties of the state to the citizen); and self-discipline, industry, efficiency, loyalty, punctuality, etc. – i.e., the duties of the citizen to the state (Boli and Ramirez, 1988).

Technical-Rational Socialisation

Besides the development and promotion of these "modern" cultural and ideological orientations modern education also involves the cultivation or development of knowledge and of those intellectual or cognitive abilities, and technical and manual skills, which are necessary for economic development and the hastening of modernisation and industrialisation. This view of education as a prerequisite for, and even engine of, economic growth found justification in the influential human capital theories of the 1950s and 1960s and had powerful support in international organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank, (see Musgrave, 1965 for Ireland). And this view certainly underlay the rapid expansion of Irish second-level education in the 1960s (Department of Education, 1965).

Education was seen as "a crucial type of investment for the exploitation of modern technology. This fact underlies recent educational development in all the major industrial societies ... the development of education bears the stamp of a dominant pattern imposed by the new and often conflicting pressures of technological and economic change" (Floud and Halsey, 1961, p. 1).

This type of technical-rational socialisation could be perceived as being at odds with the cultural/ideological objectives. Schools, working as technically modernising agencies, could come to regard traditional cultures and social arrangements as stumbling blocks to progress. However, schools are generally expected to attempt both kinds of socialisation simultaneously. The Curriculum and Examinations Board's consultative document on "Senior Cycle: Development and Direction" (1986) states that "young people must be equipped not only with the technological expertise vital in today's world, but also ... there is an urgent need to find expression for many of our traditional beliefs and [for our] sense of

human relations in innovative corporate forms and Irish-style entrepreneurship appropriate to our industrialising society" (p. 9). Quite an uneasy mix of objectives!

Education as Selection

The measurement, ordering, selection and allocation of talent and skill, or rather the certification of differences in talent quality and type, which may be used by employers in allocating people to positions in the economy, is another major objective of modern education systems which is stressed in its literature. Parsons' (1951) functionalist view stressed how the "selection" function of education is a means of selecting the most capable people for the varying tasks and occupations in society. Educational certificates, in this sense, are considered as "tickets of employment" (Watts, 1985, p. 15). The concept of selection used emphasises merit and equality of treatment: performance is to be evaluated on the basis of merited achievement where "equal treatment" in educational provision and assessment is assumed.

So graduation from schools in this sense is a "rite of passage" into modern society, where the necessary certifications are generally considered valid and meritoriously conferred. Schooling, in this sense, "serves as an extended initiation rite, ... once children leave school, nothing else is required of them; they are chartered as social participants" (Boli and Ramirez, 1988, p. 13). As an objective this "rite of passage" into adult society is clearly implied in the Irish senior cycle curriculum where the preparation of young people "for immediate entry to open society" is stated as one of its main aims. (See p. 15, *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, 1987/88.)*

Individual Development

Within conventional educational perspectives the personal and social development of the individual has long been considered one of the main aims or objectives of education. The traditional functionalist views of Durkheim and Parsons emphasise that the primary goal of education is the development of individual abilities and capacities, but in a context within which they need to be fitted to the needs of society: so that the individual student's expectations are directed to those that are realistically attainable given varying individual abilities. So that, although Durkheim emphasises that "the educator should take into account the germ of individuality that is in each child. He should seek to foster its development by all possible means" (op. cit., p. 105), he clearly sees this as fitting, or being fitted, within societal demands where ability is matched with relevant opportunity.

Thus differential socialisation for the varying needs of society is seen as allowing for individuals' personal development through adequately and fairly fitting varying talent to varying needs. So "what is socially expected becomes individually needed" (C.W. Mills, 1959). Later sociologists (like Young, 1971; Keddie, 1971; Esland, 1971) or economists like Bowles and Gintis, (1976), while emphasising that personal development should be a priority aim of education, are much less sanguine than the functionalist sociologists about its attainment or about the priority of fitting pupils to "societal demands".

Although these different views of its priority and feasibility exist in most analyses the personal and social development of pupils is usually proposed as a main goal of education. Indeed Boli and Ramirez (1988) in their review of modern educational objectives, see the primary source of compulsory mass schooling in the modern state's need for "active citizenship". Active citizenship requires the state to promote individualism and individual development: the enhanced individual being seen as the source of progress, with the individual in turn supporting the state as the most effective organiser of the national polity. The dominant ideology of schools in this instance would be the development of the child who, in turn, contributes to national development. Rather contentious debates over the role of education for individual development have, in fact, raged since the 1960s. This progressive role of schools has significant support in the research literature dealing with "modernisation" (Inkeles and Smith, 1974) and is very clearly emphasised in recent Irish educational reforms.

This developmental and "modernising" view of schools, both personal and national, is at odds with other – generally neo-Marxist or conflict views – that emphasise schools' restrictive socialisation, and their social control and social reproduction functions.

A Contending Viewpoint

In most of the "consensus" perspectives the school system is seen as a rationally organised and functional societal arrangement to ensure that each new generation is sufficiently socialised to take up adult roles in the society, and is equally socialised to accept the legitimacy of the societal arrangements used to allocate people to differentially rewarded positions, so guaranteeing the legitimacy of these arrangements.

It is this role in allocation and legitimacy that is specifically contested by later critics of such "consensus" or "functional" views of education. The persistence of substantial class inequalities in educational achievement in most modern societies, which cannot be explained by "innate" individual ability differences, and the fact that the contents of educational

programmes taken are often only tenuously related to subsequent work role requirements, means that it is school certification of "meritorious achievement" that is the main discriminator in subsequent achievement – not merit in some ideally valid sense, nor even appropriate content. So, if substantial inequalities in educationally certified achievements exist, one of the most important outcomes of the operation of the school system may well be to legitimise – to make widely acceptable – this inequality. In addition, conventional schooling may tend to make acceptable particular practices of subordination which are characteristic of adult society – legitimising authority differences by emphasising obedience and docility, acceptance of rigid timetabling of activities, and acceptance of their failures as just and well deserved by those who are poor performers. (See Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Karabel and Halsey, 1977.)

So, instead of advancing egalitarian achievement, and spreading rationality and enlightenment, schools have also been seen as reproducing inequality and reinforcing repressive tendencies in the society (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu, 1983). Their graduates are released on to the world stage at different levels of achievement and certification: pre-second level into manual and lower service jobs; completed second level into lower white collar jobs; and third-level graduates into upper non-manual and professional jobs. Unskilled manual or service employment it is proposed, within this perspective, effectively requires a work-force alienated from essential human development potential – one attuned to failure and to the performance of low-skilled and discrete tasks which do not add up to meaningful wholes – characteristics of the bottom rungs of a highly differentiated labour market (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). And if the experience of this inequality is reproduced educationally from generation to generation, in that the same families occupy the same privileged or deprived positions from one generation to another, class inequality also is highly legitimised, in that merit, not inheritance, can be claimed as the reason for continuity (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

This equally "functionalist" critique – from the left – of the conservative perspective on education is obviously over theorised. There is also a good deal of contrary evidence to the viewpoint. The educational goals of human capital development, personal development, preparation for citizenship, seem to refute it; while school emphasis on the equality value itself further weakens the argument. Some studies, such as Hickox (1982), show that school leavers have been much less seduced by the meritocracy claims for schooling achievement and occupational attainment than has been assumed. Other work such as Willis' (1977), shows that school pupils who have not achieved well may actively develop a school counter culture.

So ideological indoctrination may not be as successful as has sometimes been claimed.

The intention in discussing this highly critical viewpoint on schooling, is that, along with the original more positive viewpoint, it clearly indicates the difficulties and ambiguities surrounding investigations of educational objectives. Are educational goals primarily individually developmental and societally integrative; or mainly directed toward social control, and social stratifying and differentiating objectives? And even if the intentions or stated goals are of the former type, what are the actual effects or outcomes of education?

The discussion also indicates the intricate, subtle and often hidden nature of the roles schools actually play in a society: that is, the nature of the personality characteristics developed and the consciousness produced; the nature of the beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills acquired; and the nature of the integration of children into adult relationships and social hierarchies by the development of their conformity to authority through the disciplining nature of timekeeping, rule following and authority – subordination practices characteristic of schooling practice.

To conclude this introductory section, therefore, there appear to be four main types of objectives underlying the expansion of modern education systems. These appear to be present in most analyses irrespective of the political orientation of the authors.

(i) Socialisation into, and the promotion of identification with, the central elements of the complex cultural and ideological characteristics of modern nation states.

(ii) Socialisation into modern rational-technical culture, both in terms of direct curricular content but also in terms of the personal and social disciplines required to function effectively in modern economies and societies.

(iii) Classifying, sorting and certifying individuals in terms of their relevant abilities and the extent to which they have conformed with or mastered the contents of (i) and (ii) above.

(iv) Individual and personal development, though usually this is seen in the context of individuals fitting into societal demands.

These appear to be the main macro-objectives underlying the rapid and almost universal expansion of educational provision that has occurred

since the end of the Second World War. They are well represented in the Irish case as we shall see in the next section – particularly in the rapid expansion that occurred in second-level education from 1967 onwards.

Irish Educational Goals

The most comprehensive analysis of Irish second-level educational goals is that by Mulcahy (1981). His detailed analysis shows that the aims of Irish second-level education, even those of the rapid state initiated educational expansion after 1967, are not easily discerned. In fact state policy making shows a general disregard for clarity of goals. The general aims of secondary education seem to be so taken for granted, or its values so deeply institutionalised, as not to require articulation or justification.

The "General Education" Model

The dominance of the Grammar/Secondary school model of "general education" has been so great in Ireland that, up to very recently, the contents taught within that tradition appeared justified by their mere mention: Language and Literature, Classics, History and Geography, General Mathematics, Science, Arts, Religion, etc. The importance of the educational rhetoric of a liberal "general education" has its origins in the dominant position of Secondary/Grammar schools in Irish second-level education. Since this Grammar school model is so elite based – with its eighteenth and early nineteenth century *origins* in educational provision for a predominantly Protestant, aristocratic or stable bourgeois class, or later a growing Catholic, rising bourgeois, elite – the depth of institutionalisation of this model can hardly be unexpected. The historical roots of this tradition in the Protestant English Grammar school tradition and the equivalent Catholic European tradition has been elucidated by many writers (see McElligot, 1966; Atkinson, 1969; Hannan with Boyle, 1987). The widely shared values underlying this educational model are so highly legitimised within the elites dominating the educational system that they appear to require no rationalisation. Many of the so-called goals of second-level education then are no more than *post-factum* rationalisations for contents already "chosen" by this elite tradition and for reasons that are not clearly articulated (see Mulcahy, 1981, pp. 51-65). This "general education" model, however, is expected to give:

(i) an all-round general education for life after school which is aimed at the general enrichment of the person rather than a preparation for any specific vocation or skills; the production of persons of

character, knowledge and culture capable of taking responsible roles in the society – but designed with the expectation that these roles would be at an elevated level;

(ii) an intellectual, liberal and humanistic general (i.e., non-specialist) education which is concerned with the production of an "educated person" in intellect and character, but was generally thought of also as providing the intellectual and knowledge base for entry to third-level education;

(iii) religious/moral and character development goals are also emphasised, particularly in the Irish and European Catholic tradition (Mulcahy, 1981).

Whether, however, the school develops the particular capabilities necessary for successful entry to adult society is not really asked in this tradition of education. Rather indeed the role of the Grammar/Secondary school is to add to the cultivation within the society: the school is not seen as a societal instrument subordinate to economic or societal modernisation needs, but rather as an important civilising institution in its own right. Educational goals here do not come from an analysis of societal needs but rather are expressions of traditional, and often unexamined, elite values. In a very real sense these implicit values about a rational and cultivated life style are to be implemented in the school, rather than the school programmes being instrumentally determined by externally given ends. Since this kind of education was originally designed for the socialisation of the children of privileged elites or for entry into the Church – or for the induction of the children of *nouveaux riches* into that elite culture – these characteristics of conventional grammar school education are hardly unexpected.

The 1960s Reforms

The dominance of this educational tradition was contested by the reforms of the mid to late 1960s. Two main objectives appear to underlie the rapid expansion of educational provision at that time – the educational- vocational needs of the rapidly developing economy, and the necessity to ensure equality of opportunity in educational attainment and talent development. The obvious inadequacies in the pre-existing system of education, and the dominance of human capital theories in economic development policy at that time, ensured the significance of economic goals in education policy. The necessity to correct the obvious imbalance

between the conventional output of schools and the needs of the rapidly developing economy were very clearly emphasised. But of almost equal significance were equality of opportunity values, which were being clearly emphasised internationally and were being obviously breached by the glaring social class and regional inequalities in educational provision in Ireland (Department of Education, *Investment in Education,* 1965, pp. 369-394). Besides the dominance of economic goals and of equality of opportunity values another goal, or value, was emphasised: the necessity to respond positively to each individual's developing abilities and needs and the maximisation of each individual's talents (see Department of Education, 1969; Craft, 1970).

Although of secondary significance in terms of status and number of pupils, Vocational schools were a very important segment of post-primary educational provision in the 1960s. These schools had been developed partly to provide continuing education up to 15 or 16: "to continue and supplement education provided in primary schools" for those not going on to Secondary schools (Vocational Educational Act, 1930). But Vocational schools had mainly been developed to provide skill relevant education and training for their local economies: providing a practical education to "prepare boys and girls who have to start early in life for the occupations open to them" (Department of Education Technical Branch *Memo V.40. 1942*). They had, in fact, already been singled out for further development in a number of Ministerial and government statements preceding the publication of the *Investment in Education* report and the subsequent 1967 decisions on educational change (Randles, 1976; Mulcahy, 1981, pp. 19-23). So besides the general objectives of re-orienting secondary education away from its elitist roots, educational policy at that time was directed toward a considerable expansion of Vocational-Technical education directly relevant to economic needs. And, although the outcomes were not as expected, the intentions of many of the reforms at that time were directed toward expanding the practical and Vocational-Technical provisions of Irish education. The curricular reforms of the late 1960s included, on an equal basis to the older academic subjects, many Practical-Vocational courses in the new junior cycle and senior cycle curricula. The distinctions between the Vocational and Secondary curricula and examination systems were abolished and senior cycles were allowed and rapidly developed in Vocational schools. New Comprehensive schools were introduced and a clear comprehensivisation strategy for future educational provision was developed which integrated fully both of the older traditions in Irish education.

State Policy: Explicit Curricular Objectives

Clarity of goals is not an obvious virtue in the state's general policy documents, even in the 1960s. They are even less clear in the practical state documents which up to 1990 guided everyday practice in schools: the *Rules and Programmes for Secondary (and Vocational) Schools* (1987/88 to 1989/90). Since the school leavers' interviewed in the study left school in the early 1980s the older, pre 1990-91, curriculum is the relevant one.

Some general purposes are spelled out, sometimes in unexpected places. The Civics syllabus, for instance, which is intended to complement overall curricular objectives (op. cit., 1987/88 pp. 175-176), does have some of the most explicit statements on general educational goals:

> One of the main purposes of education is training for citizenship. Education is concerned with the inculcation of virtues and of right moral principles; with the formation of correct habits and attitudes of mind and of action, towards oneself, one's family, one's fellowman, one's country and towards the world community; with the development of character and the training of the mind; and with the inculcation of social virtues and a sense of social and civic responsibility, all issuing finally in a true regard and solicitude for the common good (p. 175).

These goals of socialisation into expected Civic and Social virtues, and character and intellectual development have much the same status and character as many parental value admonitions to children: things that ideally should be achieved but are given little practical effect in programmes of study or in the actual everyday behaviour of schools. Although schools are obliged, for instance, to teach Civics in the junior cycle, many schools do not take this obligation seriously and it, or any equivalent Political and Social Studies course, is rarely taught at senior cycle level. It is not examined and modern revisions of its outdated syllabus have not, as yet, been accepted.

The general aims of the "old" Junior Cycle (Intermediate) Curriculum are both brief and vague. They are stated to be: (i) the provision of a well balanced "general education"; (ii) the provision of an education suitable for people leaving full-time education at age 16 and taking up employment and adult roles; (iii) the provision of an education suitable for more advanced senior cycle courses. The issue of what a well balanced "general education" consists is not developed but the fact that preparation for work and entry to "open society" is so emphasised should be noted (*Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools*, 1987/88, pp. 12-14).

The approved course for junior cycle pupils requires instruction in Irish,

English, Maths, History and Geography, Civics, and at least two other subjects from a recognised list of 18 other subjects. So this required curriculum and obligatory subject syllabi clearly indicate the priority of basic educational goals in literacy and numeracy, a minimum socialisation into a shared culture and ideology and a knowledge and appreciation of Irish nationhood and its position – historically, culturally and geographically – in the modern world. Since only Irish remains an obligatory subject in the senior cycle – although in practice both English and Mathematics are also almost universally taken – the "foundational" basic educational, cultural and ideological goals of the junior cycle are very clearly implied. Two additional subjects are to be taken from a list of more applied or less value laden subjects: in Science, Continental Languages, Business Studies, Vocational-Technical subjects, Art and Music, etc. The aesthetic, the recreational or Physical Education, or even the Religious-Philosophical, goals of education are not given much precedence in state documents or provision arrangements in education. The influence of the Churches, and the residues of an historically adapted restricted role for state involvement in philosophical-moral-religious education can, therefore, be clearly seen in current policy developments (see Coolahan, 1981; Ó Buachalla, 1988).

The general aims and purposes of senior cycle education are stated in equally curt and general terms in *The Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools:* (i) The continuance of "general education" at an advanced level is presumed. (ii) The preparation for immediate entry to "open society" is explicitly stated. Preparation for work and adult roles generally is given priority – although it is emphasised that schools do not prepare or certify directly for employment. (iii) Adequate preparation for third-level entry and courses is required.

Adequate mastery of the required and chosen curriculum, which is state regulated and which sometimes very clearly sets specific objectives, is obviously expected and the extent of this mastery is measured by state examinations. In the various courses' specifications "knowledge" acquisition is emphasised: with a stress on both the content, and the cognitive development associated with the learning of academic contents. Mastery of abstract theoretical knowledge is a requirement, especially in the honours courses, and is rewarded in the examinations.

Additionally certain "skills" – cognitive, scientific, manual and technical – are also emphasised. Laboratory and practical work in the Science and Technical-Vocational subjects is required and tested in the examinations, but was not, up to very recent revisions, given high priority. Competence in the basic educational skills – reading, writing and calculating – are, of

course, presumed. Besides the requirement for mastery of the normal reading and writing skills, competence in aural and oral language skills is also currently emphasised – and examinations now assess this, particularly in Irish and other second language courses at junior and senior cycle.

Underlying the rules for the provision of Irish language and literature courses there is a clear ideological rationale: the reproduction and reinforcement of Irish identity and cultural characteristics. However, these are not stated explicitly, though they are clearly implied in the requirement for all pupils to study Irish. The programmes for English, however, do contain more explicit educational goals. To "think, to speak and to write correctly", and the "pupils' powers of oral expression should be developed" to "elicit the pupils' sincere response to their own experience of life and literature", are two of the main goals of the junior cycle English curriculum (*Rules and Programmes*, 1987/88, p. 33). Development of the capability to reflect and think through problems – eliciting and developing the capability to rationalise initial responses to life experiences, and to develop powers of expression and communication through language mastery – with students being encouraged to "speak articulately, coherently and correctly" (op. cit., pp. 33, 185) is, therefore, explicitly emphasised in the junior and senior cycle syllabus goals. So, besides the normal reading, writing and composition skills the development of the capability to think through issues and the concomitant ability to express thoughts logically and coherently, both orally and in writing, are clearly emphasised.

The specification of general educational goals for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses, as well as the specific subject goals, appears to presume relatively persistent and unavoidable intellectual ability differences amongst pupils. They also appear to presume equally varying aptitude differences. For example, "Employers and others wishing to use it (the Leaving Certificate examination) for selection purposes are advised to institute their own supplementary tests, which should assess aptitude rather than achievement" (*Rules and Programmes*, op. cit., p.15).

Although rather short on its analysis of educational goals (Mulcahy, 1981) – the *White Paper on Educational Development* (Department of Education, 1980), does deal with some of the modern dilemmas of post-compulsory education. It is emphasised that education must try to meet both the needs of the individual and the needs of society. These goals are to be pursued by providing adequately funded programmes, and equal educational opportunities, so that each pupil can develop his/her talents and "potential as a human being" (p. 43): that is, individual developmental goals are emphasised for all pupils. The school system, however, is also

expected to provide those "competencies and attitudes necessary for social, economic and cultural progress" (p. 43): here the needs of the society are emphasised. Although the objectives of the senior cycle are manifold: "among them is the expectation of society that it should provide young people with the opportunity to prepare for the jobs which are available in the economy" (Department of Education, *White Paper for Educational Development,* 1980, p. 46). However, it also emphasises that, due to the rapid rise in participation rates, there are many pupils who leave school after the Leaving Certificate to enter the world of work and "that the present Leaving Certificate courses are not always of real value to such pupils and that alternatives are needed" (op. cit., p. 49). This suggests that the educational system did not then consider itself to be successfully achieving its desired goals for the "bottom" ability-performance fraction of Leaving Cert pupils; and subsequent curricular reforms have attempted to correct some of these defects.

These broad educational aims, it is emphasised, cannot be achieved unless pupils are well schooled in spoken, written and artistic expression, scientific method, manual dexterity, acceptable forms of social behaviour and the exercise of social responsibilities – "These are the prerequisites for personal fulfilment, for good citizenship, for the creative use of leisure, for further education and for vocational adaptability" (Ibid.,p. 49). Thus education is expected to satisfy both the developmental needs of the individual, while at the same time providing for the needs of the developing economy, polity and rapidly changing society.

The New Curriculum

The broad aims of the new Junior Certificate programme introduced first in 1989/90 are very similar to those already described for the old Intermediate Certificate course. The main differences are in the content of the curriculum, the suggested methods of teaching the course, and the examination system: having more to do with the methods of achieving the objectives rather than any significant change in the latter. The curriculum is broader and is specifically designed to cater for a wider ability/aptitude range. It is less academically dominated, more integrated – in the Bernstein (1971) sense – more experiential, and is more explicitly linked in the first year to the "pupil based" primary school curriculum. It is intended also to use broader and more continuous methods of assessment.

The new programme integrates the old Group and Intermediate Certificate courses and examinations – so as to overcome the clear status distinctions between pupils of different ability/aptitude ranges and social backgrounds that characterised the older dual system. (See Department of

Education, 1989, *A Guide for the Junior Certificate,* pp. 8, 12, 13, 19).

There appear to be four major innovations in its introduction:

(i) There is a greater breadth and depth to the curriculum. All subjects are taught at two levels, and a number are taught at three. This is explicitly designed to cope with the wider ability/aptitude range that has occurred as most of the cohort not only complete junior cycle but even the senior cycle. So this change should not only allow for greater differences in ability and aptitude but also help to maximise achievement across a range of subjects and abilities/aptitudes, and minimise failure rates amongst the lower achieving pupils (op., cit., pp. 18-19).

(ii) The syllabi are based more on an "integrated" and more experiential approach than the older academic and subject based approach; with linkage between subjects being emphasised (Ibid, p.18). It is also explicitly more integrated with the pupil – centred primary school curriculum (Ibid. p.19).

(iii) Like the older programme, however, the new one retains priority on a "well balanced general education".

(iv) Examinations are to allow for a greater extent of teacher (continuous) assessment, and to be more widely based on projects and practicals, with more oral and aural tests, etc (Ibid, p.23).

These current and proposed changes in the junior cycle curriculum and examination system are of no immediate relevance to the post-school experiences and assessments of the school leavers who were interviewed for this study, however, since they had completed their second-level education by May 1982. In the conclusions, however, the relevance of these educational changes will be considered in detail.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the evidence, therefore, there appear to be 9 broad objectives of Irish second-level education which are either presumed, explicitly stated, or clearly implied in the main state educational policy documents. Although not mutually exclusive these objectives, or general motivating values, of Irish second-level education are sufficiently different as to require separate treatment:

(i) A broad general education which is concerned with the all round development of the person intellectually, personally and socially.
(ii) Mastery of the basic, conventional, educationally developed, knowledge and skills – the "3Rs".
(iii) Cognitive and intellectual development.
(iv) Ideological and Cultural objectives.
(v) Vocational preparation for adult work roles – particularly emphasised in the Vocational school programmes.
(vi) Personal and Social Development.
(vii) Civics and general "political" education for life in modern societies.
(viii) Religious, moral, and character development.
(ix) Preparation for entry to third-level education, which is clearly stated as a goal of senior cycle education.

Of these 9 "objectives", or values, of Irish second- level education the extent to which school leavers believed that 6 of the more applied of them had been successfully achieved in their own education is examined in this study:

1: Basic Educational Goals: basic literacy and numeracy skills.
2: Intellectual and Cognitive Development Goals.
3: Personal and Social Development Goals.
4: Preparation for Entry to the World of Work.
5: Preparation for Entry to other Adult Roles: Particularly Sex Roles and Political and Civic Roles.
6: Preparation for Third-level Entry.

Because of resource constraints the other 3 objectives mentioned above were not covered.

Interviews were carried out with a large national sample of school leavers in late 1987 about their views and assessments of the adequacy of their education. By then most of them had spent at least 5 years in the labour force. The majority had been employed for some time and over half had established independent residences, with a small minority married. The transition to full independent adult status, in other words, was in most cases very well established. They were asked to assess the extent to which their education had adequately prepared them for adult life on each of the chosen 6 educational preparation dimensions.

There are at least four general sources of variation in the level of satisfaction of school leavers with their education: their own expectations for education – what it is they want out of it; institutional differences in educational objectives and the nature of the education supplied, particularly between Vocational, Secondary and Comprehensive schools (i.e. the nature of supply); how well individual schools met expectations –

the effectiveness of supply; and the outcomes of education – particularly success or failure in the labour market. The first 3 refer to schooling experience *per se* and expectations for it. The fourth refers to post-school experiences retrospectively affecting judgements.

Two major Irish studies of educational values and expectations amongst pupils, teachers and parents have been carried out since the early 1970s (Raven *et al.*, 1975; Madaus *et al.*, 1979). Although the Raven *et al.* (1975) study showed high consensus on some educational objectives, it also showed considerable variation in both teachers' and young people's priorities. The Madaus *et al.*, (1979) study also indicated significant variation in parental educational goals and priorities.

In Raven *et al's* (1975) study conventional educational goals, such as basic education (the "3 Rs") and certain aspects of intellectual and cognitive development including their attitudinal and behavioural correlates – like independence of thought and action, personal and social development and moral and character development goals – had over 80 per cent priority. The development of a critical and sceptical intelligence, a critical cultural and philosophical education, and direct vocational preparation goals, or the development of practical skills for after-school life did not, however, have equally high priority (Raven, *et al* 1975, Vol. 1, p. 13). In teachers' actual experience of teaching priorities the preoccupation with examination success tended to dominate. So, provision of a wide academic education and development of self-motivated characteristics, like initiative and independence, were felt to be amongst the least well attained goals in education (op. cit., p. 34). As for pupils' expectations, intellectual and cognitive development and associated attitudinal and personal development (independence and self-confidence) goals, and vocational and character development goals, had the highest priority; but examination preparation loomed very large in their preoccupations also. Satisfaction was more pronounced with the conventional educational goals, but was much lower for vocational and personal development goals (Raven *et al.*, Vol. 2, 1975, p. 6).

The research by Madaus *et al.*, (1979) showed that "basic education" and general "scholastic" education had a high priority, and relatively high satisfaction rating, amongst the general public; and these priorities appeared to conform closely to those of teachers'. Personal and social development goals were given a high priority but low achievement; and cultural and aesthetic education, although with a lower priority, had even lower satisfaction scores. Vocational preparation with a higher priority and satisfaction than cultural, aesthetic or personal development goals, had still a low satisfaction rating – with less than 50 per cent being satisfied that

school emphasis was right.

Dissatisfaction with schooling was higher amongst the more poorly educated, and amongst working class and farm respondents. The relative importance of goals sought – such as higher education or basic education – varied by social group and this variation had a major influence on satisfaction levels. The third-level educated were less satisfied with the former and the poorly educated with the latter. Dissatisfaction with aesthetic education is most marked amongst the middle class and better educated. Although general dissatisfaction with school practice is most marked among the better educated middle class, dissatisfaction specifically with their own education was clearly most marked amongst the more poorly educated. So expectations and satisfactions varied systematically by social class and educational level. There were, however, certain deviations from this – those with Group Certificate qualifications particularly were, in many respects, similar to the most highly educated in their level of satisfaction. Though different in their emphases on objectives, particularly schools' (over)emphasis on scholastic and vocational goals, both groups tended to be amongst the most satisfied clients (Madaus, *et al.*, 1979).

Toward Hypotheses

Given this evidence about clients' educational objectives and satisfactions, as well as the significant changes that have occurred in educational participation and labour market outcomes since the 1970s, the following hypotheses are proposed;

- The conventional basic educational goals, and associated cognitive and attitudinal development goals are expected to have the highest priority and highest satisfaction ratings.
- Personal, social and character development goals are equally likely to be given high priority, but are expected to have much lower levels of satisfaction.
- Given the current saliency and difficulties in employment, vocational preparation goals are now likely to be far more significant than in the early to mid-1970s; but are even more likely now to have low levels of client satisfaction.
- Satisfaction is likely to be positively correlated with level of education achieved, but is also likely to be responsive to the type of education received – these with Group Certificate and Technical-Vocational qualifications are also likely to be highly satisfied. (See Madaus *et al.*, 1979.)
- The social and cultural background of pupils' families, particularly their social class background, is likely not only to influence schooling type

and level but is also likely to affect priority in educational objectives and level of satisfaction. Priority on elite academic goals, and level of dissatisfaction with their achievement is likely to be most marked amongst the middle class (and better educated). Priority on practical vocational goals and dissatisfaction with their attainment is likely to be most marked amongst those from working class origins.

There is, therefore, considerable variation in satisfaction among school leavers. Why this is so needs to be examined. Besides the actual extent to which, and the effectiveness with which, schools actually provided relevant programmes, there are other factors which influence school leavers' assessments of the quality of their education.

We have already identified 4 general sources of variation in school leavers' satisfaction with education. These were: (i) school leavers' own objectives for, and expectations about, education (mainly the influence of social class, gender and remoteness on these expectations); (ii) institutional differences in educational objectives and provision – mainly the effects of different school types on school philosophy and provision, as we lack information on the individual school's goals, values, etc.; (iii) the extent to which individuals attain, or schools meet, "normal" educational objectives – particularly in the level of education achieved, and the subject "track" taken; (iv) the outcomes of education as experienced by school leavers – mainly their labour market histories.

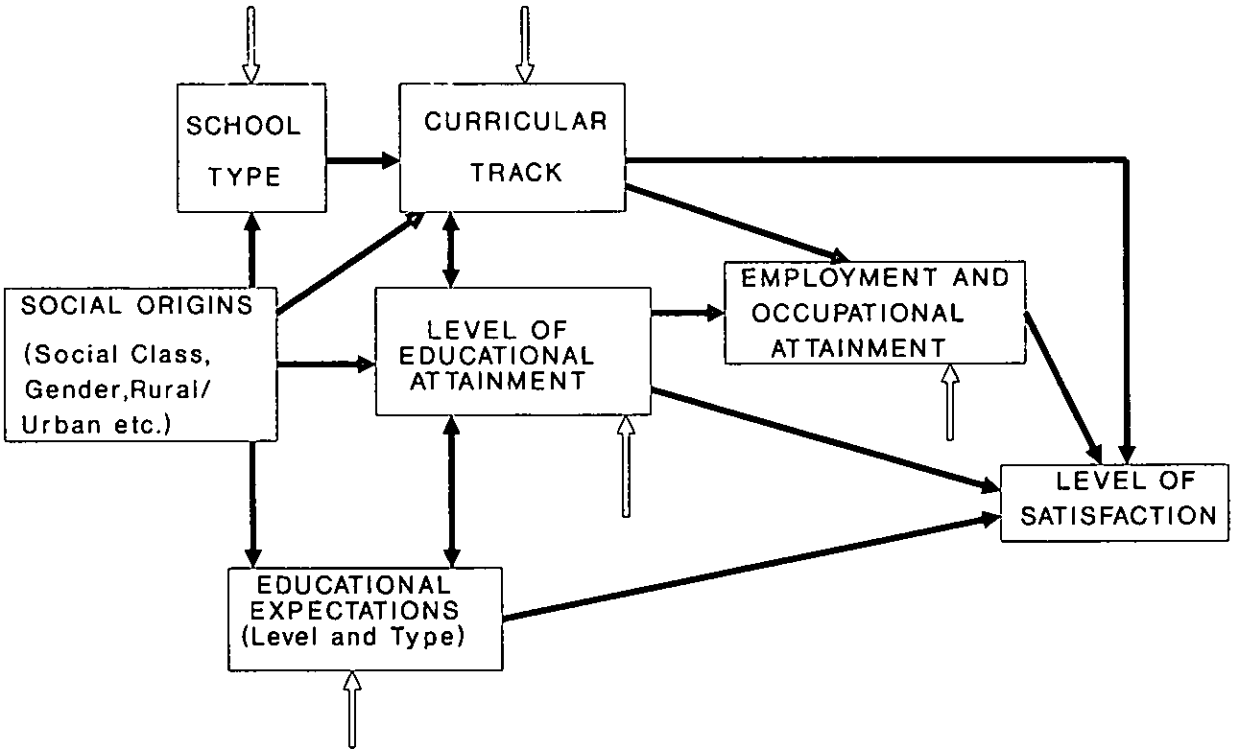
These various influences on school leavers' attitudes to education are illustrated in Figure 1.1 which represents a crude model of the hypothesised relationships.

Two main types of "intervening variables" are likely to structure school leavers' evaluations of, or satisfaction with, their schooling: the level and type of expectations held for education, and the level, type and quality of education. Although highly intercorrelated these variables are best thought of as separate. The higher the level of education achieved, and the more relevant the "curricular track" is to outcomes being evaluated, the more likely it becomes that school leavers are satisfied with their education. So the adequacy of "work preparation" is more likely to be highly evaluated by the more highly qualified and the more vocationally educated. On the other hand, early school leavers, or those with poor qualifications, are likely to be amongst the most dissatisfied.

As well as level of education attained, the subject "track" chosen or allocated to is likely to have important effects on satisfaction. The most satisfactory are likely to be Vocational and Academic "tracks", while allocation to a Pass level, general, track is likely to be very unsatisfactory.

Allocation to, or choice of, "tracks", as well as level of education

Figure 1.1: Model of Hypothesised Relationships of Predictive Variables to School Leavers' Level of Satisfaction with Education



attained, is also highly correlated with school type: Vocational, Secondary, and Comprehensive/Community.

These different schools vary systematically in their educational objectives, schooling practices and in the social class, gender and ability characteristic of their pupil intakes (Hannan with Boyle, 1987, pp. 25-67: Hannan, Breen *et al.,* 1983, pp. 80-114). Vocational schools place a high priority on pragmatic, instrumental and vocational goals, and less emphasis on personal and social development goals – particularly compared to Comprehensive schools, girls' Secondary schools, and schools catering for middle to upper middle class pupils. Intellectual development and personal development are linked and equally emphasised goals in schools catering primarily for middle class pupils; with significantly less emphasis on immediate vocational preparation goals. The median social class characteristics of a pupil body is highly correlated with these schooling priorities. Almost 60 per cent of schools catering mainly for working class pupils have pronounced pragmatic/instrumental and vocational goals, compared to less than 10 per cent of schools with predominantly middle class clients (Hannan with Boyle, 1987, pp. 60-65).

The differentially "chartered" origins of the three school types, and of the different religious orders running our Secondary schools, as well as the predominant gender and social class and ability characteristics of their pupils – and their likely or expected social destinations – have substantial effects on schooling objectives and on schooling practice. So, both the expectations and the experience of schooling, and the "quality" of the education received, is likely to vary systematically by school type attended.

Allocation to, or choice of, school type is also highly dependent on certain social background factors – social class, gender, and rural-urban origins (Hannan with Boyle, 1987, pp. 25-67). Most of the probable effects of such social background factors are likely to be mediated through "school type", educational level and curricular track; though the type and level of respondents' educational expectations are also likely to be independently influenced by such social background variables. In particular gender is likely to be an independent influence on some attitudes – males still appear more likely to be preoccupied about "preparation for work" and less about "personal and social development". But both type and level of such educational expectations are likely to be influenced by many other unmeasured factors.

Besides educational type and level, and the relevant background effects, subsequent employment history and occupational attainment are likely to have some independent influences on schooling assessments. A successful employment history is expected to be positively correlated with educational

assessments: i.e., some *post-factum* "praise" or "blame" being assigned to schooling due to success or failure in the labour market. The main effects, however, are hypothesised to be educational.

A number of factors are, therefore, likely to differentially influence the dimensions of educational satisfaction – particularly social background, school type and subject track. Middle class pupils are likely to concentrate on, and be more satisfied with, the Academic/Intellectual aspects of education; while working class students are likely to emphasise and be more satisfied with the Vocational/Technical aspects of their education. This applies particularly among boys. Girls are concentrated in more "generalist" streams (and therefore are likely to be less satisfied); but, on the other hand, are given more attention in personal and social development. The interaction between class, gender and school type (i.e., Vocational, Community/Comprehensive or Secondary) can be hypothesised as follows:

- School leavers from Vocational schools and Comprehensive schools, particularly those with successful labour market careers, are likely to be most satisfied with the vocational and educationally instrumental objectives of their education. This is likely to hold for all levels of educational attainment.
- School leavers from Secondary schools, particularly those from schools with predominantly middle class clients, are likely to both emphasise and to be most satisfied with the academic/intellectual goals of education.
- Those school leavers, therefore, who had attended Secondary schools and had taken a Pass level, "general educational" curricular track, are likely to be most dissatisfied with their schooling. Their achievements are neither valued within the predominant ethos of their schools nor have been of any great advantage outside.
- Boys in the Vocational-Technical tracks, and all those in the Academic-Honours "tracks", are most likely to be satisfied: most people in these "tracks" are likely to have taken courses that correspond to their expectations and to have been in schools that valued these courses.
- Personal and social development goals will be most emphasised in predominantly middle class schools, particularly in girls' schools. Dissatisfaction with such education is likely to be most marked amongst academically educated boys – with high expectations and poor provision.

Chapter 2

DECLINING LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES AND THE INCREASING RELEVANCE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Introduction

Rapidly growing youth unemployment over the 1980s led to substantial changes in state policies in west European countries (OECD, 1988, 1989). In Britain increased participation in schools, and substantial expansion in state training and work experience schemes were developed to cope both with rapidly rising youth unemployment rates but also with public and political dissatisfaction with previous education and training programmes (Gleeson, 1985; Finn, 1986; Young, 1987). In Scotland, for instance, a country with a very similar education system to Ireland, while school leavers' unemployment levels grew only from 11 to 17 per cent between 1977 and 1987, participation of school leavers in state training and work experience schemes grew from 4 to 27 per cent and participation in further education grew from 20 to 30 per cent of school leavers (Raffe, 1988). So, while employment was the dominant status of school leavers (for over 80 per cent) in the late 1970s it was clearly a minority (less than 30 per cent) status by 1987 (Raffe, 1988). As we shall see below the Irish case almost completely replicates that of Scotland.

To some extent, however, school leavers' employment or unemployment rates in their first year out of school misrepresents the true employment situation for young people from the mid-1980s onwards, particularly as employment generally started to increase in Britain. The employment preparation functions of state training schemes such as the Youth Training Schemes (YTS) have grown substantially in the past decade. In the late 1980s more than half of the young people entering the Scottish labour force for the first time, for instance, came from YTS schemes. So while in the earlier period such schemes were mainly directed toward "looking after the poorly qualified" by the late 1980s they had acquired much wider significance in pre-employment induction (Raffe, 1983, 1988). In The Netherlands too, the rise in post-compulsory vocational education is seen as a reflection of the lack of available jobs for young people. There was, for instance, a 12 per cent decrease between 1980 and 1985 in those who finished education at 16 years (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Report,*

1988, p. 162). In Ireland also both the growth in third level and other post-second level education and training programmes, as well as substantial expansion in shorter-term training and work experience schemes, has meant a significant postponement in labour market entry over the 1980s – most of it probably a once-off effect although having permanent consequences.

One of the paradoxes of growing unemployment levels has been an increase in the significance of educational and training qualifications in employment decisions and expectations. This growing significance of qualifications cannot, in the main, have been due to an increase in the need for improved quality of intake – since both the number of jobs and, in some respects, the "quality" of jobs for school leavers had actually declined up to very recently (see Breen, 1984; Hannan, 1986). As the OECD *Employment Outlook* points out, this increasing emphasis on entry qualifications is unusual also in that a significant acceleration in technological change renders specific occupational qualifications obsolete more quickly (July 1989, p. 81). What appears to have occurred is that since employers use qualifications and certification to select likely candidates amongst applicants for jobs – in the belief that such educational qualifications, particularly the more generic ones, index both a measure of "general ability" and a more general personal(ity) suitability for jobs – as overall employment opportunities declined so certification requirements correspondingly increased (see Raffe, 1983). In addition increasing rates of on-the-job training and retraining may mean also that employers use such school certification as indicators of potential for such constant retraining. However, this is likely to hold only for a subset of occupations.

Watts (1985) and Bills (1988) maintain that in Britain and the US respectively, because educational qualifications are now almost universally used as "tickets" to employment, and level of qualification is constantly increasing, many workers are overqualified and their skills are not being used. Similarly Levy-Leboyer (1980) found some evidence that entry into the French labour market is equally marked by "overqualification" – i.e., an accumulation of educational and training qualifications, which did not necessarily mean an increased capacity to do a particular job. In The Netherlands also, the increased competition in the youth labour market has increased the pressure for more and more qualifications (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Report,* 1988). Breen (1984) and Hannan (1986) have clearly shown the extent of such "qualification inflation" for Irish school leavers over the early 1980s as young people (particularly males) "traded down" the occupational status scale in order to get jobs. The effect of this was to effectively push those without any qualifications

out of employment altogether as the unskilled manual or service jobs previously available to them were now being taken up by the better qualified. OECD Reports point out also that the growing importance of qualifications has had detrimental effects on those with the lowest levels of attainment as differences in unemployment rates by level of attainment have widened considerably (OECD *Employment Outlook,* July 1989).

Combined with growing third-level entry enrolments and expectations this increasing occupationally extrinsic value of educational certifications is, therefore, likely to have had increased motivational and social control effects within schools: perhaps the main reasons influencing the growth in senior cycle participation. Both instructional and learning processes within schools are likely to have been strongly affected by such an increasingly extrinsic reward environment. As a result reforms, which are based on improving the intrinsic reward system, like the new Junior Certificate Programme, may be found difficult to operationalise successfully when there has been an increasing perception that only the final examination results matter. Similar apprehensions have been expressed in The Netherlands, where they have introduced a new "Foundation curriculum" which is remarkably similar to the new Junior Certificate. They anticipate problems with its implementation if secondary schools continue to use the first three years (when the foundation curriculum will apply) to prepare pupils for progression to the later stages of their education in the same way and with the same expectations as they do now (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Report,* 1988, p. 179).

Besides the coercive educational effects of such increasing certification or qualification pressures it is likely also that both educational and labour market inequalities grew with unemployment levels (see Raffe, 1983, 1986; Breen, 1984). As the "tightening bond" between education and employment grew so too should the relative importance of differences amongst students' families in the economic and cultural capital which facilitate academic performance. A great deal of recent research supports the continuing importance of such home background factors in educational attainment (Etzioni-Halevy, 1987; De Graaf, 1988; Furth, OECD, 1988). The rapid change in job markets in OECD countries has increased the value of knowledgeable educational and vocational choices; so that students (and families) who know of and choose strategies valued by employers fare better and, therefore, differences in access to, as well as quality of use of, such information increases educational inequality. Less privileged young people tend to be left behind by those who have "the experience and the social capital" to adopt strategies and use information that ensure their dominance in the more valuable courses (Furth, OECD, 1988, p. 13).

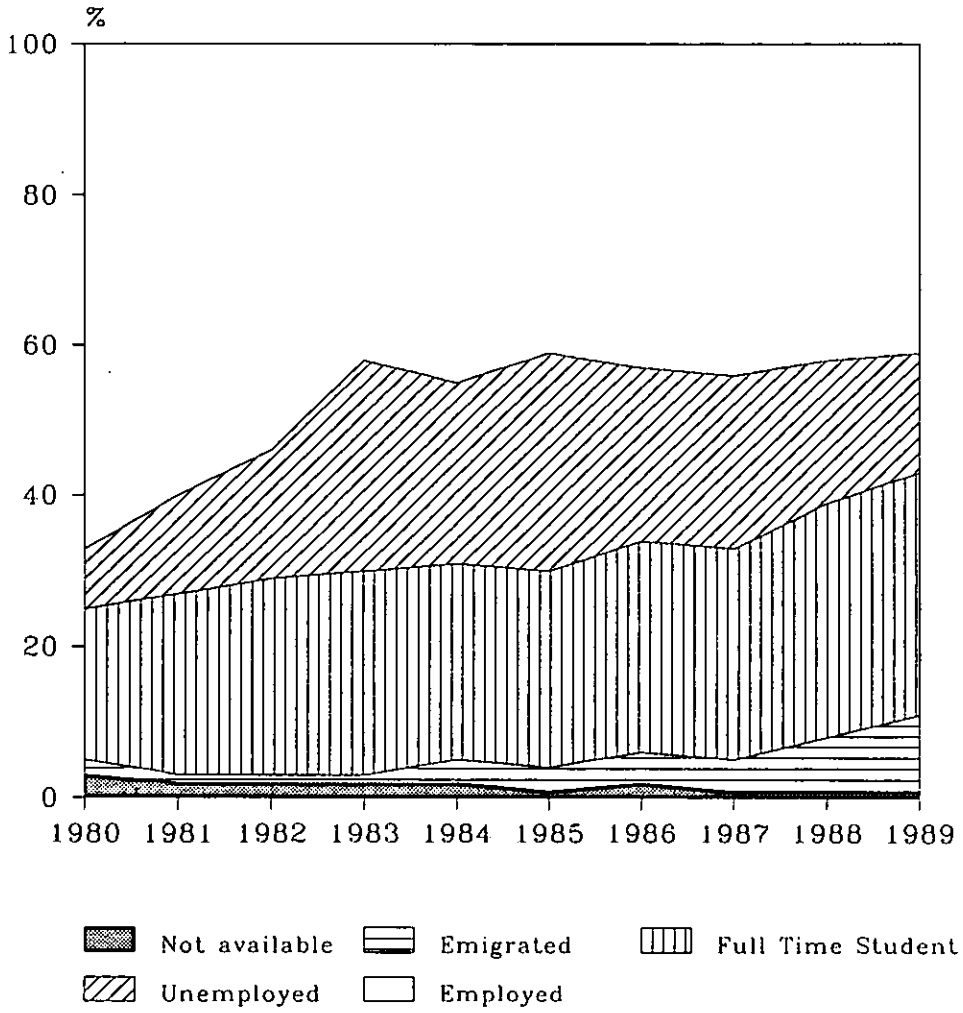
In the following analysis we first examine the changing educational, training and labour market circumstances of school leavers from 1979 to 1988. Having established the overall economic context within which they acted, subsequent sections of the chapter then examine in detail the educational, training and work experience of the 1981/82 school leaving cohort over the first 5/6 years of their post-school life. The relationship between educational and labour market experiences is analysed later in Chapters 4 and 5.

The Department of Labour's *School Leavers' Surveys* provide the data for our analyses in this chapter (Department of Labour, *Economic Status of School Leavers,* annual surveys). The 1978-79 cohort was the first school leaver group to be surveyed since this became an annual survey. Almost a full year is allowed to elapse after the school leavers have left second-level schools before they are interviewed. This allows a more settled picture to emerge of their labour market experiences or their persistence in further education. The sample is a stratified, random, two stage, sample of all post-primary schools and of all leavers from these schools. The sample size is of around 2,000 school leavers annually. The response rates for the school leaver surveys have been very high, and the very low refusal rate (less than 1 per cent) is a distinctive feature of the survey. The sample of schools is selected randomly from the Department of Education's list of post-primary schools and is stratified by school type, location, sex mix and size of school. The sample of pupils is further stratified by the level at which they left school. (For a more complete account of how the survey is conducted, the reader should consult Breen, Whelan and Costigan, 1986.)

Schooling and Work in Ireland 1980-1989

As can be clearly seen from Figure 2.1 below (and Appendix Table A2.1) employment opportunities for school leavers declined substantially in the 1980s – falling from an estimated 43,000 in jobs in 1980 to 25,000 in 1985 and stabilising around 28,000 between 1986 to 1989. Figure 2.1 dramatically illustrates both the rapidly declining employment of school leavers between 1980 and 1985; and equally dramatic unemployment growth. These trends occurred despite the decline in the number of school leavers entering the labour market, due mainly to significant increases in the retention rate of older pupils in schools as well as growth in entry to third-level colleges. As a result the number of school leavers entering the labour market declined by almost 6,000 between 1980 and 1985. Despite this decline in labour supply however the unemployment rate almost quadrupled between 1980 (10.5%) and 1985 (41%), but has declined since then.

Figure 2.1: Cumulative Percentage Graph of the Employment Status of School Leavers in May of Year after leaving Second-Level Education: 1980-1989



(Source:School Leavers' Surveys(SLS),Dept. of Labour,1980 to 1989)

Besides the increasing retention of older pupils in second-level schools – partly the result of the newly introduced VPT[1] courses, there was also a significant increase in post-second-level educational participation: from 20 to 26 per cent of school leavers.

While unemployment peaked in 1985 (with 29 per cent of school leavers either seeking a first job or having lost a job – see Table A2.1) its value as an indicator of overall employment opportunities for potential school leavers declined progressively over the decade. This is clearly indicated by the declining numbers entering the Irish labour market directly from school, even though the total number of leavers was actually greater in 1988/89 than it was in 1980/81. There is an estimated decline from 47/48,000 in the labour force in 1980/81 to 39/41,000 in 1988/89. There are three factors accounting for that decline. (i) In the initial period up to 1985 it is partly due to an increased retention of teenagers in second-level schools. (ii) There was also a substantial increase in participation in third level and other full-time education and training courses – from an estimated 20/24 per cent of school leavers in 1980/81 to 31/32 per cent in 1988/89. (iii) And finally there is a substantial growth in emigration from 1987 onwards. In fact, if one combines the percentage unemployed and the percentage emigrated, it has remained almost constant at between 26-32 per cent since 1983.

These trends, however, suggest too pessimistic a view of the youth labour market in Ireland in recent years because there has been a significant increase in the proportions postponing entry to the labour force until they had taken some post-second-level education or training. As can be seen the proportions going on to become full-time students (mostly, though not exclusively, in third-level colleges) increased from 20-24 per cent of the 1980/81 school leaving cohorts to 31-32 per cent of the 1988/89 cohorts. The number entering third-level colleges is estimated to have increased from 13,400 in 1980/81 to 17,200 in 1986, and has continued to increase up to 1989. At the same time participation in full-time FÁS/CERT (Training and Employment Authority/the State Tourism Training Agency) and other related training programmes more than doubled between 1980/81 and 1985, and has continued since then (Breen, Whelan and Costigan, 1986, pp. 94-107).

So both conventional third-level education – particularly technological education – and provision of FÁS/CERT and other related full-time education training expanded considerably over the 1980s (See Breen,

[1] Vocational Preparation and Training courses offered full-time both for post-junior cycle and post-Leaving Certificate students from the mid-1980s onwards.

Whelan and Costigan, 1986). This expansion is more obvious for males than females, because of a compensating substantial decline in induction into teacher training and nursing for the latter over that period. Of course third-level education is almost exclusively confined to those who successfully completed second level, while full-time training with FÁS/CERT, etc., is much more characteristic of those leaving at an earlier stage of education.

The school leavers whose post-school progress is examined in detail in the following sections and later in Chapters 4 to 8, therefore, entered a rapidly deteriorating labour market situation in 1982-1983 as can be seen from Figure 2.1. As it worsened schools and pupils reacted by considerably expanding provision and participation. This is clearly indicated in the following section. Post school education and training provision also changed markedly as will be seen in later sections.

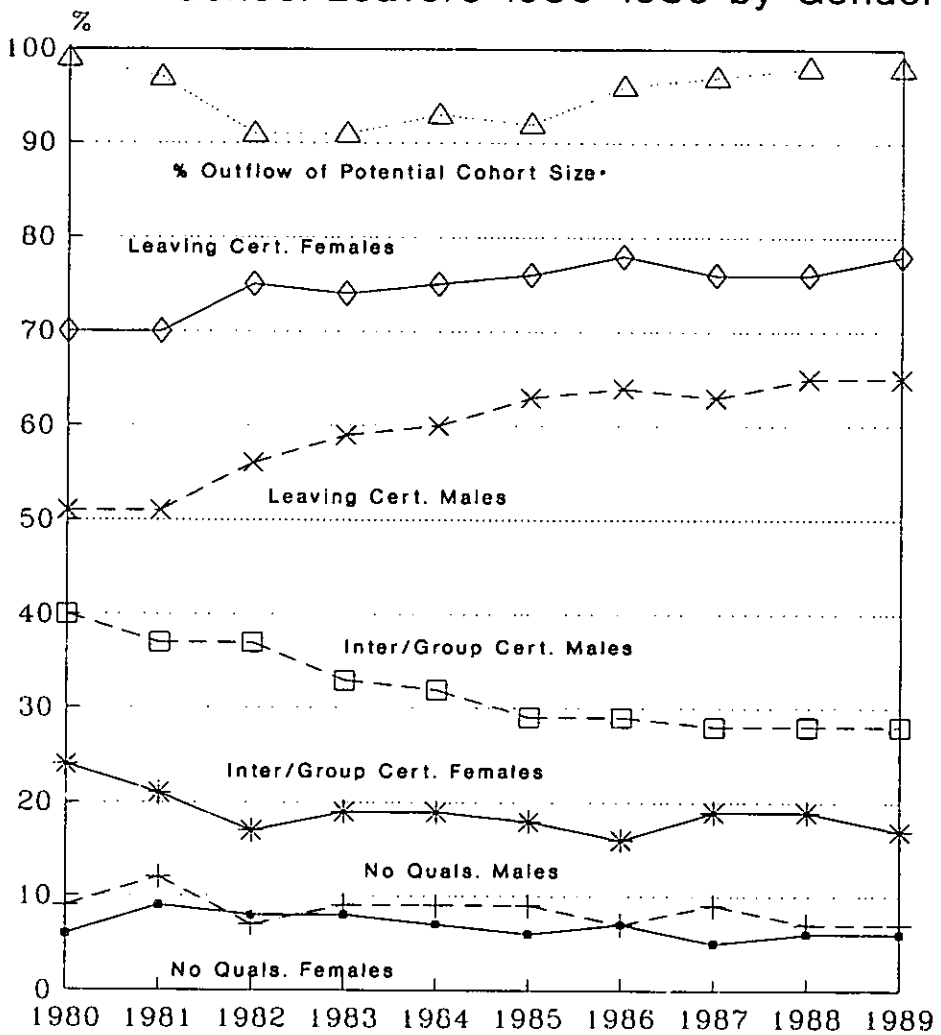
Growing Unemployment and Participation Increases

Like many other OECD countries, but particularly akin to Britain, both school participation rates and subsequent continuing education and training levels increased rapidly over the 1980s. Figure 2.2 below clearly shows the rapid growth in senior cycle participation and completion rates over the 1980s. The total outflow declined by almost 10 per cent up to the mid-1980s as potential school leavers postponed their exit from school – mainly to stay on to complete senior cycle. In addition, however, there was a significant expansion in post-junior-cycle Vocational preparation courses. For example the number of pupils taking Vocational, Technical, Secretarial and other related courses in schools increased by over 50 per cent (from 13,000 to 21,000) between 1980 and 1986 (Department of Education, *Statistical Reports,* 1980, 1986).

The total outflow from schools declined from an estimated 64/65,000 in 1979/80 to 61/62,000 in 1981/82, but then started to increase again to a maximum outflow of up to 68,000 in 1987/88. As a percentage of the relevant single year (average) age group, within the 15-18 age group, the outflow declined from an estimated 99 per cent of the potential cohort in 1979/80 to 91 per cent in 1980/82, but grew again to 98 per cent by 1986/88. (See Appendix Table A2.2.) The outflow decline, in other words, was due completely to increased retention within second-level schools as the actual cohort size (potential outflow) increased by over 1,000 in the interim. This declining outflow is clearly illustrated in Figure 2.2 (topmost line).

Within second-level schools the increased participation was almost equally distributed in 2 categories; (i) increased participation in the senior

Figure 2.2: Changes in the Outflow from Schools and Changes in Qualification Levels of School Leavers 1980-1989 by Gender



Source:Relevant SLS,Dept. of Labour

See Appendix Tables A2.2,A2.3

cycle general education stream leading to the Leaving Certificate qualification; or (ii) in the considerably expanded provision of alternative Commercial/Vocational courses or the new Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programmes introduced in the mid-1980s. These latter programmes have mainly concentrated on Post-Group or Post-Inter Cert pupils.

The increasing participation in senior cycle Academic type courses is clearly illustrated in Figure 2.2 (see also Appendix Table A2.3). As a result the average level of educational qualification of the school leaving cohort increased markedly over the decade: from 60/61 per cent of all school leavers having completed the Leaving Certificate in 1980/81 to 71 per cent by 1987/88.

Although their actual level of qualification remains lower throughout, this increase in qualification level is most marked for males – from 51 to 65 per cent with some Leaving Certificate qualifications. This is a much faster rate of growth than amongst females – who were already, however, at a very high rate (70 per cent) of second level completion by 1980/81.

To compensate for this growth at senior cycle level the proportions leaving school with only a junior cycle qualification (i.e. Group or Inter Cert level) have shown a comparable decline – again particularly for males. But, since 1982, the proportion of those dropping out early, before completing the junior cycle course, or without taking any examination, has remained stubbornly fixed at 7 to 9 per cent for males and 6 to 8 per cent for females; although the total rate has shown some decline from around 9 per cent for 1980/81 to 6-7 per cent for 1986/88. In general, however, growth in participation appears to be limited to those type of students who previously had been content with junior cycle qualifications.

In conclusion, therefore, the level of higher qualifications increased markedly over the 10 years: from around 60/61 per cent of leavers taking the Leaving Certificate in 1980/81 to 70/72 per cent in 1988/89. with little change, however, in the proportion leaving without any qualification. There appears to be about 5,000 leavers in both the 1980/81 and 1984/85 surveys leaving without any qualification, though these are estimated to have dropped to between 4,100 to 4,400 in the 1988 and 1989 Surveys.

This estimated decline in early leavers is proportionally more marked amongst males – from around 10 to 7 per cent, but is still higher than the female rate of 6 per cent in 1989. Equally the decline in those leaving with junior certificate qualification is more marked for males – from 37/40 per cent to 28 per cent for males, and from 21/24 per cent to 17/19 per cent for females. Obviously increased labour market pressure, combined with the greater leeway available to them in any case, has meant that males

disproportionately increased participation rates.

This remarkable participation rate increase, within the normal senior cycle Academic courses – to over 3 out of 4 females or 2 out of 3 males, means that both have now almost a 50 per cent higher rate of completion of second-level education compared to Scotland, Northern Ireland or England and Wales (See Raffe, 1989). However, most of this increase appears to be at a "general" rather than an achieved honours (3+) academic level. The equivalent (honours) courses for "A levels" and the Scottish "Highers" generally take one year longer to complete than the Leaving Certificate but, with suitable adjustments at honours level, can be taken as roughly equivalent examinations. The following table gives roughly equivalent figures for Ireland and the UK countries. At the upper academic levels Irish attainments appear to be roughly equal to those of Scotland and Northern Ireland and are higher than England and Wales. The proportions completing a somewhat lower level "general course" of 5 years' duration or more is substantially greater than in any of the UK countries. At the other extreme the proportion leaving without any qualification is somewhat higher than England but is substantially lower than Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Table 2.1: *Estimated Second-Level Completion Rates*

Certificate Level	*Scotland* 1986/7*	*England* 1986/7*	*Wales* 1986/7*	*N.Ireland* 1986/7*	*Ireland** 1986/7*
			Per Cent		
(1) % Passing 3 or more "Highers": (4+)	23	–	–	–	–
(2) % Completing 2 or more "A Levels":		14	13	20	–
(3) % Passing Leaving Cert. (5 or more, passing,D grades):	–	–	–	–	66
(4) % Getting 4 or more honours (C+) at Leaving Cert. level:	–	–	–	–	16
(5) Percentage with No quals or No graded results	19	9	16	20	13

* *Sources:* McPherson, 1989; Centre for Educational Sociology (CES), 1989; HMSO, *Regional Trends*, 24, 1989, p. 104.

** *Source:* Estimated from 1988/89 School Leavers Survey Report.

Irish second-level education then compares favourably with Scottish and Northern Irish education at higher levels and more than favourably with England and Wales; at least as measured by advanced level public examination results. And at the lower "failure" or "drop-out" level the Irish rates are again relatively favourable – except for the English figures.

Besides significant differences in the nature and timing of our examinations, three other important underlying economic and cultural processes are at work: our higher youth unemployment rates which have led to significant "qualification inflation"; the higher proportions going on to third level – perhaps also indicating an institutional and popular response to the search for economic and occupational success; and finally the much greater significance in popular and public authority consciousness, in a much less developed economy, of the role of education in personal and national economic success. Whatever the reason, however, there is no doubt that educational certification has considerably increased over the past decade.

Having described the overall picture of changing education, training and labour market trends among young people over the past decade in the rest of the chapter we examine these trends in more detail. We first look at the situation of school leavers after one year out of school and suggest some conclusions on the basis of these data. However we then go on to examine the school leavers' position up to 3 years after leaving school and then up to 5 years after school. At each of these three sample points we examine both the extent and the type of post-school education or training undertaken and relate these in particular to school leavers' original qualifications. In this way we hope to elaborate on the nature of the relationship between original post-primary school qualifications and later education and labour market outcomes. We conclude the chapter with an examination of the role of part-time education over all 3 time-periods and give a summary of the various career paths of school leavers into further training and/or the labour market.

Post-School Training and Original Qualification

Year Following School

Since the late 1970s both within-school (VPT) and post-school training has expanded enormously. Previously such training had been closely linked to traditional apprenticeship, or to commercial (business type shorthand and typing) training. But growing youth unemployment, particularly, led to a rapid expansion in training – some of it, in fact, directly concerned with unemployment reduction. The following table

details the extent of such training received by the 1982 school leavers surveyed, within one year of their leaving school, by May 1983.

First, those leaving without any qualifications received no such in-school training. Secondly, substantial in-school vocational preparation type training courses were provided for those who left school upon completing the Group or Intermediate Certificate: for 14 per cent of all those who left with a Group Certificate and 18 per cent of those who left after the Intermediate Certificate. The proportions taking such courses increases substantially – to 44 per cent for those leaving in the pre-Leaving Cert year. This declines to 9 per cent of those with a Leaving Cert. Most of these courses were of a "commercial" or business studies nature. So within-school vocational training is more concentrated amongst those with junior certificate qualifications – mainly the Inter Cert, though almost 60 per cent of those taking such courses had the Leaving Cert.

Table 2.2: *School and Post-School Training Received by School Leavers (1981/2) up to one year Following their School Leaving: Percentage of Each Educational Level Taking the Relevant Courses*

Training Courses	*Level of Education Attained in Second Level*					
	1 No Quals (N) (135)	*2 Group Cert (126)*	*3 Inter. Cert (181)*	*4 Post Inter (130)*	*5 Leaving Cert (1,055)*	*Total (1,644)**
			– % –			
(1) Percentage who had taken additional Vocational Courses while in Second Level	–	14.4	–	43.5	8.9	10.3
(2) Percentage who took a FÁS/NMS training course/schemes in year following school	13.5	26.6	24.4	26.6	19.1	20.2
(3) Percentage who took any post-sec. level Vocational or Training course (FÁS/CERT/ Teagasc,etc.):	14.6	33.2	35.3	33.4	26.2	27.2
(4) Percentage who took any within-school or Post-School Training Course	14.6	41.5	35.3	64.5	31.5	33.7

* Numbers do not always add up across the rows to equal the total in right hand column because of differing missing values on variables.

During the year following school leaving, however, participation in official state provided training and work experience programmes doubled – from 10 per cent of school leavers in the year preceding their departure to 20 per cent in the year following it: specific vocational training and work experience programmes being roughly equal in coverage. And, where in-school training had been directed to those who left after junior cycle examinations, post-school training was much more widely spread – although the very early school leavers were much less likely than others to be involved. If we include all forms of post-school training irrespective of funding source or provider, the total proportion who had taken any such course increases to 27 per cent – though this increase is minimal for those with no qualifications. So, if we include all forms of in-school and out-of-school training, it increases progressively and substantially by level of education – from 15 per cent of those leaving without any qualification to over half of those leaving after Inter Cert or Leaving Certificate exams, excluding from the latter those going on to third-level education. So some type of training or work experience had become normal for senior cycle school leavers, while this held for only a small minority of very early leavers. Clearly training has not operated to correct for educational disadvantage for this cohort of school leavers. To a large extent this bias appears to have been corrected for in later post-school training programmes (see Appendix Table A2.4), where in subsequent years these programmes have become increasingly directed towards the more poorly educated.

Post-school education

For almost all school leavers there was very little evidence of any "second-chance" (second-level) education in their first year out. Almost all of those who wished to improve their grades or qualifications had stayed on full time in schools. The transition from second-level education was abrupt and final for almost everyone. Less than 1 per cent of school leavers took any second-level course in their first year out of school which might lead to an improvement in qualifications, and all of these had taken the Leaving Cert or had some pre-Leaving Cert qualifications.

Almost a quarter of all school leavers (22%) went on to attend full-time third-level courses. (See Table 2.3). Almost all of these had previously completed their Leaving/Matriculation examination. A small number of earlier leavers, however, were attending full-time vocational courses (mainly apprenticeship, etc.) in Technological Colleges. In addition there is some part-time course participation at third level – about 6 per cent – although most of these courses appear to be of a vocational nature.

Table 2.3: *Estimated Percentage Participation in Full and Part-Time Third-Level Education Courses by Level of Education – May 1983: (Full-Time Courses in Parentheses).*

Attendance at Full-Time and Part-Time Third Level Courses	*Level of Education Attained at Second Level*					*Total*
	1 No Quals (N=135)	*2 Group Cert. (N=126)*	*3 Inter. Cert. (N=181)*	*4 Post Inter (N=130)*	*5 Leaving Cert. (N=1,055)*	*(N=1,627)*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
(1) At Universities and Teacher Training (Academic/Professional) Courses	–	–	–	–	18.5 (17.4)	11.9 (11.3)
(2) Technological and Regional Technical Colleges (Academic and Professional Courses)	–	–	–	–	13.9 (13.1)	9.1 (8.5)
(3) Technical and Regional Technical Colleges (Vocational Courses, including Nursing)	–	6.3 (0.8)	6.6 (2.2)	7.2 (1.6)	5.8 (2.4)	5.5 (2.0)
(4) Total Third Level Participation						
(a) Full-Time:	–	0.8	2.2	1.6	32.9	21.8
(b) Part-Time:		5.5	4.4	4.6	5.0	4.7
(5) Total Education and Training	14.6	41.5	35.3	64.5	61.3	52.0

Compared to the US particularly (see Markey, 1988), post-school "second chance" education in Ireland (in order to improve one's second-level educational qualifications) is very underdeveloped. In the United States it is estimated, for instance, that roughly half of high-school dropouts (who leave without a high school diploma) later go back either on a full or part time basis to complete their course or to get an equivalent diploma. In Britain also "Continuing Education" colleges do provide a small but important alternative channel for upward educational mobility for those completing their post-primary education without "A" or "O" levels. In some respects, Ireland is similar to The Netherlands. Although Dutch higher education is becoming more accessible, the secondary phase is and is likely to remain highly selective. One of the consequences of this

is that it will become harder to compensate through adult education for the effects of selection during compulsory schooling: "Youngsters leaving secondary school unqualified will find it increasingly difficult to improve their position through adult education" (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Report,* 1988, pp. 190/191). Whatever the underlying reasons are, the outcome in Ireland is quite stark – there is almost no attendance at part-time corrective, "second chance" second-level education courses at least in the first year out of school. Of course if young people stay on full-time in school to repeat a course, or examination, or to improve upon grades, they would not form part of a study of school leavers such as this until they have left full-time education. There is a substantial amount of such "full-time" repeating, though most of it appears to occur at Leaving Certificate level in order to improve their grades (Clancy, 1988). What one wants to draw attention to here, however, is the extraordinary extent of finality of second-level qualifications in Ireland once one leaves the full-time system.

If any movement to correct previous educational underachievement by school leavers occurs, therefore, it is difficult to detect in their first year out of school. The movement to third-level education, however, building on second-level success, is quite pronounced. As can be clearly seen from Table 2.3, third-level education is built on second-level achievement. Thirty three per cent of those who completed the Leaving Cert in 1982 were in full-time third-level education in May 1983; with in addition a small number having "dropped out" of third-level before completing their first year. These are roughly evenly divided between university type, degree giving, institutions, like Universities or Technological Colleges, and Regional and other Technical Colleges with 2 and 3 year Certificate and Diploma courses.

Besides the full-time students there was an additional 2 per cent of Leaving Cert graduates taking part-time academic courses in third-level colleges. In addition 3 to 4 per cent of all school leavers were taking part-time vocational training courses in Technical Colleges.

In total, therefore, 37 per cent of all school leavers were taking either a full-time or part-time educational course at the time of the Survey in 1983: 28.4 per cent full-time and 8.3 per cent part-time. (See Appendix Table A2.5.) Almost 80 per cent of full-time courses were in Universities or Technical Colleges, most of the remainder being FÁS/CERT or Agriculture courses. Two-thirds of part-time courses were also in Universities or Technical Colleges.

By and large, therefore, both full and part-time courses for school leavers are heavily biased toward those who were successful at second level. Nevertheless, looking at all non-third-level educational and training

courses undertaken in the first year out of school, and excluding those without any qualifications, there is a remarkable similarity in participation – at around one-third of all leavers from those with Group Cert to those with Leaving Cert qualifications. Indeed for those leaving with a Group or Inter Cert qualification over 40 per cent have received some additional vocational training before or after they left school. "Dropout" therefore, is clearly a misapplied term in their case. An obviously conscious and organised effort is being made by, or for, them to prepare them for the labour market. Early leavers, however, are obviously highly disadvantaged.

Adding up all the training and educational courses taken in the first post-school year, therefore (row 5, Table 2.3), there is obviously a very pronounced relationship between original educational level and total education-training participation. Participation increases consistently from 15 per cent to over 35 per cent and again to over 60 per cent, from the very low participation of the unqualified to the majority participation of those leaving from the senior cycle. The higher the initial level of education the greater the subsequent probability of further education or training.

Kind of courses taken in first year out of school

The nature of the educational or training institutions attended and of the courses taken in first year is illustrated by the following graph (see also Appendix Table A2.6).

One characteristic that is immediately obvious is that although full-time third-level education dominates, the Technical Colleges do provide substantial full and part-time Vocational training courses in addition to the more Academic/Professional courses. For almost 6 per cent of the school leaving cohort, in fact, they appear to be more important than AnCO – The Industrial Training Authority/CERT in providing that kind of Vocational training.

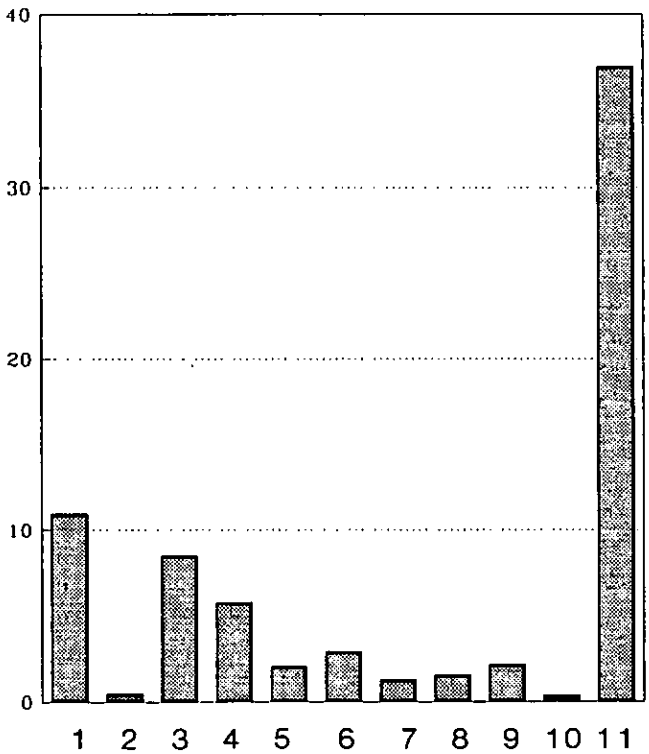
As can be seen part-time Academic type education is, in fact, very poorly developed at third level; and is almost completely absent at second level. It appears to be somewhat better provided for at the RTC and Technical College level than at the University level.

In other words Irish Academic or Scholastic type education, at least in the first year out of school, is provided in extended, full-time courses with rigid timetables, and with strict entry requirements. Once people finish with one level of education they very rarely go back to complete the course programme, examination or qualification which they had missed or failed. Of course a significant minority now stay on in full-time second-level education to repeat their final examinations.[2] But the system does not

[2] Estimated by Clancy (1988).

Figure 2.3:Nature of Post-School Courses Taken

Percentage of School Leavers in each type of Course in 1983



1: Full-Time University
2: Part-Time University
3: Full-Time Academic Courses in RTCs,Technical Colleges
4: Full and Part-Time Vocational Courses
5: Part-Time Academic/Professional 3rd. Level Courses
6: Full-Time AnCO/CERT Vocational Courses
7: Part-Time AnCO/CERT Vocational Courses
8: Full-Time Agricultural and Domestic Science Courses
9: Secretarial Courses - Vocational School and Private Colleges
10: Second-Level Academic Courses in Secondary Schools
11: TOTAL Full or Part-Time

facilitate the gradual piecemeal acquisition of examination results – like the Intermediate or Leaving Certificate – over a number of years while the individual is in full-time education, nor does it facilitate "second chance" part-time education once people leave school. Alternance – that is, joint work/education arrangements – is not well developed. The Irish education system appears, therefore, to punish "incompletes" and failures heavily; and "continuing education" is, by and large, built upon previous attainment. It is not progressively corrective, but is rather cumulatively advantaging in its effects.

Outside traditional school or college provision, which in general provides full-time uninterrupted courses of study, there are a number of state funded Vocational Training Institutions and course programmes (AnCO/FÁS; CERT;Teagasc – The Agriculture and Food Development Authority; – BIM Irish Fisheries Board, etc.). These provide either specifically designed apprenticeships – mostly FÁS, or related Vocational Training Programmes (as in most CERT, Teagasc, or BIM programmes), or typically shorter general vocational programmes of study – usually provided by FÁS. Together they provide training for around 7 per cent of school leavers at any one time in the year following their leaving school. Although substantially less unequally directed than college courses they are clearly biased against the early leaver. This, however, appears to have been corrected for the later cohorts of school leavers. (See Appendix Table A2.4.)

In conclusion, therefore, judging from progress achieved in the first year after school leaving, Irish education has the following clearcut characteristics.

(i) A dominance of the full-time college (institutional) system of provision, in generally full-time uninterrupted courses of study.
(ii) A hierarchical or progressive system, so that successful certification, or completion of one level, is necessary to go on to another.
(iii) Besides such academic education, another equally developed apprenticeship training system has existed. Here both continuous block release, and part-time, training is provided in RTCs, FÁS centres etc. This traditional apprenticeship system, however, has been declining in significance.
(iv) There has been some growth in occupationally specific vocational training and education for the hotel and tourist business (CERT), agriculture (Teagasc), and fishing (BIM).
(v) A substantial growth has occurred in training and work experience schemes for unemployed youngsters. These are designed to provide training, work experience, work search and personal development

courses for unemployed, particularly poorly educated and disadvantaged, youth. They operate also as unemployment reduction schemes.

(vi) The lack of publicly validated and portable certifications/qualifications for the non-apprenticeship ANCO/FÁS training programmes appears to be a serious deficit.

(vii) There is therefore, a significant lack of openness in our second or third-level education system. Certification or qualifications cannot generally be acquired on a part-time, cumulative credit, basis, for instance; nor is "return" or "second chance" education a feature of the system.

These conclusions, however, are based on school leavers' experiences in their first year out of school. Perhaps these obvious gaps or deficits in provision or takeup are corrected in later years. In the following Section we first look at progress up to the end of 1984 – 2 to 3 years after leaving school – and then later go on to examine trends up to 1987 – 5 to 6 years after.

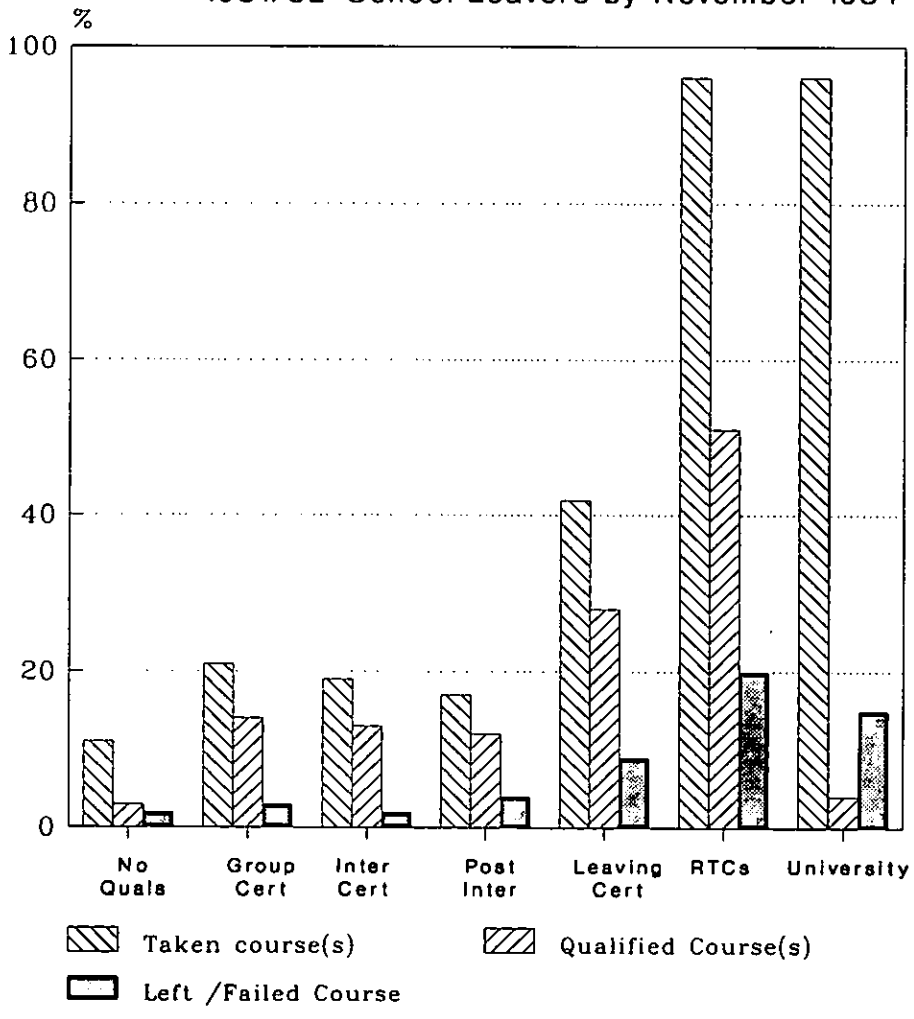
Continuing Education and Training up to Nov. 1984: 2 to 3 Years After School

Quite a wide range of educational and training courses now exist for school leavers. Indeed, if we ignore the length of courses, conventional third-level education now provides only around half the number of such "places" provided for school leavers; particularly if we limit consideration to those who successfully completed second-level education. Besides the pre-existing range of apprenticeship, commercial and business type training courses, a range of state funded courses by AnCO/FÁS, CERT, Teagasc, BIM, and other private and public education and training bodies, now exist.

Figure 2.4 below illustrates the extent to which school leavers add to their educational or training qualifications within 2 to 3 years of completing their second-level education. Within that period almost half (44%) took at least one other full-time education or training course. Even if we exclude third-level students from consideration 31 per cent of the remainder took at least one full-time course - with a small proportion (6%) taking two or more courses.

But the choice, or chance, to do so depends crucially on level attained in conventional second-level schooling – as can be clearly seen from Figure 2.4. The participation rate increased from only 11 per cent of those who left early without taking any examination to 17 to 21 per cent of those who left with a group certificate qualification to 58 per cent of those who completed the senior cycle and did the Leaving Cert examination. Even if

Figure 2.4: Summary of Post-School Educational and Training Participation(Full-Time) of 1981/82 School Leavers by November 1984



See Appendix Table A2.8

we exclude those who went on to take third-level courses we still find that almost 4 times the proportion (42%) of those completing second-level education went on to take further education and training courses within 2 years after school as compared with those early leavers without any qualifications. The advantages acquired in the highly institutionalised primary and second-level education system, therefore, clearly carry on into the much less formalised post-school education and training system.

Interestingly, little difference exists in post-school educational or training participation amongst the 3 "intermediate" educational categories – all having participation rates of about double the early leaver rate but half that of those with a Leaving Certificate.

Besides participation in such courses Figure 2.4 also provides data on "completion" and "drop-out" rates. From this it is clear that incompletion is a serious problem with many courses. Between 15 to 25 per cent fail to complete or "drop-out" of most courses. As a proportion, however, of those who completed a course and got a qualification plus those still in courses, the proportionate dropout-rate is higher for the "early leavers" or the poorly qualified than for those with a Leaving Certificate; or for those who went on to third level.

The value, public acceptability and "portability" of these qualifications also varies by original level of qualifications – from a certificate of completion of a short term training course to apprenticeships, to externally validated (NCEA – National Council for Educational Awards, etc) two and three years Certificate and Diploma courses, to a University degree.

Type of courses taken by Nov. 1984

The following table summarises the situation up to November 1984. By this time almost all third-level entrants were well advanced in their courses and most other educational and training programmes had been completed.

Three different types of full-time further education and training dominate: (i) conventional third-level education – almost exclusively for those who successfully completed second level; (ii) apprenticeship and related Vocational training courses run by AnCO, CERT or other training agencies on their own or in co-operation with the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs); and (iii) a set of other Vocational Training (mainly Commercial/Clerical Training) courses taken in Vocational schools or in Private Colleges. The first type of education came to almost a quarter of all school leavers, or a third of those completing the Leaving Cert. (See Table 2.4, rows 1 and 2.) The second type of organised, generally state funded, training was almost equally as popular (22%), but was much more diffused amongst all educational levels – though mainly concentrated at Group

Table 2.4: *Type of Course Attended: Percentage Participation in Third Level, Vocational Training, and Other Educational and Training Courses, by November 1984*

Kind of Courses % Participation - at least one course – in Education/ Training.	*Level of Education x 1983*							*Total*
	1 No Quals (135)	*2 Group Cert (126)*	*3 Inter Cert (181)*	*4 Post Inter (130)*	*5 Leaving Cert (732)*	*6 RTC (140)*	*7 Univ. (184)*	*(1,644)**
(1) Participation in University (N) Academic/ Professional Courses	–	–	–	–	4.0	14.4	93.0	12.9
(2) Participation in RTC etc. Academic/ Professional Course (Both RTC and s Univ. Courses)	– –	1.2 –	0.2 –	– –	5.8 (0.6)	74.4 (6.4)	5.1 (3.5)	8.5 (1.2)
(3) Participation in RTC, etc., short Vocational/ Training Courses	0.5	9.4	11.0	5.8	11.5	16.6	3.6	9.3
(4) Participation in AnCO/CERT and other related Vocational Training Courses: (2+)	12.4 (2.7)	19.9 (3.2)	14.1 (2.3)	10.5 (1.5)	17.0 (1.9)	6.2 –	1.0 –	13.1 (1.7)
(5) Participation in other (non AnCO etc) Vocational Courses (Voc. schools, Pvt. Secretarial Colleges)	0.9	1.9	0.8	6.3	10.9	–	0.6	5.8
(6) Participation in Agricultural Courses (and resident Domestic Science, etc., Courses)	–	–	0.5	–	1.8	0.4	–	0.9
(7) Participation in second-level academic/scholastic courses	–	–	0.8	1.0	1.0	–	0.5	0.7

* Numbers do not add up across rows because of missing data.

Cert (29%), Inter Cert (25%) and Leaving Cert (29%) levels (rows 3 and 4). This indicates the much more graduated entry, of boys particularly, into apprenticeships and related skilled manual trades, and clearly indicates the continuing relevance of junior cycle exams for entry into such trades. Equally "other vocational training" mainly indicates the continuing relevance of Commercial/Clerical type training for girls, particularly those with senior cycle qualifications.

Of course many individuals can take two or more courses, so Table 2.5 takes only the "highest" level of training/qualification courses taken, if respondents had taken more than one. The courses are coded: 1 = University; 2 = RTC – 3rd level; 3 = RTC-Vocational; 4 = AnCO/CERT and all other training; 5 = second-level courses. Nineteen per cent of all respondents had taken a third-level Academic course – 32 per cent of those with a Leaving Cert. There is very little overlap between the two third-level courses - although 19 individuals (2% of those completing the Leaving Cert) had taken both RTC and University courses. Almost all third-level courses are at least of 2 years' duration, most of 3 years or more. Over a quarter of all individuals had taken at least one Vocational Training course either in a Technological College (mostly for apprentices), or in an AnCO/CERT centre or another training establishment. Very few individuals appear to have gone back to improve upon their second-level qualifications – less than 1 per cent of all school leavers. And those who did had already completed a junior cycle course.

Table 2.5: *Type of Full-Time Courses Taken up to Nov. 1984*

Type of Training: Highest Level of Course/Qualifications Taken: (No.)	*Level of Education*					*Total*
	1 *No Quals* % (135)	*2* *Group Cert.* % (126)	*3* *Inter Cert.* % (181)	*4* *Post Inter.* % (130)	*5* *Leaving Cert.* % (1055)	% (1644)
1. University courses	–	–	–	–	19.9	12.0
2. RTC (acad/prof.)	–	–	–	–	12.1	7.0
3. RTC Vocational Preparation Courses (apprentice) courses	0.5	1.8	3.6	1.6	5.9	4.0
4. AnCO/CERT/Agriculture and all other training courses	11.7	20.0	15.3	12.9	20.5	18.6
5. Second-level courses	–	–	–	1.5	0.4	0.4

Taking all full-time educational or training courses, therefore, almost half of all school leavers had taken some additional courses. But this chance to improve upon qualifications increased progressively with one's level of attainment at second level – from 12 per cent of early leavers, to around 20 per cent of those leaving with junior cycle qualifications, to almost 60 per cent of those with terminal Leaving Cert qualifications. And while short-term general vocational training was concentrated almost exclusively on the most poorly educated, those with intermediate levels of education to a larger extent concentrated on apprenticeship and Commercial-Clerical training, while those leaving having successfully completed second level went predominantly on to third-level education. So both the chance to get any further education or training as well as the quality, content and length of that education or training, depended on previous educational qualifications.

As we have seen already the achievement of different second-level educational attainment levels depends crucially on certain individual attributes and background sociocultural characteristics (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1984; 1985; Whelan and Whelan, 1985) as well as some schooling characteristics (Hannan with Boyle, 1987). So it appears from the above results that a significant proportion of working class children – particularly boys of lower Academic ability, neither attain minimum educational qualifications nor any post-school Vocational Training; and have very little probability of "second chance" education. The ending of full-time second-level education at either 14 or 18, therefore, is final for almost all pupils. In our sample it was final for all of the early leavers. Not only is third-level education restricted to those with Leaving Cert qualifications, but other education/training programmes are also highly biased against early leavers. However, we have dealt only with the first 2 years out of school. It may well be that in later years (i.e., 3 to 5) such obvious inequalities will be corrected. The following section explores this possibility up to the end of 1987.

Education and Training up to 1987: 5 to 6 Years after School

Very few people, in fact, who had not already taken at least one education or training course by the end of 1984 then took up any course afterwards. The overall proportion who had taken any course increased only from 44 to 47 per cent between 1984 and 1987. Of course many of those who had started out by taking a further education or training course did go on to take further ones. The following table summarises the extent of full-time education or training participation up to the end of 1987 – with the 1984 base for comparison. Unfortunately the 1983 survey did not distinguish

between full-time and part-time courses so a direct comparison with 1983 is not possible here.

As can be seen very few additional people took courses after 1984. Interestingly, proportionately more of the least qualified had taken at least one course after 1984 – though the total proportion only increased from 11 to 14 per cent. In all other cases the proportional increase is very low. So by 1987 the inequalities had decreased slightly – but even by then those with a Leaving Cert were more than 3 times more likely to have taken a post school training course.

Table 2.6: *Percentage of Respondents who had Taken Various Education or Training Courses up to November 1987 and the Percentage who had got Successful Certification or "Dropped Out"*

	Level of Education 1983							
Full-Time Education or Training Courses taken by end 1987	*1 No Quals*	*2 Group Cert.*	*3 Inter Cert.*	*4 Post-Inter. Cert.*	*5 Leaving Cert.*	*6 RTCs*	*7 University*	*Total*
				– % –				
(1) Percentage who had taken at least one course by end 1987 (by end 1984)	14.3 (10.6)	22.5 (21.2)	21.5 (18.6)	22.8 (16.8)	45.4 (42.5)	96.7 (95.5)	99.7 (96.3)	46.8 (43.7)
(2) Percentage who had taken *two* or more courses by end 1987 (by end 1984)	3.2 (3.2)	6.5 (2.5)	4.6 (3.3)	7.1 (3.7)	11.7 (7.6)	40.9 (24.7)	42.7 (8.4)	15.3 (7.6)
(3) Percentage who had completed a course and got a qualification (by 1984)	5.7 (2.7)	14.6 (13.8)	14.6 (12.5)	17.9 (11.6)	33.8 (27.8)	75.2 (51.2)	72.4 (4.0)	34.4 (20.7)
(4) Percentage who had "dropped" or left incomplete an educational/training course (by 1984)	2.3 (2.3)	3.9 (3.3)	2.1 (2.1)	5.4 (4.2)	9.2 (8.6)	24.1 (19.9)	21.5 (14.6)	9.8 (8.1)
(5) Percentage still attending a *full-time* educational/training course in Nov. 1987	0.9	–	0.7	0.6	2.1	5.2	20.5	3.9
Total No.	135	126	181	130	734	140	184	1,644

The proportions taking 2 or more courses almost doubled, however, for almost all levels of educational attainment between 1984 and 1987. There is one exception – the most poorly qualified, of whom none at all took 2 or more courses after 1984. University graduates' probability of taking a second course only emerged after 1984. Except for those who went on to third level, however, the overall proportionate takeup of 2 or more courses is very low; being one-third to a quarter of those who took any full-time course. For those who went on to third level, however, almost half (41 to 43%) had taken 2 or more courses by the end of 1987.

It appears, therefore, as if people in general either take additional courses within the first or second year of leaving school or not at all, although at the highest levels there is a strong tendency to "accumulate" courses. In relative terms the most poorly qualified are more likely than others to delay taking up courses. However their absolute level of participation is so low on either occasion that this modest deviance from the overall pattern hardly matters. Continuity in or persistence with the "habit of education" from the school to the post-school environment appears to depend highly on initial success. Schooling appears, therefore, to have both an initial "level effect", and a persistent "habitual effect". Very few of those who do not go on within a year or two of leaving school appear to be willing or able to do so later. "Education time" in the life cycle of individuals appears to be very tightly packaged both interpersonally and institutionally. "Return education", or "second chance" education, is particularly poorly developed, with less than 1 per cent of school leavers going back later to get better results.

As can be seen from rows 3 and 4 of Table 2.6 not all of those who took a full-time course completed it successfully, and not all of those who even completed a course got a recognised certification. But in all educational categories the extent of successful completion of courses, resulting in such certification, had increased significantly by 1987 over 1984. The increase was from 21 to 34 per cent overall, or from less than half of those who had taken one full-time course by 1984 to three-quarters by 1987. This increase in qualification is particularly marked for those third-level courses. Almost none of those in universities had any qualification in 1984, but 3 out of 4 had some certification by 1987.

Once again, the probability of such successful qualification from a course depended crucially on level of initial education: from three-quarters of those in third-level courses or with a Leaving Cert, to two-thirds of those with junior cycle qualifications, to less than 40 per cent of those who left school without any qualification. In other words the probability of getting further (portable) educational or training qualifications from a post-school

course depended crucially on the level of one's initial certification; the lower the initial level the lower the probability of such further certification. The main reason for this variation is not because of a disproportionate failure rate amongst the initially poorly educated but rather the absence of marketable or portable qualifications for a high proportion of the latter's courses.

The "dropout rate" from courses had not changed significantly between 1984 and 1987, except for third level where it had increased marginally. A total of 10 per cent of all respondents had "dropped out" or left at least one course incomplete, or 21 per cent of those who had taken at least one such full-time course. The proportionate "dropout" rate varied from 20 to 25 per cent for those initially entering third level, or those getting some senior cycle (second-level) certifications, to between 15 to 20 per cent for those with junior cycle certifications, or with none. The higher the initial level of certification or attainment, in other words, the higher the probability of taking further courses, the higher the success in qualification from them, but also the higher the probability of dropping out from them.

A rather high proportion of full-time education or training courses for the most poorly qualified, therefore, do not appear to have any recognised certification or qualification – at least as reported by respondents: around half the courses taken by those who left school without any qualifications, and around 1 in 4 of those with Group or Inter Cert qualifications. On the other hand, almost all of the courses taken by those with a Leaving Cert, or of those taken by initial third-level entrants, appear to have clear certification potential. Education and training systems, therefore, provide both clearly signalled and highly stratified outcomes for labour market scrutiny. The nature of the educational or training courses, of course, also varied substantially by initial level of education. The following results clearly illustrate this.

Type of courses taken by 1987

By the end of 1987 not only had almost all of those initially in University (in 1983) taken a University degree course but so had 1 in 6 of those who had initially gone to RTCs; so some at least of the RTC "dropout" or "incomplete" rate is due to people leaving for Universities. Most of the 17 per cent involved, however, had initially completed an RTC Certificate or Diploma course. In addition about 10 per cent of those with an initial (1983) Leaving Cert qualification had subsequently (after 1983) gone on to do a University or RTC (Diploma or Certificate) course.

Over 20 per cent of those who initially (in 1983) stated they were taking an RTC Diploma or Certificate course subsequently said they were not (or

categorised themselves wrongly in 1983). But an additional 10 per cent of those who had initially gone to a university type of institution had subsequently taken an RTC, etc., course. Overall, almost 1 in 4 of all school leavers, and around a third of those completing the Leaving Certificate, had gone on to third- level courses. Almost all had done so immediately, but an additional 10 per cent of those initially content with a Leaving Cert qualification (in 1983) had gone on to third-level after the 1982/83 academic year, mostly in the following year.

Table 2.7: *Percentage Participation in Continuing Third-Level or Other Full-Time Education or Training Courses from School Leaving up to November 1987. (1984 figures in parentheses)*

	Educational Level in May 1983							
Type of Full-Time Courses taken	*1 No Quals*	*2 Group Cert.*	*3 Inter Cert.*	*4 Post-Inter. Cert.*	*5 Leaving Cert.*	*6 To RTCs*	*7 To University*	*Total*
(N)	*(135)*	*(126)*	*(181)*	*(130)*	*(734)*	*(140)*	*(184)*	*(1,640)*
(1) University Courses (academic)	–	–	–	–	4.0 (4.0)	16.8 (14.4)	98.0 (93.0)	14.2 (12.9)
(2) RTC Courses (academic)	–	–	–	–	6.1 (5.8)	77.7 (74.4)	9.7 (5.1)	10.6 (8.5)
(3) RTC Vocational Courses	0.5	1.8	3.6	3.0	7.8	15.3	1.7	5.9
(4) AnCO/CERT & other Vocational Training	14.3 (12.4)	19.9 (19.9)	14.1 (14.1)	16.0 (10.5)	17.6 (17.0)	8.9 (6.2)	3.4 (1.0)	14.4 (13.1)
(5) Total Full-Time Vocational Courses	16.2 (13.3)	22.6 (21.8)	17.9 (14.9)	20.9 (16.8)	35.7 (27.9)	19.8 (6.2)	4.7 (1.6)	24.7 (18.9)
(6) Second-Level Academic/Scholastic Courses	0.9	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.5	–	0.5	0.8

The RTCs are still important sites for short-term Vocational Training courses – particularly for apprenticeships. Around 6 per cent of all school leavers had taken such Vocational Training courses in RTCs, compared to 15 per cent who had taken such courses with AnCO, CERT, BIM or ACOT etc.; or 25 per cent of all school leavers who had taken some such, generally short-term, Vocational Training course.

Full-time Vocational Training courses had been taken by 1 in 4 of all school leavers (Row 5, Table 2.7). In numerical terms this is greater than the proportion who had gone on to third level. Between the two types of courses, therefore, about half of all 1981/82 school leavers had taken some further education or training; and over a third had got some additional qualification or certificate for this additional training by the end of 1987 (almost 40 per cent if one adds in those still in full-time education in 1987). The extent of this additional certification crucially depends, however, on initial second-level certification:

No Quals	= 6%
Group/Inter	= 15%
Leaving Cert	= 34%
Third Level	= 80-100%

Clearly initial educational advantage is being substantially added to both in terms of additional courses but also by additional certifications, and this pattern has persisted throughout the three time periods we have examined.

The information so far analysed, however, refers only to full-time courses. It may well be that part-time courses are distributed differently, though this would appear unlikely. The following and final section examines this question.

Part-Time Education/Training Courses

The extent and nature of part-time education or training is only partly ascertainable from the interviews. Only questions on contemporary part-time education or training were asked at each interview. So, what follows significantly underestimates its extent. It should none the less satisfactorily estimate the distribution of part-time education and training opportunities. Table 2.8 contains the relevant information.

Even restricting consideration to the 3 interview points it is remarkable how much part-time education and training has occurred – with 21 per cent of all school leavers having taken at least one course.

Other than those leaving without any qualifications there is very little variation by original educational level achieved. Only a minuscule proportion of the unqualified took any part-time course. Their self-imposed or institutional exclusion is even more complete than for full-time courses. There is very little variation amongst other educational levels (see bottom row Table 2.8).

Compared to full-time courses, attendance at which declines significantly over time, part-time education and training persists strongly. By 1987 it had become as important as full-time education for the third-level educated, while it is the only type of training of significance for those with

a Leaving Cert. However, for those with only a junior cycle qualification, it becomes insignificant after 1984.

Table 2.8: *Percentage Participation in Part-Time Education or Training on Each Occasion of Interview: May 1983, Nov. 1984, Nov. 1987*

Participation in Part-Time and Full-Time Education or Training (N =)	*Level of Education 1983*							
	1 No Quals (135)	*2 Group Cert. (126)*	*3 Inter. Cert. (181)*	*4 Post Inter. (129)*	*5 Leaving Cert. (727)*	*6 RTC (138)*	*7 University (183)*	*Total (1,630)*
	– per cent –							
(1) Part-time and full-time education or training courses in May 1983:								
Part-time	1.2	9.9	11.6	10.2	12.6	–	–	8.6
Full-time	0.4	11.0	6.2	7.5	14.6	100	100	28.6
None	98.4	78.2	82.3	82.3	72.5	–	–	62.6
(2) Percentage in part-time and full-time educ./training in Nov. 1984:								
Part-time	1.0	15.4	12.6	7.3	12.3	10.9	2.8	9.9
Full-time	4.7	2.6	3.0	2.4	7.8	47.8	87.0	18.9
None	94.3	82.0	85.6	90.3	80.0	41.3	10.2	71.2
(3) Percentage in part-time or full-time education/training in November 1987:								
Part-time	20.6	2.2	3.1	2.3	9.7	8.7	15.0	7.6
Full-time	0.9	–	0.7	0.6	2.1	5.2	20.5	3.9
None	98.5	97.8	95.5	97.2	87.1	86.1	64.5	88.6
(4) Percentage in at least one part-time education/training course (on any of the 3 occasions)	2.9	19.5	19.7	17.6	26.9	17.9	17.5	20.8

The nature of part-time courses varies significantly – from apprenticeship type courses, to other Vocational Training courses, to third-level Academic courses (Table 2.9). Part-time apprenticeship courses are most common amongst those with junior cycle qualifications – where almost a third of

boys had taken at least one such course by 1987. Apprenticeship training is less important for those with the "Leaving" but is still slightly more important than third-level courses. The latter is more important for those with a Leaving Cert or higher. In 1983 almost half (5.6 per cent out of 12 per cent) of the part-time courses taken by Leaving Cert respondents were third-level Academic type courses. By 1987 almost 8 per cent had taken such courses at some time – a significant addition to the original third of such second-level graduates who had gone directly to third-level (see Table 2.3.)

Table 2.9: *Some Characteristics of Part-Time Courses Taken in 1983, 1984, 1987.*

	Level of Education (May 1983)							
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*Total*
	% of Each Educational Category who had taken course							
(1) Had taken an Apprenticeship Course at some stage up to 1987	5.8	18.9	31.1	19.5	12.0	2.4	0.7	12.6
(2) Had taken a part-time third level course:								
1983	–	–	–	–	5.6	–	–	
1984	–	–	–	–	2.7	7.1	0.5	2.1
1987	–	–	–	0.9	5.0	3.6	8.4	3.6
(3) Had taken a part-time third level course at some stage in 1983, 1984 or 1987	–	–	–	0.9	7.5	8.6	8.5	4.5

Conclusion

To conclude, therefore, the following flow chart roughly indicates the proportionate flow of 1981/82 school leavers, with various levels of initial educational certification, into either full-time training/education or into the labour market in their first year out of school, as well as the cumulative participation in full-time training up to 1987. Almost all of those who left school without any, or with junior cycle, qualifications entered the labour market directly – with around 10 per cent of them taking up some full-time training courses during their first year out. The flow into further training/education is shown with a broken line to indicate that people entered such full-time training or education courses at various times –

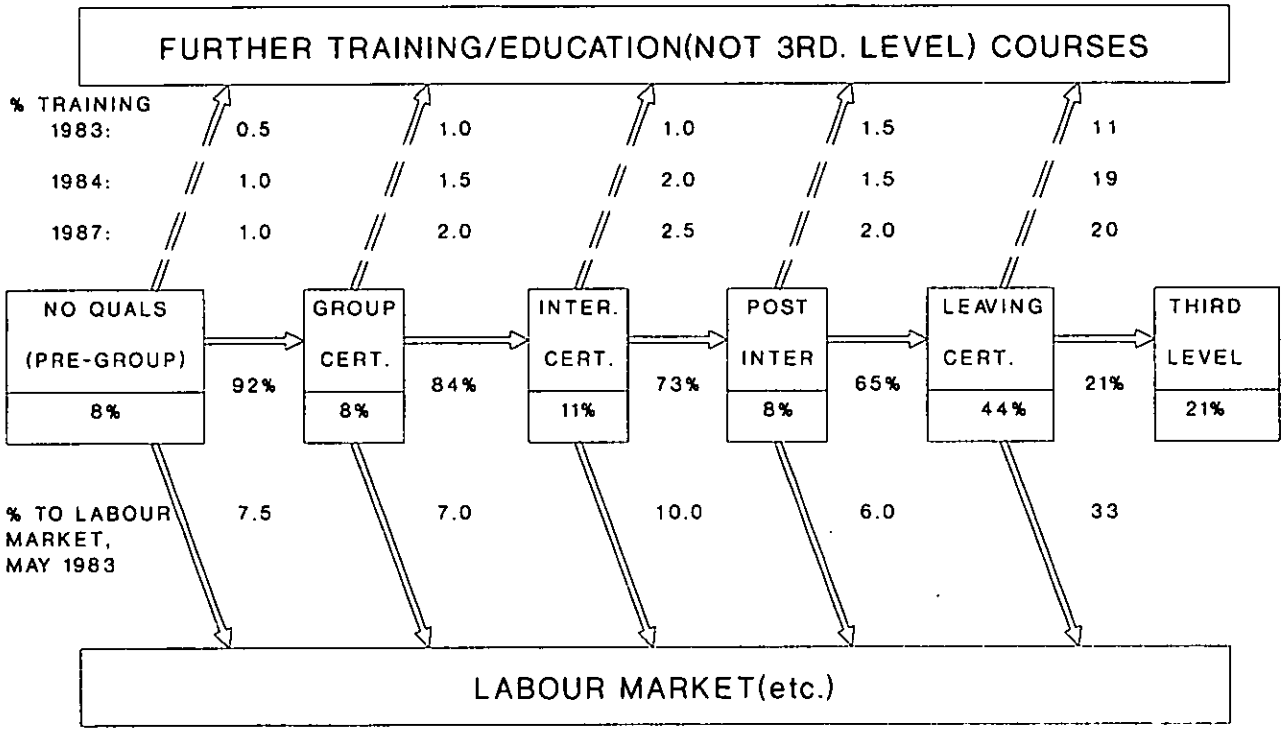
rarely immediately upon leaving school. And much of the movement into training amongst the most poorly qualified appears to result more from failure in the labour market than from anticipatory planning to improve labour market chances. The only exception to this are those with a Leaving Certificate who, proportionately, do appear to use further education and training in such a planned fashion.

The choice, or the chance, to take further training/education courses is highly correlated with beginning educational advantage. And this relative advantage of the better educated increases over time. In the first year out, only 1 in 20 early leavers with no qualifications took a full-time training course. This increases to around 1 in 10 for those with junior cycle qualifications, and to 1 in 4 for those with a Leaving Cert. And, while over time this proportionate disadvantage of the poorly educated does not deteriorate, the absolute advantage of those with a Leaving Cert, has widened by 1987 to almost 20 percentage points from an initial 10 points.

As already indicated, however, a lot of full-time training for the less qualified is provided for unemployed youth, rather than being a fully integrated part of the developing individual's integration into work life. As a result a lot of such "training" was provided to "take care" of this large group of unemployed youngsters and may not have been paid much significance in employment decisions. So, the fact that such training was highly biased toward the better educated, while it certainly relieved their burden of unemployment, may not have contributed substantially to their labour market chances. Since it is necessary to control for so many other variables in estimating the employment effects of such training – such as, for instance, gender, level of education and amount of time spent unemployed – a much more extended and sophisticated analysis is necessary, and has been carried out by Breen (1991). The direct relationship between the number of training courses taken and unemployment in 1987 is negative – controlling for level of education. The more "training courses" an individual has had the more likely is he/she to be unemployed by 1987 (Appendix Table A2.8). However, as Breen (1991) points out, since a high proportion of those taking such courses had been unemployed before they took them, when adequate statistical controls are introduced such "training" does have a positive impact on employment choices.

This study shows clearly a quite biasing and differentiating role of initial educational certification levels, particularly on subsequent training and educational decisions – whether made by the affected individuals or by other, mainly institutional, decisionmakers. This effect of initial educational certification persists through each of the time periods we have

Figure 2.5:Flow Diagram of School Leavers'(1981/82) Destinations to further full time education or training or into the labour market, by educational level; to May 1983,Nov.1984,Nov.1987.



identified and, as we have just seen, may in fact become more differentiating in effects over time. Those with the highest levels of initial education tend to accumulate further certified training, while those with lower levels of education – particularly those with no qualifications – have a much lower probability of gaining further training. And any training that they do get is less likely to be formally certified. There is, therefore, a strong concentration of educational advantage built upon initial certification levels. The effects of such initial certification attainments on people's attitudes and satisfaction will be explored in detail in later chapters.

APPENDIX 2

Appendix Table A2.1: *Employment Status of school leavers in May following year of leaving school 1980 – 1989. (Source: Annual School Leavers Surveys, Dept. of Labour).*

Employment Status at Time of Survey	*Year of Survey (May)*									
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
At Work	68	60	55	42	46	41	44	44	43	42
No. ('000)	(43.3)	(39.1)	(33.5)	(26.0)	(28.8)	(25.0)	(28.2)	(28.4)	(28.5)	(27.9)
Unemployed	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	5
Seeking First Job	5	9	13	23	20	25	19	18	14	11
(% Entering Labour Market)	(75)	(73)	(72)	(70)	(70)	(70)	(66)	(66)	(62)	(58)
Student	20	24	26	27	26	26	28	28	31	32
Not available	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
Emigrated	2	1	1	1	3	3	4	4	7	10
%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total: No. (000)	64.1	64.7	60.9	61.6	62.6	60.9	63.7	65.4	66.5	66.8
No. Entering Labour Market (000)	48.2	47.1	43.7	42.9	43.9	42.3	42.3	43.4	40.9	38.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	10.1	17.1	23.3	39.3	34.3	41.0	33.3	34.6	30.3	27.5

Sources: Dept. of Labour School Leavers Surveys, *Economic Status of School Leavers*, 1980 to 1989. Breen, Whelan and Costigan, "School Leavers 1980-1985", Report to Dept. of Labour, ESRI, 1986.

Appendix Table A2.2: *Estimated Outflow from Post-Primary Schools 1978-79 to 1987-88*

School Year	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*% of Average 15-18(single year cohort)*
1978-79	31,900	32,200	64,100	99.1%
1979-80	33,400	31,300	64,700	97.4%
1980-81	31,100	29,800	60,900	91.4%
1981-82	31,200	30,400	61,600	91.1%
1982-83	32,400	30,200	62,600	92.7%
1983-84	31,600	29,800	61,400	91.6%
1984-85	32,500	31,200	63,700	96.4%
1985-86	33,300	32,100	65,400	97.2%
1986-87	34,100	32,400	66,500	98.4%
1987-88	33,900	32,900	66,800	98.2%

Source: Department of Labour, SLS, 1980-1989, Department of Education, Statistical Reports for the 1980s.

Appendix Table A2.3: *Estimated Percentage Breakdown of School Leavers by their Educational Level and Sex 1978/79 to 1987/88*

Year of Leaving School		*1 No Qualifications*		*2 Group/Inter*		*3 Leaving/Matric*		*Total Qualifications*			*Total*
		Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*1*	*2*	*3*	
		%'s add across x row						– % –			%
1978/79	M	9		40		51		8	32	61	100
	F		6		24		70				
1979/80	M	12		37		51		10	29	60	100
	F		9		21		70				
1980/81	M	7		37		56		8	28	65	100
	F		8		17		75				
1981/82	M	9		33		59		8	26	66	100
	F		8		19		74				
1982/83	M	9		32		60		8	25	67	100
	F		7		19		75				
1983/84	M	9		29		63		8	23	69	100
	F		6		18		76				
1984/85	M	7		29		64		7	22	71	100
	F		7		16		78				
1985/86	M	9		28		63		7	24	69	100
	F		5		19		76				
1986/87	M	7		28		65		7	23	70	100
	F		6		19		76				
1987/88	M	7		28		65		6	22	72	100
	F		6		17		78				

Source: Relevant School Leavers Surveys, Dept. of Labour.

Appendix Table A2.4: *Percentage of 1980/81, 1981/82, 1984/85, 1987/88 and 1988/89 School Leavers on Training or Work Experience Schemes in May following School Leaving: i.e., May 1982, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1990 by Level of Education*

Level of Education	*1982*	*1983*	*1986*	*1989*	*1990*
	%	%	%	%	%
(1) No Quals	3.2	2.9	5.2	9.9	12.6
(2) Group/ Inter Cert.	7.0	13.9	8.4	7.3	5.1
(3) Leaving Cert.	3.8	8.1	4.6	1.9	1.6
Total	4.7	8.2	5.4	3.6	3.1

Source: Breen, Whelan and Costigan, 1986; relevant School Leavers Surveys, 1986, 1989, 1990.

Table A2.5: *Full-Time and Part-Time Educational and Training Courses attended in May 1983 by Level of Education and Type of Institution*

		Level of Education 1983					
Type of Institution	*Full or Part-Time*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Total*
(1) University and Teacher Training, etc.	Full	–	–	–	–	17.4	11.2
	(Part)	–	(5.7)	(3.5)	(1.0)	(1.6)	(1.9)
(2) RTC and Other Technical Colleges	Full	–	1.2	2.0	2.6	16.7	11.3
	(Part)	–	(0.7)	(4.6)	(4.5)	(4.6)	(3.9)
(3) Agricultural Colleges	Full	–	–	–	0.6	2.4	1.6
	(Part)	–	–	–	–	–	–
(4) School and Private Secretarial Schools	Full	–	–	–	–	2.0	1.3
	(Part)	–	(1.9)	–	–	(1.6)	(1.2)
(5) AnCO/CERT, etc.	Full	0.4	9.8	3.9	4.3	2.2	3.0
	(Part)	(0.7)	(1.7)	(3.0)	(2.9)	(0.9)	(1.3)
(6) None	Full	99.6	89.0	93.8	92.5	59.3	71.6
	(Part)	(98.5)	(90.0)	(88.9)	(91.0)	(91.3)	(91.7)
Total No.		135	126	181	130	1055	1644

Appendix Table A2.6: *Breakdown of Courses being Attended by 1981/82 School Leavers in May 1983*

(1)	*Full Time,* Third Level Academic Courses: Univ:	11.2%
	RTCs:	8.5%
(2)	*Full Time* RTC Vocational Courses:	2.7%
(3)	*Part Time* University Academic Course:	0.5%
(4)	*Part-Time* RTC Academic Type Courses	2.1%
(5)	*Part Time* RTC Vocational Courses (mostly block release apprentice type courses etc.)	3.1%
(6)	AnCO/CERT etc. *Full-Time* Vocational Courses	3.0%
(7)	AnCO/CERT etc. *Part-Time* Vocational Courses	1.3%
(8)	Agricultural/Domestic Science *Full Time* Courses	1.6%
(9)	Vocational School and Private Secretarial Colleges	
	Secretarial Courses: *Full Time*	1.3%
	Secretarial Courses: *Part Time*	0.9%
(10)	Second Level Schools or Private Schools to do Academic Second Level Courses: *Part Time*	0.4%
	Total attending any course full or part-time	37.1%

Appendix Table A2.7: *Percentage of 1981/82 School Leavers Who Participated in, Completed, or Dropped Out of Post-Second-Level Educational or Training Programmes by November 1984*

Education and Training Courses taken, completed or dropped by Nov. 1984	*Educational Level Achieved or Attending Full Time in May (1983)*							Total
	1 No Quals	2 Group Cert	3 Inter Cert	4 Post Inter	5 Leaving Cert	6 RTCs etc.	7 Univ.	
(N)	(135)	(126)	(187)	(130)	(737)	(140)	(184)	(1,639)
(1) Percentage who had taken at least one full-time education or training course**	10.6%	21.2	18.6	16.8	42.3	95.5*	96.3*	43.7
(2) Percentage who completed an educational/training course and got a qualification	2.7	13.8	12.5	11.6	27.8	51.2	4.0	20.7
(3) Percentage who had "dropped out" or left an incompleted educational or Training Course	2.3	3.3	2.1	4.2	8.6	19.9	14.6	8.2
(4) Percentage still in a full time educ. training course by Nov. 1984	4.5	2.7	2.7	2.5	7.3	47.0	83.8	17.8

* These figures should equal 100 per cent but by November 1984 4 to 5 per cent of both groups said they had not gone on to third level.

** Figures here refer to full-time courses whereas figures in Table 2.2 refer to all courses both full and part-time.

Appendix Table A2.8: *Some Employment Effects of Post-School Full-Time Training*

		1 *No Quals. or Group Cert*	*3* *Inter*	*5* *Leaving*	*6* *RTC*	*7* *Univ*
		% Unemployed (% Unemployment Rate) in November 1987				
(1)	No full-time Training Courses	25.6 (26.1) (N=213)	20.1 (22.2) (N=241)	9.5% (10.3) (397)	0 – (5)	– 0 –
(2)	At a part- or full-time Course	39.6 (39.6) (N=35)	24.8 (26.5) (N=51)	11.4% (11.9) (246)	5.0 (5.4) (77)	5.9 (8.3) (100)
(3)	Two or more full-time Courses	40.9 (41.7) (N=13)	51.4 (52.9) (N=17)	11.4% (13.2) (N=85)	11% (11.8) (N=56)	9.7 (13.2) (N=76)
		y=.28	y=.22	y=.10	y=.48	y=.34

Chapter 3

FIVE YEARS LATER: DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS' ASSESSMENTS OF THE ADEQUACY OF THEIR EDUCATION

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to describe the nature and structure of school leavers' responses to almost 40 questions asked them about their assessments of the quality or effectiveness of their education. As indicated in Chapter 1, 6 different sets of questions were asked, corresponding to the 6 types of educational objectives. Whether the pattern of our respondents' perceptions, beliefs and evaluations correspond to the pattern of the 6 categories of questions proposed is one of the main questions explored in this chapter. As we shall see, in some significant respects they do not.

These school leavers' attitudes to the adequacy of their education express their assessments of it in linked cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings) and evaluative (normative) judgements. Attitudes are defined as relatively enduring orientations – linked sets of beliefs, feelings and — toward education and its adequacy for adult life (Upshaw, 1968; McKennell, 1977). Since serious problems of reliability and validity exist when using single items or questions in measuring such attitudes (See McKennell, op. cit.) a multi-item "attitude scale" approach is used to provide reliable and valid measures. Only "closed", graded response categories – e.g., "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied" – are allowed to respondents to express their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the different aspects of education. These responses to the different questions can then be scaled – correlated from high to low satisfaction and, if valid and reliable, are added up to provide an overall score which expresses each respondent's level of satisfaction. The detailed questions and response categories are given in Appendix 3A.

These attitudes toward the adequacy of education are based on reflections and evaluations which are articulated 5 years after respondents had left school. They are evaluations – primarily cognitive and affective – about the utility or effectiveness of what was learned in school, of what competencies were built up by schools or of general experiences while in school; all of which had been "tested" by at least 5 years out in the labour

market, and by related adolescent to adult developmental experiences. They are, therefore, different from equivalent attitudes or judgements of older students in school, or even of very recent school leavers. Taken at face value they could be regarded as more mature, or more solidly grounded, judgements – since the adequacy of schooling for adult life has been more fully "tested". However, such more mature attitudes may also be subject to *post-factum* rationalisation – with those failing in the labour market, for instance, "blaming" education for their predicament. We are sensitive to this possibility in the analysis which, however, shows that although some such rationalisation occurs it appears to be minor. The similarity between the results of this survey and earlier ones such as that by Raven *et al.*(1975), which was carried out with students in school, will also be used to test the generalisability of the results.

The data come from a national sample of school leavers carried out in 8 weeks from mid-November 1987. This is a re-survey of the original 1981/82 sample of school leavers who were first interviewed in May 1983. The survey was carried out for YEA/FÁS. It is the third interview wave for this panel of school leavers. First interviewed in May 1983, one year after they had left school (Department of Labour, School Leavers' Survey, 1983), they were re-interviewed in November 1984 (Corcoran *et al.*, YEA, 1986), and thirdly in late 1987 and early 1988. An average of over 5.5 years had elapsed, therefore, from the point at which they had completed their post-primary education in 1981/82 to their third, 1987/88, interview.

In addition to this 1981/82 sample a further subsample of all third level entrants in the 1980/81 school leavers survey was included. These were first interviewed in May 1982 after they had completed almost one year of third-level education. This provides a "double sample" of third-level entrants from 1981 and 1982. This was done so that we would have a sufficient number of third-level graduates and students, in order that their progress could be compared with that of the majority of 1981/82 school leavers who had directly entered the labour market upon leaving school. The following table briefly summarises the sample and final interview outcomes.

The completion rate at 84 per cent was quite satisfactory. In order to avoid any sample biases however, the sample was carefully reweighted to fully reflect the original sample characteristics first selected for the May 1983 survey: by level of education, sex, size and type of school, region, etc. In most cases in the following analysis we use either the fully reweighted 1987 sample from the 1981/82 school leavers' survey (N = 1,644) or – since many respondents had migrated and could not be personally contacted – the sample of respondents who were personally interviewed (N = 1,114).

There are some minor variations in the numbers reported in different analyses due to missing data – but these are very small differences.

In this first part of our analysis we focus on the beliefs and attitudes of all the school leavers who were interviewed. We pay particular attention to their views about the adequacy of their own education: particularly the adequacy of preparation provided for work and other adult roles over the 5 to 6 years after completing post primary education. The analysis mainly focuses on the responses to around 40 separate questions designed to tap their assessments of the 6 different dimensions of educational preparation described in Chapter 1.

We first deal with the main structure of their responses to 35 different questions about level of satisfaction with schooling: that is, the manner in which the various responses hang together, or are different from each other. The 6 different educational objectives we isolated were: basic education and cognitive development, preparation for work, for other adult roles and for third level entry, personal and social development, and civic education. Since, however, respondents may not view or assess the world in the same way as researchers we first need to establish whether the pattern of their responses corresponds to the pattern hypothesised.
Before we proceed to look at this we first examine these school leavers' views of the relative importance of these various dimensions of educational preparation.

Table 3.1: *Details of Sample and Interview Completion Rates November 1987 – February 1988 Interviews of 1981/82 School Leavers Panel*

	Number	*Percentage*
Total Sample Selected	2,380	100
(1980/81 3rd level)	(440)	
(1981/82 School Leavers Total Sample)	(1,940)	
Total Sample Interviewed	1,990	83.6
Total Refused	127	5.3
Total Other Unattainable (even with callbacks)	59	2.5
Total Deceased, Ill or Family Moved and Uncontactable	149	6.3
Other – Non-Completions	55	2.3

School Leavers' Priorities and Satistactions with Education

Priorities

Not all educational objectives have equal priority – for either schools or their clients, as both Raven *et al.* (1975) and Madaus *et al.* (1979) have clearly demonstrated. If we were not aware of the priority attached to various aspects of education we could assume that high client dissatisfaction with one aspect of education which was not considered to be important had more significance than moderate dissatisfaction with an aspect of education which was considered vital. The following table provides an overview of school leavers' priorities in some major aspects of educational provision – and their general level of satisfaction with such provision. Nine separate questions, testing 6 different aspects of educational preparation, were assessed: (i) basic education and cognitive development (Questions 1 and 2), (ii) preparation for work roles (Questions 3 and 4) and (iii) associated adult roles (Question 5), (iv) personal and social development (Questions 6 and 7), (v) civic education (Question 8), and finally (vi) preparation for third-level education (Question 9). These are the 6 selected dimensions outlined in Chapter 1.

Table 3.2: *Relative Priority Placed Upon Different Educational Functions and Goals*

Dimensions:	*Items*	*% who say it is "very important" these should be attained*	*% who say these were actually provided*	
			(a) "Very well"	*(b) Not at all"*
		–	*Per cent*	–
I. 3Rs, Cognitive:	Reading, Writing and Calculating	98	75	1
Development	Think things through and come to clear solutions	84	21	23
II. Work Roles:	Prepare well so as to be able to do a good job well	93	29	24
	Prepare well so as to get a good job	91	21	33
III. Adult Roles:	Prepare well for adult life when leaving school	91	18	35
IV. Personal & Social Development	Develop self-confidence and self-reliance	89	17	26
	Preparation for life – develop and apply good values to everyday problems	85	14	34
V. Civic Life:	Play an active role in public affairs	42	6	60
VI. Third Level:	Prepare well for third level*	88	30	27

* Asked only of those who actually went on to third-level education.

It is evident that there is a very clear-cut rank order of importance: basic educational goals have almost 100 per cent support, but some aspects of cognitive development (Row 2) are given a lower priority than preparation for work life. Preparation for work life and for other adult roles is given almost equal priority as basic education. Preparation for third-level entry, a dominating objective in most Secondary schools, is given a slightly lower priority than work even when the question was asked only of third-level entrants.

The development of an assertively rational capability and of a moral or evaluative capability is given somewhat lower status, though nevertheless over 85 per cent regard these personal and social development goals as very important. Civic and political education is given the lowest priority of all.

Almost everybody, therefore, places the highest *priority* on the traditional basic objectives of education – particularly the 3Rs. And a surprisingly high 75 per cent think these objectives were achieved to a high level in their own case. This very positive evaluation of the more basic goals of education is supported by similar questions asked elsewhere in the survey, where around 80 per cent respond that provision for reading and writing in their own education had been very satisfactory – though satisfaction with "calculating" appears to be less enthusiastic. The priority attached to "cognitive development" is not as great – though still over 80 per cent. But satisfaction with it is very low with only 21 per cent very satisfied and 23 per cent very dissatisfied. So while the more mechanical aspects of conventional education – the 3Rs – get high priority and satisfaction, satisfaction with the more subtle and emergent cognitive development aspects of education is very low.

Only slightly less universally prescriptive is the emphasis placed on preparation for employment and work life – indeed this is regarded as more important than certain aspects of cognitive development. However, satisfaction with the achievement of these goals was very low – indeed even lower than for cognitive development. At a maximum, 1 in 4 respondents thought that these objectives had been very well served/achieved in their schooling, while up to 1 in 3 were highly dissatisfied with this aspect of their education. The adequacy of preparation for other adult roles and relationships – an almost equally prescriptive goal – was much less satisfactory again with less than 20 per cent very satisfied with provision and over one-third being very dissatisfied.

Only slightly less prescriptive as a goal of education is: (i) development of self-confidence and self-reliance, and (ii) preparing young people to develop the capacity to implement and apply "good" values in an increasingly individualised world. It is clear, therefore, that the development of an

individualism which is self-confident and socially and morally assertive is given very high priority by respondents – almost as important as the conventional 3Rs programme and practical "preparation for work". But clearly these goals are not being achieved. The level of dissatisfaction is particularly high, with only 1 in 5 to 1 in 6 respondents being very satisfied, and 1 in 3 or 4 being very dissatisfied.

However, education for, or socialisation into, one's role in public life – civil and political affairs generally – is not given very high priority. Only 4 out of 10 gave it the highest priority, although only 1 out of 9 say it is *not* an important goal of education. Nonetheless, in relative terms the proportion dissatisfied here is the highest of all: only 6 per cent say this objective was "very well" attained by the school, with 60 per cent saying it was not carried out at all by the schools.

With the exception of civic/political education, therefore, almost all other aspects of education previously discussed under the various dimensions of education are given very high priority by school leavers. Of the high priority dimensions, therefore, it appears that satisfaction is highest for "basic education", next highest for work and adult role preparation, and lower again for personal and social development. The lowest satisfaction level of all is for civic education – but it also has very low priority.

With minor exceptions this rank order of priorities is rather close to that in Raven *et al.'s* (1975) study of students' values in education. Here personal and social development values received even higher priority than the basic 3Rs. Taking the 50 educational objectives ranked by pupils as "very important", intellectual development and development of self competency goals were given the highest priority, as well as personality, character and social development competencies. Around two-thirds of respondents thought both of these were very important. Next was the development of innovative, assertive and initiative taking competencies. Education for development of the capabilities to construct good and fulfilling adult sex roles and familial relationships, and the capability to take on associated responsibilities had an equally high rating. Around 60 per cent of respondents thought them to be very important. Next only in importance came the more basic 3Rs, as well as development of competencies in speech, articulateness, etc. After this came preparation for adult work roles and associated life roles: while civic-political education came lowest in the list of priorities as in our own case (ibid., pp. 5-10).

This low ranking of basic education in Raven's study is surprising. We should remember, however, that the study was carried out in the early 1970s when employment opportunities, and preoccupation about

employment, was not as pressing an issue: so that "personal development" goals may have declined somewhat in importance since then, while basic education and preparation for work life may have substantially risen in importance. With the latter exception, however, Raven's *et al's* (1975) study gives very similar rankings to those given by the school-leavers in our study.

The Structure of School Leavers' Assessments

As already discussed, in our questions to school leavers, we concentrated on the following 6 important dimensions of educational socialisation or "preparation".

1. Basic education: (a) basic language and arithmetical skills; as well as (b) basic aspects of intellectual and cognitive development (9 questions).
2. Personal and social development objectives; moral and character development (9 questions).
3. Preparation for entry to general adult roles (5 questions).
4. Preparation for entry to the world of work (8 questions).
5. Preparation for civic and political roles (6 questions).
6. Preparation for third-level entry (2 questions).

In addition respondents were asked 2 general questions about the main educational deficits they had experienced and the extent to which they still planned to correct any deficit in their education. There are obviously other educational goals or outcomes that could have been included but, given severe restrictions on the time available in the interview, these 6 appeared to be the most relevant dimensions.

A total of 40 attitudinal type questions in all were asked to tap these various dimensions of educational assessment (see details in Appendix 3A). Their distribution over the 6 different aspects of educational preparation are given above – with between 5 to 9 questions used to tap each dimension (See also Appendix 3A). There is an overlap in a small number of questions – they could fit into either of 2 dimensions. The following sections analyse the response to these questions, as well as the basic structure of respondents' answers – as revealed through the conventional method used to assess the dimensionality of scored, or scaled, responses to such questions – that is, to factor analyse the correlations amongst these responses.

Factor analysis is a statistical technique for analysing correlation matrices – as, for instance, the correlations amongst all the scaled responses to the above 35 questions asked of respondents. The technique enables us to determine whether some consistent underlying pattern of relationships exist in the data such that we can abstract out a small number of

underlying "factors" or "components" that may be taken as "source variables" which account for the observed consistencies in the pattern of correlations (Kim and Mueller, 1978). One may think of it as a way for extracting the minimum number of clusters of highly intercorrelated items from the total 35 x 35 matrix; each cluster of items are highly intercorrelated with each other but have low, or no, correlations with items in other clusters. In this case we are using the method to test the hypothesis that 6 underlying factors – the 6 different educational objectives isolated above – are the "source" of the pattern of association amongst the scaled responses to 27 different questions asked of respondents about the attainment of educational objectives.

One, therefore, needs first to "scale", or attach at least an ordinal value to, each of the responses given. For example, question 31(a) asked respondents about their second level education:

> To what extent have you found that the things you learned there have been of use to you in coping with employment and working life?

Responses were coded 1 if respondents said that their education had not been of "any use at all"; 2 if of "some but very little" use; 3 if of "good use"; and 4 if of "great use".

The number assigned expresses the ordinal "degree" of satisfaction – i.e., more or less, higher or lower, etc. Next one needs to calculate the correlations amongst all of the scaled responses – the extent to which they vary together. Finally, the resultant correlation matrix is "factor analysed" in order to isolate the minimum number of underlying "factors", or dimensions, which explain as much as possible of the variance in the correlation matrix.

The following table provides the main results from the factor analysis (Principal Components with Varimax Rotation) of the scaled responses to 27 different assessments respondents made of their education. Twenty five of these questions referred specifically to the first 5 of the dimensions hypothesised above: basic education and cognitive development, preparation for work and for other adult roles, personal and social development and civic education.

The two questions dealing with the sixth hypothesised dimension, adequacy of preparation for third-level education, were excluded from the factor analysis because they were answered only by a small and elite subset of the total sample – those going to third level. But two additional questions were added to measure respondents' views about specific deficits in their own education. It was expected that these two items would "load on" or be highly correlated with the "preparation for work" dimension – as they were highly practically phrased.

Table 3.3: *Factor Weightings, Communalities and Eigenvalues for 37 Attitudinal Variables. 6-Factor Solution, Principal Components with Varimax Rotation. (Weightings of .35 or greater)*

	Factors						*Communality*
I.*Personal and Social Development*	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	h^2
			– Factor Loadings –				
1. (3412) Helping you to get on with other people	.72	–	–	–	–	–	.63
2. (3403) Making new friends	.71	–	–	–	–	–	.55
3. (3402) Self-confidence	.62	–	–	–	–	–	.54
4. (3415) Talk and communicate well	.58	–	–	–	–	–	.56
5. (3406) Well balanced person	.58	–	–	–	–	–	.54
6. (3404) Preparation for adult life	.49	–	.45	–	–	–	.62
7. (3411) Think for yourself	.47	–	–	–	–	–	.48
8. (3408) Play a responsible part in society	.44	–	.45	–	.44	–	.59
9. (3511) Self-confidence and self-reliance	.39	.66	–	–	–	–	.64
10. (3407) Relations with opposite sex	.38	–	–	–	.55	–	.47
II. General Assessment of own Schooling as Preparation for Adult Life							
11. (3513) Preparation for Life – and to apply values to every day problems	–	.72	–	–	–	–	.60
12. (3511) Develop self-confidence	.39	.66	–	–	–	–	.64
13. (3517) Prepare well for adult life	–	.65	–	–	–	–	.64
14. (3516) Able to do a good job well	–	.63	.35	–	–	–	.59
15. (3512) Ability to think through things	–	.63	–	–	–	–	.57
16. (3515) Preparation for role in Public Affairs	–	.60	–	–	–	–.47	.59
17. (3514) Preparation to get a good job		.58	.39	–	–	–	.56
III. Preparation for World of Work and Adult Roles							
18. (3101) General assessment of utility for work roles	–	–	–.67	–	–	–	.56
19. (3201) General preparation for adult life	–	–	–.59	–	–	–	.52
20. (3409) Increase chances of getting a good job	–	–	.55	–	–	–	.53
21. (3301) Education: lacked something	–	–	–.52	–	–	.50	.58
22. (3405) Understanding world of work	–	–	.48	–	–.35	–	.54
23. (3404) Adult life in general	.49	–	.45	–	–	–	.62
24. (3408) Responsible role in society	.44	–	.45	–	.41	–	.59
25. (3514) Well prepared to get a good job	–	.58	.39	–	–	–	.56
26. (3516) Prepared to do a good job well	–	.63	.35	–	–	–	.59
IV. Basic Education							
27. (3401) Education has given sufficient reading and writing skills	–	–	–	.76	–	–	.64
28. (3510) Extent to which school provided reading/writing/calculating skills	–	–	–	.73	–	–	
29. (3410) Gave sufficient education for calculating amounts	–	–	–	.65	–	–	.56
30. (3414) Time-keeping and being able to concentrate	–	–	–	.43	–	–	.43

Table 3.3: *continued*

	Factors						*Communality*
V. Political/Civil Roles	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	h^2
31. (3413) Understand Politics	–	–	–	–	.76	–	.63
32. (3407) Good relations with friends of opposite sex	.38	–	–	–	.55	–	.47
33. (3515) Active role in public affairs	–	.60	–	–	.47	–	.59
34. (3408) Full and responsible role in your society	.44	–	.45	–	.41	–	.59
35. (3405) Better understanding of world of work	–	–	.48	–	.35	–	.54
VI. Specific Educational Achievement Defects							
36. (3701) Educational qualifications you would like to get	–	–	–	–	–	.84	.73
37. (3301) Education – lacked something	–	–	–.52	–	–	.50	.58
Eigenvalues	9.0	1.7	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.0	Cumulative
% of Variance Explained:	33.4	6.4	5.7	4.2	4.1	3.8	58%

The factor analysis yielded 6 clear factors with eigenvalues[3] greater than 1.0. The 6 factors combined extracted 58 per cent of the total variance. Factor 1 was by far the most important factor (eigenvalue = 9.0), extracting 33 per cent of total variance. Factors 2 and 3 had eigenvalues of 1.7 and 1.5 respectively, and each extracted an additional 6 per cent of the total variance. Factors 4, 5 and 6 had eigenvalues of 1.2, 1.1 and 1.0, respectively, and extracted 4.2, 4.1 and 3.8 per cent of the variance. If we use a factor weighting of .35 as a cutoff point, the above table provides the "factor weightings" – the "correlations" between individual items and the derived "factor" – for the 6 factors extracted.

With some significant exceptions the dimensionality of school leavers' assessments, as revealed by the factor analysis, does conform rather closely to that originally proposed, as the factor "labels" and the individual items included clearly indicate in Table 3.3.

The first and main factor extracted refers mainly to respondents' assessments of the attainment of personal and social development goals. However, ability to "think for oneself", general preparation for adult life

[3] Eigenvalues are statistical measures of the total variance extracted by the factor. Their relative size provides an index of factors' relative importance.

and for public civic responsibilities, and cross sex relationships are also moderately correlated with this factor. The most highly intercorrelated cluster of items that represent this dimension is, therefore, very close to that hypothesised (see Appendix 3A). It does appear, however, as if preparation of such competencies in interpersonal relationships as ability to communicate, self-confidence and assertiveness – the hypothesised aspects of personal and social development – are also judged as moderately correlated with ability to "think for oneself". Not too surprisingly, perhaps – though not hypothesised – the development of all of these qualities appears also to be linked to the development of ability to perform well in adult roles.

Clearly, however, the main dimension tapped here is that of personal and interpersonal development, in which the development of self-confidence and associated personal competencies, and of capabilities in constructing new adult interpersonal relationships and organisational roles, are the most important aspects.

The second factor is much more general or diffuse in context but is restricted to 7 adjoining questions in the interview schedule which asked people to rate their own education, or what could be interpreted as their own school, on how well it provided programmes of instruction in personal, social and cognitive development and preparation for work and adult life. With two exceptions (provision of basic education and preparation for third-level entry) the scaled responses to these questions – from "very well" provided to "not at all" provided – were highly intercorrelated. This suggests that respondents were judging the adequacy of their own school's programmes in an overall or summary fashion – one which did not distinguish between different programme evaluations in the same way as the other more dispersed set of questions had done.

The main items here refer both to the adequacy of preparation for adult life roles and to personal development, linking the development of personal qualities of rationality, self-reliance and value assertiveness with preparation for work and associated adult roles. Whereas the first factor, therefore, emphasised the effectiveness with which their education had developed personal and social qualities and skills of use in later life, this second factor is specifically directed towards assessing the adequacy of provision of instructional or developmental programmes in their own schools for adult life preparation. The hypothesised dimension of preparation for adult roles does not emerge therefore (see Appendix 3A). Instead there emerges a much more general assessment of the adequacy of schooling preparation for entry to "open society".

The third factor refers exclusively to very utilitarian assessments of

schools as providing people with knowledge and skills of use in work life and related adult roles in general. This factor, therefore, emerges as hypothesised (see Appendix 3A).

Factor 4 refers to very basic educationally-based knowledge and skills: reading, writing and calculating competencies; as well as mental, attitudinal and personal discipline associated with good pupil roles. So, being able to concentrate and "keep time" are linked attributes. Revealingly, the few general cognitive or intellectual development questions (e.g., ability to think through things, etc.) do not load highly on this factor but tend to be "scattered", particularly on F1 – dealing with personal and social development, or on F2 – preparation for adult roles or "open society". Again this pattern of response is not as hypothesised, but these item responses are correlated with the set of items on F4 – though not as highly so as with other dimensions.

Factor 5 refers to effectiveness of preparation for participation in public or civic roles; but, interestingly, preparation for adult sex roles also loads highly here. Since it also loads on F1 (personal and social development), it appears as if respondents view and experience such relationships as both interpersonal and "public".

Finally, Factor 6 refers to respondents' personal dissatisfaction with some particular deficit in their educational background, or to a current personal educational deficit that they would like to or intend to correct. The responses to these two questions are highly correlated, although responses to one of the items also loaded highly on the "preparation for work" factor. In other words the preoccupation about educational defects is linked most closely with evaluation of one's educational preparation for work. However, the two items jointly form a separate dimension and will be treated as such.

So, in most respects the originally hypothesised dimensions do appear: "basic education", personal and social development, preparation for work and adult roles, as well as preparation for civic/political roles, etc. However, the evaluation of the intellectual-cognitive aspects of educational development do not "load" on basic education – though they are correlated; and preparation for work and adult roles tend to load together. Perhaps there are too few items dealing with the cognitive development aspect of education to allow them emerge as a separate dimension, but it is revealing that the two items concerned are most highly intercorrelated with factors other than "basic education". In addition to the above factors a separate and very general dimension appears: a general utilitarian assessment of one's own school's adequacy, which emphasises a more general assessment of preparation for adult and work life as well as ability to think and act for oneself.

The following sections detail school leavers' satisfaction with each of these separate dimensions of educational provision. In each case the items are rank ordered in terms of level of satisfaction. We will take each dimension in the order it emerged starting with the first and most important factor – in terms of the total variance it explains – personal and social development.

Dimension 1: Satisfaction with personal and social development goals

Table 3.4 provides the results for dimension 1 – the personal and social development objectives of educational preparation.

Table 3.4: *Items and Responses to Questions on Dimension 1.*

Items	*Responses*		
To what extent has education benefited or helped you in the following ways?	*"Yes A lot"*	*"Yes Some"*	*"No Help"*
		Per cent	
1. (3403) "Making new friends"	54.6	37.9	7.5
2. (3412) "Helping you to get on with other people"	40.9	49.9	9.1
3. (3415) "Talk and communicate well"	38.3	53.0	8.7
4. (3411) "Think for yourself"	33.2	53.4	13.4
5. (3402) "Increased your self-confidence"	30.2	49.5	20.2
6. (3406) "Develop into a well balanced person"	22.0	56.9	21.1
7. (3404) "Preparation for adult life in general"	19.9	47.1	33.0
8. (3408) "Play responsible part in your society"	18.6	53.3	28.1
9. (3407) "Good relationships with persons of opposite sex"	18.0	35.1	46.8

Compared to the assessment of how well the specifically instrumental educational goals – (the 3 Rs) – are evaluated, schooling performance in achieving these personal and social development goals is not very satisfactory. For interpersonal relationships (items 1 and 2) the general level of assessment is moderately satisfactory – with around half feeling that their schooling helped them "a lot" in making new friends, and 41 per cent feeling they were helped "a lot" to get on well with people. Almost half are moderately satisfied and 1 in 12 or so are very dissatisfied. In general not a bad result.

Satisfaction with schooling, in the sense of perceived benefits from it, in improving personal communication skills and being able to think through things logically and concisely, as well as in developing the self-confidence

necessary to act independently, rationally and decisively (items 3-5) is much lower than this. Only around one-third are very satisfied, a half are moderately satisfied and one-twelfth to one-fifth are highly dissatisfied. So schooling is being moderately to negatively evaluated in these respects. The related aspect of aiding the development of a "well-balanced person" (item 6) is much less satisfactorily served by schooling.

An even less satisfactory position holds for preparation/socialisation for those aspects of adult roles that demand a more public performance: both in constructing interpersonal and organisational relationships and forming good relationships with persons of the opposite sex (items 7-9). In all of these respects schooling preparation appears highly inadequate. Less than 1 in 5 respondents are highly satisfied and between a quarter to a half are highly dissatisfied.

In general, therefore, as one moves from the general level of preparation for constructing interpersonal relationships to personal communicational skills and the development of personal qualities of reasoning and self-confidence, and then to preparation for adult organisational roles and heterosexual relationships, satisfaction percentages decline continuously. It appears indeed as if successful socialisation becomes more problematic as one moves from the interpersonal to the public and organisational level. There is one apparent exception to this trend: preparation for relationships with the opposite sex – where dissatisfaction is at its highest. It may well be, of course, that respondents conceive of such relationships less as private matters but more in the context of constructing new and initially more public relationships.

Dimension 2: Overall assessment of effective schooling as preparation for adult life

The 7 items involved in this factor are highly intercorrelated and form a single scale. They constitute a quite specific assessment by respondents of the adequacy of their secondary schooling as a general preparation for adult life roles, as well as some linked personal qualities such as self confidence, "ability to think through things" and ability to think for oneself. It is, therefore, a very general assessment of the adequacy of one's educational preparation for the transition to adult life – or for life in "open society", to use the Department of Education phrase. In the following table we give the 7 items in the rank order of their satisfaction – from most to least satisfactory. For comparative purposes we include respondents' assessments of the effectiveness of teaching the 3Rs, as well as how well third level entrants evaluated the quality of their preparation for entry. Responses to all 7 items – excluding the first and last – are moderately to highly correlated with each other and can be aggregated to form a single

attitudinal scale of overall schooling assessment as a preparation for adult life.

Table 3.5: *Overall Assessment of How Satisfactory Second Level Schooling was for Entry to "Open Society"*

Rank Order of Satisfaction of items	*School or educational programmes were "very well" provided for*	*Programmes were "not at all" provided for*
	Per cent	
1. (3Rs)	(75)	(1)
2. Do good job well	29	24
3. Preparation to get a good job	21	33
4. Think through things	21	23
5. Prepare for adult life	18	35
6. Develop self–confidence	17	26
7. Prepare to implement values	14	34
8. Role in Public Affairs	6	60
9. (Well prepared for third level)	(30)	(27)

As already discussed, schools are very highly evaluated on their basic educational and direct curricular and pedagogical goals. With the "3 Rs" 98 per cent of respondents felt that the objectives were very important and had been very well or moderately well provided for by schools. Only 2 per cent were highly negative about this aspect.

However, evaluation of the less direct and less curricular-based objectives are much less positive. It appears also that the more generalisable the knowledge or skill required – the less tied to particular curricular contents or to particular instructional arrangements – the less *satisfied* become respondents. So general preparation for coping with adult life dilemmas, particularly those which *demand* a self-confident and morally assertive stance, appears to be least satisfactorily provided for. General preparation for work life is the most highly evaluated of the 7 aspects. But only between a quarter to one-third of respondents are very satisfied with their schooling in this respect, with a further 40-50 per cent, however, being moderately satisfied. At the other extreme, are 24-33 per cent who are highly *dissatisfied*. So there is considerable variation in the effectiveness of schools' programmes in these respects.

The next most satisfactory aspect refers to intellectual, personal and social development goals: ability to think through things, development of self-confidence and ability to argue one's point. Only 14-21 per cent are very satisfied with their schooling in these respects, although another 50 to 60 per cent appear moderately satisfied. This gives us a total of around two-thirds who appear to be at least moderately satisfied. But at the other extreme are 23-34 per cent of respondents who are very dissatisfied. There is then not only higher dissatisfaction with schooling in these latter respects – but there is also increasing polarisation in school-leavers' views abut the adequacy of this aspect of their schooling. The underlying reason for this increasing polarisation will be dealt with later. Satisfaction with the adequacy of preparation for public affairs is extremely low, with 60 per cent saying there was no provision whatsoever.

Dimension 3: Assessment of preparation for work life

There are 8 items which load at greater than .35 on this scale. The most highly loaded items refer directly to the adequacy of preparation for work life.

Table 3.6: *Assessment of the Adequacy of Preparation for Work Life*

Items	*"Yes, a lot" or, "very well"*	*"Yes, somewhat*	*"No", or "not at all"*	*(N)*
		Per cent		
1. (3516) Programmes provided to be able to do a good job	29.1	47.4	23.5	(1130)
2. (3409) Increase chances of getting a good job	21.1	43.1	29.2	(1130)
3. (3514) Programmes provided to prepare you to get a good job	20.6	46.7	32.7	(1093)
4. (3404) Preparing you for adult life in general	19.9	47.1	33.0	(1128)
5. (3408) Ability to play responsible part in your society	18.6	53.3	28.1	(1131)
6. (3405) Provided better understanding of world of work	12.9	34.1	53.0	(1132)
	Yes, of great use	*Yes, quite good*	*Some but little*	*None*
7. (3101) Education for work, coping with employment and working life	5.0	25.0	41.0	28.0(1132)
8. (3201) Education – preparation "for adult life in general"	5.0	29.0	38.0	29.0(1117)

Satisfaction with practical preparation for work life is very low. Around half are moderately satisfied, with the remainder split between being highly dissatisfied and highly satisfied. In actually coping with everyday work life (item 7), however, up to 70 per cent are clearly not satisfied. Obviously different question wordings are giving different responses, but the overall pattern of response is negative – and much more so than for the personal and social development aspects of education. Satisfaction with the related aspect of preparation for adult roles and for life in general is also negative with similar percentages being very dissatisfied or seeing their education as of no use at all in these respects (items 5 and 8).

Dimension 4: Satisfaction with basic or fundamental educational skills or competencies

Four items in all constitute this dimension of educational assessment: provision of reading, writing and arithmetic or calculating competencies; as well as the extent to which a limited set of personal disciplines or competencies were built up by schooling; ability to concentrate, timekeeping or time budgeting, etc.

The following results generally indicate a rather high level of satisfaction with those aspects of education.

Almost 80 per cent of respondents appeared very satisfied with their schooling in generating adequate reading, writing and calculating skills. Seventy-nine per cent said that schools benefited them a lot in reading and writing, and 75 per cent indicated that these important functions, combined with calculating, etc., were very well provided for in their education. However, between 1 to 3 per cent were highly dissatisfied. Basic mathematical skills are not as highly evaluated as reading or writing skills – with only 58 per cent of respondents giving it full marks, so to speak; and 8 per cent saying it failed badly in this respect.

As to rather basic personal skills and competencies, required for modern "technically rational" society with its increasingly rigid bureaucratic arrangements – like timekeeping, ability to concentrate, ability to discriminate in time allocation, etc. – respondents were somewhat less satisfied. Around half were very satisfied but almost 10 per cent were very dissatisfied. Nevertheless, compared to other aspects of schooling it is obvious that it apparently does succeed in building up these competencies to a greater extent than in other areas.

As already indicated the selected "cognitive development" items did not "load" or were not most highly correlated, with this dimension of education – although they were correlated at a rather low level. If we include these items and compare levels of satisfaction with "basic

education" and cognitive development, the following order of satisfaction emerges:

1. Reading and writing (75 – 80)
2. Mathematics – calculating skills (60 – 70)
3. Timekeeping, concentration skills (50)
4. Ability to think for oneself (35)
5. Development of self-confidence (30 – 40)
6. Ability to think through things (21).

Table 3.7: *Satisfaction with Basic Educational Preparation*

	Items	*Responses* "Yes A lot"	"Yes, Some"	"No Help"	*(N)*
			Per cent		
1. (3401)	Extent to which second level education benefited helped "in giving you sufficient reading and writing skills"	79.2	18.3	2.5	(1131)
		Function very well provided	*Somewhat or moderately provided for*	*Not at all provided for*	*(N)*
2. (3510)	Extent to which schooling enabled or provided ability to "read, write and do calculations well"	74.6	24.1	1.3	(1090)
		"Yes A lot"	*"Yes, Some"*	*"No Help"*	*(N)*
3. (3410)	Extent to which schooling gave sufficient knowledge and skill to calculate amounts (etc.) for work and everyday life purposes	57.8	34.7	7.7	(1134)
4. (3414)	Extent to which schooling helped in developing "timekeeping" skills, and "being able to concentrate well on doing things"	50.1	40.5	9.4	(1129)

So one could say that schooling is generally very satisfactory in its direct, curricular based educational functions, adequate for the general technical competencies that are clearly related to such learning (such as concentrating and timekeeping) but not very satisfactory in building up those

aspects of "substantive rationality" that are of central relevance in modern societies.

Dimension 5: Assessment of preparation for political/civic roles and responsibilities

A clear dimension of preparation for civic/public responsibilities and roles emerged. Three separate political/civic questions were involved. The responses to two additional questions – relationships with opposite sex friends and understanding of world of work – were also moderately to highly correlated. However, since they deal with quite different subjects and are included in other dimensions, they are excluded here.

Table 3.8: *Satisfaction with Preparation for Adult Civic/Political Roles*

Items	*Responses*			
Extent to which respondent felt that second level schooling benefited or helped	*"Yes a lot"*	*"Yes some"*	*"No help"*	*(N)*
		Per cent		
1. (34.13) Helping to understand Politics and how to make political decisions	5.8	26.7	67.5	(1129)
2. (34.08) Increasing ability to play a full and responsible part in society	18.6	53.8	28.1	(1131)
	"Very well provided for"	*"Somewhat well provided for"*	*"Not at all provided for"*	
3. (35.15) Extent to which school actively provided/ helped to develop ability "to take an an active role in public affairs and in contributing to solving your country's and community problems"	5.7	34.7	59.6	(1088)

Here we can see that in civic and political terms the schools are failing dismally: only 5-19 per cent are very satisfied, while up to two-thirds feel that schools do nothing to achieve this objective. However, as already indicated, school leavers do not generally think this educational objective is very important. So, if we limit high dissatisfaction to those who feel that it actually is an important function of schools only 22 per cent are very dissatisfied; with another 18 per cent dissatisfied but not apparently too upset since they do not consider such civic/political education to be very important. So, although it is least provided for of all objectives the majority

viewpoint of clients suggests that they are not really too upset about the relative absence of civic education.

Dimension 6: Specific educational defects identified by school leavers

As already discussed a number of questions dealt with respondents' specific disappointment with particular aspects of their education. Two of them, as we have seen, were scalable and were included in the factor analysis. It was expected that they would be most highly correlated with the more practical, or work related, evaluation of education. The scaled responses to these two questions were so highly correlated with each other, however, that they emerged as a separate factor.

The first question asked "thinking of all the education and training you received, do you feel *strongly* that it lacked something or that there were major defects in it?" Fifty-three per cent of respondents felt strongly that it was defective, 47 per cent indicated clearly that it was not.

The related question asked "Are there any qualifications or certificates, or particular training you would really like to get, which you think would improve your chances of getting a good job (or help you in your present job)?" Forty-five per cent of respondents replied "Yes", that they would like to get additional educational qualifications, and 55 per cent replied "No".

On average, therefore, around half of these school leavers felt strongly that their education had been defective in some specific way and roughly the same proportion would like to or intended to get additional qualifications to try and correct these defects. The nature of these defects and the nature of the additional qualifications sought will be described later. Here we emphasise both the magnitude of the dissatisfaction involved, and the correlation between such dissatisfaction and intentions to correct it: around two-thirds of those who felt their education was defective would clearly like to correct it. Nevertheless over one-third did not. In fact, less than one-third were definite in their intention to do so. So the experience of educational failure and the explicit perception of the necessity for additional educational qualifications does not necessarily lead to definite plans to correct this deficit for a majority of school leavers. The reasons why this occurs will be explored later.

Dimension 7: Assessment of adequacy of preparation for third level

The questions dealing with the adequacy of preparation for third level were not included in the factor analysis because these questions were only asked of those who had actually gone on to third level – around 1 in 4 of the total sample.

Two specific questions were asked. (i) The first asked: "how important ... should ... [it be] .. to be well prepared for all the courses you had to do in third level?". Eighty eight per cent said it was "very important", and less than 1 per cent said it was unimportant. (ii) The second question asked "how well ... provided" were such courses in preparation for third level? Only 30 per cent said such courses were well provided, but another 43 per cent said they were moderately well provided. However, 27 per cent said that they were "not at all" well provided. So, although a slight majority exists on the very favourable side of the balance, a large minority is highly dissatisfied with these aspects of second level education; particularly given the emphasis on this objective.

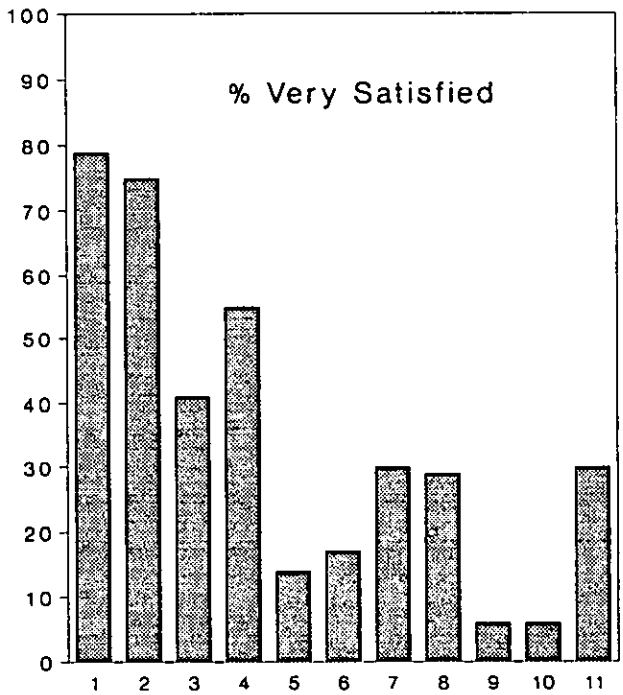
Summary and Conclusions

As we have seen respondents tended to view and judge the quality of their educational experiences along 6 dimensions: (i) basic education and related personal disciplines, (ii) personal and social development, (iii) a general or overall assessment of preparation for adult life provided by their specific schools, (iv) adequacy of preparation for work roles, (v) preparation for civic, political and public communal roles. The sixth dimension which emerged referred to specific educational defects that people had experienced in their work and adult lives, some of which they still hoped to remedy. Because questions about it were restricted to third-level entrants, assessment of the adequacy of third-level preparation is treated separately. Cognitive development items did not "load", as hypothesised, on "Basic Education".

The level of client satisfaction expressed conformed to the above ordering of the dimensions. The most satisfactory outcome, or goal best achieved, was "basic education"; and the least satisfactory was civic and political education. The following figure illustrates these results clearly. The figure reports the percentages who are very satisfied with each of the main assessment dimensions of education isolated, using the items most highly correlated with each "factor" or dimension of educational assessment. Attitudinal type scales have been constructed for each of these factors. Details about these are given in the relevant chapters and the average dissatisfaction score for each scale is given in Appendix Figure 3A. In Figure 3.1 the items are ordered in terms of the order of satisfaction.

As already discussed satisfaction with "basic education" is very high, with personal and social development moderate, with preparation for work and adult roles moderate to low; and with "civic education" extremely low. Satisfaction with third-level entry preparation is moderately high – roughly on a par with that of personal and social development.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of Respondents 'Very Satisfied' with the six Dimensions of Educational Evaluation



Basic Education
1: 'Giving Sufficient Reading and Writing Skills'
2: 'Read,Write and Do Calculations Well'

Personal and Social Development
3: 'Helping You to Get On Well with Other People'
4: 'Making New Friends'

Preparation for Adult Life
5: 'Preparation for Life'
6: 'Developing Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance'

Preparation for Work Life
7: 'Coping with Employment'
8: 'Increase Chances of Getting a Good Job'

Civics and Political Education
9: 'Understanding Politics'
10: 'Active Role in Public Affairs'

Preparation for Third Level
11: 'Well Prepared for Third Level'

In general, therefore, 5 years after school leaving these young adults rate their education highly to very highly on the achievement of the 3Rs, associated personal disciplines and general cognitive development, but generally have found it to be much less satisfactory on nearly all other dimensions – particularly on preparation for effective participation in public life. Peculiarly, after the 3Rs, schools get their next highest rating on personal and social development education, despite the fact that preparation for work and adult life in general receives a higher priority as an educational objective. However, as one moves away from the very basic and very traditional educational goals there is not very much difference amongst the other dimensions in respondents' level of dissatisfaction – except for political education.

In comparing these young adults' assessments of the adequacy of schooling with what they regard to have been essential to it the following conclusions appear clearcut.

1. Basic education and the development of cognitive capabilities, as well as certain personal disciplines, are both regarded as essential and generally receive a high effectiveness evaluation.
2. Preparation for work and entry to adult or "open" society is ranked at an almost equally high level of importance, but in general the level of satisfaction with attainment is moderate to low – generally lower than for personal and social development.
3. Personal and social development goals are perceived to be equally as important as preparation for adult work and other roles but, peculiarly, satisfaction with the effectiveness of schooling programmes to achieve those objectives is slightly more positive than with preparation for work roles. Nevertheless, only about a third of respondents are very satisfied with their schooling in these respects.
4. Dissatisfaction with preparation for third-level entry (amongst those who went on to third level) is moderate – with only 30 per cent being very satisfied. This is dramatically below the 75 per cent of respondents who were very satisfied with their "basic education" provision.
5. Political and civic education is not given high priority by schools and is lowly ranked by school leavers. So, although it shows the highest level of dissatisfaction of all – with over 2 out of 3 respondents very dissatisfied – this dissatisfaction does not as seriously undermine young adults' overall evaluation of their education. Their much less severe disappointments with school programmes on preparation for work or with personal and social development programmes, for instance, carry much more weight.

Schools, therefore, still appear to act as rather isolated institutions which, although they are supposed to prepare people for adult work and societal roles, do not appear to do so effectively; at least according to the views of their graduates. This finding is not unusual in the international literature. The OECD (1983) review in commenting on these rather common international findings gives 3 main reasons why this occurs: (a) the curriculum ignores many of these goals, except insofar as particular vocational courses are provided or particular guidance programmes are effective; (b) the pedagogy is "almost devoid of content relating to work and has an air of isolation from the world outside the school"; and (c) is often taught by teachers who act as if teenagers were 5 year olds, and who do not, therefore, in their teaching indicate how best to live one's life after school, or even after school hours (ibid., p.50). The view then that schooling should be about the world outside, especially about the world of work, and the frustration that it is not, is not only an Irish view.

Irish educational provision expanded very rapidly after the 1960s, and this expansion was, to a large extent, premised on the belief that it should be involved in "preparing the young for economically productive roles, necessary for both national productivity and the individual's ultimate economic success" (ibid., p.50). But as industrial and general economic life becomes constantly transformed by rapid technological change the difficulties of the education system in trying to cope with these changing demands has correspondingly increased.

These rapid economic and technological transformations suggest the *increasing* importance of a good general (and generalisable) education. The issues here are very complex, however, as well as being very important. While one could not, for instance, argue for the unequivocal expansion of immediately practical Vocational education, the very rapid expansion in General educational courses that has occurred to cope with the rapid senior cycle participation increases of the past 15 years, is not likely to have been the best provision available for average to low ability pupils. The issues involved, however, require much further investigation before coming to any practical policy conclusion. There is no doubt, however, about school leavers' conclusions.

Perhaps it is partly because of these rapid economic and technological changes that schools have moved away from actual contact with the world of work as their programmes have expanded in scope and coverage in almost all OECD countries (ibid., p. 51). The consequences, however, of this trend toward a more General Academic education is likely to have been least helpful for working class youth – whose home life is most removed from the Academic culture of the school (Willis, 1977; Gaskell and Lazerson, 1981; OECD, 1983, p. 51).

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3A

Details of the attitudinal questions used in the factor analysis to tap the 6 hypothesised educational assessment dimensions

1. *General Intellectual and Cognitive Development Goals, and Acquisition of Basic Educational Skills.*

(i) (34(11)) "To what extent do you feel that your second level education has benefited or helped you to think for yourself?
Responses: Yes, a lot ( ). Yes, Some ( ). None ( ).

(ii) (35(12)) "How important should (the following) be?
"To think through things and come to clear and good solutions to problems":
Responses: Very Impt. ( ). Impt. ( ). Not Impt. ( ).

(iii) (35(12)) and "How well provided was it in your education" – "To think through things".
Responses: Very Well ( ). Somewhat ( ). Not Well ( ).

(iv) (34(15)) "To what extent has your education benefited you "in being able to talk and communicate well with others?"
Responses: Yes, a lot ( ). Yes, Some ( ). None ( ).

(v) (34(14)) "To what extent has your education benefited you in timekeeping, and being able to concentrate well on doing things?"
Responses: Yes, a lot ( ). Yes, Some ( ). None ( ).

(vi) (34(1)) "To what extent has your education benefited you in giving you sufficient reading and writing skills?"
Responses: Yes, a lot ( ). Yes, Some ( ). None ( ).

(vii) (34(10)) "To what extent has your education benefited you in giving you sufficient knowledge and skill in calculating amounts (money, etc.) in work and everyday life?"
Responses: Yes, a lot ( ). Yes, Some ( ). None ( ).

(viii) (34(1)) "How important should this be in education?
(a) to be able to read and write well":
Responses: Very Impt. ( ). Impt. ( ). Not Impt. ( ).

(ix) (35(10)) (b) "How well provided was (the following) in your education?" – "To be able to read and write well?"
Responses: Very Well ( ). Somewhat ( ). Not Well ( ).

2. *Personal, Social and Character Development Goals*

"To what extent do you feel that your education has benefited you:

		Responses		
		Yes, A lot	Yes, Some	None
(34(12))	"In increasing your self-confidence?"	( )	( )	( )
(34(3))	"In making new friends"	( )	( )	( )
(34(6))	"In helping you develop into a well balanced person"	( )	( )	( )
(34(7))	"In building good relationships with friends of the opposite sex"	( )	( )	( )
(34(12))	"In helping you to get on with other people"	( )	( )	( )
(35(i))	"How important should goals be" and			
(35(ii))	"How well were they provided?"			
		Importance?		
		Very Impt.	Not Impt.	Impt.
(35(2))	"To have good programmes to help young people's self-confidence and self reliance?"	( )	( )	( )
		How Well Provided?		
		Very Well	Not Well	Well
		( )	( )	( )
		Importance?		
		Very Impt.	Not Impt	Impt.
(35(4))	"Good preparation for life or in preparing young people develop and apply good values to everyday problems".	( )	( )	( )
		How Well Provided?		
		Very Well	Well	Not Well
		( )	( )	( )R

3. *"Preparation for Adult Life in General": School Goals*

		Responses			
(32(a))	"Thinking of things on a much wider scale than the getting of jobs or of work, how much did you gain from your second level education in preparing you for your adult life in general	Yes, Great Use	Yes, Good Use	Some Use	No Use
		( )	( )	( )	( )
		Yes, A lot	Yes, Some	None	
(34(4))	In preparing you well for adult life in general:	( )	( )	( )	
(34(15))	In being able to talk and communicate well with others	( )	( )	( )	
		"How Important"			
		Very	Some	None	
(35(i))	"How important should these goals be"	( )	( )	( )	
(35(ii))	"How well were they provided for?"	"How Well Provided"			
		( )	( )	( )	
(35(8))	To prepare you well for adult life when you leave school				

4. *Preparation for the World of Work*

		Yes, Great Use	Yes, Good Use	Yes Some Use	None
(31(a) and (b))	"To what extent have you found that the things you learned then (at second-level and third-level) have been of use to you in coping with employment and working life?"	( )	( )	( )	( )

		Yes, A lot	Yes, Some	None
(34(5))	"In giving you a better understanding of world of work?	( )	( )	( )
(34(9))	"In increasing your choices of getting a good job?"	( )	( )	( )
(34(14))	"In timekeeping and being able to concentrate well on doing things?"	( )	( )	( )

		How Important? Very	Some	None
(35(i))	"How important should these goals be in education?"	( )	( )	( )
(35(ii))	"How well were they provided for?"	How Well Provided? ( )	( )	( )
(35(5)(i) and (ii))	"To be well prepared to get a good job?"	How Important? Very ( )	Some ( )	None ( )

		How Well Done? Very	Somewhat	Not at all
Q.36(7)(i) and (ii)):	"To be able to do a good job well (when you get one)."	( )	( )	( )

5. *Preparation for Civic, Political and Community Roles*

		Responses Yes, A lot	Yes, Some	None
(34(8))	"In increasing your ability to play a full and responsible part in your society"	( )	( )	( )
(34(13))	"In helping you to understand politics and how to make political decisions"	( )	( )	( )
(35(i))	"How important should these goals be?"; and			
(35(ii))	"How well were they provided for?"			

		How Important? Very	Some	None
(35(6))	"To take an active role in Public Affairs, and be able to contribute to solving your community's and country's problems".	( )	( )	( )

	How Well Done Very	Somewhat	Not at all
	( )	( )	( )

6. *Specific Educational Achievement Defects*

(37(01)): "Any qualifications you would like to get which you think would improve your chances of getting a good job or help you in your present job?" Yes ( ) No ( )

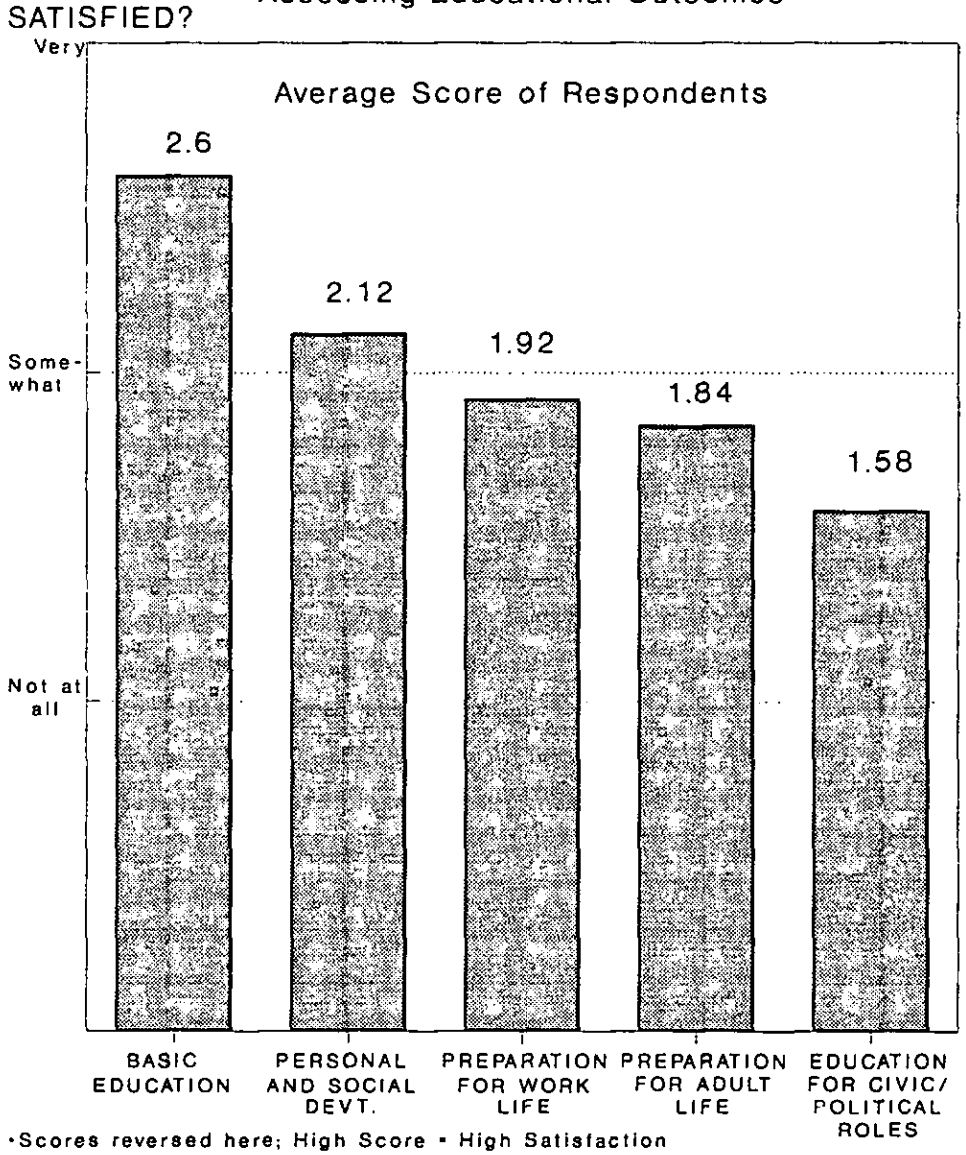
(33(01)) "Do you feel strongly that your education lacked something?" Yes ( ) No ( )

7. *Preparation for Third-Level Entry*

How Important?		How Important?		
(35(i))	"How important should ———— be in education";	Very	Some	None
(35(ii))	"How well were they provided for?"	( )	( )	( )

		How Well Done		
(35(8)	"To be well prepared for all the courses and things you had to do in third level."	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
		( )	( )	( )

Appendix Figure 3A: Average Satisfaction Scores• on each of 5 Likert scales of Attitudes Assessing Educational Outcomes



•Scores reversed here; High Score = High Satisfaction

Chapter 4

TRANSITION TO WORK: SCHOOL LEAVERS' EXPERIENCES AND ASSESSMENTS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Introduction: Education and the Labour Market

The main objective of this chapter and the next is to analyse school leavers' assessments of, and attitudes towards, their education, in terms of its value or utility for work: to get a job, to do a job well, to provide an understanding of the world of work, and prepare them for work and associated adult roles. While in the following chapter we examine overall satisfaction with the utility of education for work and perceived defects in the provision of that education, in this chapter we focus more specifically on both the experienced and perceived relationship between educational outcomes and labour market success. In particular we analyse the perceived importance among school leavers of the type of education and the level of certification required to get a job. Before, however, we can do this we need to briefly examine the actual relationship between education, training and employment chances. This is examined in great detail in Breen (1991).

International (OECD, 1989; Raffe, 1984; 1988) and Irish research (Breen, 1984; 1991; Hannan, 1986) has shown the central role that educational attainments play in labour market access – to both the probability of getting a job as well as the quality or status of the job achieved. The central role that level of educational achievement plays in initial occupational status attainment has been isolated from the early 1960s (Blau and Duncan, 1967). Equally, the serious labour market disadvantages suffered by poor educational attainers or early school leavers, has been isolated from at least the 1950s. Besides the *level* of educational attainment, the type of curriculum specialised in, or "track" or "stream" allocated to or chosen, has also been shown to be very important in occupational attainment (Hallinan *et al.*, 1984; Hallinan and Sorenson, 1985; Shavitt, 1984).

The significance or relevance of qualifications has been shown to have grown in importance with the 1980s recession, as youth unemployment grew (Raffe, 1988; Raffe and Courtney, 1987; Shelly, 1987). So, both the possession of a portable educational or training qualification, as well as the

level or value of the qualification, plays a crucial role in labour market access for young school leavers.

Education and the Labour Market: The Research Evidence

Common sense notions, as well as human capital and functionalist theory, suggest a direct relationship between the quantity and quality of education or training received and both the probability of getting a job and satisfaction with education: the "quantity" and "quality" of educational resources available for sale in the labour market mainly determining employment and the quality of occupation achieved. These ideas suggest that it is the content or quality of the knowledge, know-how, and skills possessed that directly determines employment chances and expected labour productivity. This approach primarily emphasises the cognitive development, or manual training, direct link with labour productivity. But outside a very narrow range of occupations – for example, certain skilled manual or craft occupations, and certain professional/technical occupations – this "direct connection" is rarely obvious. Indeed, many surveys of employers' opinions, or studies of employment decisions, indicate that a much broader or more general assessment of educational/training contents and qualifications is used in employment decisions (see Raffe (ed.), 1988; Brown and Ashton (eds.), 1987; OECD, *Employment Outlook*, July 1989).

Besides the main "human capital" approach, a number of other explanations of the connection between education and work have been proposed, particularly: (i) the "sorting", "screening", or related "queuing", perspective – where employers use qualifications to sort and rank applicants on the basis of certain beliefs about what they measure: and (ii) the "socialisation" perspective which emphasises the role of education in socialising young people into work-related attitudes and aptitudes – e.g., to carry out orders, timekeeping, concentration and work disciplines, as well as social skills, etc. (see Blaug, 1980; OECD, 1989).

Unfortunately, we do not have any direct evidence for Ireland of employers' perspectives on education nor the role educational characteristics play in employment decisions. Nevertheless, the rapid "qualification inflation" that occurred with the 1980s recession, as well as the economic marginalisation of those leaving schools without any qualifications (Raffe, 1984; Breen, 1984; Hannan, 1986), indicates clearly the extraordinary significance of credentials or qualifications in modern labour markets – and their growth in significance as employment declines, even if the exact nature of the connection between schooling, employment decisions and work remains a problematic issue.

This "tightening bond" between educational qualifications and labour market success would, therefore, suggest not only that the possession of qualifications and their level has a significant impact on labour market success but that it would also be indicative of school leavers' views and attitudes about the usefulness and effectiveness of education. Certifications or qualifications in this sense represent, or symbolise, differential achieved "statuses" in adult society which are almost universally recognised, not least by employers: e.g., University graduate, Leaving Certificate, Inter or Group Certificate holders. As a result, positive attitudes towards the utility of education for employment access is hypothesised to be highly correlated with possession as well as level of qualification, even independently of the attainment of employment or of level of occupational status achieved.

As we are concentrating on evaluations of the very practical or utilitarian aspects of education in this chapter, it is also expected that the type of education received – or the curricular content specialised in – will also be predictive of school leavers' assessments and attitudes. As was demonstrated clearly in Hannan with Boyle (1987), Irish students are severely differentiated by the type and level of curriculum assigned to them, particularly in schools which stream or "track" – the majority of boys' Secondary, Vocational and Comprehensive schools.

Upper streams are assigned Honours Academic curricula, usually with Science, Languages and Honours Maths for boys, and in Languages and History, Geography or Business Studies for girls (see also Hannan, Breen, *et al.*, 1983). Besides this highly academic specialisation at Leaving Certificate level, there has been an historically rooted and equally "biased" specialisation in Vocational/Technical subjects for boys leaving at Intermediate and Group Cert levels. This specialisation had become crystallised in the apprenticeship directed courses in Vocational schools up to the late 1970s; but is still a significant element in Vocational and "Community/Comprehensive" education today (Barber, 1989). Since it is so practically or vocationally oriented, it is hypothesised that pupils who specialise in these subjects will have more positive attitudes than others.

An equivalent, non-academic curricular specialisation for girls, is that in "Commercial Subjects" in the Group Certificate, or in Commerce or Business Studies at Leaving Certificate level. Either can be combined with a subsequent "Commercial Course" (of typing and related Commercial Training), mainly in Vocational schools. Again, here the very practical bias of the course should equally be indicative of positive utilitarian assessments of education.

The socio-economic and related socio-cultural background of students, should be predictive not only of level of educational achievement but also

of school leavers' general evaluations of the utility of their education (see Weir, 1989, for review). Early leavers are recruited mainly from lower working class backgrounds, whose cultural and social-psychological characteristics are generally not supportive of formal education. In addition, such families are most likely to place the main emphasis on the more utilitarian aspects of education. So, if education has failed them, they are also far more likely to "blame education" for their failure.

There is, on the other hand, a possible corrective class bias in the disproportionate selection of, or choice by, working class pupils of vocational/technical subjects or "tracks" (Breen, 1986). Thus, while their social class background may have a negative effect, the practical nature of their courses may, as we hypothesised above, improve their positive assessments of education. Such interlinking effects of social class and curricular "track" will be investigated in the next chapter. First, however, we examine the actual experience of school leavers in the labour market.

The Work Experience of School Leavers 1982 to 1987

Success in the labour market on leaving school was not only highly correlated with level of education attained, but the relative advantage of the better educated improved significantly over time. The following table shows the relationship between employment chances, unemployment rates and level of education attained by 1983, 1984 and 1987.

If we start with the most striking comparison and restrict ourselves to those who first entered the labour force in 1982/83, the unemployment rate stood at 59 per cent of those with no qualifications in May 1983 while it was 36 per cent for those with a Leaving Certificate: a ratio of 1.6 to 1.0. By November 1984, this ratio had widened to 3.6 to 1.0, and by November 1987 to 3.9 to 1.0 (i.e., to a point when the unemployment rate was 43 per cent for the unqualified and 11 per cent for those with a Leaving Certificate).

These relationships are clearly illustrated in the following figure (4.1). The rate of decline in unemployment is minimal for those without qualifications, modest for the intermediately qualified, and quite marked for those with the Leaving Certificate. Most of the improvement, however, had occurred by the end of 1984.

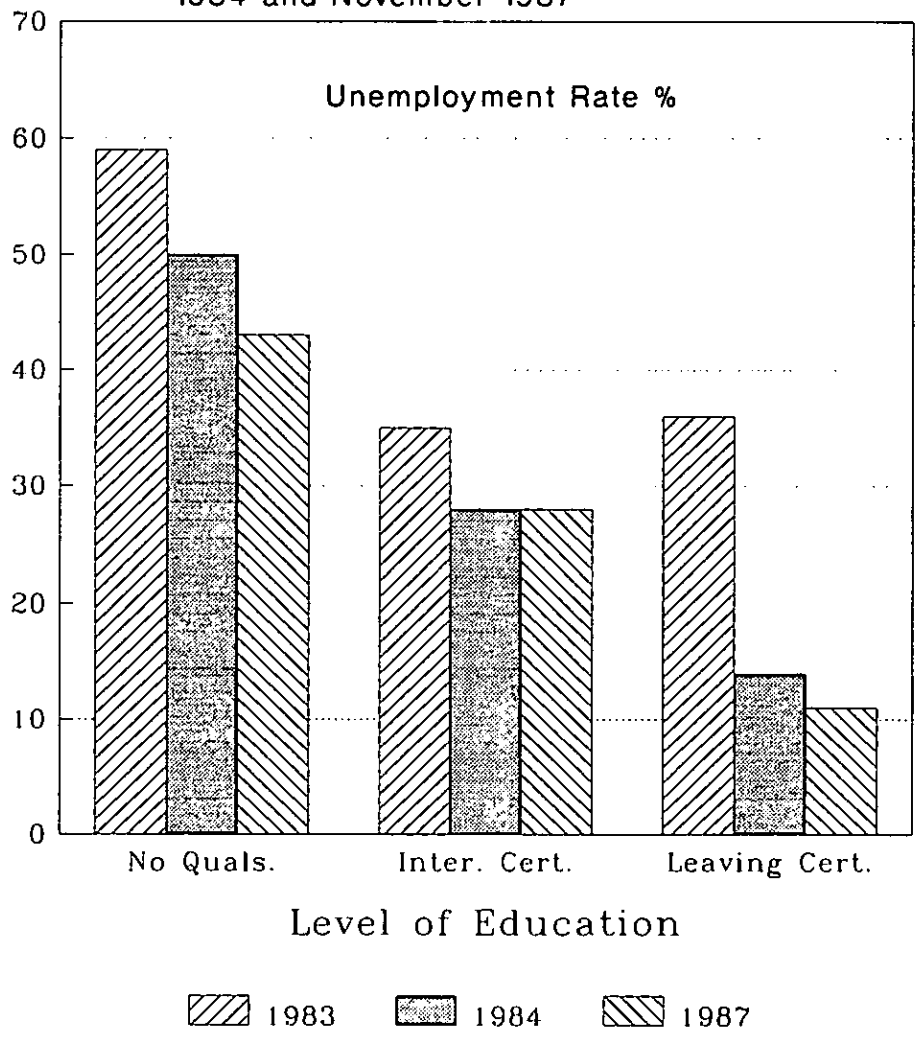
Changes in the relative unemployment rate, however, understate the growing disadvantage of the most poorly qualified because a higher proportion of them gradually pulled out of the labour force altogether – particularly females. Over a quarter of unqualified females had returned to "home duties" by November 1987, for instance, compared to 8 per cent of Leaving Certificate and 1 per cent of third-level graduates (see Appendix

Table A4.1 and Figures A4.1 and A4.2). This withdrawal from the labour force appears to be strongly associated with marriage (80 per cent are married), although well over half of young married women have not retired from the labour force. However, compared to others, young marrieds not retired from the labour force are less likely to have children, and those retired with children have more of them. In addition, the less qualified the young women are the more likely they are to retire from the labour force on marriage or on the birth of children. Over two-thirds of poorly qualified married females have retired, compared to less than 30 per cent of those with the Leaving Cert.

Table 4.1: *Relationship Between Level of Education Attained by 1982/83 and Labour Market Outcomes by 1983, 1984, 1987*

		Level of Education 1982/83						
	Year	*1 No. Quals. (n=114)*	*2 Group Cert. (n=131)*	*3 Inter. Cert. (n=237)*	*4 Post-Inter. (n=94)*	*5 Leav. Cert. (n=640)*	*6 In Third Level (n=390)*	*Total (n=1640)*
				Per cent				
(1) % Total Employed	1983	37	57	61	57	56	9	44
	1984	46	69	69	71	84	22	62
	1987	49	72	66	69	84	77	75
n in LF, May 83		*(n=103)*	*(n=125)*	*(n=223)*	*(n=86)*	*(n=561)*	*(n=38)*	*(n=1136)*
(2) Unemployment Rate (% of those in labour force)	1983	59	42	35	37	36	5	38
	1984	50	31	28	27	14	31	24
	1987	43	27	28	21	11	10	19
(3) % of Total not in labour force	1983	8.5	1.6	6.5	9.2	12.3	90.4	28.3
	1984	7.8	–	3.6	4.4	2.8	68.4	18.9
	1987	13.2	2.3	8.0	12.7	6.0	14.6	8.3
(4) % Students (of Total)	1983	–	–	2.2	8.6	9.9	87.0	26.0
	1984	–	–	0.9	3.3	0.8	67.1	17.1
	1987	–	–	–	–	1.1	13.6	3.7
(5) % Home Duties (female)	1987	26.6	7.2	13.7	26.6	7.7	1.1	9.5

Figure 4.1: Unemployment Rate of School Leavers with 3 Levels of Qualifications in May 1983, November 1984 and November 1987



Overall, therefore, there appear to be 3 different paths into the labour force or alternative adult roles: (i) directly into employment or into relatively secure long-term employment after some initial job-search difficulties. This appears to hold for around two-thirds of those directly entering the labour force upon leaving school. The probability of attaining such secure employment is highly correlated with educational level achieved. (ii) At the other extreme, there is a very deprived group subject to very high levels of unemployment – unemployment which has persisted for 5 to 6 years after leaving school. This is over one-third of those leaving without any qualifications – but appears to hold for less than 10 per cent of those leaving with even minimal educational qualifications. (iii) Finally, amongst the most poorly qualified and most deprived female school leavers there is a minority pattern of "withdrawal" into "home duties". This is mainly due to marriage and new household formation, but a similar minority pattern occurs without marriage for the very poorly educated. These latter patterns of retirement on early marriage or early family formation are almost exclusively working class.

The following figure (4.2) crudely summarises paths of access of the differentially qualified to the labour market.

Figure 4.2: *Relationship Between Educational Qualification and Labour Market Success*

Place in Labour Force	Level of Qualification: Poorly Qualified	Intermediate Quals.	Leaving Cert. Quals.	Third Level
1982/83	Mostly unemployed (c. 60%)	Over half employed, over one-third unemployed	Over half employed, one-third unemployed	Delayed entry for between 2-5 years after second-level schooling
1984/85	Half employed, half unemployed	Over two-thirds employed, but over a quarter remain unemployed	Over 80 per cent employed, with very little unemployment	Then almost complete absorption
1987/88	As above High withdrawal of young women from labour force into "home duties" on marriage	As above Moderate withdrawal of young women into "home duties" roles	Most employed Little, if any, withdrawal by young women into "home duties" roles	

So, given the above and the quite biased distribution of post-school training opportunities, with the almost complete absence of "second chance" education for those with less than a Leaving Certificate qualification, one would expect a very clear relationship between both level and type of education and school leavers' assessments of preparation for adult work roles. If successful transition to employment is the most satisfactory outcome for most respondents, then the more vocationally relevant one's education, and the higher its level, the higher the level of satisfaction is likely to be.

Objectively, therefore, level of education is very important for labour market success – but to what extent do school leavers perceive this to be the case? In the following we examine the importance these school leavers, with their varying labour market experiences, attach to level of qualification and subject "track" in getting jobs. As we shall see, their perceptions appear to conform closely to actual experience.

The Perceived Importance of Certification

The preceding results have clearly demonstrated the importance of educational level and certification for employment.

What importance do educational certifications come to acquire in school leavers' consciousness, however, or how preoccupied do they become about them? It is possible to get some idea of this from questions asked of school leavers about the importance they thought employers attached to different aspects of education and qualifications.

These questions were, of course, asked 5 to 6 years after respondents had left school and entered the labour force – limiting consideration to those who did not go on to third-level. The answers, therefore, do not directly indicate what these school leavers thought when they were in school – but are subsequent reflections based on at least 5 years' post-school experience. They do, however, indicate the relative saliency of different educational and training attainments for young people recently left school and are, therefore, unlikely to be very much different from those of their younger peers still in full-time education. As we shall see later, poor educational attainments do not appear to be subsequently too seriously rationalised or "explained away" – indeed, quite the reverse, in that poor educational attainers with very poor employment experience appear to overemphasise the role of educational credentials. Consequently, these views can be taken as safely representative of the mature reflections of recent school leavers about educational priorities and the effectiveness of educational provision for work life.

First, we asked respondents: "For your first job what importance do you

think your employer attached to the following ... in you getting the job?"[4] Five different aspects of educational attainment were mentioned: highest certificate achieved, examination results, particular subjects taken, particular courses taken – like pre-employment, etc., and particular (AnCO/CERT) training courses.

The following figure (4.3) reports the percentage of school leavers who felt employers had placed "a lot" or "some" importance on these 5 educational or training attainments.

The 5 aspects of education dealt with were clearly ranked in terms of their perceived importance in the labour market. Certifications came first with around two-thirds of respondents regarding them as at least of some importance. Next came the importance of examination results and of particular subjects taken in these examinations – with over 1 in 2 respondents regarding both of these as important. Particular pre-employment Vocational courses were important for almost 1 in 4 respondents. AnCO/CERT courses were, however, regarded as important by only 1 in 6 respondents.

If we limit consideration to those respondents who have had at least one job – almost 90 per cent of all respondents – and who, therefore, have had direct experience of a successful job search, the above figures do not change their relative position. Indeed, the only thing that changes is that in each case the proportionate importance of each aspect of education *declines* by 2 or 3 percentage points: those who have been least successful think each of these aspects of education are more important.

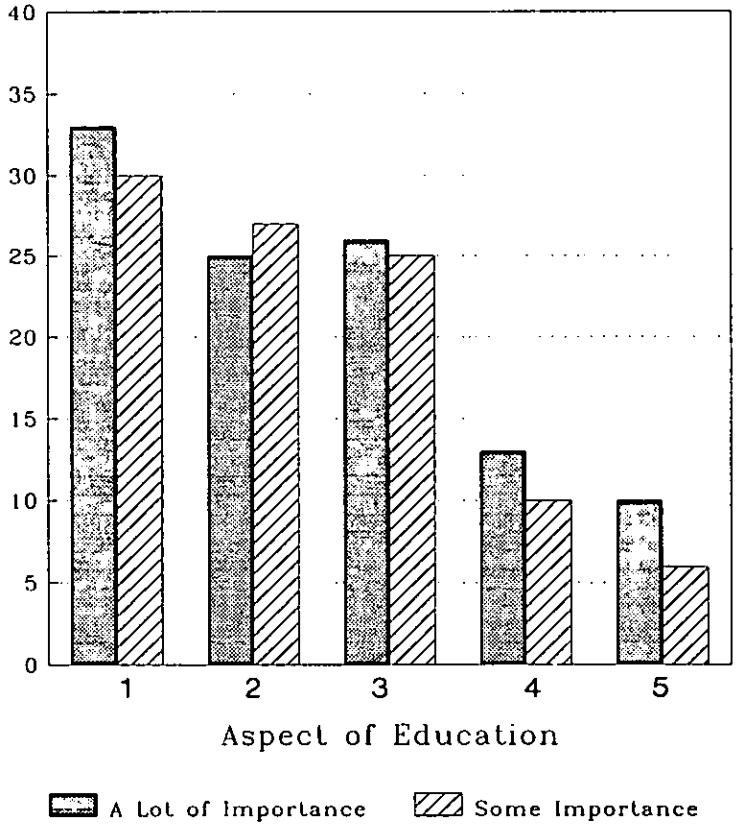
Of those who have had at least one job since leaving school, the importance attached to these 5 aspects of education or training varies very substantially by level of education. And the 3 aspects which most vary are the importance of educational certificates, of examination results and of particular subject taken.

As can be seen in Figure 4.4, the higher the level of education the more important the type and level of certification becomes in getting a job. Certifications appear less significant for the majority of those with unskilled manual jobs, and for those with casual or temporary low skilled jobs; mainly the jobs obtained by the poorly qualified. On the other hand, almost 8 in 10 third-level graduates regarded certification as important, and over 90 per cent of those with a university degree.

Differences in the relative importance of examination results, as well as particular subjects taken, are almost equally as pronounced: those with

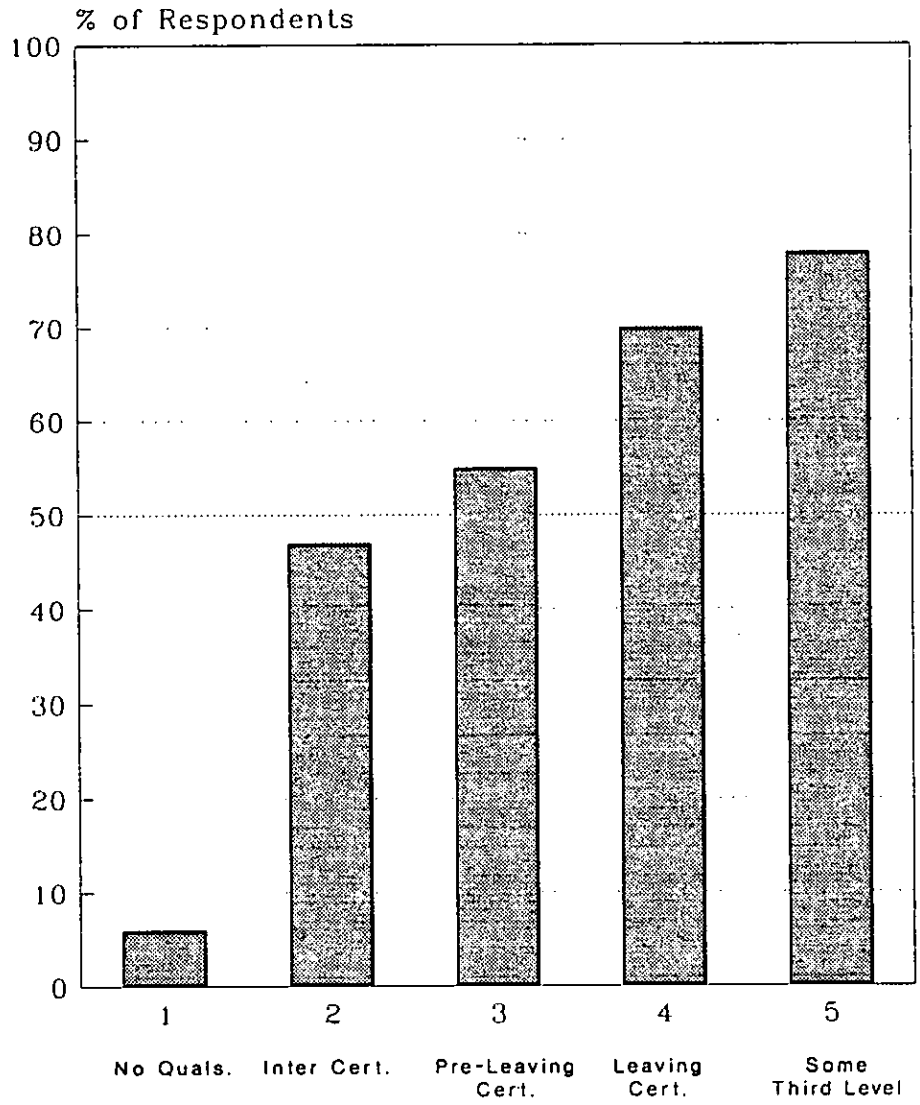
[4] (For those never employed: "Importance employers attach to the following things in giving jobs?")

Figure 4.3: Proportion of Respondents who felt Employers had placed 'a lot' or 'some' importance on five different elements of their education (or training) in deciding whether to give them their first job or not



1: Level of Certificates
2: Actual Exam Results
3: Particular Subjects in Exams
4: Pre-Employment Vocational Courses
5: AnCo/CERT Courses

Figure 4.4:Percentage of Respondents with at least one job who considered that their educational certificates have been at least of some importance to their employer in getting their first job (% 'a lot + 'some')



none or low level qualifications finding that they are relatively unimportant while over two-thirds of those with some third-level education find them to be important, almost 40 per cent finding them to be very important. Obviously, as educational certification level increases, respondents have found that the connection between certification, examination success, educational content, and job type and level tightens.

It could well be, of course, that, given their increasing level of investment in education, it is necessary for the more qualified to believe that it matters! This question of the possible validity of their views will be examined in detail later; but what is very obvious is that for the kind of jobs obtained by poor educational achievers, their educational certification, examination results and type of subjects do not appear to them to be very important; for the highly qualified, on the other hand, they are very important.

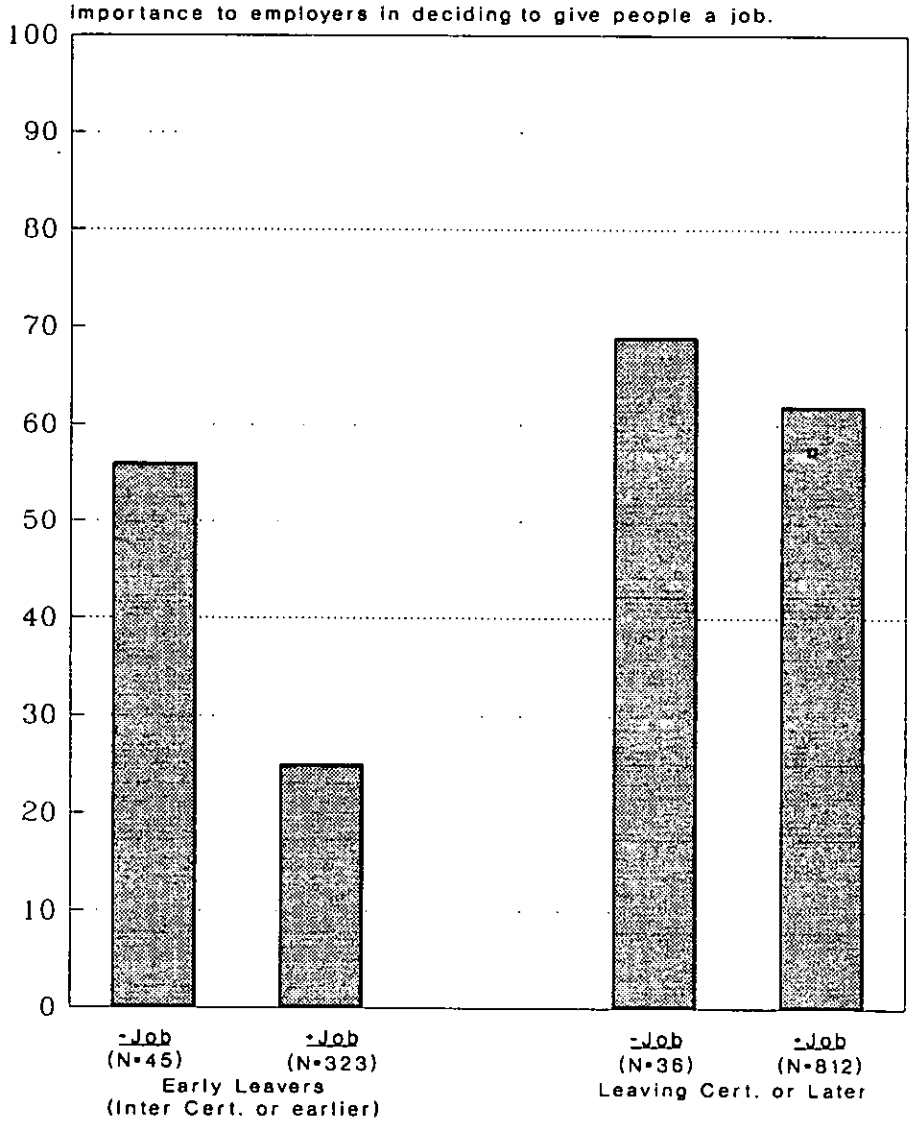
As to particular Vocational courses taken in school – like Vocational Preparation and Training programmes (VPT) or commercial courses, etc. – the only educational group who have found them to be significant are Leaving or Intermediate Certificate respondents who have actually taken these courses. There are no statistically significant differences by educational level for the importance assigned to AnCO/CERT courses – with over 80 per cent of respondents finding them of no importance in getting jobs.

However, only about 10 per cent of school leavers had taken any AnCO/CERT courses – counting only bona fide education-training courses. Of these, a substantially higher proportion – 35 per cent – thought they were of "a lot" of importance in the decision by employers to give them their first job, and only 45 per cent thought they were of no importance. And the probability of reporting such courses as of employment importance increased with the number of such courses taken. There was no statistically significant tendency for the more poorly educated to regard such courses as of lesser, or greater, importance than the better educated.

Peculiarly for those who have never had a job and who are not currently in full-time education, the relevance of educational certification appears to be *more*, not less, important. Their lack of educational credentials appears to them to influence employers' assessments of them to a greater extent than it does to those who have been successful in the labour market. The following figure (4.5) illustrates this clearly.

The perceived relevance of certifications, in other words, is *more* salient for those who were economically unsuccessful at all levels of education; and the lower the level of education the greater this relative difference.

Figure 4.5: Proportions of early school leavers - and of those who left with at least the Leaving Cert. - who:
(a)have had at least one job;and
(b) have never had any job;
who report that educational certifications were at least of some importance to employers in deciding to give people a job.



This clearly suggests that *post-factum rationalisation* is not an important element in economically successful respondents' assessments of the relevance of such certification, i.e., they do not exaggerate the importance of certification because they got a job. In fact, those poor attainers who have been at least somewhat successful in the labour market, appear to have somewhat more realistic judgements of the importance of certification (given the quality of jobs attained) than those who were unsuccessful. The latter apparently attach much greater significance to educational failure in accounting for their lack of economic success. It is almost as if their lack of success in the labour market causes them to assign even more importance to educational credentials than is warranted. And, as we can see from Figure 4.5, the poorer the level of education the much more likely this is to occur. Poor educational attainers with no jobs place almost as much importance on educational attainments as a discriminator as do the most highly qualified with jobs.

In both cases – the economically successful and unsuccessful – the greater the level of education attained the greater the importance attached to it. This pattern holds for certificates, examination results, particular subjects or particular vocational courses taken.

To conclude, therefore, educational certification is perceived as important in actually securing a job in the first place – as well as affecting the level of job attained, and is also perceived to be the most important of the 5 aspects of educational attainment. Significantly, however, the lower the level of certification the lower the relative importance attached to it. This tendency, however, is much less marked amongst those who are unemployed, who appear to regard the absence of qualification as a major blockage to their own attainments.

The Relative Importance of Different Subjects and Other Aspects of Education for Work and Adult Life

If respondents agreed that education was at least of some importance in preparing them for work and adult life, they were asked which subjects or aspects of the education they had received were most useful, in (a) their subsequent working life, and in (b) their related adult roles. The two questions were open-ended and respondents could give a number of responses to each. Responses were coded in the order in which they were given.

Not unexpectedly, given the context within which the questions were asked, individual subjects are the most frequently mentioned as "most useful" (see Table 4.2). The most frequently mentioned subject is Maths, with 22 per cent mentioning it as the most important for work life. English

Table 4.2: *The Relative Importance of Different Subjects and Aspects of Education for Work Life or Related Adult Roles: % Mentioning Subject at Least Once – 2 Questions Amalgamated*

Priority of subjects for aspects of Education	*Level of Education*						*Total x Sex*
	1 No Quals.	*2 Group Cert.*	*3 Inter. Cert.*	*4 Post Inter.*	*5 Leaving Cert.*	*6 Third Level*	*M F*
	– % –						– % –
(1) Maths	23	43	46	42	37	33	45 31 (38%)
(2) English	32	22	45	39	37	31	26 44 (36%)
(3) Personal Development and Social Skills	10	26	19	30	24	26	25 23 (23%)
(4) Business Studies*	1	1	8	15	19	18	16 13 (16%)
(5) Vocational Subjects*	25	46	22	8	7	2	26 0.5% (13%)
(6) Science Subjects*	1	4	3	17	12	14	13 8 (11%)
(7) Home Economics*	22	4	13	15	12	3	0 18 (10%)
(8) Total Basic Education (English + Maths, + 3Rs, etc.)	57	51	67	66	58	55	59 58 (59%)
							N = 1130

* Business Studies = Commerce, Business org., Accounting, Economics, etc.
Vocational Subjects = Woodwork, Metalwork, Engineering Workshop, etc.
Science = Science, Physics, Chemistry, etc.
Home Economics = Domestic Science, Home Economics I & II, etc.

is the next most useful at 16 per cent; then (at 10 per cent) Vocational-Technical Subjects, and Business Studies subjects (at 8 per cent). Home Economics and Science are next at 5 per cent. Very small percentages mention any other individual subject. A minority of respondents did not mention any particular subject but emphasised aspects of general development they experienced while at school. General personal and social development was the most important of such benefits, being mentioned by over 6 per cent of respondents.

The above table (4.2) briefly summarises the relative importance of 8 different subjects or aspects of education to either of the two questions dealing with this issue.

"Basic Education" (almost exclusively Maths or English) is mentioned by almost 40 per cent of respondents. This reaches almost 60 per cent if both are combined with responses like the "3 Rs", etc. But surprisingly, given the context of the questions asked, by far the most important other aspect of education mentioned was personal and social development – at 23 per cent. After that, Business Studies and Vocational-Technical studies were emphasised by 16 and 13 per cent of respondents respectively. Science and Home Economics were mentioned by less than 1 in 9 of respondents.

The relationship of the subject mentioned to level of education is quite pronounced in most cases – though not linearly. For Maths and English, for instance, both the lowest and highest educational attainment categories were amongst the least likely to regard them as important.

The direct relationship to education, however, is very pronounced for Vocational-Technical subjects, as well as for Business Studies and Science subjects. For Vocational-Technical studies the relationship is especially marked, being substantially more important for those who leave school early, particularly for boys with the Group Certificate. The opposite relationship holds for Business Studies and Science – the higher the level the greater the importance. The relationship of Home Economics to educational level is the reverse, being most significant for the most poorly educated girls.

The importance of personal and social development has no consistent relationship to educational level – except that those who left without any qualifications gave it extremely low priority.

What is noticeable, therefore, for the basic "3Rs" subjects is the greater importance attached to them by those leaving school with intermediate qualifications. It has obviously been experienced as most salient and important for them. Over 2 out of 3 of Inter Cert respondents mention one of these basic subjects/skills. It appears, therefore, as if the most poorly educated, when in jobs, do not experience the need for basic linguistic and mathematic skills to the same extent as do those with Inter Cert qualifications. On the other hand, the best qualified do not appear to meet occasions where their objectively better linguistic and mathematical skills are so stretched that they become preoccupied about them. The other "subjects" mentioned have a clearer relationship to educational level, any discrepancies – as in Home Economics – being usually explicable by gender differences.

Gender is almost equally as differentiating as educational level, as is evident from the last column of the table. While Maths is a male preoccupation, English is a female one. But the most marked gender difference is for Vocational-Technical subjects and Home Economics. Both of these are almost exclusively single gender preoccupations – to the point where Vocational subjects equal English in importance for males, and Home Economics almost equals Personal and Social Development for females. Both Vocational-Technical subjects and Home Economics are particularly important for those leaving school with a Group Cert.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the ever-tightening bond between educational certification and labour market success over the 1980s, and school leavers' perceptions of the importance of their educational outcomes in this regard.

Three broad pathways into adult life – if not always into secure employment – exist amongst these school leavers: (i) relatively directly into somewhat secure employment and associated adult roles – particularly amongst the better qualified; (ii) a deprived group subject to enduring high levels of unemployment, particularly amongst the poorly qualified; and (iii) "withdrawal" from the labour force into "home duties" by female school leavers from the most poorly qualified groups. Thus, there appears to be a clear failure of educational preparation for the labour market amongst a significant minority of school leavers; a failure they themselves clearly perceive.

In general, school leavers thought that their level of educational certification was an important factor in getting a job, though perceived as less important by the most poorly qualified, clearly reflecting their position at the lower end of the labour market. Those without a job, however, attribute an even greater importance to qualifications as a factor in gaining employment. This is especially so amongst the least qualified. The actual labour market disadvantage of the most poorly qualified without jobs is, therefore, clearly reflected in their own perceptions of educational failure and its relevance.

Finally, as regards subject choice, while Maths, English and basic education are almost universally seen as important for working life, there was also a strong emphasis on Vocational/Technical subjects amongst boys – particularly the less qualified; and on Home Economics amongst equally disadvantaged girls.

APPENDIX 4

Appendix Table A4.1: *Percentages Employed, Unemployed, Student, Home Duties and Other in May 1983, November 1984 and November 1987 by Level of Education 1983*

	1 No Quals.		*2 Group Cert.*		*3 Inter. Cert.*		*4 Post Inter.*		*5 Leaving Cert.*		*6 Third Level*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
							Per cent					
% Employed:												
May 1983	40	47	53	55	63	61	64	58	54	55	8	11
Nov 1984	44	53	67	65	70	67	85	67	76	80	23	20
Nov 1987	66	43	70	72	70	63	79	59	84	81	79	74
% Unemployed												
1983	53	44	43	42	32	34	33	37	33	30	6	1
1984	53	38	31	27	27	31	15	23	14	14	10	10
1987	32	29	29	14	29	24	21	19	13	10	7	11
Unemployment Rate	(32.7)	40.3	29.3	16.3	29.3	27.6	21	24.4	13.4	11	8.1	12.9
% "Student"												
1983		1	4	–	2	1	4	1	14	12	86	88
1984	1	1	–	–	4	–	–	2	10	3	64	69
1987	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	2	14	13
% "Home Duties"												
1983	1	6	–	3	1	4	–	4	–	1	–	–
1984	–	5	–	5	–	–	–	9	–	3	–	1
1987	–	26	–	11	–	12	–	21	–	7	–	1
% ill, disabled	6	2	1	–	1	–	–	1	1%	2%	–	–
or other	–	3	2	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	2%	–
(i.e., discouraged)	2	–	1	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	1%	1%

Figure A4.1: Unemployment Rate (% unemployed of those in the labour force) of differentially qualified school leavers;May 1983, November 1984,November 1987.

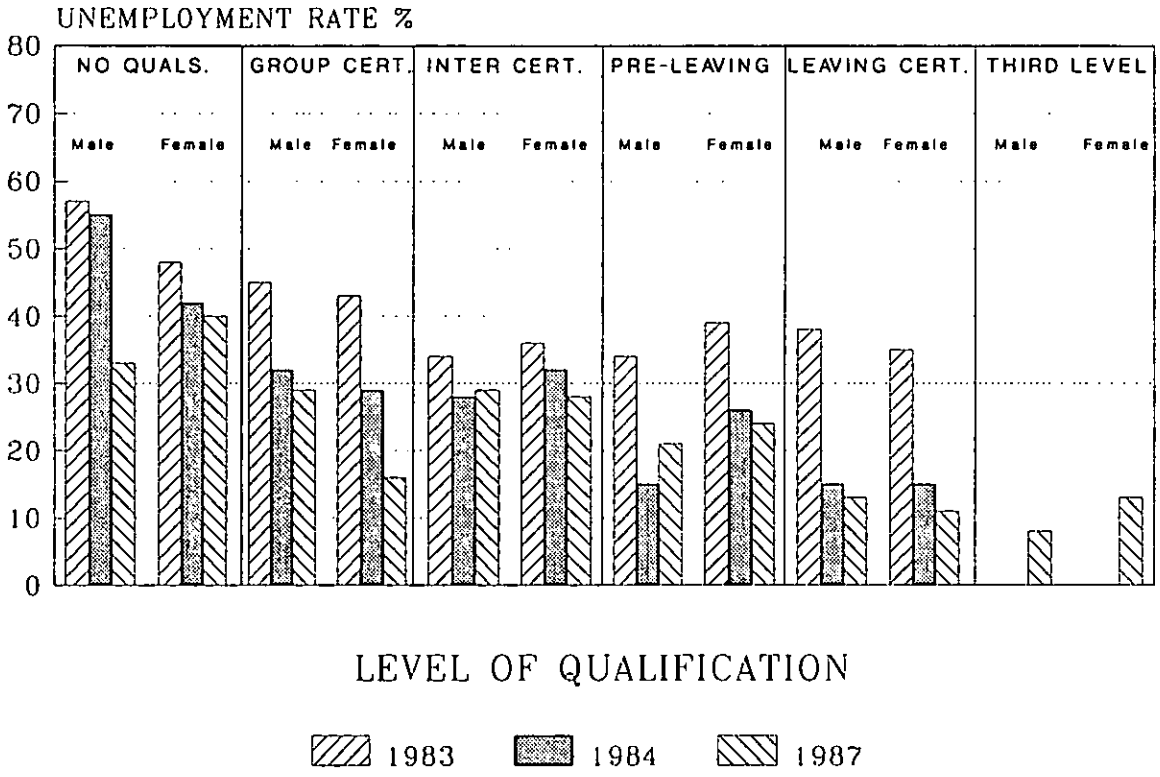


Figure A4.2: The Change in the Proportion of those with 'No Qualifications' who are Employed,Unemployed or in "Home Duties", for each Gender 1983 to 1987

Chapter 5

SCHOOL LEAVERS' ASSESSMENTS OF THE UTILITY OF THEIR EDUCATION FOR WORK AND ASSOCIATED ADULT ROLES

Having examined the actual and perceived importance of educational qualifications in preparing school leavers for the labour market, we now go on to analyse these school leavers' assessments of the utility of their education for work and related adult roles. The main objective of the chapter is to explain why these assessments vary so much – why so positively evaluated by some and so negatively evaluated by others. The main hypotheses guiding the analysis have been elaborated in Chapters 1 and 4 and will be detailed in summary form here. As we have hypothesised that a large number of variables interact with each other to influence such assessments we use multiple regression methods to measure their relative effects. However, before we examine the joint effects of all the independent variables on the overall attitudinal scale measuring school leavers' general assessments of education as preparation for work, we briefly illustrate the relative importance of the most important social background and educational mediating factors on school leavers' assessments.

First, we look briefly again at school leavers' own educational priorities: particularly the priority of educational preparation for work roles. Secondly, we examine the patterns of satisfaction with the achievement of this goal. Thirdly, since level of education and certification appears to be one of the most important variables predicting employment chances, we examine in detail its relationship to school leavers' assessments of the utility of their schooling in this respect. Besides level of education, the type of education received is also attended to, particularly the type of subjects specialised in, or "track" chosen, or assigned to – for example, a highly Academic, Honours level "track"; a Vocational-Technical "track"; or a lower "general" Pass level curricular "track". In addition, one's socio-economic background, gender, and remoteness of place of origin are also likely to affect both employment chances and one's satisfaction with education – in that they are likely to both influence expectations for schooling, as well as satisfaction with it. Having middle class parents, being male and being from more urbanised areas is likely to both increase level of expectation and level of dissatisfaction – all other relevant variables being controlled.

Fourthly, we will try to explain what lies behind the differences in school leavers' satisfaction with the "work utility" of schooling. Besides their actual success or failure in getting a job and their assignment of responsibility for these labour market outcomes to educational attainments – which we examined in the last chapter – we will also examine variation in school leavers' expectations for such utilitarian schooling priorities as preparation for work, and in their complaints regarding the fulfilment of these expectations.

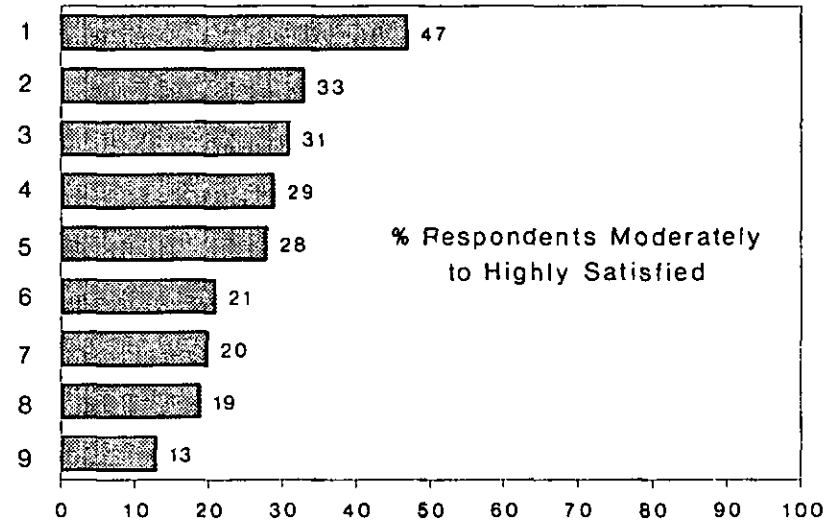
Priorities and Satisfaction with Education for Working Life

As we saw in Chapter 3 there is an almost universal emphasis among school leavers on education as a preparation for work life and adult roles. It is assigned an only slightly lower priority than "basic education" and an almost equivalent priority to personal and social development. The strong priority given to these utilitarian employment aspects of education is emphasised by some results discussed later, where preparation for work figures strongly among unprompted complaints about defects in education, whereas the absence of personal and social development programmes does not (see Table 5.5). These priorities are somewhat differentiated by level of education as we saw in the previous chapter. There is a slight tendency for the better educated – particularly those "choosing" Academic "tracks", and third-level entrants, to place less priority on utilitarian goals, and more priority on general preparation for adult life goals. But these differences are minor, so that the priority of preparation for working life seems to be an almost universal one among school leavers of all levels.

However, while a very high priority is placed on education for working life, the level of satisfaction with the provision of such education is in general very low. The general level of satisfaction is measured by the responses to the questions on the third evaluative dimension identified in Chapter 3 – that of "Preparation for Work Life". As we saw, those 9 attitudinal items load moderately to highly on factor 3, which broadly indicates attitudes towards the adequacy of education for work life and related adult roles. The scaled responses to these 9 items are highly intercorrelated and the overall scale constructed has very high overall reliability (alpha = .84). The detailed responses to these questions have been given in Chapter 3 but Figure 5.1 below summarises those responses which relate specifically to work life.

As can clearly be seen from these responses, the average school leaver does not have the highest opinion of her/his second-level schooling as a preparation for working life. Between one-third to one-half have positive to

Figure 5.1: School Leavers' Assessments of the Adequacy of Their Education for Work Life



1: "Major Defects in Education"
2: "Preparation for Adult Life in General"
3: "Of Use in Working Life"
4: "Able to do a Good Job Well"
5: "Increased Chances of Getting a Good Job"
6: "Programmes Provided to help get a Good Job"
7: "Programmes Provided Preparing you for Adult Life in general"
8: "Increased Ability to Play a Full and Responsible Part in Society"
9: "Better Understanding of the World of Work"

very positive views while about the same proportions have very negative views (see also Table 5.1). Dissatisfaction with second-level education programmes as an adequate preparation for work life and related adult roles is, therefore, general but widely variable. Dissatisfaction appears to be greatest with the provision of coping skills for everyday work life.

Table 5.1: *Percentage of Respondents with very Negative Assessments of the Adequacy of Education for Work Life, by Level of Education by 1983*

	Level of Educational Attainment in 1983						
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	
	No Quals.	*Group Cert.*	*Inter. Cert.*	*Post-Inter. Cert.*	*Leaving Cert.*	*In Third Level*	*Total Correlation* (Pearson)*
	% Saying Education was of "No Use"						
(1) (3101) Extent – things learned have been of use in coping with work life	54	37	32	29	24	23	r = – .18
	% Saying Education was of "No Use"						
(2) (3201) Extent to which gained from education in preparing you for adult life in general	65	33	31	28	25	23	r = – .20
	% Saying it was of "No Help"						
(3) (3409) Extent to which education "increased chances of getting a good job"	69	29	37	39	22	19	r = – .25
	% Saying "Not At All Provided"						
(4) (3405) Education provided "a better understanding of the world of work"	64	38	47	52	52	62	r = .07
	% Saying "Not At All Provided"						
(5) (3514) Percentage saying that educational programmes were not at all provided – to prepare people "to get a good job"	67	41	38	34	28	22	r = – .20

* The correlations with the remaining 4 items were:

(6) (3404) "Prepare you well for adult life in general" : r = -.06
(7) (3408) "Able to play a full and reasonable part in your society": r = -.11
(8) (3516) "Able to a good job well": r = -.18
(9) (3301) Felt strongly that education "lacked something or major defects in it" (i.e. the higher the level of education, the more respondent felt it was defective. This anomaly with be dealt with later). r = +.14

As clearly indicated in Chapter 4 level of education is one of the most discriminating characteristics in gaining employment and is thought by school leavers themselves to be the factor of most significance. How this affects school leavers' views about the adequacy of their education for work life is therefore examined next.

Educational Level and Satisfaction

As educational level attained is strongly related to labour market success we would expect it to have a strong impact on school leavers' assessments of the adequacy of their education for work life. It is no surprise then that, taking the most typical item and those most highly correlated with the general, 9 item, scale, the above table (5.1) shows a very clear relationship to educational level attained for most items.

There is obviously a quite pronounced correlation with level of education attained for all but one of these items - with the most highly dissatisfied in all cases being the most poorly educated. Up to two-thirds of those leaving without any qualification have extremely negative views about the adequacy of their education for work life over almost all items. This declines to between a quarter to one-fifth of those with Leaving Certificate or higher qualifications. Given the more practical or vocational character of the education received by those leaving with a Group or Intermediate Certificate, this is rather surprising. The reason, of course, may well be, as we have already seen, the increasing probability of employment with level of certification received.

In general, the highest correlations appear to be with items that deal with help in getting jobs or generally coping with jobs and associated adult life roles. And the lowest correlations are with those items which deal with specific knowledge or understanding of the world of work. In other words, increasing educational level achieved is being assessed as succeeding more in providing access to employment, or in providing knowledge or understanding about work life itself. Those leaving schools with an Intermediate or Group Certificate, for instance, having mostly specialised in the more vocational or practical curricula, were, not surprisingly, the least dissatisfied with their education in providing them with an understanding of the world of work or specific knowledge and skills that were of direct use.

Subject Specialisation and Satisfaction

Besides level of education, the type of second-level education received – whether an Academic, Vocational-Technical, or "general" Pass level, subject package – is also likely, it has been argued, to affect satisfaction with

students of Vocational oriented courses being likely to be the most satisfied. In Appendices A5.1 to A5.2 we show how we developed a set of subject/level categories ("tracks") in which pupils specialised.

Broadly, 7 "track" types are isolated: (i) those without any qualifications – about whose subjects we have no information; (ii) "High Academic" – at least 3 Honours Academic subjects, besides Irish, English and Pass Maths. These academic specialisations are usually in Science, Languages and Honours Maths.; (iii) general, Pass level, "academic" subjects; (iv) Vocational-Technical (more than 2 vocational subjects); (v) History/ Geography with Business Studies, or Arts (Art or Music) subjects; (vi) "General", with Home Economics; (vii) general, shallow and wide range of Pass level, mostly non-academic, subjects.

As is clear from the results in Table 5.2, "track" allocation/choice is highly correlated with level of education attained, as well as with gender.

Table 5.2: *"Track" Allocation by Level of Education and Gender*

Track	*Educational Level*							
	1 No Quals.		*2 Group Cert.*		*3 Inter Cert.*		*4 Leaving Cert. + Matric.*	
	Gender		*Gender*		*Gender*		*Gender*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
	-Per Cent -							
(0) No Qualifications (No Information).	100	100	–	–	–	–	–	–
(1) High Academic	–	–	–	–	1.1	0.8	49.7	44.7
(2) General Pass Academic Level	–	–	1.5	5.0	10.2	6.3	7.5	5.8
(3) Vocational-Technical	–	–	74.3	–	50.8	–	12.9	–
(4) Social Science - Commerce Subjects or Arts	–	–	7.2	35.0	25.4	53.5	20.6	24.4
(5) Home Economics + General courses	–	–	–	35.0	0.6	21.1	0.6	20.0
(6) Pass level Shallow or General Curricular (more limited no. of subjects)	–	–	14.9	25.0	12.4	18.8	8.6	4.9
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	68	68	105	20	177	128	465	586

Males leaving with a Group Certificate have almost exclusively "specialised" in or were allocated to, Vocational-Technical subjects. Those leaving at Intermediate Certificate level were almost equally Vocationally specialised. Poorly educated females were more evenly scattered across three broad general course types, all at Pass level: the social sciences with Commerce, or Arts, or Home Economics with other general subjects; or a broad and general, Pass level, course across many other subjects. At Intermediate Certificate level, while over half the male leavers have taken Vocational-Technical subjects, the rest are scattered over a range of Pass level "general" courses. For equivalently qualified females, on the other hand, the main "specialisation" was in "Social Science", Commerce and Arts, with Home Economics as an alternative Pass level option.

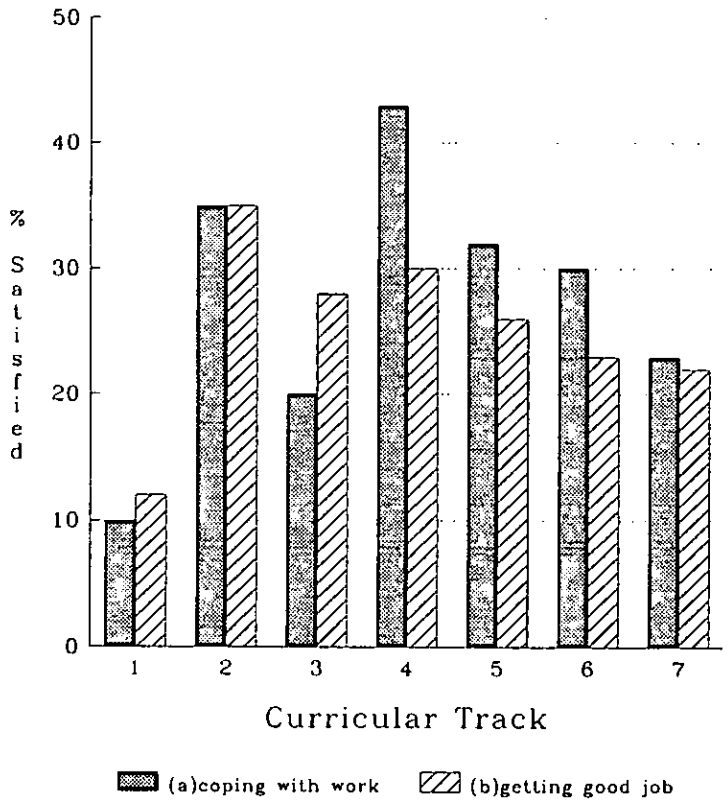
At Leaving Certificate level the dominant "track" is the Honours level Academic one; with males more likely to take Science and Advanced Maths courses than females. While 1 in 8 males had specialised in Vocational-Technical subjects at this level, almost twice as many had taken the Social Science/Commerce/Arts options. So the Vocational-Technical specialisation is primarily a junior cycle one, with only around 1 in 4 of such Vocational-Technical "specialists" having a Leaving Certificate. While Social Science with Arts subjects are mainly female options, the main differentiating option for females at senior cycle level is that of Home Economics.

In the following figure (5.2) we summarise the relationship found between subject specialisation, or "track" as named in the American literature, and school leavers' satisfaction with their education for work life (see Appendix Table 5.3 for more details). The two items selected here are the two work relevant items most highly correlated with the general "work factor" (see Chapter 3).

Clearly, those leaving without any qualification are the least satisfied. Those with a Pass level, "general Academic", education, or those with a broad but shallow (or non- specialised), Pass level, option are the next most dissatisfied. But those specialised in Vocational-Technical subjects tend to be generally as satisfied as those leaving with a high Honours Academic (Languages, Science, Honours Maths) speciality; although even here only about a third of those school leavers are fully satisfied with their schooling.

So, the order is much as predicted for the responses to questions about education for "getting a job", or preparation for working life: the most academically qualified are the most satisfied, while the completely unqualified are the least satisfied in all cases. But after these unqualified school leavers, the next least satisfied were those who had taken, or been assigned, a broad and shallow, Pass level, subject package (with generally one subject taken in each specialist area).

Figure 5.2: Percentage of Respondents who say their education was
(a)of 'quite good' or 'great' use in "coping with employment and working life'
(b)increased 'chances of getting a good job' 'a lot'



1: No Qualifications (No Information)
2: High Academic or High Honours Specialised
3: Low Honours (3) and General Academic
4: Vocational Technical Specialised
5: Social Science and Commerce/Art
6: General Less Academic Low Honours and Home Economics
7: Shallow General Non-Academic Pass Level Courses

In these respondents' views, therefore, the most satisfactory curriculum was the high Academic one – with three or more Honours level subjects, almost exclusively at Leaving Certificate level. But the second most satisfied group of customers is the Vocational-Technical group, usually with Group/Inter Cert qualifications. This advantage of the high Academic curriculum occurs despite the fact that it is assessed as the least satisfactory in providing an "understanding of the world of work", while the Vocational-Technical speciality is assessed as the most satisfactory in these respects (see Appendix Table A5.3). There is also an interesting gap between respondents' assessment of the practical usefulness of their Vocational-Technical speciality (42 per cent found it useful) and the extent to which it was felt to increase the chances of getting a good job (only 30 per cent responding positively). This suggests a bias in employment decisions against Vocational-Technical specialities, given the actual experience of school leavers of this education as useful at work. Such a gap does not show up to such an extent for any other subject track.

So, assessments of the adequacy of one's education for work life vary significantly by level of education, as well as by curricular track. One interpretation of these results is that it is because "Pass level" school leavers are assigned, or facilitated to "choose", a Pass level "Academic general" (History/Geography with Arts or Commerce) "track", that their educational experiences are the least satisfactory. These options are "packaged" by the school, but perhaps perceived by the pupils and by employers, as general "Pass level" tracks which have clear labelling effects.

It appears, therefore, as if the residue of a strong Vocational bias in education still occurs for boys with poorer academic prospects and who leave school with junior cycle qualifications. Within the education course, *per se,* there is no equivalent Vocational specialisation for girls. They tend to be catered for by "general courses" in History/Geography, Business Studies and Arts or Home Economics. There is, however, substantial "post-educational" vocational training given for such girls, once they complete their examinations. These, generally "Commercial", Vocational courses appear to function in much the same way for the less academically able girls as the Vocational/Technical specialisation does for boys. Neither of these options, however, now provides a secure route into either craft or clerical type jobs, as they did ten years ago. They still provide important bridges into the labour force, however, and, as we have seen, are generally very positively assessed by school leavers.

Why Educational Assessments Vary – The Joint Effects of All Variables

The combined or joint effects of various independent variables on

attitudes to the adequacy and utility of education for work life are analysed using multiple regression. The main hypotheses guiding the analysis are those proposed in Chapter 1.

The main variable to be explained is the 9 item attitudinal scale which is a straightforward Likert-type summative scale of all the scored responses to the 9 items included in Factor 3, already described in Chapter 3. The scaled responses to all these items are highly intercorrelated – with an average inter-item correlation of .36. The overall reliability of this scale is very high (Alpha = .84) – indicating a much more reliable, or "purer", measure of the underlying construct "assessment of the adequacy of educational preparation for work" than any of the individual items. Since the item dealing with "defects" in education detracts slightly from the overall reliability of the scale, and has a somewhat different meaning for the other items, it has been excluded from the scale. It will be dealt with later in the chapter. The scale values vary from 1.0 to 3.0. The higher the score the more negative the attitude. The 8 item scale has a mean value of 2.08 and a standard deviation of .507. The average attitude therefore tends towards the negative pole.

As already discussed in Chapter 1 and elaborated at the beginning of Chapter 4 the variables hypothesised to affect such "work adequacy" assessments were: first, ascriptive social background factors – father's occupational status, level of education attained by respondent's mother, and whether fathers were unemployed – are the main family status factors used. In addition, the individual's gender and the degree of remoteness of the individual's place of origin is also included. The 4 family status variables are measured using conventional social scales. Occupational status is a 6 item occupational social status scale (see O'Hare, Whelan, Commins, 1991 for details). Mother's education is scaled from 1 (primary education) to 5 (university degree). Gender and father's unemployment status are dummy variables (1 = female, 0 = male; 1 = unemployed, 0 = not). Remoteness is a "size x distance" measure of the respondent's home community which varies from a score of 1 for Dublin to a top score of 580 for small area country communities in North West Mayo (see Sexton, Walsh, Hannan, McMahon, 1991 for details). It measures the extent of rurality and remoteness of places of origin indicated by last school attended.

Educational attainment level and type of education are measured by a number of variables. Level attained by 1987 is scored from 1 for early leavers without qualifications to 9 for those with a university degree. Subject "track" is indicated by 2 variables – the number of purely Academic, Honours level courses taken, and the number of Vocational or Technical subjects taken. In addition whether the individual had taken a full-time post-examination

Commercial-Vocational course or not is used in the analysis.

Post-school employment experience is measured by two variables. The first is the proportion of time the respondent spent unemployed while in the labour force and the second is the proportion of her or his friends who are unemployed.

The results are given in three multiple regression equations in Table 5.3. Equation 1 examines the direct effects of the social background variables. It showed that three variables are of significance: fathers' occupational status, fathers' unemployment and remoteness. Neither gender nor mothers' education are of any significance. The lower the status of the father the more negative the attitude – and respondents whose fathers were unemployed were also more negative in their views. As we can see in Equation 2, however, these socio-economic effects are fully mediated by educational level and type. Working class respondents are more negative in their views largely because they receive a poorer education. Remoteness, however, is a far more important and robust predictive variable. The more urbanised the community of origin the more negative the assessment of educational preparation for work. And controls for educational level attained do not to any great extent mediate or reduce the effect. Level of expectations appear to be the only likely explanation – persons from the more urbanised communities expect more from education.

Equation 2 examines the effect of educational level and type – using the 5 variables already described. Almost all of these prove to be significant. The higher the level of respondents' education and the greater the number of Honours Academic or Vocational-Technical subjects taken the more positive their evaluation of educational preparation for work; and the more likely they are to have taken a post-examination Vocational preparation course the more positive their views also. All of the educational-vocational hypotheses are, therefore, strongly supported. The most negative school leavers are those who left school without any or with very poor qualifications, particularly those who had taken a Pass level general "track". The most negative are those who had not gone on to take a Vocational preparation course once they had completed their state education examinations.

It is not surprising, perhaps, that the more vocationally oriented courses taken the more positive the attitude – though it is unexpected that the combined effects of the two variables measuring this are greater than for level of education attained. It is even more surprising that attendance at a Vocational school has an additional positive effect – with none of the other school types showing any effect. Obviously the ethos and Vocational bias of the Vocational school has clear – though minor – positive effects on school leavers' attitudes.

Table 5.3: *Multiple Regression Coefficients of Effects of 12 Independent Variables on Responses: Attitudes toward the Adequacy of Schooling as a Preparation for Work Life*

Independent Variables	*Equation 1 Effects of Education and Training Variables*	*Equation 2 1 + Effects of Social Background*	*Equation 3 1 + 2 + Effects of Subsequent Unemployment and Level of Occup. attainment*	*Pearson Correlation Coefficient + Work Attitudes*
	Beta wts.	*Beta wts.*	*Beta wts.*	*r*
A. Social Background Factors				
1. Father's Occ. Status	.08*	.01	.03	.09
2. Mother's Education	.03	−.01	−.02	.05
3. Father's Unemployment	.07*	.04	.02	.08
4. Remoteness	−.15**	−.11**	−.12*	−.14
5. Gender	−.03	−.07	−.04	−.03
B. Education				
6. Level of Education	–	−.18**	−.16**	−.18
7. Whether had taken a post-cert. vocational training course immediately on completing Group/Inter. or Leaving Cert exam.	–	−.13**	−.12**	−.15
8. No. of Academic honours courses taken in Leaving Certificate	–	−.08*	−.05	−.13
9. No. of Vocational and technical subjects taken	–	−.17**	−.15**	−.10
10. Attended a vocational school	–	−.09**	−.10**	−.09
C. Post-School Employment				
11. % of time spent unemployed since entered Labour Force	–	–	.14**	.20
12. Proportion of Friends Unemployed	–	–	.07*	.14
R^2=	.034	.111	.136	.025
F =	6.1	10.9	11.4	
N =	883	883	883	
p	< .01	< .01	< .01	

** Statistically significant at .01 level.
* Statistically significant at .05 level.

Equation 3 examines the additional effects of post-school employment experience controlling for all preceding variables. It shows a very clear additional effect of unemployment – the longer the period unemployed the more negative the attitude. And the more respondents are involved in high unemployment friendship – and, as we have already seen, family – networks, the more negative the attitude. The contextual and reference group effects of being members of high unemployment groupings are therefore significant though small. One's own unemployment experience, however, irrespective of level and type of educational attainment, has a much clearer negative effect. To a limited extent, therefore – accounting for somewhat less than one-fifth of the explained variance – post-school employment or unemployment experience is influencing evaluative judgements of preceding schooling quality independently of the level and nature of the education received.

The addition of these unemployment variables to the regression, however, has very little influence on the effects of the preceding social background and educational variables. So, irrespective of actual labour market experience, better and more vocationally educated respondents from more remote areas evaluate their education much more positively than others.

Very poorly educated urban males with no Vocational-Technical subjects, no post-certificate school based training and with a poor employment history (over two-thirds of time in the labour force spent unemployed), have an average score of 2.39 – a highly negative evaluation if we compare them to the average score on the "work-attitudes" scale at 2.08. At the other extreme are rural males with Leaving Certificate qualifications but with at least some Vocational-Technical qualification, or with some post-school vocational training. These have an average score of 1.88.

So on this delimited dimension, schooling is being evaluated positively on the basis not only of level of education attained and certification effects on employment, but also in terms of its Vocational-Technical content, as well as extent of post-school Vocational training. Most of the latter did help in attaining employment (see Appendix A5.4). But, even irrespective of this effect, both level of certification and type of education had positive attitudinal effects. It appears, however, to be only the Vocational-Technical content of education that has such attitudinal effects, not Honours levels or strength of Academic contents, even though the latter has a stronger effect on employment chances.

Interestingly, it is not level of education or certification, *per se*, that is the most important predictive variable in unemployment reduction but membership in a high (Honours level) Academic track. But Vocational-

Technical qualifications are also significant. Both "track" specialisations have positive and independent effects, therefore, on unemployment reduction; but only membership of Vocational-Technical "tracks" significantly affects school leavers' attitudes independently of level of education.

So, while class of origin and type of track – or educational/training channel, appear to be important discriminatory variables in explaining the extent of unemployment experience (see Appendix Table A5.4) it is *level* of certification, as well as specialisation in a Vocational track, that have the main discriminatory effects on education-for-work assessments. In the latter case both socialisation and "certification" effects are present, as well as some presumed correspondence between applied curricular contents and work demands.

As was clear from the results of the factor analysis in Chapter 3 although the recognition of defects in education was closely linked to feelings of dissatisfaction with education for work – and is included in that factor, responses to this item were also so highly correlated with intentions to correct defects (which was poorly correlated with the work factor) that they both emerged as a separate factor in the analysis. However, given our hypotheses and the inclusion of the "defect" items in the "work factor", we will discuss the main results here.

Perception of Defects in Schooling and Intentions to Correct Such Defects

We have already seen in Chapter 4 the general recognition of the importance of educational qualifications in employment decisions, particularly among the less successful. We have also noted the almost universally prescriptive nature of the utilitarian priority of education for work and adult life, again particularly strong among the less well educated. In this chapter a striking concentration of dissatisfaction with utilitarian education has emerged (see Tables 5.2 and 5.4) and we have identified the most poorly educated and those with no Vocational-Technical specialisation as the most dissatisfied. We would expect, therefore, in line with our hypotheses, that the more poorly educated would be far more likely to fault or find defects in their education; though they may be less likely to articulate precisely what it is that is wrong with it. To investigate this the following tables provide school leavers' answers to questions about perceived serious defects in their education as well as their intentions to correct them.

Table 5.4 shows clearly that those "rational" hypotheses are not supported – at least in regard to strongly held explicit critiques of education: in fact, the most critical are the most highly educated.

Table 5.4: *Extent to which Respondents Felt that Education Lacked Something or that There Were Major Defects in It*

	Level of Education						
Was Education Defective?	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
				%			
% Yes, it was defective	44	40	36	55	60	60	53
(n)	(77)	(90)	(158)	(70)	(397)	(224)	(1052)

$x^2 = 66.5$ $p < .001$

Just over half of the sample say that their education was defective, with the more highly educated most likely to be critical. Around 40 per cent of those leaving at or before the Inter Cert are critical compared to 60 per cent of those at Leaving Cert or higher levels. The most positive are those with an Inter Cert, the least positive are those with a Leaving Cert, while the least qualified hold an intermediate position. Given our findings on level of satisfaction with schooling for work, why has this unexpected result occurred? Obviously there is a very high level of stratification of school leavers' expectations – of what they want, or think they can gain, from education. Given the counter intuitive nature of these results, it appears that their expectations for education and their beliefs that it can intervene successfully in their lives are very highly structured. While those with most qualifications expect most from it and obviously believe it can deliver, those with few qualifications expect less from education – and appear less likely to believe that it could provide useful resources to them. Those with poorest education of all, however, obviously cannot have expected more from it than the intermediately qualified. So, their greater fault finding with education has to be explained by other and more material motives – mainly the failure to get satisfactory employment.

The nature or kind of criticisms made of education by those who thought their education had been defective also shows this counter intuitive pattern (see Appendix Table A5.5). Two main criticisms emerge: the narrow Academic bias of the curriculum – particularly the dominance of subject based Academic content, and the lack of practical or utilitarian relevance of the education received for work life or for the practical demands of living after school. Almost 60 per cent of all respondents gave either of these critiques. Interestingly both were most characteristic of the

senior cycle "early leavers" – and much less so of the early junior cycle leavers. The latter were more likely to be critical of the way schools were (mis)managed or run and of interpersonal relationships and curricular and instructional arrangements within the school. Such early leavers were also far more likely to make very generalised criticisms which they found very difficult to tie down to specific defects.

Interestingly, when we take specific volunteered complaints – given without prompting (Table 5.5) – defects in the general (non-vocational) preparation for life after school, or complaints about the absence of personal and social development programmes, do not figure as serious preoccupations. Obviously it is the very practical utility of schools, and preoccupation about the defects of the everyday conventional operations of schools, that draws attention.

Table 5.5: *The Nature and Relative Extent of "Complaints" made by School Leavers about Education, by Level of Education and Gender*

Defects?	*Educational Level*						*Total %* - *Sex* -	
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*M*	*F*
				%				
(1) Too academic and too intellectually biased - too narrowly focused:(%)	40	41	41	53	55 ($p < .05$)	62	53 (53)	53
(2) Inutility for adult life:(%)	16	27	37	45	42 ($p < .05$)	38	39 (38)	37
(3) Inutility for Work Life:(%)	9	28	36	21	32 (p, n.s.)	26	28 (29)	30
(4) Critique of school organisation, school classes, curricula, teachers, etc: (%)	36	42	26	25	27 (p, n.s.)	31	29 (29)	30
Total (N)	(34)	(36)	(58)	(38)	(240)	(133)		

Respondents were, in fact, allowed two open-ended responses to the question on educational defects. By combining these in the above table (5.5) we find that around half of them made at least one complaint about the over-academic nature of the curriculum, and somewhat over half about the lack of practical relevance of their education for work or related adult roles (see Appendix Table A5.6 for further detail).

As to the criticisms of inadequacy of preparation for work and adult life the most critical respondents tended to be those with Inter Cert qualifications, and the least critical those with no qualifications. The Academic "bias" criticisms tended to be most characteristic of those with Leaving Certificate or higher qualifications. On the other hand, the generalised critiques of schools as organisations, of the quality of relationships with teachers, and other school-specific factors, tended to be most characteristic of the most poorly qualified. Of course, as Hannan with Boyle (1987) show, the schools with the greatest differentiation between pupils and the most rigid structuring of education tend to be those with predominantly working class pupils, especially boys. This system of rigidity and differentiation leads to higher levels of within-school stratification, to greater polarization amongst the pupils and to higher dropout rates. This may account in part for the more generalised school-based criticisms of the most poorly qualified, as their experience of the school as an institution may be significantly different from, and less satisfying, than those of the better qualified pupils. However, in each of these cases differences are minor and are statistically significant only for critiques of preparation for adult life and of the Academic bias of the school – where in both cases the better educated tended to be the most critical.

There is no consistent overall relationship to gender, but there is a quite marked interaction effect between educational level and gender on attitudes. A more clearcut relationship between educational level and critique of education exists for males. The following table provides some summary statistics.

The effects of educational level depend on gender: more highly educated females tend to be much more critical of the Academic bias of their schooling, while being less critical than their male peers of their education as a preparation for life. On the other hand, the poorly educated males were much more critical than their female peers of their schools on organisational and interpersonal relationship grounds. It appears as if more poorly educated females in general experienced a better preparation for adult life and better relationships to teachers and school authorities.

So, in general, the more highly educated were more explicitly critical of their education, and were also more specific in their criticisms. This is

despite the fact that they had actually gained greatly from it and, as we have seen, had much more positive attitudes towards it than the less well educated. It is as if being more positively oriented towards their education and having gained substantially from it, they felt that, being an effective institution, it could still have done better for them. The less well educated appear to be much more alienated from the institution in general and feel that it really could not do very much better for them as currently structured: so they feel less able – or perhaps less concerned – to specify particular defects in it.

Table 5.6: *Correlations between Educational Level and Each Dimension of Critique, for Male and Female School Leavers*

Gender of Respondent	*Inutility for Adult (life)*	*Over emphasis on Academic Exams*	*School Relationships Critique*
Males	r = .19*	r = .06	r = –.11*
Females	r = .01	r = .20*	r = .04

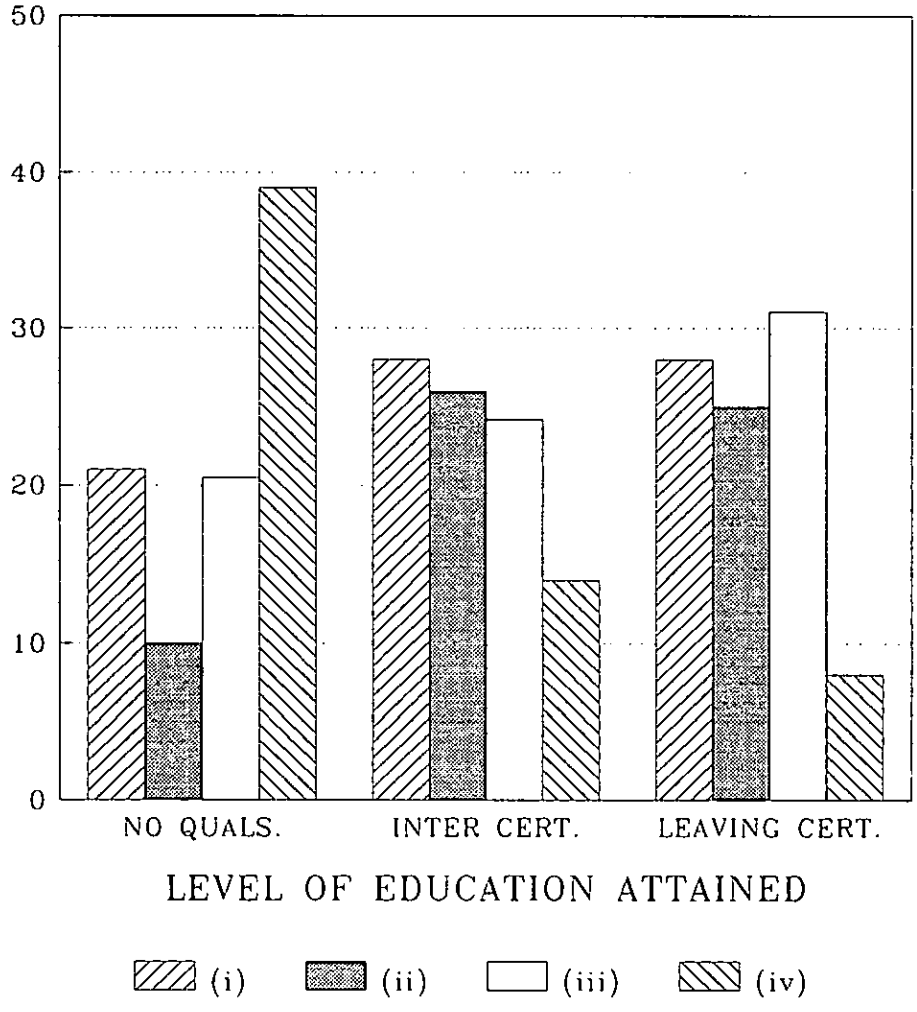
* $p < .05$

Rationales for Dissatisfaction

Besides coding the content of these questions on defects in education we also coded the underlying rationales as to why respondents gave the views they did, in so far as these rationales were obvious or were clearly implied by their responses. Four relevant rationales were found: (i) a practical or utilitarian rationale related to work or income generation; (ii) similar utilitarian rationales about other aspects of the practical demands of adult life: (iii) conventional intellectual or cognitive development rationales: (iv) negative emotional or attitudinal responses about the subjects taught or the teachers involved - including boredom and lack of interest, etc. The first three rationales are roughly of equal importance – with about 3 out of 4 respondents using either utilitarian rationales about preparation for work, adult life in general, or about the intellectual failings of their education.

If they gave reasons, those who leave school early or with junior cycle qualifications are relatively more likely to use utilitarian, work related, rationales (see Figure 5.3). They are less likely to use rationales referring to preparation for adult social life in general. Here only 10 per cent of early leavers use this rationale compared to 25 per cent of those with at least a Leaving Certificate. Clearly, therefore, educational inappropriateness for

Figure 5.3:Of those who think their education was defective percentage whose specific critique was related to
(i) lack of practical utility for economic life
(ii) lack of practical utility for adult life generally
(iii) intellectual or cognitive development failures
(iv)unspecified,unstated or unclear.



work is a greater relative preoccupation for the poorly educated, while lack of preparation for entry into open society – or the practical demands of everyday living – is relatively more important for the better educated. This might be explained by their more assured labour market position.

An equally clear differentiation holds for the use of intellectual rationales – over 31 per cent of the Leaving Cert respondents but only 21 per cent of the early leavers used this type of rationale. And the type of critique also varies – in the former case focusing on the inadequacy of their education and in the latter on its academic dominance. The early leavers are somewhat more likely to use emotional rationales, and are more likely also to use a wider range of individualistic rationales: referring, for instance, to individual teachers or peculiarities of their own school, etc. In many respects their dissatisfaction with education is much too inchoate or too diffused to articulate clearly; or too focused on individual level experiences to generalise easily. The data in the above figure illustrate this clearly where over a third of early leavers do not spell out their critiques of the defects of their education compared to less than 1 in 10 of those with a Leaving Certificate.

In general, therefore, we could conclude that the more highly educated people are the more satisfied they become with their education. However, they also expect more from it and become increasingly conscious of individual failings in it, and are more able to articulate these failings. Although generally less positive about the adequacy of their education, those completing it with lesser credentials appear to be less preoccupied about individual defects in their education, and are also less able to articulate the nature of their dissatisfaction with it. They appear, in other words, to have less regard for schooling generally as a relevant and credible source of personal resources which can be of use in the labour market. A small minority appear to be so alienated from it that the question of correcting its defects does not enter their minds.

"Defect" or "failure" seems, therefore, to be interpreted in most cases to mean that some aspect of a person's "education" is consciously recognised as missing or defective. As seen in Chapter 3, this recognition of defects in one's education is correlated with plans to correct these defects. So it does appear as if the recognition of such a "defect" is being, in the majority of cases, interpreted as something missing that needs to be corrected. It is, therefore, linked with actual intentions to correct these defects. But both the recognition of and the plan to correct such "defects" appear to depend on level of success already achieved in education. For those who have already failed, this connection between recognition of defects and intentions to correct them it is not likely to be very pronounced.

Future Expectations: Aspirations to Redress Defects

The pattern of diffuse or inchoate dissatisfaction amongst the more poorly educated is even clearer in response to the question about future educational aspirations/expectations. This question (Q 37) asked each respondent about the educational qualifications or training she/he "would really like to get" and which "you think would improve your chances of getting a good job (or help you in your present job)?"

Forty five per cent of respondents did aspire to such educational qualifications. This was moderately correlated with educational level ($r = -.15$). Less than 1 in 3 of early school leavers aspire to such future educational certification compared to over 50 per cent of Leaving Cert and higher achievers. Nevertheless there is still up to a third of the early school leavers who do want to improve their education.

Of the 460 (45%) sampled respondents who did aspire to such qualifications, 36 per cent named ones which were additional to, or were designed to "top up", their current professional, technical or craft qualifications (see Table 5.7). The remaining 64 per cent referred to ones which had no apparent direct connection with a person's existing qualification – but were rather later additions to these.

Third-level graduates were most likely (42%) to want to improve upon their current degree or professional qualifications by aspiring to a higher degree or diploma in their area of specialisation. The remaining third-level respondents were roughly evenly split between those who wanted to get additional commercial, language or computer applications qualifications, and those who aspired to third-level qualifications which were unrelated to their existing qualifications, or, apparently, to their current work roles. So, of the third-level respondents who wanted additional qualifications most (around 3 out of 4) wanted additional post-graduate or higher (including diploma) qualifications which were either directly linked to their current qualification or had connections to their current job requirements, or likely job/career prospects.

At the other extreme most of the early leavers aspired to craft and apprenticeship qualifications or to other, usually work-related, qualifications. Only a minority, as we can see, aspired to specific educational certifications like the Group, Intermediate or Leaving Certificate examinations. Most of these craft type courses and qualifications, however, do not appear to be "on-line", and many appear highly unrealistic; for example, young men without any educational qualifications aspiring to craft apprenticeships, etc. So in general this educational demand cannot be satisfied by ordinary second-level courses, and is somewhat unrealistic even if directed towards the acquisition of practical and work-related knowledge, skills and certifications.

Table 5.7: *Percentage Distribution of Respondents of Different Educational Levels by Type of Aspiration for further Education or Certification*

	Level of Education						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
A. *Additional Qualifications/ Certification – 3rd Level*				%			%
(1) Additional Professional or Semi-Professional qualification: (all 3rd level)	–	–	–	–	–	20.2	5.6
(2) Additional Technical or Semi-Professional e.g. nursing quals. or upgrading of diplomas or degrees	–	–	–	–	6.4	21.9	7.5
B. *Additional Skilled Manual or Commercial Quals.*							
(3) Additional craft quals.	11.9	14.1	21.8	11.3	10.3	1.4	9.9
(4) Additional Commercial or Business quals. (Secretarial, Accountancy, Management)	2.2	–	7.4	8.8	19.5	10.5	13.1
C. *Additional Unrelated Qualifications*							
(5) Other Professional or Semi-Professional Quals. unrelated to current quals.	8.0	–	–	12.7	6.4	4.1	5.3
(6) Secretarial/Commercial/ Languages	6.0	5.0	10.8	20.2	13.4	17.4	13.7
(7) Other Craft, technical, or other quals. unrelated to current quals.	54.5	67.7	38.0	36.1	27.7	13.8	30.4
(8) Computer Science Quals. or Programing Skills	–	12.3	4.9	3.4	13.9	9.9	10.2
(9) Basic Educational Quals. or Certifications	17.3	–	17.4	7.6	2.5	0.9	4.9
Total % No	100 23	100 32	100 54	100 39	100 139	100 112	100 459

We tested the realism of those aspirations or expectations – to measure "effective demand" so to speak – by asking respondents whether they had "definite plans to get this qualification or training". Table 5.8 below shows that only a minority of respondents had such definite plans, and there is an even smaller minority amongst those with very poor levels of education.

Even taking the most liberal view of plans to go on for further education or training only 1 in 2 of those respondents who had some such plans could be said to have any realistic intention of going on. This falls to almost 1 in 4 for those without any qualifications but increases to 6 in 10 for those who got their Leaving Certificate and went on to third level. Indeed it is only those who have such high levels of education who appear most likely to go on. Around 1 in 4 definitely plan to go on – compared to 1 in 8 for those with the lowest level of education. Even those amongst the most poorly qualified who would like to go on generally recognise such aspirations as unrealistic.

Table 5.8: *Percentage Distribution of Respondents with Varying Levels of Education by having Definite Plans for Further Education or Training (Percentage of Those Who Would Like to Get Additional Qualifications):*

	Level of Education						
How Definite are plans?	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
				%			
"Definitely Yes"	11.9	14.8	8.0	2.5	32.3	28.5	23.8
"Probably Yes"	18.9	14.0	34.1	34.2	32.7	34.9	31.5
"No"	69.2	71.2	58.0	63.3	35.1	36.7	44.7
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	
No	24	32	54	37	198	112	457

$x^2 = 44.1$, $p < .001$
$r = -.25$

The main reasons given for not proceeding with (aspired to) further education or training are: current time constraints and work and family responsibilities which do not allow them to proceed currently (46% of all responses); and the financial costs involved – direct and indirect – in proceeding with the course (10%). Lack of qualifications (11%) and a host

of other miscellaneous and individualistic reasons (31%) complete the picture. Time and money constraints are the main factors affecting the highly educated (41%). Such constraints are only relevant for 24 per cent of those who have no qualifications at all. Lack of required educational qualifications are only of relevance (20%) for those with Group or Intermediate Certificates.

Conclusions

- School leavers had in general a low opinion of the utility of their education as a preparation for work life, with up to half having clearly negative assessments.
- Positive assessments of preparation for work life increased with educational level. Up to two-thirds of the most poorly qualified have very negative opinions compared to less than 1 in 3 of those with a Leaving Certificate.
- In multivariate analyses level of education, specialisation in Vocational-Technical subjects, and the taking of post-school vocational courses, all had independent positive effects on attitudes to schooling as a preparation for work life. As hypothesised, positive attitudes are more characteristic of those with Vocational-Technical specialisations.
- With the above independent variables controlled for, socio-economic status of origin does not have any independent effect. Remoteness however does – with the most urbanised being the most dissatisfied. The experience of unemployment also has an additional and independent negative effect – though this does not influence the effect of preceding schooling variables.
- Objectively, and subjectively, the least well qualified – in either academic or Vocational-Technical qualifications – are, and feel, the most disadvantaged by their education. However, they are far less likely than others to isolate particular defects in their education, or to plan to correct their, self-recognised, educational disadvantages. Clearly most objectively disadvantaged and most attitudinally negative of all respondents, such educationally disadvantaged respondents are least likely to make any explicit complaints about education; neither do they appear to have any faith that the educational system can correct itself in ways that can benefit them.
- This inchoate negative orientation towards the adequacy or relevance of education is reflected in their greater tendency to advance diffuse and particularistic critiques of their schooling.

On the other hand the most highly educated appear to take for

granted the legitimacy of the current organisational arrangements for their schooling, as well as its potential for improving their life chances, and focus their much more severe, explicit and more extended critiques on the adequacy of its curricular and pedagogical delivery.

- Perhaps as a result of their more diffuse alienation from current schooling arrangements, even when the more disadvantaged recognise the relevance of educational qualifications and their own educational defects they do not intend to correct them – at least within current arrangements.
- Relating back to the findings reported in Chapter 2 it is clear that the curricular and examination system rigidities within Irish second-level education with its extreme rigidity of "framing" (Bernstein 1966) – in content, pace, timing, packaging, examining, and degree of isolation from work and community life, combined with difficulties in delivering second chance education, means that, as currently structured, it effectively cannot correct its obvious defects for the most deprived groups isolated here, at least at the point at which school leaving occurs.

APPENDIX 5

Appendix 5.1: **The Derivation of Subject Specialisation Categories**

To derive a reliable set of categories of subject specialisations by school leavers we first factor analysed the intercorrelations amongst 9 parallel subject specialisations – given in the attached Appendix Table A5.1: Languages, Science, Business Studies, Vocational-Technical subjects, Social Science, Home Economics, Honours Maths, etc. The factor analysis – Principal Components with Varimax Rotation – yielded 3 factors for males and 4 for females.

Factor 1 is, with one exception, common to both genders: a dimension which indicates that school leavers can be arranged by whether they have taken Hons. Maths courses or not and the number of Honours, Languages, and Science subjects taken. People who take Honours Maths tend also to take one or more subjects from each of these subsets; operating at an Honours level in most cases. The reverse also tends to be the case. Those operating at a Pass level tend not to take any or only a few of each of these subjects. For boys, such an Honours Academic course is negatively correlated with the choice of Vocational-Technical subjects. Not surprisingly, given that most take none, this is not so for girls but is negatively correlated with the number of Home Economics subjects taken.

Factor 2 (Males) has an analogue in Factors 2 and 3 for females. A Business Studies speciality is negatively associated with Science and Vocational-Technical choices for boys. It is positively associated with a "Social-Science" (mainly History and Geography) specialisation for boys. For girls, while Business Studies is negatively associated with Science subjects its take-up is not associated with Social Science. The latter, Social Science, is positively associated, on the other hand, with Art/Music for girls – while such aesthetic subjects appear to have no significant presence for boys. So while Business Studies is more a "Pass level" general studies option for boys, it tends to be taken as an alternative to Science specialities for girls, and tends to be a more honours level option. Social Science and Arts are clearly separate and positively associated options for girls.

Factor 3 (Males): has no analogue in the girls' choices. In the rare cases where it occurs for boys, Art and Music choices are associated with Home Economics options taken in Coed schools. For girls, on the other hand, Art and Music options are positively associated with Social Science options, and have low negative correlations with Home Economics options. Home Economics, on the other hand, tends to be a separate pass level option – still taught as an alternative to Vocational subjects in coed schools.

Appendix Table A5.1: *The Derivation of Subject Specialisation Categories: Factor Analyses (Varimax Rotation) of 9 Subject Choice/Allocation subsets by School Leavers in All Examinations*

Degree of Specialisation in "Subject Packages"	*Male*				*Female*				
	Factor 1	*Factor 2*	*Factor 3*	*Commun-ality*	*Factor 1*	*Factor 2*	*Factor 3*	*Factor 4*	*Commun-ality*
Number of subjects taken in each category	*Factor Analysis*			h^2	*Factor Analysis*				h^2
(1) No. of Languages	.71	–	–	.52	.65	–	–	–	.53
(2) No. of Science Subjects taken	.55	–.53	–	.50	.47	–.36	.51	–	.62
(3) No. of Commerce/ Business Studies Subjects Taken	–	.71	–	.57	–	–	–.85	–	.76
(4) No. of Vocational-Technical Subjects Taken	–.58	–.49	–	.59	–.22	–	–	.77	.68
(5) No. of Social Science Subjects Taken	–	.54	–	.32	–	.72	–	–	.52
(6) No. of Home Economics Subjects Taken	–	–	.72	.53	–.35	–	–	–.65	.54
(7) No. of Arts/Music Subjects Taken	–	–	.73	.55	–	.72	–	–	.53
(8) No. of Honours Maths Subjects Taken	.64	–	–	.45	.70	–	–	–	.63
(9) No. of Honours Level Subjects Taken	.84	–	–	.72	.82	–	–	–	.68
Eigen Value	2.40	1.41	1.04	–	2.14	1.19	1.09	1.05	
% of Variance Explained	26.5	15.6	11.6	53.7	23.8	13.3	12.1	11.7	60.9

Languages: No. of language/literature subjects excluding Irish and English: i.e., French, German, Italian, etc.
Science Subjects: Science (junior cycle), Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Agricultural Science etc.
Commerce/Business Subjects: Commerce (junior cycle); Economics, Business Organisation, Accountancy, Economic History, Agricultural Economics and Typing etc. in Group Cert. courses.
Vocational/Technical: Woodwork, Metalwork, Mechanical Drawing, Engineering Workshop, Construction Studies.
Social Science Subjects: History, Geography, Humanities, Civics, Environmental Studies etc.
Home Economics: Home Economics I and II: Domestic Science; Cooking, Needlework, Laundry (Group Cert.)
Art: Art and Music.

Appendix A5.2: **The Derivation of Mutually Exclusive Categories of Students who have Specialised in Particular Curricular Packages or "Tracks" in Their Courses and Examinations**

For males there appear to be at least four separate types of associated choices: (i) Honours; Science, Languages; (ii) Vocational Technical – which is negatively associated with (i); (iii) Commerce and Social Science options, which tend to be negatively associated with both Science and Vocational-Technical options; and (iv) Art-Music. Home Economics is, by and large , irrelevant.

For females while (i) Factor 1 is common with males,(ii) Vocational-Technical options are irrelevant; (iii) the taking of Commerce subjects is not associated with Social Science subjects – as with males – and tends to be an honours option. (iv) Social Science on the other hand is associated with Art and Music for females but not for males; (v) Home Economics, however, is clearly an important pass level option – highly negatively associated with all honours academic options.

The following – composite-variables – were computed to reflect the above results:

(i) *NACADHI* = the number of Languages (excluding Irish and English), Science, Honours Maths subjects taken plus whether person had taken 4 or more honours level subjects.

(ii) *NSOCART* = Number of Social Science and Art/Music subjects taken.

(iii) *NCOMSOC* = Number of Commerce and Social Science subjects taken.

(iv) *NVOCADHI* = Number of Vocational-Technical subject taken where, at least, 2 "acadhi" subjects are also taken.

(v) *NGENERAL* = Number of "general" subjects taken at Pass level: counted as follows – if at least one subject is taken in each area – Languages, Science, Social Science, Commerce, Art, Home Economics.

From these and the original subject sets we constructed the following 9 category set of "tracks", subject by level packages, in which school leavers had specialised.

1. *Acadhi 1:* At least 3 honours subjects taken with at least one subject from three of the following 4 subject sets: Science, Vocational-Technical, Languages, Honours Maths.
2. *Acadhi 2:* Acadhi 1 but less than 3 choices taken from the 4 subject sets.
3. *General (Pass) Academic Option:* As Acadhi 1 but number of honours subjects less than 3 and number of "general subjects" (including Languages and/or Science) greater than or equal to 3.
4. As for 3 but with number of Science subjects greater than or equal to 1.

5. *Vocational-Technical (Pass):* Acadhi less than 3. NHons. less than 3, and NVocTech greater than 1.
6. *Comm-Soc-Art:* Acadhi less than 3, NHons less than 3, and NVocTech less than 2, and NArt = 0, and "Comm-Soc" greater than or equal to 2.
7. As for 6 but N.Comm = 0 and "Soc-Art" greater than or equal to 2.
8. *Pass General + Home Economics:* As for 6, but NHomEcon are greater than or equal to 1.
9. *Pass Level Non Academic:* As for 3 but "NHons" = 0. NLangs = 0, NSci = 0 and NGen is greater than or equal to 2.

In many cases for practical analytic purposes we use the following 7 categories which are derived directly from the above:

1. *No Qualifications* – those for whom we have no information on subject track.
2. *High Academic* – combining Acadhi 1 and Acadhi 2 above.
3. *General Academic* – combining 3 + 4 above i.e. the pass academic options.
4. *Vocational-Technical* – the same as Vocational-Technical (5) above.
5. *Social Science and Commerce/Art* – combining 6 and 7 above.
6. *Pass General and Home Economics*
7. *Shallow General Non-Academic* – the same as 9 above.

Appendix Table A5.3: *Attitudes Towards the Adequacy of Schooling or a Preparation for Work Life and Associated Adult Roles by Type or Category of Curriculum Specialised in (or "Track" Taker)*

	0 No Qual (or no Subjects)	*1 Acad high + Sc. + langs*	*2 Adac high − Sc. + langs*	*3 Gen 3 coed Educ. + langs*	*4 Gen 3 + Sci. langs.*	*5 Vocat. Tech. Special −isation*	*6 Comm. + Soc. Soc.Sc.*	*7 Art + Soc. Sc.*	*8 Gen. + Home Econ.*	*9 Restr-icted general no Sc. langs.*	*10 Restr-icted general + Sc. or langs.*	*Total*
(1)(3101) Educ. utility for working life					%							
% of good + Great use	11	36	34	22	21	42	35	27	30	21	29	30
% Not of use	49	18	14	32	38	27	26	22	32	45	34	28
					$x^2 = 91.1.\ p < 001$							
(2)(3201) How much gained .. in preparing you for adult life in general					%							
% gained quite a lot or immensely	14	41	42	27	48	35	32	31	33	31	35	33
% gained nothing	52	22	22	29	22	32	29	21	22	33	38	29
					$x^2 = 73.1\ p < .001$							
(3)(3405) Understanding world of work					%							
% "Yes a lot of help:	13	4	10	18	11	19	14	16	12	16	15	13
% "No Help":	60	60	56	56	51	42	54	42	532	46	54	53
					$x^2 = 38.2\ p < 05$							

Appendix Table A5.3: *continued*

	0 No Qual (or no Subjects)	*1 Acad high + Sc. + langs*	*2 Adac high – Sc. + langs*	*3 Gen 3 coed Educ. + langs*	*4 Gen 3 + Sci. langs.*	*5 Vocat. Tech. Special –isation*	*6 Comm. + Soc. Soc.Sc.*	*7 Art + Soc. Sc.*	*8 Gen. + Home Econ.*	*9 Restr-icted general no Sc. langs.*	*10 Restr-icted general + Sc. or langs.*	*Total*
(4) (3409) Increase chances of getting a "good job					%							
% "A lot"	12	35	36	29	28	30	28	213	254	26	21	28
% "No help"	57	18	19	21	20	27	29	31	30	28	48	29
					$x^2 = 73.3$ $p < .001$							
(5) (3514) Prepare well for getting a job					%							
% "very well"	7	22	21	18	26	25	19	30	17	20	12	21
% "Not at all"	55	21	26	30	33	31	33	40	26	39	50	33

Appendix A5.4: *Regression of 10 Independent Variables on Percentage of Time in Labour Force Spent Unemployed*

Independent Variables	*Equation (Beta wts.)*
A. *Education and Training Variables*	
1. Level of Education	– .06
2. No of Honours level high academic subjects taken	– .16**
3. No. of Vocational-technical subjects taken	– .10**
4. No. of "General", non-specialised-pass level subjects taken	– .02
5. Whether took a post-certification (junior or senior cycle) in-school training course	– .08*
6. Post school apprenticeship type qualifications attained	– .10**
B. *Social Background Variables*	
7. SES	.11**
8. Remoteness	.06
9. Gender	– .14**
C. *Occupational Status Achieved or Aspired To*	
10. Level of Occupational Status	.07
	R^2 = .113
	F = 10.2
	N = 808

*p < .05
**p < .01

Table A5.5: *Percentage Distribution of Educationally Critical Respondents of Different Educational Levels by Type of Critique Made of It*

Critique	*Level of Education*						
	Pre-Group Cert	*Group Cert*	*Inter. Cert*	*Post-Inter. Cert*	*Leaving Cert*	*Post L.C to Third Level*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
(1) Not Practical Enough for Work Life or for the demands of living after school	25.6	36.4	43.8	40.0	36.5	33.6	35.6
(2) Narrow Academic Bias of School	21.3	12.1	16.4	37.2	23.2	24.2	23.0
(3) Critique of School Management or School Practice	17.0	27.3	11.0	5.0	10.8	15.1	13.4
(4) Preparation for Life-Social and Personal Skills and Competence	4.3	–	5.5	–	4.0	6.1	4.5
(5) Specific Subjects - absence or presence	10.8	9.1	15.1	14.3	23.6	18.1	19.0
(6) Other: not specified	19.1	15.1	8.2	2.9	1.6	3.1	4.7
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
No	47	33	73	35	249	265	702

Table A5.6: *Percentage who Felt Strongly that There Were "Major Defects" in Their Education and Percentages Who Made Particular Criticisms of Their Education*

Items	*Level of Education*						*Total*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	
% Say it had "Major Defect"	43	40	36	55	60	60	53
N	79	91	159	70	398	224	
				%			
If "Defective" in what way?							
(1) Not Practical or useful enough	24.6	32.7	47.7	41.0	38.9	33.6	36.9
(2) Too narrow academically or too directed to exams and points	19.2	5.3	15.5	22.6	22.6	25.4	22.0
(3) Criticism of particular schools, classes, teachers, etc.	20.6	26.0	10.5	6.7	11.7	19.7	15.2
(4) Lack of Career Guidance	7.9	–	2.5	8.5	9.1	7.0	7.3
(5) Other subjects missing or not taught:	5.8	–	17.2	6.8	8.3	9.9	9.1
Total N	35	36	59	37	239	132	549

Chapter 6

BASIC EDUCATION AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES OF EDUCATION: SCHOOL LEAVERS' EVALUATIONS

In our original hypothesised dimension of cognitive development and basic educational development we proposed 7 items which we felt minimally tapped this proposed dimension of basic educational development. Given the severe space limitations in the interview schedule these were the maximum affordable number of items. The following outlines the 7 questions asked.

1. Education has given "sufficient reading and writing skills". (3401)
2. Education has given sufficient capability in "calculating amounts (money) or heights and weights etc., in work and everyday life". (3410)
3. Extent to which schooling provided or developed capability to "read, write and do calculations well". (3510)
4. Education has given you sufficient capability "in helping you to think for yourself". (3411)
5. Education has developed, or prepared you sufficiently "in time-keeping, and being able to concentrate well on things". (3414)
6. Extent to which schooling provided for a developed capability "to think through things and come to good and clear solutions to problems". (3503)
7. Extent to which schooling developed the capability to be "able to talk and communicate well with others". (3415)

The intercorrelations amongst the scaled responses to these 7 questions, and the other responses, as revealed by factor analysis, clearly indicated, however, that some of these items – particularly the last 3 – "loaded" more heavily on other factors, particularly Personal/Social Development. However, since for conceptual reasons, we also wish to investigate more fully those wider dimensions of cognitive development – rather than the narrower dimensions of "basic education" revealed by the factor analysis, we will initially examine the responses dealing with school leavers' evaluations on all these 7 questions.

Basic Education and Cognitive Development

In fact the scaled responses to the 7 questions are all moderately to highly intercorrelated as is clear from Table 6.1 below. The table also includes the item correlations with the total score – the sum of all individual items scores. Individual item responses are scored from 1.0 to 3.0 – that is, from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied".

Table 6.1: *Intercorrelations Amongst the Scaled Responses (1, 2, 3) to the 7 Items Formerly Mentioned – Which Tapped Cognitive Development and Basic Education Goals of Education*

		Items (numbered as shown on left)							
Items		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*
1	3401	1.00							
2	3410	.36	1.00						
3	3510	.52	.38	1.00					
4	3411	.24	.30	.26	1.00				
5	3414	.27	.34	.30	.33	1.00			
6	3512	.21	.24	.27	.35	.28	1.00		
7	3415	.25	.29	.28	.42	.43	.35	1.00	
8	Aggregate score	.45	.47	.50	.51	.50	.45	.54	1.00
9	Average score value	1.13	1.50	1.26	1.80	1.58	2.05	1.71	11.11

So, the scaled responses to the 7 items are sufficiently highly correlated to constitute a single scale. The item by total score correlations given in the second last row of the table indicates the relative consistency of the overall scale. In fact, the reliability of that scale (Cronbach's alpha = .77) is almost equally as good as that for the more "pure" "Basic Education" scale isolated in Chapter 3. So, for the purposes of this chapter, we will regard it as a single dimension: the summary scale measuring evaluations of the effectiveness of provision of basic education and cognitive development. The scale has an average score of 1.59 and a standard deviation of .389. Table 6.2 gives the level of school leavers' satisfaction with each of these aspects of cognitive development and basic education for each level of education attained.

As already discussed in Chapter 3 the great majority of school leavers (over 75%) are very satisfied with the basic 3Rs teaching, although there is much less satisfaction with "arithmetic". However, this is clearly not the case for the most poorly qualified – where less than half are very satisfied with development of reading and writing skills, and around 10 per cent are

very dissatisfied. The proportion of the poorly qualified highly satisfied with their mathematical education is less than half these figures, and the proportion highly dissatisfied more than double.

Table 6.2: *Levels of Satisfaction with Basic-Education/Cognitive Development Aspects of Education by Level of Education. Items Ordered by Level of Satisfaction*

Items	*Level of Education* 1	2	3	4	5	6	*Total*
(Rank ordered by "satisfaction")	*– Percentage very satisfied –*						
[1] (3401) "Reading and writing skills"	46	65	67	85	88 (r = –.31)	90	80
[2] (3510):"Read, write and do calculations"	43	67	63	28	81 (r = –.28)	84	75
[3] (3410): "Calculating amounts", etc.	21	61	48	63	60 (r = –.21)	74	58
[4] (3414) "Timekeeping, ... concentrating"	25	42	35	62	60 (r = .21)	54	51
[5] (3415) "Talk and communicate well"	28	43	34	35	43 (r = –.09)	35	38
[6] (3411) "Think for yourself"	20	28	31	42	40 (r = –.07)	26	33
[7] (3512) "Think through things and come to clear solutions"	10	18	17	18	18 (r = –.23)	31	20
[8] Average value of the "Basic Education and Cognitive Development" scale	1.98	1.67	1.65	1.54	1.51 (r = –.26)	1.52	1.59

The relationship between level of education and "concentration/time-keeping" shows somewhat the same pattern with one significant exception. There is roughly the same magnitude and pattern of dissatisfaction/satisfaction by educational level as with "calculating", except that the most highly educated are somewhat less satisfied than those with intermediate levels. Whereas satisfaction with "basic education" was most marked amongst

third-level entrants this is clearly not so for concentration/timekeeping. It is as if the salience or importance of concentration/timekeeping has been tested and found wanting to a far greater extent amongst those who went on to third-level. The same pattern of increased dissatisfaction for third-level entrants holds also for 2 other items: verbal communication, and thinking for oneself. Again it is as if these "emergent" capabilities have been more stringently tested and found wanting amongst the third level educated – since it is highly unlikely that they have actually received poorer preparation in these respects. In both of these latter cases levels of dissatisfaction are substantially higher than with the previously-mentioned items. The most seriously under-educated respondents are also those with the highest levels of dissatisfaction, with between 25 to 30 per cent of respondents being very dissatisfied. The item that drew the most dissatisfied comments of all, however, was that dealing with "thinking things through". Here over half (55%) of those without any qualifications are very dissatisfied – declining to 11 per cent of third-level entrants.

Overall, therefore, the highest satisfaction on this dimension is with "basic education" and the lowest with development of rational calculability. In all cases the most dissatisfied customers are those without any qualifications and generally the most satisfied are those with the highest.

Besides educational level attained, other factors in respondents' backgrounds, the level and nature of education attained, and post-school employment experience is likely to have significant effects on schools leavers' evaluations – as hypothesised in Chapter 1 and as tested in the preceding chapter. The same set of independent variables are used as in the regression for evaluations of the adequacy of educational preparation for work in Table 5.3. In Table 6.3 we report the results of a multiple regression of the joint effects of these 12 social background, educational level and type, and unemployment characteristics on satisfaction with basic-education/cognitive-development.

Taken on their own, three of the social background variables have significant effects: father's occupational status, gender, and remoteness. Working class respondents and males, particularly those from more urbanised communities, are significantly less satisfied with basic educational provision and cognitive development. These results are very similar to those for attitudes toward the adequacy of schooling for work life (Table 5.3).

The results in Equation 2 shows that most of these effects disappear when we introduce controls for educational level and type: the effects of socio-economic background and remoteness are fully mediated through education. Gender retains a slight effect – but this also disappears when further controls are introduced.

Table 6.3: *Regression of 12 Independent Variables on "Basic Educational" Attitudes*

Independent variables	*Eqt 1* *Social background effects (Beta wts.)*	*Eqt 2* + *School/educ. effects (Beta wts.)*	*Eqt 3* + *Current unemploy. (Beta wts.)*	*Pearson's r*
A. *Social Background:*				
1. Father's Occup. Status	.09**	.04	.02	.11
2. Mother's Educ. Status	.03	−.04	−.05	.06
3. Father's unemployment	.06	.04	.02	.07
4. Gender (1 = female)	−.10**	−.07*	−.06	−.10
5. Remoteness	−.06*	−.03	−.03	−.05
B. *Education*				
6. Level of education	–	−.19**	−.17**	−.23
7. No. of Vocational-Technical courses taken	–	−.09**	−.08**	−.02
8. No. of higher academic courses taken	–	−.11**	−.09**	−.20
9. Post-certificate; vocational course	–	−.19**	−.19**	−.19
10. Type of school attended	–	−.08*	−.08	.06
C. *Post-School Employment*				
11. Percentage of time in labour force unemployed	–	–	.10**	.19
12. Percentage of friends unemployed	–	–	.07*	.16
R^2 =	.03	.12	.14	
F =	5.3	11.8	10.9	
p =	< .001	< .001	< .001	
N =	882	882	882	

Notes: *Statistically significant at .05 level.
**Statistically significant at .01 level.

Both educational level and type have equally significant effects to those for adequacy for preparation for work – with type of education received being as important as level attained. The higher the Vocational, as well as the Honours Academic, content of this education the more positive respondents' evaluations. This is surprising in an objective sense, but subjectively it is clear that higher Vocational-Technical content of education increases positive feelings toward it on most dimensions. School

type – whether Vocational, Secondary or Comprehensive – has a slight effect. Attending a Comprehensive-Community school has a slight positive effect while attending a Vocational or Secondary school has a slight negative effect on attitudes.

Conclusions

- Seven separate questions were asked respondents about their level of satisfaction with preparation in basic education and cognitive development. The scaled responses to these questions (from very to least satisfactory) were sufficiently highly correlated with each other to allow us to construct a highly reliable (alpha = .77) Likert scale which has, at face value in any case, relatively high validity.
- Satisfaction was very high with basic educational standards achieved – i.e., the 3Rs, although less so with arithmetic. But general dissatisfaction was evident with the more indirect, or emergent, cognitive development aspects of education: mainly technical-rational processes and related personal disciplines.
- Satisfaction was moderately correlated with educational level attained, with the most dissatisfied being those with the poorest level of educational attainment. It is revealing that such poorly qualified school leavers appear to judge their own relative underachievement according to internalised general societal standards of literacy, numeracy and rationality which they apply in relatively the same way as most middle class respondents would. This, however, is more characteristic of the very practical, 3Rs, aspects of education than of its more emergent or indirect cognitive development aspects.
- Some evidence of differences in expectations or standards of judgement occurs for the most highly qualified for some aspects of cognitive development: particularly verbal communication skills and ability to concentrate and "timekeeping". Here it is clear that those at third level have been "tested" on these qualities/capabilities to a greater extent than those with middle level qualifications and have consequently found them wanting to a greater extent.
- Again, as in the previous chapter, those specialising on Vocational-Technical subjects have significantly more positive attitudes toward educational preparation for "basic education". Judging their assessments on objective achievement grounds, either such vocationally educated people are selective of those who had objectively better standards or their subsequent "Vocational education" had been more successful than the alternatives in improving their basic educational standards. Neither

of these possibilities appear plausible. So, it appears that either their generally greater satisfaction with education "overflows" into these specific evaluations or else their cognitive development expectations and "requirements for the job" are lower.

- Social background effects on evaluation of such basic educational attainments are almost fully mediated through level of education obtained.
- Having controlled for all of these social background and educational attainment effects, post-school employment experience and context retain significant effects – the greater the personal and group experience of unemployment the more negative the attitude. Although the additional effect is not very substantial it is statistically significant. To a small extent post-school experience of unemployment negatively affects one's retrospective views of education.

Chapter 7

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ASPECTS OF EDUCATION – SCHOOL LEAVERS' EVALUATIONS

Introduction

There is a general consensus on the importance of personal and social development goals in education by almost all involved. Ninety per cent of our respondents consider it an important goal of education, only somewhat less important than "basic education" or education for work, as we saw in chapter 5. The new Junior Certificate reflects an increased commitment to this goal – with even the new Maths syllabus stating as one of its aims the development of attitudes that lead to appreciation, confidence, initiative and independence in the young person (Department of Education, Rules and Programmes, 1989/90, p.39). One of the stated objectives of History and Geography is to teach young people to be open-minded and respectful of the rights of others to be different (ibid., p.72). Italian aims to inculcate self-awareness, confidence and an insight into personal potential (ibid. p.124). The Civics syllabus, designed to be complementary to other subjects, clearly intends the course to address the social and personal development needs of pupils (ibid., p.175). This commitment is not so clearly stated at the Leaving Certificate level. While the English syllabus does mention social and personal objectives they are closely intertwined with academic prowess, that is to say, if young people are "good" at English, they will also benefit from the social and personal development aspect of the course. The Physical Education syllabus also aims to foster mature and responsible behaviour, self-confidence and development of principled behaviour (pp. 360-366). The much more clearly stated social and personal objectives of the transition year project, however, highlights the absence of such a clear statement from the rest of the Leaving Certificate programme.

This commitment to the social and personal development aspect of education is also visible in an international context. The Training and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) which was introduced in Scottish schools in 1984 aimed at giving 14-18 year old boys and girls a more relevant and practical preparation for adult and working life. Within this, more attention is paid to personal and social development (Bell and Howieson, 1988, p. 222). The new Dutch foundation curriculum, which in

some respects is quite similar to our Junior Certificate, states that personal development and fruitful participation in society are among its basic goals (*The Netherlands Social and Cultural Report,* 1988, p. 163). There appears in most OECD reports on education a general acceptance that education should be actively engaged in preparing young people not only for working life, active citizenship and future adult roles, but also that personal and social development is a crucial requirement (OECD, 1985, p. 12; OECD *Observer,* 1985, pp. 18, 52).

It seems, therefore, that both nationally and internationally there is an acknowledgement of the importance of personal and social development in education. In this chapter we examine school leavers' assessments of how well this goal is realised and analyse some of the factors affecting their level of satisfaction: socio-economic status of origin, gender, level and type of education, and own and friends' employment situation. Overall, as we noted in Chapter 3, satisfaction with personal and social development through education turns out to be moderate, varying from well to moderately satisfied with preparation for interpersonal communication, to moderate to low satisfaction with personal development (self-confidence, initiative taking).

Method

Each respondent was asked 10 questions about the adequacy of personal, social and character development goals:

(1) Did education help increase your self-confidence?
(2) Did education help you make new friends?
(3) Was education helpful in preparing you well for adult life in general?
(4) To what extent did it help you develop into a well balanced person?
(5) To what extent did it help you build good relations with friends of the opposite sex?
(6) To what extent did it increase your ability to play a full and responsible part in your society?
(7) Has your education helped you to think for yourself?
(8) Did education help you to get on with other people?
(9) Did your education increase your ability to talk and communicate well with others?
(10) How well provided were programmes to develop self- confidence in your education?

As can be seen from Table 7.1 below, the scaled responses to the 10 questions are all moderately to highly interrelated, being sufficiently intercorrelated to form a separate dimension in the factor analysis which was reported in Chapter 3. "Relations with the opposite sex" is the only

Table 7.1: *Intercorrelations Amongst the Scaled Responses to the 10 Questions Used to Assess Levels of Satisfaction with the Personal and Social Development Goals of Education*

Items	*1 Self Confidence*	*2 Making Friends*	*3 Preparation for Adult Life*	*4 Well Balanced Person*	*5 Relations with Opposite Sex*	*6 Play part in Society*	*7 Think for yourself*	*8 Get on with other people*	*9 Communicate well with others*	*10 How well provided were programmes to develop self-confidence?*
(1) Self-confidence	1.00									
(2) Making friends	.44	1.00								
(3) Preparation for adult life	.53	.39	1.00							
(4) Well balanced person	.50	.36	.55	1.00						
(5) Relations with opposite sex	.32	.30	.35	.32	1.00					
(6) Play part in society	.48	.30	.52	.53	.42	1.00				
(7) Think for yourself	.39	.31	.37	.40	.30	.44	1.00			
(8) Get on with other people	.40	.51	.38	.43	.35	.41	.49	1.00		
(9) Communicate well with others	.41	.40	.37	.41	.29	.42	.43	.54	1.00	
(10) How well provided were programmes to develop self-confidence?	.47	.32	.41	.41	.23	.37	.34	.36	.37	1.00
(11) Total Attitude Scale	.74	.63	.74	.74	.47	.71	.67	.72	.69	.66

item which deviates from this – it is more weakly intercorrelated than the other items. In Chapter 3 we saw that this item loaded more highly with the political/civic factor than with the personal and social development factor. Conceptually, however, it appears more acceptable to consider enhanced capability to have good relations with members of the opposite sex as part of social and personal development than as part of the development of political/civic roles.

The reliability of the Likert scale, constructed from all the hypothesised items, is very high (alpha = .87) and removing any item, even that concerning relations with the opposite sex, reduces this reliability. For this analysis, therefore, we retain all of the items previously hypothesised rather than adhering rigidly to the narrower dimension of personal and social development revealed by the factor analysis.

The summative scale constructed from the scores on all 10 items ranges in value from 1.0 to 3.0. The higher the score the more negative the attitude. The average score is 1.87, slightly toward the positive pole. The standard deviation is .47.

Satisfaction with Personal and Social Development through Education

Nationally and internationally, as we have seen, personal and social development is seen as an important goal of education. It is also recognised as a priority by pupils themselves. However, our respondents did not feel their education had been very successful in achieving this goal. Only one-third were highly satisfied that their second-level education had helped increase their self-confidence. Over half felt that their school had helped them a lot with regard to making new friends, but at the other end of the scale only 1 in 5 thought that it had prepared them well for adult life in general or had assisted "a lot" in their development as a well balanced person. The overall picture then, is one of a moderate to low level of satisfaction among school leavers with the adequacy of their education in terms of their personal and social development. Compared with "basic education", therefore, satisfaction with personal and social development is low. It is somewhat higher, however, than satisfaction with preparation for work roles. In the rest of this chapter we examine variations in the level of satisfaction and, as in previous chapters, look at some factors that might explain this variation.

Level of Education

The following table shows the percentage of respondents at each level of education who were very satisfied with the different aspects of personal and social development. Items are ranked from most to least satisfactory.

Table 7.2: *Percentage Very Highly Satisfied with Personal and Social Development Aspects of Education by Level of Education*

Aspects of Education	*Level of Education*						
	1 *No Quals.*	*2* *With Group*	*3* *With Inter*	*4* *While Studying for Leaving*	*5* *Leaving*	*6* *3rd Level*	*Total*
	– % Very Satisfied –						
(1) Making New Friends (r = –.04)	44	57	46	64	59	49	55
(2) Get on with other people (r = –.09)	26	41	38	43	44	41	42
(3) Communicate well with others (r = –.11)	28	43	34	35	43	35	38
(4) Think for yourself (r = –.09)	20	28	31	42	40	26	35
(5) Self-Confidence (r = –.10)	12	32	32	35	32	31	32
(6) Well Balanced Person (r = –.10)	5	26	20	29	22	23	22
(7) How well provided were programmes to develop self-confidence? (r = –.13)	9	23	16	16	14	22	17
(8) Play part in society (r = –.11)	11	26	18	24	18	19	20
(9) Preparation for adult life (r = –.06)	12	30	20	17	19	17	20
(10) Relations with opposite sex (r = +.06)	9	32	14	29	16	16	18
(11) Total Scale (Av. score) (r = –.13)	2.19	1.86	1.87	1.87	1.82	1.88	(N = 1019)

Interestingly the most satisfactory aspects are those dealing with the development of interpersonal social skills – i.e., building interpersonal relationships (items 1 to 3). The next most satisfactory aspect is personal development – developing a self-confident, rational and well balanced

person (4 – 7). The least satisfactory is preparation for more public, or less interpersonal, roles (i.e., "role in society" etc.).

It is clear that the most poorly educated are the least satisfied. Only slightly more than 1 in 4 of these are "very satisfied" with interpersonal skills development (items 1 to 3), only about 1 in 9 with development of self-confidence, and only around 1 in 10 are equally satisfied that their education provided an adequate preparation for adult life dilemmas. All of these satisfaction ratings are substantially lower than for those with higher levels of education – on many items being less than half.

Satisfaction with personal and social development education does not, however, increase consistently with level of education. For most items two categories share the highest satisfaction ratings – those with a Leaving Cert and those with a Group Cert. The former, with those completing a Pre-Leaving Commercial Course, tend to give the highest ratings for interpersonal skills development as well as self-confidence growth (1-6); while those with the Group Cert give much higher ratings than others to preparation for adult life and adult sex roles. The least satisfied respondents are those without any qualifications and those who went on to third level, the former it would appear because of the clear objective ineffectiveness of their education, and the latter because of their higher expectations and greater experienced need for interpersonal and personal capacities. Why Group Cert respondents, predominantly male and with a clear Vocational/Technical speciality, should be more satisfied with their education as a preparation for adult roles (items 8-10) in the society is not at all obvious – but there is no doubt about their judgements. It may be that they think of these roles more narrowly than other groups and that work and Vocational roles have greater importance for them so that the direct work preparation in Vocational tracks "spills over" into personal and social development. However, this does not explain their greater satisfaction with preparation for adult sex roles – where overall satisfaction tends to be least amongst those completing second level. As we shall see later, attendance at a Coed school is positively correlated with such satisfaction and since most Group Cert respondents attended Coed Vocational schools this may partly explain their greater satisfaction.

Gender

Given that boys and girls with the same level of education and even with the same number of honours in the Leaving Certificate, and who have taken the same courses, end up on very different life paths (Hannan, Breen *et al.*, 1983, pp. 284-5), one might expect that this would lead to a substantial gender difference in their evaluation of the social and personal dimension

of their education. There are, however, no significant differences. (See Appendix Table A7.1). Girls tend to be more satisfied that their education helped them in making friends, getting on with others and most other aspects of personal and social development, but boys tend to be more satisfied that their education helped them to build good relations with friends of the opposite sex. Those differences, however, are minor. Again, some of these differences may be related to the higher proportion of girls in single-sex schools. As we shall see later, Coed schools appear to provide more satisfactory social and personal development programmes, or a peer-group context which is more conducive to such developments.

The Effect of Employment Status

Current employment status is likely to affect assessments of the adequacy of personal and social development education for, at least, two reasons: the general level of well-being of respondents and of their social environment, and the extent to which formal work and adult roles require higher levels of skill and flexibility in informal and formal social relationships. Unemployment has substantial negative effects on individuals' well-being (see Whelan and Hannan, Creighton, 1991). As a Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) Report (1985) points out, employment still remains the main mark of adulthood and is essential to most people's psychological well-being and acceptance as honoured adult members of the community. Unemployment, particularly persistent unemployment, is damaging in far more ways than strictly financial ones, as it undermines positive transitions to adulthood. Furlong and Spearman (1989) used the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) to compare the psychological well-being of a nationally representative sample of Scottish 17 year olds in a range of education and labour market situations. They found that those who suffered the most traumatic effects were young people who had failed to make a "successful" transition from school to the labour market (p.52). Such unemployment is highly concentrated amongst young poorly educated working class youth. Their demoralised status is, therefore, most likely to affect their general feelings of inadequacy but their education itself is also disproportionately likely to leave them inadequate in various other respects – particularly in handling the private personal and interpersonal difficulties typically faced by such unemployed young people.

There is a range of other social background and educational factors affecting unemployment levels that are also likely to influence attitudes toward the adequacy of schooling. These will be controlled for in later multivariate analyses. The following results (Table 7.3) show that while the unemployed tend to be consistently more negative in their assessments

than the employed they are not the most negative. The respondents with the most negative attitudes are the students, the unemployed are the next least satisfied while the employed and those in "home duties" and other statuses are the most satisfied. Here, however, "students" refers only to those selected few who were still in third-level education 5 years after they completed second-level education.

Table 7.3: *Percentage "Very Satisfied" with Personal and Social Development Education by Employment Status in 1987 (% Very Dissatisfied in Parentheses)*

Personal and Social Development Assessment Items	*Employment Status*					
	Employed	*Unemployed*	*Never Employed*	*Student*	*Other*	*Total*
			% Very Satisfied			
1. Self-Confidence*	32%	24%	33%	13%	33%	30%
	(20)	(19)	(36)	(29)	(16)	(20)
				($p < .05$)		
2. Well Balanced*	24%	15%	6%	16%	23%	22%
Person	(19)	(30)	(27)	(27)	(16)	(21)
				($p < .01$)		
3. Preparation for*	20%	16%	22%	12%	21%	20%
Adult Life	(30)	(44)	(42)	(38)	(36)	(33)
				($p < .01$)		
4. Average Score for total "PERSOC"	1.85	1.96	2.10	2.10	1.86	1.88
Likert scale (Nos.)	(814)	(188)	(29)	(28)	(75)	(1134)

*These are the three highest correlated items with the overall Likert Scale (See Table 7.1).

The results for such students are unexpected. They have the highest level of education, the best examination results and generally tend to be most satisfied with the more conventional aspects of their education. It is obvious here, however, that in terms of personal self-confidence, of interpersonal presentation "performances", of social interaction skills and of adequacy in formal roles, these remaining third-level students feel the most inadequately prepared. Of course in many respects their expectations and requirements for these roles are more complex, difficult or demanding than in other cases – especially for the upwardly mobile. So, tested against their more exacting standards, their educational preparation, at least in this respect, is found more wanting.

Two post-school sources of dissatisfaction are therefore, identified: the diswelfare effects of unemployment on general feelings of well-being and the more demanding requirements of the third-level educated. In both cases, however, those effects are minor.

The Unemployment Context

As we have already seen unemployment has a significant, though small, effect on assessments of the adequacy of personal and social development education. However, the group contexts within which respondents make their judgements – particularly the unemployment rate within respondents' social groups – are likely to have additional significant effects by varying the standards within which people make judgements. We measured some aspects of these group contexts by asking respondents what proportion of their friends were employed/unemployed. Five rank ordered responses were allowed; "Almost all" or "most" employed or unemployed; and "half employed and half unemployed". Responses were scored from 1 to 5 – the higher the score the more unemployed the context. The correlation between the scale and the overall (9 item) Likert scale measuring attitudes toward the adequacy of personal and social development education was r = .16; the higher the unemployment rate the more negative the attitude. For most of the individual items indeed, those in the highest employment group contexts are two to three times more likely to be very satisfied with their educational preparation than those in the highest unemployment contexts.

Of course the employment status of friends is not independent of one's own employment status, or of one's level of education or social background characteristics. A later multivariate analysis will estimate its independent contribution. Here, however, we examine one additional relative, or comparative, reference group effect of one's own and one's friends' employment statuses. Neither are perfectly correlated – with many employed respondents with all/most friends unemployed, and many unemployed respondents with all/most friends employed.

Reference group theory would suggest that employed respondents with unemployed friends would have more satisfactory attitudes than those with employed friends. In comparative judgemental group terms they should feel relatively better off – the higher the group unemployment level the more positive the attitude. The reverse, however, would be the case for those unemployed people with employed friends who would be more likely to be most dissatisfied as, in comparison to their friends' status, they are substantially worse off – the higher the group unemployment level the more negative the alternative. In other words there is likely to be a pronounced interactive effect between these two variables.

The results presented in Table 7.4 however, do not support this hypothesis. The two effects, in fact, appear to be completely additive. Both one's own unemployment, and one's friends' unemployment, affect one's assessment in a purely additive way – they jointly increase the level of

negative assessments. So it appears, therefore, that the main (reference) group effects are normative: respondents use the standards of their different membership groups to judge their own situation, rather than using relative status comparisons.

Table 7.4: *Reference Group Effects of Membership of High or Low Unemployment Networks on Employed and Unemployed Respondents' Assessment of the Adequacy of Personal and Social Development Education*

	Respondents Employed		*Respondent Unemployed*	
	Most/all friends employed	*Most/all friends unemployed*	*Most/all friends employed*	*Most/all friends unemployed*
(1) Average score on 9 item Likert "Persoc" scale	1.82 (623)	1.92 (38)	1.92 (88)	1.98 (42)
(2) Correlation (Pearsonian) between % friends unemployed and "Persoc" Scale	r = .11 (n = 814)		r = .13 (n = 217)	

School Effects

Unfortunately we have no information on the actual provision of personal and social development courses by individual schools. However, we do know the identity of the authority running each school, as well as its size, and whether it is coed or single sex etc. As we saw in Hannan with Boyle (1987, pp. 25-67) and Hannan, Breen *et al.* (1983, pp. 80-114) the religious order running the school, and whether it is a Vocational or Community/ Comprehensive school, had clear curricular and ethos implications. We would hypothesise, therefore, that coed schools, schools run for elites (like fee paying schools, or schools run by religious orders catering mainly for the middle class) and the new Comprehensive schools, will have more extensive and more effective personal and social development programmes or contexts. The effects of such school type variables will be examined later.

Besides the school authority another school context factor is likely to be very important – coeducation. There has been an ongoing debate within the sociology of education for many years concerning the merits of coeducation. Dale (1974) claims coeducation is more favourable in this respect, as does Feather (1974), who says it is a more natural preparation for the wider social context. Ormerod (1974), however, shows that the evidence favouring coeducation is quite dubious; while Kelly (1978) points

out the importance of other factors – like the social organisation of the school, the philosophy of the teachers, integration of parents, etc. – which may lead to as much variation within school types as between them.

However, when we examine the percentage of young people very satisfied with the personal and social development aspect of their education by type of school, a definite pattern does emerge. Ex-pupils of single sex schools are consistently less satisfied with each dimension of their personal and social development education than ex-pupils of coeducational schools (see Table 7.5). The most satisfied group are those who attended coed Secondary schools, and Community/Comprehensive schools – almost all of which are coed. Since to a large extent the same orders run both single sex and coed Secondary schools and their philosophy is likely to be quite similar, the sex composition of the schools – both pupils and teachers – would appear to be important. This would suggest that what is important in boosting satisfaction is not so much the conscious action of school authorities in terms of curricular/pedagogical initiatives but the opportunities offered for interaction between the sexes in the school environment. It is interesting too that the most stark differences relate to the question regarding relations with the opposite sex – 3 per cent of pupils from girls' Secondary and 10 per cent from boys' Secondary schools are highly satisfied, while at the other end of the spectrum 36 per cent of pupils from coed Secondary schools are satisfied that their education helped them build good relations with members of the opposite sex. Vocational schools occupy an intermediate position between Coed Secondary, Community/Comprehensive and the single sex Secondary schools.

Table 7.5: *Percentage Very Satisfied with Personal and Social Development Aspects of Education by Type of School*

Aspects of Personal and Social Development Education (Total N = 1,015)	*School Type*				
	Girls' Secondary (256)	*Boys' Secondary (222)*	*Coed. Secondary (115)*	*Community/ Comprehensive (130)*	*Vocational Schools (292)*
	– *% Very Satisfied* –				
(1) Self-confidence	26	33	26	41	27
(2) Making friends	52	53	61	57	53
(3) Preparation for adult life	13	14	24	26	22
(4) Well balanced person	21	18	26	23	21
(5) Relations with opposite sex	3	10	36	33	21
(6) Av. Score on Total Likert Scale	1.91	1.95	1.83	1.79	1.87

($F = 3.05$; $p < .02$).

Coeducation, therefore, is obviously a very important school context factor in personal and social development. However, it is also correlated with other factors so we will await the multivariate analysis before coming to any definite conclusions.

The Combined Effect of all Variables

In the following analysis (Table 7.6) multiple regression is used to estimate the joint effects of 5 social background characteristics, 4 schooling provision factors, 3 school type factors and 2 unemployment variables on the summary attitudinal scale (9 items) used to measure school leavers' assessment of the adequacy of schooling for social and personal development. These are almost the same set of independent (predictive) variables as were used in previous regressions with the exception of "coeducational schools" which is hypothesised to have significant effects here but has little influence on other aspects of educational evaluation.

In Equation 1 it is shown that only remoteness has any significant effect. More remote respondents have more positive attitudes. However, these effects are minuscule – explaining only 2 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. Socio-economic status has no effect – school leavers from all social backgrounds appear to be equally satisfied or dissatisfied.

Equation 2 adds in the effects of educational level and type variables, and these have much more significant effects. The higher the level of education attained, the more Vocational-Technical the track taken in school, and the more post-educational Vocational training courses taken, the more positive the effect on assessments. Interestingly it is not those who took the high Academic track that have the most positive attitudes – but those with Vocational-Technical specialisations. It appears, therefore, that for personal and social skills development, as with preparation for work, those taking Vocational-Technical courses are at an advantage. Gender has a slight persistent, though not significant, effect – with girls having more positive attitudes. Remoteness, obviously because of its relationship to educational level achieved, drops out of significance after Equation 1.

A number of the school type variables have clear effects. Coeducational schools and Comprehensive schools have a significant advantage over others; with most of the preceding variables retaining significance. Being educated in a coeducational school, therefore, apparently mostly because of its organisational context and ethos, appears to provide significantly better personal and social development opportunities than single sex schools. None of the other school type variables retain any significance. Combined, all these variables however explain only 6 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable. As we shall see later the total "between-school" variance

is far greater than this so that what schools actually do to satisfactorily supply education for social and personal development is very inadequately measured by these school level variables. Nevertheless – even with these crude measures – differences in school type do have significant effects.

Table 7.6: *Regression of 14 Independent Variables on Satisfaction with Personal and Social Development Aspects of Educational Preparation (Beta wts.)*

Predictor Variables		*Eqt. 1 Social Background Effects (Beta wts)*	*Eqt. 2 1+ Educational Provision Effects (Beta wts)*	*Eqt. 3 2+ Unemployment Status Effects (Beta wts)*	*Univariate Correlation (Pearson)*
(i)	*Social Background*				
(1)	Fa's Occ. Status	.05	.03	.01	.04
(2)	Mo's Education	–.03	–.05	–.05	–.02
(3)	Fa's Unemployment	.06	.05	.04	.06
(4)	Gender	–.06	–.07	–.06	–.06
(5)	Remoteness	–.09*	–.03	–.04	–.09
(ii)	*Educational and Curricular Effects*				
(6	Level of Educ.	–	–.13*	–.11**	–.13
(7)	No. of Honours course taken	–	–.03	–.02	–.07
(8)	No. of Vocat.-Technical Courses taken	–	–.11**	–.09**	–.05
(9)	Taken post Educ. Vocat Training Courses at School	–	–.11*	–.11**	–.14
(iii)	*School Type Effects*				
(10)	Coed. Sec. School	–	–.09**	–.09**	–.06
(11)	Vocat. School	–	–.07	–.08*	–.03
(12)	Comp. School	–	–.11**	–.11**	–.09
(iv)	*Unemployment Status Effects*				
(13)	% Time in LF Unemployed	–	–	.08**	.14
(14)	Proportion of Friends Unemployed	–	–	.09**	.13
R^2	=	.02	.06	.08	
F	=	3.14	5.46	5.75	
p	=	<.01	<.01	<.01	
N	=	886	886	886	

* p <.05
**p<.01

Besides school type, however, the unemployment context within which individuals live has a substantial additional effect on assessments: the greater the proportion of time spent unemployed and the greater the unemployment rate amongst friends the more negative the attitudes, independently of all other preceding variables.

Conclusions

- While personal and social development is generally recognised by pupils, and at an official level, as a very important goal of education, satisfaction with the realisation of these goals in Irish education is only moderate to low. Between a third to one half of respondents were very satisfied with personality development (self-confidence, etc.) and interpersonal skills development aspects. However, only one-fifth were equally satisfied with preparation for adult life roles and relationships with friends of the opposite sex. Satisfaction was generally highest with the development of interpersonal social skills, next highest with the development of a self-confident, rational individuality and lowest with preparation for more public roles and for relationships with the opposite sex. There is significant variation in these attitudes, however, and a number of important factors are related to this variation.
- While overall satisfaction tends to increase with level of education attained the relationship is, in fact, curvilinear. The most satisfied groups are those leaving with the Group Cert and those who took a post-Inter or Post-Leaving Cert Vocational course. Although there is some focus on personal and social development in these Vocational courses this would not explain the higher satisfaction among Group Cert pupils. The popularity of Vocational-Technical courses amongst such respondents appears to be important – as such courses appear not only to prove satisfactory for entry to work but also for other developmental aspects of education.
- The individual's own employment status and group context was hypothesised as an important discriminator, as getting a job is so crucial to a successful transition to adulthood. However, those presently unemployed have only slightly more negative attitudes. What does have an important effect is whether the individual has ever had a job – with both students and those still seeking their first job having the highest levels of dissatisfaction. Those respondents whose friends were mostly unemployed, however, were 2 to 3 times more dissatisfied with their personal and social development education than those in a primarily high employment context. The combined effects of the individual's own unemployment and this unemployment context are additive.

- There are few significant differences by gender. However the sex composition of the school itself does have a big impact, independent of school type. Those in coeducational schools are more satisfied with their personal and social development. It would seem that this is mainly due to the environment of the school and not necessarily to any particular actions on the part of the school authorities.
- Most of the individual variables identified as important above retain their significance in the multivariate analysis. There are some small social background effects with girls and those from more remote areas being more satisfied. Educational effects are quite clear – the better educated are more satisfied in general with their personal and social development education and those taking Vocational-Technical subject tracks are also highly satisfied. These two variables have the most significant effects on attitudes on this dimension. Coed Secondary and Comprehensive-Community schools also show greater levels of satisfaction. Once again also the unemployment experience and context are both seen as having significant negative effects on respondents' assessments. The most positive effects on these assessments are a high level of education, taking a number of Vocational-Technical subjects, attending a coeducational secondary or comprehensive school, and being employed and having friends who are employed.

APPENDIX 7

Appendix Table A7.1: *Percentage Highly Satisfied with Personal and Social Development Aspects of Education by Sex*

		% Highly Satisfied - Sex -	
Aspects of Education		*Male*	*Female*
(1)	Self-confidence	30	30
(2)	Making friends	52	56
(3)	Preparation for adult life	18	20
(4)	Well balanced person	21	22
(5)	Relations with opposite sex	21	14
(6)	Play part in society	20	17
(7)	Think for yourself	31	34
(8)	Get on with others	37	44
(9)	Communicate well with others	37	39
(10)	How well provided were programmes to develop self-confidence?	16	17

Chapter 8

GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE ADEQUACY OF SCHOOLING PROVISION

As was indicated in Chapter 3 one of the unexpected dimensions of schooling evaluation isolated was a general assessment of an individual's own school's provision of programmes of preparation for adult life; that is, providing programmes which helped develop a self-confident, rational and morally assertive capability in work and other adult life roles. The 7 questions (items) asked were grouped together in the interview schedule and appeared to have been interpreted as an overall evaluation of the quality of educational programmes provided in a respondent's last school. The scaled responses to the 7 items were highly intercorrelated and formed a highly reliable Likert scale (alpha = .86).

The 7 questions were asked as a group in response to a general contextual question which queried respondents firstly about the "importance" that 9 different aspects of education should have; and then went on to ask for each item – "how well were these programmes actually provided in your education?": "very well" (1); "somewhat well" (2); "not at all well" (3). There was a high level of intercorrelation amongst 7 of the responses to these 9 items. The exceptions were 1 question on basic education, and 1 on third-level education. For these 7 questions respondents appeared to ignore differences of meaning in question content which, in the other more dispersed questions, they had clearly distinguished: i.e., differences between questions dealing with personal and social development, cognitive development and preparation for work and associated adult roles were ignored in this case although they were clearly distinguished otherwise.

The scale is difficult to interpret, therefore. However, given the high intercorrelations amongst the item responses (see Appendix Table A8.1), the attitudinal scale constructed assesses the general adequacy of respondents' schools' provision of courses/programmes for cognitive and personal development and an adequate preparation for work and adult life roles. It, therefore, reflects an assessment of some of the most important goals in modern education – a combination of technical-rational socialisation, personal and social development and other aspects of preparation for adult life. And, given the context of the question, it appears to be a specific assessment of one's own (last) school's adequacy in these respects.

Although attitudes were generally negative there was considerable variation. In this chapter we examine that variation and attempt to explain it. Initially we examine the relationship to level of education attained. Next the type of curriculum, and after that a number of "school type" characteristics which are expected to influence both school programmes and their evaluations. Finally we examine the effects of individuals' social background characteristics and current employment status.

Hypotheses

As in previous chapters – particularly Chapters 1 and 4, and for the reasons there outlined, we hypothesise that favourable assessments would be most characteristic of the better educated, of those taking both highly Academic and Vocational-Technical "tracks", and of those who received substantial in-school and out-of-school Vocational preparation courses. School type also is expected to affect assessments, with Coeducational schools and Comprehensive schools particularly being at a distinct advantage. Unemployment of self and friends is also likely to have significant negative effects.

Level of Certification and Subject "Track"

Level of education, or educational certification, attained is, as previously, the most highly correlated of the educational variables with assessments of the overall adequacy of schooling preparation for adult life.

The level of satisfaction with educational preparation for adult roles and relationships increases with educational level for each of the 7 items included (see Table 8.1). Level of satisfaction is greatest for job preparation, next for cognitive development and preparation for adult life, next for personal, social and moral development, and by far the least for civic/political education.

The majority of the most poorly qualified are clearly dissatisfied for all items – from up to 67 per cent clearly dissatisfied with job preparation to over 80 per cent highly dissatisfied with civic education. For those with third-level qualifications, levels of equivalent dissatisfaction vary only from up to 22 per cent for work preparation, to a maximum of 43 per cent clearly dissatisfied with civic/political education. The correlation between level of education and the 7 item summary attitudinal (Likert) scale is $r = -.21$. So, the longer one remains in school, and the more extended and difficult the courses and curricula taken, and examinations passed, the greater the satisfaction with educational preparation for adult life. Presumably, however, there is an element of selection involved – those who are most satisfied are most likely to remain in school.

Table 8.1: *Percentage of Respondents Who are Very Satisfied that Their Education (School) had Provided Programmes which Adequately Prepared them for Adult Life over a Number of Aspects of Educational Preparation (Ranked by level of Education)*

How well were these programmes actually provided in your education?	*Level of Education 1987*						
	1 No Quals	*2 Group Cert*	*3 Inter Cert*	*4 Post Inter*	*5 Leaving Cert*	*6 Third Level Entrants*	*Total*
	% "Very Satisfied" or programme was provided "very well" by school						
(1) (3516): "Prepared to do a good job well (% "Not at all" provided)	12 (52)	34 (23)	22 (27)	29 (30)	27 (22)	40 (13)	28% (24) (r=.20)
(2) (3512):"To think through things and come to clear solutions" (% "Not at all" provided)	12 (55)	16 (30)	17 (32)	19 (23)	19 (19)	32 (11)	26% (23) (r=.24)
(3) (3514):"To get a good job" (% "Not at all")	9 (66)	30 (39)	17 (39)	23 (35)	14 (31)	18 (22)	19% (34) (r=.21)
(4) (3517):"Prepare for adult life when left school" (% "Not at all")	8 (67)	27 (33)	17 (34)	20 (36)	15 (34)	20 (23)	18% (34) (r=.13)
(5) (3511): "Develop self-confidence and self-reliance" (% "Not at all")	11 (50)	23 (33)	16 (27)	16 (22)	14 (26)	22 (16)	17% (26) (r=.13)
(6) (3513): "Prepare to develop and apply good values to everyday life" (% "Not at all")	13 (52)	17 (32)	12 (34)	10 (42)	12 (37)	21 (21)	14% (34) (r=.10)
(7) (3515): "Active role in public affairs etc." (% "Not at all")	4 (81)	9 (63)	6 (64)	9 (65)	4 (61)	8 (43)	6% (60) (r=.14)
Overall Scale Mean Value: (7 items)	2.51	2.15	2.20	2.18	2.17	1.97	2.16 (r=.21)

As in previous cases there is an interesting discontinuity to the gradual improvement of attitudes with educational attainment – so that the "selection effect" of satisfaction affecting decisions to stay does not hold universally. Those having left with a Group Cert qualification – particularly boys with Vocational-Technical qualifications who, in any case, constitute the majority of Group Cert school leavers – tend to be more satisfied than those leaving with an Inter Cert, and even those with solely a Leaving Cert qualification. So this particular Vocational-Technical "course type" is being evaluated very positively – particularly for job-preparation, but also in self-confidence building, etc. The following table shows a clear relationship between "track" specialisation and such school assessment ratings.

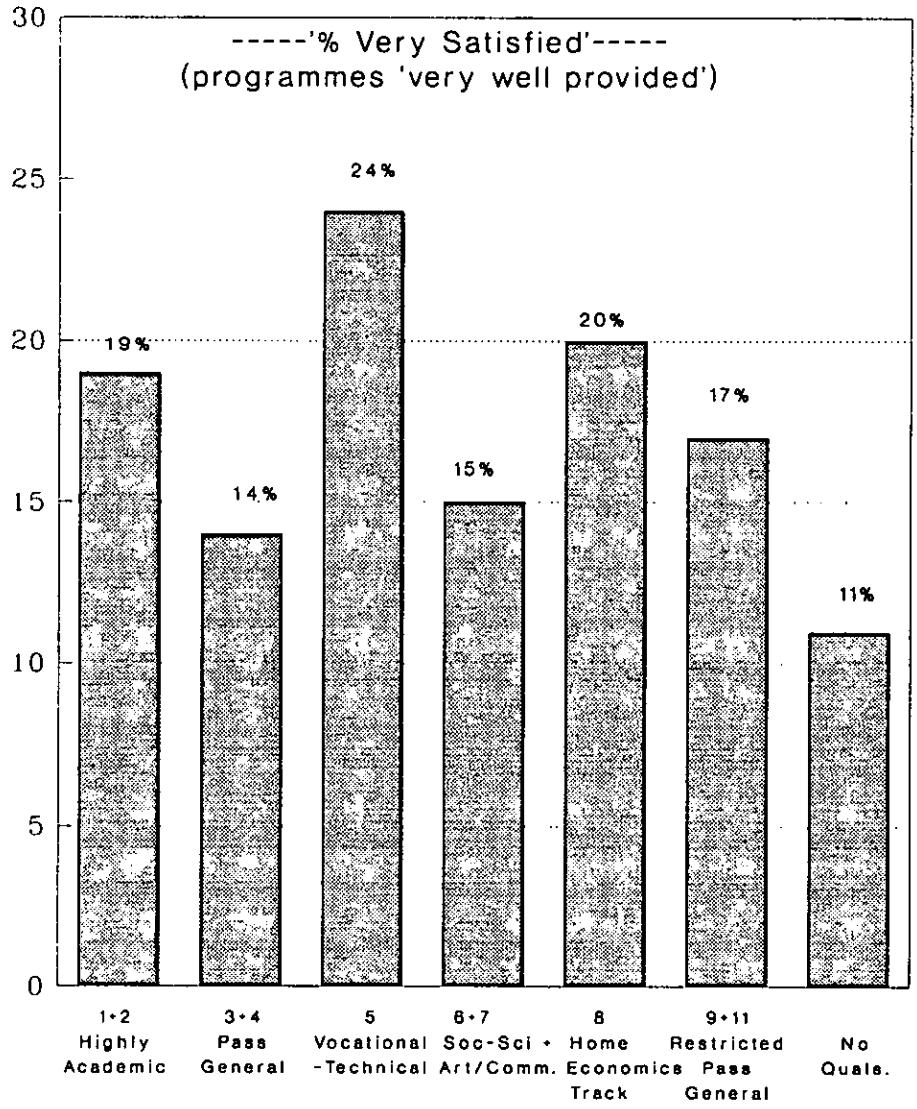
Table 8.2: *Average Values of "School Attitudes" by Curricular Track Taken in Schools*

	"Track Type"							
	High Academic Track	*"Pass General" (Unrestricted)*	*Vocat.-Technical*	*General with Soc./Sci./Art/Commerce*	*Home Economics*	*Very Restricted General Pass Course*	*No Quals. (No information) on subjects etc)*	*Total*
Average Score on Attitude Scale "School Attitudes"	2.04	2.27	2.15	2.18	2.14	2.20	2.41	2.16
(n)	(311)	(52)	(164)	(249)	(103)	(113)	(102)	
			F = 5.93;	df = 9;		p < .001;	Eta = .25	

The most satisfied school leavers are those who took the highly academic, university preparation, courses; but the next most satisfied are those who took the Vocational-Technical courses (usually those with junior certificate qualifications) or those with a Home Economics specialisation. Although the actual differences are small they are highly statistically significant. The most dissatisfied respondents are those who had either left without any qualifications or had taken the "Pass" level general academic course at Leaving Cert level or an even more restricted set of Pass level, non-specialised courses, at Inter Cert level.

This relationship to curricular "track" is clearly illustrated in the following figure which gives the percentages of respondents who are satisfied that their school provided adequate preparation ("very well") for "adult life". Here those who specialised in the Vocational-Technical courses are more satisfied than those who specialised in the highly Academic curriculum. This relative advantage for the Vocationally educated is even

Figure 8.1:Percentage Respondents who were satisfied that Schools provided programmes for "preparation for adult life","very well".



more pronounced in education for work but does not hold equally for programmes dealing with personal and social development.

So, in general (with the exception of those with the Group Cert), there is a linear relationship between level of education and satisfaction with schooling. There are also three important "track" effects. The greater satisfaction of the high Academic tracks reinforces the satisfaction of those at the higher levels of education, while being in the Vocational-Technical track has a mitigating effect on the dissatisfaction of those finishing at junior cycle, particularly Group Cert, level. In addition it appears that those taking the Pass level general (or non-specialist) academic courses are almost as dissatisfied as those without any qualifications.

School Characteristics

As we saw in previous chapters for other dimensions of educational assessment it is likely that respondents' schooling evaluations are likely to be highly dependent on the nature and quality of the school attended – as well as the level of education attained and the type of curriculum followed. So type of school (whether single sex or Coed, Secondary or Vocational), as well as the ethos of religious orders running the school, are all likely to have significant impacts on schooling adequacy assessments.

As to school type, and examining univariate relationships, there is a slight tendency for Vocational and Comprehensive schools to have a better rating on work preparation courses – though not on other dimensions. As regards Secondary schools run by religious orders a clearer relationship does exist. Christian Brothers' Schools (CBS) and other Brothers' schools are more positively evaluated on work preparation. On personal and social development, however, the orders running high status schools, Protestant schools and the Community-Comprehensive schools, are more positively evaluated. Taking the average score on the summary Likert scale, however, the high status (generally fee paying) schools, Vocational schools, and schools run by the Mercy Order have the most positive evaluations. Some types of boys' schools, Comprehensive schools, and some run by female religious orders have the most negative evaluations. However, these differences are very small and since such school characteristics are correlated with both the social background of pupils and school size, as well as with other schooling characteristics, we need to examine their effects in a multivariate analysis before coming to any conclusions about their effects.

We unfortunately do not have any information on the internal organisation of schools – of the way curricula are allocated, pupils are categorised or assigned to classes, the pedagogical arrangements or ethos of schools,

etc., so that the above "school-type" characteristics merely index such unobserved differences. As we have seen, access to an Academic track, or specialisation in a Vocational-Technical track, clearly has positive effects, whereas allocation to a Pass level more general curriculum is less highly evaluated.

So the curricular provision and allocation procedures within and between schools have significant effects on school leavers' evaluations. However, such schooling effects are correlated with other variable effects, so they need to be considered in a multivariate analysis.

The Combined Effects

Most of these variables are correlated with each other so that their joint effects – tested by multivariate analysis – may not be as clearcut as their univariate relationships. The following table reports the results of a multiple regression analysis of the effects of 14 independent variables on the summary attitude scale measuring respondents' overall evaluations of the adequacy of their schooling preparation for adult life. The scale ranges in value from 1.0 (highly positive) to 3.0 (highly negative). The average score is 2.16, which is generally negative, with a standard deviation of .49.

Equation 1 shows that three social background effects are significant: fathers' occupational status, father being unemployed and remoteness. Gender is not significant. Working class respondents, particularly from families where fathers are unemployed, have significantly more negative attitudes. An equally important variable, however, is remoteness. As in former cases the most remote respondents have the most positive evaluation of schooling. When controls for educational level and type are introduced in Equation 2 all family socio-economic effects disappear. As we have seen before, the effect of social class would seem to be mediated almost totally through level of education attained. The effects of remoteness, however, persist even with controls for educational level, etc. So irrespective of education and type, as well as post-school employment experience, the most remote rural respondents have the most positive evaluation of their education while the most urbanised are the most negative.

Level of education and type of education adds significantly to the explained variance – as is clear from Equation 2. The higher the level, the greater the extent of take-up of either an Honours Academic or a Vocational-Technical course, or a post-certificate Business/Commercial course, the more positive the attitude. Once all educational variables are controlled for, however, the effects of most social background variables disappear – except for remoteness.

The only school type variable of significance is attendance at a Vocational school. This appears to have a clear positive effect. No other category of school has significant effects. The most striking (though hardly surprising by now) result is that in both respects – in choice of curriculum and school type – Vocational courses and schools get a quite positive evaluation.

Being unemployed, or having friends who are unemployed, has no discernible additional effect on attitudes – as is clear from equation 3. This result departs from previous findings – where post-school unemployment experience, and that of one's informal networks, clearly had a *"post-hoc* effect" on respondents' evaluations of their schooling.

Table 8.3: *Multiple Regression of "School Attitudes" on 15 Social Background, Educational Level and Type, as Well as School Type Variables, and Unemployment Status in 1987 (Beta Weights)*

Independent Variables	*Eqt 1 Effects of Social Background*	*Eqt 2 1+Level and Type of Education*	*Eqt 3 2 + Being Unemployed*
(1) Father's Occ. Status	.09*	.06	.04
(2) Education	.03	.01	.01
(3) Father unemployed	.07*	.05	.04
(4) Remoteness	–.10**	–.07*	–.07*
(5) Gender	–.02	–.03	–.02
(6) Level of Education	–	–.16*	–.14**
(7) No of Voc. Tech. Courses	–	–.13**	–.11**
(8) InHigh Academic Track	–	–.10*	–.09*
(9) Vocational-Comm. Course	–	–.10**	–.10**
(10) Vocational School	–	–.12*	–.13**
(11) Comprehensive School	–	.02	–.02
(12) Coed School	–	.04	–.05
(13) % Time Unemployed	–	–	.06
(14) %Friends Unemployed	–		.06
R^2	.03	.10	.11
N	854	854	854
F	5.07	7.59	7.05
p	< .001	< .001	< .001

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Conclusions

- Evaluations of the adequacy of schooling in preparing students for their adult life roles – in developing a self-confident, rational and morally assertive capability in work and related roles – are generally negative. The attitudinal scale developed, although it put together responses to questions which otherwise fall on more than one dimension of response, was highly reliable. This appeared to be so because respondents were assessing in a direct way the adequacy of their own schools' provisions. The scale, therefore, could be called a general "school assessment" factor, or one which assesses the general effectiveness of their schooling as a preparation for entry to "open society".
- Although the assessment was generally more negative than positive most individual item responses showed moderate levels of satisfaction. Assessment was most positive for job preparation and cognitive development and least for personal and social development and civic education.
- The most satisfied school leavers were those who had achieved most in education – particularly the successful third-level educated. But those who had specialised in a Vocational-Technical track were almost equally as satisfied. So, besides level of education, the type of curricular "track" taken had significant additional effects – with those specialising in either Vocational-Technical or Honours Academic subjects being the most satisfied. The least satisfactory curricular "tracks" appear to be the Pass level, broad and "general" education ones.
- Those who had attended Vocational, Comprehensive or Coeducational Secondary schools assessed them as more satisfactory than others. But only Vocational schools retained any independent significance when "curricular track", and other post-examination Vocational course specialisations were controlled for. In other words, independent of level and type of education taken, there are aspects of the provision of courses, or of the pedagogy or the ethos, of Vocational schools which are being very positively evaluated by school leavers. These positive judgements are not extended to any other school type, but the effect is rather modest.
- As we shall see later, however, overall "school effects" are likely to be much greater than is indicated here. What individual schools do by way of courses, pedagogy, developing interpersonal relationship competencies, or the school's general ethos, has substantial effects on the adequacy and effectiveness of their interventions in preparing their

students for adult life roles. What this chapter has shown is that besides their success in increasing general educational attainment the Vocational-Technical aspects of education are more effective in adequately preparing students for adult life – or for entry to "open society" – than the more academic general Pass level courses.

APPENDIX 8

Appendix Table A8.1: *Intercorrelation amongst 7 items of the "Adequacy of Preparation for Adult Life" Scale*

Items	*Item*							*Average Score on Scale*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	
(1) "Self Confidence"	1.00							2.09
(2) "Think through things"	.57	1.00						2.02
(3) "Preparation for Life" and "apply good values"	.51	.50	1.00					2.20
(4) Preparation for "getting job"	.42	.43	.43	1.00				2.12
(5) Preparation for active role in public affairs	.37	.40	.42	.36	1.00			2.54
(6) Preparation "to do good job well"	.44	.43	.50	.56	.36	1.00		1.95
(7) "Preparation for Adult Life"	.51	.50	.52	.50	.45	.66	1.00	2.17
(8) Correlation with total Likert scale	.73	.74	.75	.73	.63	.77	.78	2.15

Cronbach's Alpha (Total) = .86

Cronbach's Alpha if items 4 and 6 (dealing with work roles) are excluded = .82.

Chapter 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction: The Objectives of Education

Our main purpose in this study is to report how a large sample of recent school leavers assessed the adequacy of their education, and how effectively they thought the second-level school system met its, and their own, objectives.

The overall goals of Irish second-level education are indicated only in very general terms in the main official State documents. In the guidelines for the (older) Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses at least 9 broad objectives are specified or clearly implied. (See Chapter 1).

Of these 9 objectives, or motivating values, of Irish second-level education we examine 6 in detail in this study. At least 3 other broad objectives are not examined: moral, religious and general character development; ideological and cultural objectives; and a clear priority in providing a "broad general education". In the latter case, however, some of the main problems arising from the differential implementation of such a "general education" priority is examined – particularly for lower achieving pupils. The following are the 6 objectives examined in detail.

(1) (a) Basic educational goals: basic language and mathematical skills (the "3 Rs"); and

(b) Intellectual and cognitive development goals (9 questions)

(2) Personal, social and character development goals (10 questions)

(3) Preparation for entry to the world of work (8 questions)

(4) Preparation for entry to other, more general, adult roles (5 questions)

(5) Preparation for political and civic roles (6 questions)

(6) Preparation for third-level entry (2 questions)

In order to validly and reliably measure school leavers' assessments of their education in these respects they were asked over 30 separate questions about the adequacy and utility of their educational preparation (See Appendix 3A).

Education and Employment

Although our analysis is focused around these 6 objectives the school leavers' responses were not structured exactly according to the above pattern. However, before we examine school leavers' assessments we need to place their views in context. So in Chapter 2 we look at the dramatic changes which have occurred in the Irish youth labour market over the 1980s, and in the relevance and significance of educational qualifications for labour market integration. During the 1980s, employment fell dramatically and unemployment rates for school leavers grew rapidly. This occurred despite the actual decline in the number of school leavers entering the labour market, with a growth in the retention rates of older pupils in schools, and growth also in third-level entry. The number of pupils taking Vocational, Technical, Secretarial and other related courses in schools, for instance, almost doubled between 1979/80 and 1985/86. Emigration also partly accounted for the declining number directly entering the Irish labour market – although this grew rapidly only from 1985 onwards, and appears now to have temporarily stopped. Participation in some post-second level education or training also increased dramatically – more than doubling between 1980/81 and 1985.

The school leavers whose post-school experience is examined in detail here, therefore, were entering a rapidly deteriorating labour market. As it worsened, schools and pupils reacted by considerably expanding provision and participation. Post-school education and training also expanded markedly so that pupils stayed longer in full-time education, took more post-school courses and gained more qualifications. Our higher youth unemployment rates have, therefore, been partly responsible for a significant educational expansion and "qualification inflation" over the 1980s. So by the mid-1980s Irish educational participation rates, and "examination success" rates, were higher than their English, Welsh or Scottish equivalents. At the beginning of the 1990s the general educational levels of new entrants to the Irish labour force were considerably higher than at the beginning of the 1980s – but the prospects for employment were substantially lower at all levels of education.

Besides general Academic education there is a well developed apprenticeship training system, providing block release and part-time training in Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), FÁS (The Training and Employment Authority) centres, etc. This has declined in significance over time, although there has been a recent significant growth in occupationally specific Vocational training and education (CERT – the state Tourism Training Agency, Teagasc The Agriculture and Food Development Authority, BIM – Irish Sea Fisheries Board). There has also been a

substantial growth in training and work experience schemes for unemployed youngsters. The latter aims at providing training, work experience and personal development courses for unemployed, particularly poorly educated and disadvantaged, youth. The lack of public validation of and qualification for the non-apprenticeship AnCO (Industrial Training Authority)/FÁS training programmes, however, has been a serious defect of these courses – a defect which it is now, however, intended to correct.

Post-School Education and Training

There are obvious gaps or deficits in the provision for school leavers at different levels of attainment in their first years out of school. And these gaps and inequalities do not get any less obvious over the following 3 to 5 years. The extent to which people add to their educational or training qualifications even 2 to 5 years after they leave school still depends crucially on the level attained in conventional schooling. Even if we exclude those who went on to take third-level courses, for instance, we find that almost four times the proportion of those completing second-level education went on to take further education and training courses after school as compared with early leavers without any qualifications. So the advantages acquired in the highly institutionalised first- and second-level education systems are still there 2 years, and even 5 to 6 years, later. The economic environment in which our sample of school leavers found themselves between 1982 and 1987 was, therefore, a very depressed one; and the extent of competition amongst school leavers for employment became quite fierce. The wide inequalities in initial educational achievement, therefore, had substantial consequent effects on further education and training and labour market entry.

Irish education is mostly provided in extended, full-time, periods which have sharp beginnings and endings, and with rigid entry requirements. Once people finish with one level they very rarely go back to improve upon failed or incomplete courses, examinations or qualifications. Continuing education by and large adds on to, or is built upon, previous attainment. It is cumulatively advantageous rather than progressively corrective in its effects. Effectively there is very little "second chance" education.

The inability to gain accreditation to advanced courses on part-time, cumulative credit bases, combined with extremely limited possibilities for "second chance" education means that – given the crucial role that qualifications play in employment decisions – the inequalities of early schooling become ever more accentuated as young people move through school into training and the labour market. In these circumstances just changing the curriculum and the examination system within schools can

only have a limited impact on the reduction of inequalities.

Methods

In Chapter 3 we describe the sample of school leavers, the method of interviewing, and the 6 basic categories of questions asked of them. The interviews were carried out with a national sample of school leavers in late November 1987 to end January 1988. This re-survey of the original 1981/82 sample of school leavers was carried out for the YEA (Youth Employment Agency)/FÁS. Respondents were first interviewed in May 1983, 1 year after they had left school. They were also re-interviewed in November 1984. By their third interview, therefore, in late 1987 and early 1988 5.5 years had elapsed from the time they had completed their post-primary education.

In Chapter 3 we also describe the structure of responses to the 35 different questions school leavers were asked about their assessment of, or level of satisfaction with, their schooling. Most of these questions were designed to tap the 6 different dimensions of educational objectives outlined earlier. In order to establish whether the pattern of their responses corresponded to the dimensions hypothesised the correlations amongst the scaled responses to these questions were factor analysed. With significant exceptions the dimensionality of school leavers' assessments did conform rather closely to that originally hypothesised. The basic dimensions do appear: "basic education", personal and social development, preparation for work and adult roles, preparation for civic/political roles. However, the intellectual or cognitive aspects do not "load" on "basic education", and preparation for work and adult roles items tend to load together. A separate and very general dimension also appears. This is a general utilitarian assessment of one's own school's adequacy of preparation across three dimensions: preparation for work, for adult life and personal and social development. These respondent defined dimensions of schooling evaluation provide the bases for our analyses in Chapters 4 to 8 of the study: preparation for work and adult life, basic education and cognitive development, overall schooling adequacy, and personal and social development.

We were, therefore, able to derive a set of multi-item scales which tapped respondents' attitudes – relatively enduring orientations based on linked sets of beliefs, feelings and evaluations – towards their education. These scales have high content and face validity and are highly reliable. They can be interpreted as measures of the school leavers' mature assessments of their education after at least 5 years' experience in "open society". While it was possible that such attitudes could be heavily affected by *post-factum* rationalisation of the effectiveness of their education by respondents from our analysis this appeared to be a minor effect.

School Leavers' Priorities

School leavers' own educational priorities corresponded closely to the "official" view. With the exception of civic/political education, almost all the above mentioned dimensions of education are given very high priority by school leavers. The attainment of "the 3 Rs" as well as cognitive development goals are almost universally regarded as crucial. School leavers' almost equally emphasise utilitarian vocational goals. Preparation for other adult roles, including sex roles, is almost equally emphasised. Also, personal and social development goals and the development of the individual's moral consciousness and capability are also given high priority. Preparation for third-level studies is more lowly ranked, even when the question was restricted to third-level entrants. The lowest importance was attached to preparation for civic and political roles – with less than half of the respondents thinking it very important.

Our analysis concentrates on the five more important aspects of education which were given highest priority by school leavers: basic education, preparation for work, and for other adult roles, personal and social development, and the overall assessment of one's own school's adequacy over the above areas.

School Leavers' General Satisfaction with their Education

School leavers' satisfaction with the various aspects of their education varies from a high to very high rating on the achievement of the 3 Rs and general cognitive development, to a generally less satisfactory provision on nearly all other dimensions, and particularly on preparation for participation in public life. Respondents, therefore, distinguished clearly amongst educational objectives – being highly satisfied with some and very critical of others. The strong approval given to the provision of basic education (77 per cent of all respondents saying the "3 Rs" were "very well" provided) indicates that high levels of satisfaction are indeed possible. At the other extreme, however, only 20-35 per cent are equally satisfied with the adequacy of preparation for work life, and only 17 to 40 per cent with most aspects of personal and social development.

While Chapter 3 gave us a general overview of the levels of satisfaction, we examined attitudes on each dimension in more detail in later chapters. Assessment of the adequacy of preparation for working life is examined in Chapters 4 and 5, basic education in Chapter 6, personal and social development in Chapter 7. The overall measure of assessment of schooling adequacy is examined in Chapter 8 – which draws together many of the elements of earlier chapters in a distinct fashion.

In Chapters 4 to 8 we report the results of our analysis of the factors

explaining variations, or differences, in school leavers' levels of satisfaction with their education. A number of factors were hypothesised to be important – social background factors (primarily social class and gender) which affect both respondents' aspirations and levels of attainment; institutional differences in educational objectives and provision (primarily the type of school attended); how schools meet these various objectives (measured by subject "track" specialisation and level of educational attainment); and respondents' experience of the labour market outcomes of their education. These factors, along with some others, are tested throughout these chapters as causes of variation in satisfaction, within, of course, the overall context of moderate to low levels of satisfaction.

(a) *Labour Market Experience and the Value of Education*

Before examining the influence of these variables on respondents' assessments of educational effectiveness, we first examined in Chapter 4 the actual relationships between education, training and employment chances. Success in the labour market on leaving school was not only found to be highly correlated with level of education attained, but the relative advantage of the better educated improved significantly over time. The relationship between level of educational attainment and labour market success is stark: those who leave school without any qualifications experience high levels of persistent unemployment, those with good qualifications were predominantly absorbed over 2-3 years, even in the mid-1980s.

The importance school leavers themselves attach to educational certifications supports these conclusions. Five different aspects of educational attainment were assessed: highest certificate achieved, examination results, particular subjects and particular courses taken (i.e., pre-employment etc.), and particular AnCO/CERT training courses. These five aspects were clearly ranked in terms of their influence on employment decisions: certification was considered the most important; next came examination results and particular subjects taken in these exams. Pre-employment Vocational courses came next. AnCO or CERT (out of school) Vocational courses were considered to be least important; although they were also the least likely to have been taken, and those who did take them found them to be quite important. Educational certification is considered important in both securing a job in the first place and in determining the level of job attained. School leavers perceive it as the most important educational factor in employment decisions, although not necessarily in helping to do the job itself. Significantly, the lower the level of certification the lower the importance attached to it. This tendency, however, is much less marked

amongst the unemployed. They regard the absence of certification as a major blockage to their own employment possibilities.

Respondents were also asked which subjects or aspects of their education were most useful, or from which they had gained most for working life and related adult roles. Sixty per cent considered the "3 Rs" to be most important. This was followed by personal and social development (23 per cent), then Business and Vocational-Technical studies. It is noticeable that the greatest importance is attached to the "3 R" subjects by those leaving school with intermediate level of qualifications. It appears that the most poorly educated do not experience the same need for basic linguistic and mathematical skills as do those with Inter Cert qualifications, for instance; whereas the best qualified do not meet occasions where their objectively better standards are so stretched that they become preoccupied about them. Gender is almost as differentiating as educational level in school leavers' views of the importance of different subjects: Maths and Vocational subjects are male preoccupations, English and Home Economics are female ones.

Overall then Chapter 4 reveals a strong relationship between educational attainment and labour market success: and a consequent high level of importance is attached to this relationship by the school leavers themselves.

(b) *Value of Education for Working Life*

Chapter 5 analyses in detail why school leavers vary in their assessments of the adequacy of their educational preparation for work: to get a job, to do a job well, to provide an understanding of the world of work, and to prepare them for work and associated adult roles. A number of hypotheses were proposed to explain variation in levels of satisfaction. In terms of education it was expected that the rapid "qualification inflation" that occurred with the 1980s recession would further increase the perceived significance of qualifications and hence that the higher the qualification level attained the more positive the assessment of the quality of education received for work. Type of education was also hypothesised to be important, with those taking more vocationally oriented courses having more positive attitudes.

These hypotheses were generally supported. Between a half to two-thirds of those without any qualifications were very dissatisfied with most aspects of education for work. This was true, however, for less than 1 in 4 of third-level entrants. Besides qualification level, the type of education received – whether an Academic, Vocational-Technical, or "general" Pass level subject package – also affects levels of satisfaction. Those with a Pass level "general academic" education, or with a broad and shallow (or non-specialised) Pass

level curricular specialisation, are the most dissatisfied group; being only slightly more positive than those with no qualifications at all[5]. Those who specialised in Vocational-Technical subjects tend to be generally as satisfied as those leaving with a high Honours Academic speciality.

"Track" allocation/choice is highly correlated with level of education attained, as well as with gender. The residue of a strong Vocational-Technical bias in education still occurs for boys with poorer academic prospects, particularly those who leave school with junior cycle qualifications. There is no equivalent Vocational specialisation for girls. They tend to be catered for by "general courses" in History/Geography, Business Studies and Art or Home Economics. There is, however, substantial "post- educational" vocational training given for such girls. And these generally "Commercial" Vocational courses appear to function in much the same way for the moderately, academically, able girls as the Vocational-Technical specialisation does for boys.

Both level of education and Vocational-Technical specialisation retain these effects in the multivariate analysis. In addition, remoteness of place of origin also retains significance. Socio-economic status of origin has no independent effect. So, the better educated and the more vocationally specialised, and those from more remote areas, evaluate their education most positively. In addition both personal and group experiences of unemployment also have independent effects. The most dissatisfied clients are those with poor levels of education who were not assigned to Vocational/Technical tracks but instead took mostly "dispersed" general Pass level courses, and who did not take up any relevant post-school training courses immediately on completing their exams. They also tend to come from the more urbanised areas, have a poor employment history and live in high unemployment contexts.

(c) *Perceived Defects in Education for Work*

Given dissatisfaction with education for work, and the perceived importance among school leavers themselves of the importance of educational attainment for employment we investigated school leavers' intentions to close the gap between the education provided them and their perception of educational requirements for employment. A number of linked perceptions and beliefs about schooling were apparent. First, the higher the level of education already achieved the more likely were

[5] Of course many boys with no qualifications had taken Vocational-Technical subjects. Unfortunately we do not have information on their subjects from the survey and do not know which of them actually did take Vocational-Technical subjects.

respondents to believe that certification was necessary for employment. Secondly, although poor achievers were most dissatisfied with educational preparation for work they were less likely than the high achievers to perceive, or report, major defects in their education.

In addition the higher achievers were more likely to criticise their schooling for its over-academic bias and for its failures to prepare people for work or for the practical vocational demands of life after school. Early leavers were much less specific in their criticisms and were more likely to mention the way schools were (mis)managed or run, their organisational arrangements or the poor quality of relationships with teachers, etc.

Although, therefore, the more highly educated were more satisfied with their education and believed in its benefits to a far greater extent, they also expected more from it, and were more conscious of individual failings in it which they could articulate clearly. Those who completed their education with lower attainments had less belief in its utility, expected less from it, were less preoccupied with individual defects in it, and were less concerned, or able, to articulate the nature of their dissatisfactions – even though their level of dissatisfaction was much greater.

The recognition of defects in one's education is highly correlated with intentions to correct such defects. While almost half of all respondents did intend at some stage to go forward for further education or training only half of these again could be considered as serious candidates. Definite plans for further education/training are highly correlated with educational level already achieved: the higher the level of education the greater the level of aspiration and the more definite the plan. The early institutional exclusion of the poor educational attainers has had a very serious overall alienating effect on them which appears to be permanent – they are the least likely of all educational levels to volunteer for further education or training courses, even where such courses appear to be necessary and feasible – and even when they themselves believe this to be so.

It appears, therefore, that those working class school leavers who have not experienced even modest success in their education and have not, therefore, experienced school to be an effective teaching/learning arrangement, do not intend to pursue opportunities for further educational qualification – even while they clearly recognise the central importance of such educational qualifications in labour market integration. Alienation from the educational institution in this case goes along with a clear recognition of the importance of educational/training qualifications. The end is clearly seen as necessary and desirable, the means used to achieve it ineffective and alienating. Out-of-school experimental learning programmes such as "Youthreach" are far

more likely to be responded to positively – but the constraining schooling roots of their alienation need to be tackled.

(d) *Satisfaction with Basic Education*

Chapter 6 examines school leavers' evaluations of their basic education and cognitive development. Seven questions were asked which, it was felt, tapped this proposed dimension. The scaled responses to these questions were sufficiently highly correlated with each other to allow us to construct a highly reliable Likert scale.

We found that the highest satisfaction on this dimension is with "basic education" or the "3 Rs", while dissatisfaction is more evident for the more general aspects of cognitive development, rational calculability, or the development of associated personal disciplines. It appears, then, that the more emergent aspects of educational development – those aspects most likely to be responsive to pedagogical and related schooling practice changes – are less satisfactorily developed by schools.

Satisfaction was moderately correlated with educational level attained: with the most dissatisfied being those with the poorest level of educational attainment. Poorly qualified school leavers had, therefore, sufficiently internalised societal standards of literacy, numeracy and rationality to judge their own "unsatisfactory" attainments in relatively the same way as most middle class respondents. There is a wide gap between the attitudes of those with no qualifications at all and those with the lowest junior cycle qualifications; while smaller differences in satisfaction occur between the latter and the most highly qualified. Once more we find that the high Academic attainers and those who had specialised in Vocational-Technical subjects had more positive attitudes than others. So too did those who had taken post-certificate vocational courses.

The latter finding indicates the importance of Vocational-Technical and manual subjects in education, and the dangers involved in the increasing dominance of the "elite" academic model for average to low attaining pupils, particularly working class pupils.

Fathers' employment status, remoteness of place of origin and respondent's gender have significant effects on assessment, but these disappear when educational attainment and current employment status is controlled for. Working class males are particularly alienated. Having controlled for social background and educational attainment effects, we found that employment status has an additional negative effect. The unemployed, and particularly those whose friends are also unemployed, either tend to "blame" their schooling for failing to develop their basic educational capabilities; or else their experience of unemployment and of

the way their educational defects affected their employment chances meant they applied more stringent standards than their more successfully employed peers.

(e) *Satisfaction with Personal and Social Development*

Chapter 7 examines school leavers' evaluations of the adequacy of personal and social development in their education. Ten questions were asked about the adequacy of provision for personal, social and character development. The scaled responses to these questions were moderately to highly correlated. This allowed us construct a 10 item Likert scale measuring attitudes toward the adequacy of personal and social development education. In general, school leavers are moderately to highly dissatisfied with this aspect of their education. They are most satisfied with those aspects of social development which have to do with interpersonal relationships – except for cross-gender relationships. They are most dissatisfied with preparation for formal or public roles. This would suggest that it is the general interpersonal context of school life that provides the main learning arena – not any formal curricular provision. The latter might be more important for formal role learning – although the nature of pupil involvement in school leadership roles is probably equally important.

We find that the percentage dissatisfied amongst those without any qualifications is markedly higher than for any other level of education. The most satisfied groups are those who have taken a post-Intermediate Cert course, where some emphasis is placed on personal and social development; as well as those with the Group Cert, whose high satisfaction may be explained by their tendency to take Vocational-Technical subjects which also have significant positive effects.

Although there is little variation by gender, we find that ex-pupils of single sex schools are consistently less satisfied with their personal and social development education than ex-pupils of coeducational schools. This appears to be due less to any conscious action on the part of the relevant school authorities than to the overall contextual or social-interactional effect of the coed school. Attendance at Community/Comprehensive and Vocational schools also has an independent positive effect.

As to current employment status those young people who have never had a job are the most dissatisfied group. The employment status of a respondent's friends is also highly correlated with evaluations of the social and personal dimension of their education. Young people are far more positive about their education if most of their friends are employed: a "group effect" occurring whereby young people who share similar deprived

statuses have much more negative attitudes than their own individual status would warrant.

(f) *Satisfaction with School as Preparation for Adult Life*

Chapter 8 examines school leavers' general assessments of the adequacy of their schooling as a general preparation for adult life: in providing programmes which helped develop a self-confident, rational and morally assertive capability in adult roles. The 7 questions asked about this related to their own school, and the scaled responses to these questions were highly intercorrelated and formed a very reliable Likert scale. This attitudinal scale can be interpreted as a general "school assessment" factor, measuring the overall adequacy of their educational preparation for adult life. Although attitudes were generally negative, there was considerable variation.

Positive schooling evaluation is closely related to level and type of education, as well as to type of school attended. The higher the level of education, the more highly Academic or the more Vocational-Technical the subject specialisation is, the more positive the evaluation. Attendance at Vocational schools also has an independent positive effect.

Although most social background effects are fully mediated through educational attainment factors, remoteness of place of origin has an independent positive effect also. The more remote and rural the community the more positive the attitude. Unemployment experience or context has no post-school contextual effect on these attitudes.

The Main Factors Affecting School Leavers' Assessments

We examined a number of dimensions of schooling evaluation – preparation for work and associated adult roles, basic education and cognitive development, personal and social development, and general or overall adequacy of schooling. While each is subject to somewhat different influences a number of factors have consistent effects. School leavers, of course, placed high priority on each of the above dimensions, and placed a high priority on level and type of educational qualifications for labour market success. So it is no surprise that both factors – educational level and type – emerge consistently as important predictors of school leavers' assessments.

(i) *Level of Education*

The most consistent factor influencing satisfaction with education received is the level of education attained with, in general, the best educated being the most satisfied. There is particularly high dissatisfaction

among those with no qualifications, with over half being dissatisfied with even their basic education. There is one exception to the general decline in satisfaction with decreasing levels of education – those leaving school with Group Cert qualifications tend to be as satisfied as those with a Leaving Cert. This finding is consistent with Madaus *et al's* earlier study (1979). Level of education attained is, of course, highly correlated with socio-economic status of origin. However, social origins do not retain any independent effect on attitudes once the effects of education are controlled.

(ii) *Type of Education*

Besides level of education the subject "track" or specialisation taken is also very important. The most satisfactory "tracks" are the Honours Academic and the Vocational-Technical tracks. The former is dominant in certain Secondary schools and the latter in Vocational or Comprehensive-Community schools. The least satisfactory "track" – other than the totally unqualified, both in terms of employment chances and of clients' own assessments, is the broad and shallow Pass level track. The Vocational emphasis at Group Cert level helps explain the high general satisfaction of clients with this relatively lowly level of attainment. Thus the Vocational "option" is still an effective one – although almost exclusively so for boys.

It may be proposed that the significance of the Vocational-Technical "track" is, to some extent, spurious since a high proportion of boys with "no qualifications" are also disproportionately likely to have taken, or been assigned, Vocational-Technical subjects. Since we have no information on their subjects (such questions were only asked of those who had taken an examination) their high dissatisfaction with education may well reflect failure in Vocational-Technical subjects. Only a minority of those who left school before the Leaving Cert specialised in Vocational-Technical subjects. So, relative to the majority taking other "tracks" at Group, Intermediate or even Leaving Certificate level, and excluding the Honours Academic "track", the vocationally specialised have had a much more satisfactory experience with education.

(iii) *Gender; Coeducation*

Gender effects vary along each dimension but do not tend to be important, interacting also with other factors such as level and type of education. Coeducational schools appear to be particularly effective in personal and social development, where the school environment and context seems to be very beneficial, especially in the development of satisfactory relations between the sexes.

(iv) *Socio-Economic Status*

Rather than socio-economic status of origin, the major socio-economic background factor appears to be unemployment. Unemployment tends to have a negative effect on satisfaction with schooling along all dimensions – whether it be through fathers', own or friends' unemployment, all of which have significant effects at times.

Remoteness of place of origin also has an independent effect on satisfaction with most aspects of education, with farmers' children from the remoter rural areas being amongst the most satisfied. While this group tend to do well educationally they also have high rates of outmigration from their home areas, and their educational level is of great value in successful migration. In almost all cases it is the urban working class, with relatively low rates of migration, who appear the most dissatisfied.

These are the main factors influencing respondents' level of satisfaction with their schooling. Although we explained only 10-12 per cent of the variation in individual attitudes, the factors consistently identified as influential reveal some crucial findings: the importance of level of attainment, the differing importance of various subject "tracks", the concentration of educational dissatisfaction among the most disadvantaged – notably those living in the general context of unemployment. So certain educational or schooling factors are shown to be consistently predictive of both labour market success and other satisfactory outcomes to school clients, as they judged preceding education from the vantage point of 5 to 6 years experience of the labour market.

To a large extent this completes our summary of the main results of our analysis. Although only a limited amount of the total variance in school leavers' evaluations of the effectiveness of their education has been explained the results show clearly that some educational/training programmes have clear positive effects while others have negative ones. We do not have sufficient information in this study of the nature of individual school programmes provided, nor of how effectively they were provided. Since schools differ widely in what it is they do, as well as how effectively they operate as organisations (Hannan with Boyle, 1987; Madaus *et al.*, 1979) the particular school respondents attended is likely to have significant effects on their progress, and on their attitudes.

Using Analysis of Variance procedures it was found that up to a further fifth of the variation in clients' attitudes is explained by such "between-school" effects. That is, the effects individual schools had (or what it was that schools did) that were collectively assessed by their ex-pupils as significant, "explained" up to a further 20 per cent of the total variance in individual school leavers' assessments of how satisfactory their education had been.

If we limit this "between school" analysis to schools which have at least 10 school leaver respondents we reduce our sample to 76 of the larger schools. Such school leavers were randomly sampled from all the pupils leaving individual sampled schools. These, averaged, individual school judgements, therefore, provide a crude measure of how schools differ in the judgement of their own ex-pupils.

Differences between schools, independently of differences between individuals within schools, explain 24 per cent of the variance in satisfaction with preparation for work and associated adult roles, 22 per cent of personal and social development attitude variation, and 25 per cent of the variance in satisfaction with cognitive development. It is clear then that schools – as "between-school" effects – have a big impact on their clients' satisfaction levels, presumably through what it is they do and how well they do it. These between-school effects "explain" more of the variance in attitudes than individual level variables; so that school leavers' assessments are structured to a significant degree by the particular school attended.

It would seem, therefore, that a general "school attitude" exists, shaped to a significant degree by the school itself in the content and quality of its provision of education. Hannan with Boyle (1987) showed that a number of important differences exist amongst schools in their organisation and ethos; differences which have profound implications for different groups of pupils, both as between and within school effects. Unfortunately this study does not have the same detailed information on the internal organisation of schools. Our data on curricular content and priorities are very limited, and on pupil differentiation and streaming non-existent. So, to a large extent the school itself is a "black box" in this study.

However, although we do not have data on such within-school processes we can gain some indication of what might be inside the "black box" from some limited data we do have on school characteristics. By aggregating individual-level data to the school level and by taking the mean scores, or relevant percentages, we can get measures of such school characteristics as mean social class of pupils, mean employment status of fathers of pupils, "dropout" rates in the school, the proportion going on to third level, the number of pre-employment courses taken in the school, etc. In addition other information on schools is available from published sources: school size, the identity of the school authority, whether the school is Coed or not, the remoteness or rurality of pupils in school, etc. While some of these school level data are cruder and less reliable than we would wish, they nevertheless can indicate some of the main influences that are likely to be at work at the individual school level.

Further analysis of these data at the school level showed, however, that the only variable of significance was school size – the larger the school the more positive the school attitude towards cognitive development, preparation for work and personal and social development. At a univariate level of analysis, predominantly working class schools with high dropout rates had significantly lower scores on cognitive development; and Coeducational and Vocational schools got higher scores on the "preparation for work" scale, as did Coed schools on personal and social development. However, all these other effects became insignificant when school size was controlled for. Very little of the "between-school" variance is therefore explainable from our data. Given the amount of variance that exists between schools, however, the evidence here would suggest the importance of further research on both school provision and school effectiveness factors.

Most of the individual variance, however, remains with pupils within schools, so that further study should also concentrate on such within-school differentiation, and its effects on educational achievement and client satisfaction. Besides streaming practices which are likely to be very significant (see Hannan with Boyle, 1987), the way in which the other formal and informal organisational, and cultural, aspects of schooling affects differences in achievement and client satisfaction needs to be examined.

Conclusions

A number of crucial factors have been shown to have a consistent effect on satisfaction with education throughout this study. Most of the hypotheses we advanced in Chapter 1 have been supported by our analysis and certain groups of pupils at particular risk of receiving an unsatisfactory education have been identified. Some of these groups are well-targeted in the research literature already, as well as in policy, but others are less well known. We briefly, and finally, summarise the main results below and draw some general implications for educational policy.

- School leavers place almost as high a priority on "preparation for work and adult life", and on "Personal and Social Development" goals of education as on the conventional "Cognitive Development" goals. Whereas, however, cognitive development received a *high* rating on attainment neither of the other two goals mentioned receive satisfactory ratings. Equally civic and political education receives extremely low satisfaction ratings – but is not given a high priority by school leavers. Educational priorities and levels of satisfaction among respondents have

been shown to be remarkably similar to those outlined in earlier studies by Raven *et al.* (1975) and Madaus *et al.* (1979) despite changes in the environment of school leavers and the different questions and procedures used in the various studies

- Level of education attained has a clear and consistent effect on satisfaction with all dimensions of education. As the level attained rises satisfaction almost uniformly increases. While socio-economic status has no independent effect on satisfaction it is highly correlated with level of education attained and, therefore, is still of importance for educational policy.

  The original level of education attained clearly has a very strong relationship to subsequent education and training levels and through this to employment prospects. In fact the impact of original attainment level is unusually strong in Ireland and has multiple effects over the individual's lifetime. There is a great need for policy measures which can: (i) reduce the original inequality in educational attainment, and (ii) provide opportunities for school leavers to remedy any defects in their original attainment levels by reducing the rigid, full-time "framing" of educational certification, and providing for greater use of second-chance education and "alternance" work-education linkages in the 15-18 age group.
- Trying to reduce inequality of educational attainment in this way is, of course, not the only policy option available. The growing role of in-firm training can continue to be used to good effect and many of the requirements and mechanisms of labour market integration could be changed to improve access for the less qualified. For instance, the increasing importance of school level general qualifications in gaining entry to apprenticeships has led to a high degree of overqualification in manual and service jobs, as is the case in many other countries (Bills, 1988; Watts, 1985). The provision of more apprenticeships and the loosening of entry requirements could help here. Breen (1991) also examines more closely the effects of post-school training on labour market prospects.
- A particularly high level of dissatisfaction with their education – almost alienation from it – exists amongst those with no qualifications. The high, and perhaps increasing, marginalisation of this group within the educational system, as the overall level of educational certification continues to rise, is a particularly worrying finding. From a policy viewpoint this group should be targeted with measures designed both to keep them in school longer and to offer a type of education which is both meaningful and effective. The recent "Youthreach" initiative for

such disadvantaged school leavers appears in its philosophy and reported practice to be ideally designed to be effective with such pupils, although we will have to await more detailed evaluation studies before coming to a final conclusion.

- The subject "track" or specialisation chosen, or assigned to, also has an important effect. While, not surprisingly, Honours Academic tracks are evaluated very highly more surprising is the high rating given to Vocational-Technical tracks (almost exclusively a male phenomenon). The low satisfaction with broad and shallow, Pass level, subject tracks is particularly worthy of note. A strong Vocational-Technical element is still important in many school leavers' careers and assessments.

  So, as these subjects are to be modified and updated their practical or Vocational nature should be maintained, if not expanded. Measures to encourage girls to choose these tracks or to develop new Vocational-Technical tracks which can be made attractive to the girls who are choosing, or being assigned to, non-vocational general Pass level tracks should be made available. The low satisfaction with the shallow, general track also suggests that such "residual" subject tracks are highly undesirable from the viewpoint of both pupils and employers. So resources should be directed at developing the differing potentials of those assigned to these tracks, particularly those characterised by low levels of accademic attainment.

  More generally the "general education" model remains dominant and its relevance in its current form needs perhaps to be reappraised – although recent curriculum reform may be the beginning of this process. Given the high satisfaction among those in Vocational-Technical tracks, increased participation in the VPT programme should add significantly to levels of satisfaction but will need to be carefully monitored.
- Gender effects remain important and pervasive. Differences in subject choice and allocation are significant, with girls being particularly excluded from the highly satisfactory Vocational track. They are somewhat more satisfied with their personal and social development education, however. Good programmes in this area appear particularly necessary for boys in single sex schools. Stronger links between boys' and girls' Secondary schools might be useful in improving personal and social development education, while maintaining Academic performance (particularly among girls). Coeducational schools are, however, highly evaluated – particularly for personal and social development education.
- The crucial socio-economic or socio-cultural factor influencing

educational attitudes is unemployment, be it as a characteristic of the individual's family of origin or as a labour market destination for the school leaver. It has a strongly negative effect on satisfaction across all dimensions, besides being highly correlated with level of education attained. It appears that a particularly socially vulnerable and educationally disadvantaged group is growing at the bottom of the education system, having become increasingly concentrated over the past decade. This group needs to be targeted with special measures to increase their resources and competencies for educational attainment at an early age. Their level of alienation from the educational system appears to be very intense.

- The "quality of provision" of educational programmes – what schools do and how well they do it – appears to be a major factor in educational satisfaction and effectiveness. The quality of provision of education – as judged by school leavers – is, however, differentiated not only by what school one attends, but also, and much more importantly, by what happens within schools. There is, therefore, an urgent need for further information on both between-school differences and on the internal school processes affecting differences in the quality of schooling provided to pupils.
- A process of curriculum reform has been underway for a number of years now but there is no reason to suppose that measures such as the new Junior Certificate will automatically improve matters for those most at risk of educational failure. There is a certain naïveté in the debate on this policy as to how schools operate as institutions and as to the crucial impact implementation of the policy at the school level will have on its success.

  Given the role of school-level decisions and processes in maintaining and even increasing educational differentiation (Hannan with Boyle, 1987) the new Junior Cert will have to be rigorously monitored if it is to impact positively on the failure and alienation rates among the most deprived. If it is used simply as a "fall-back" measure for those who fail Pass Irish, English or Maths, by reassigning them to the basic grades, or if it results in a reduction of effort at the school level in getting pupils up to pass levels, it may end up simply justifying and legitimising lower standards and persistent inequality. Issues such as the possibility of a repeat year, or of an extended 4 year junior cycle for lower performing pupils, also need to be examined.
- Overall, then, we find high levels of dissatisfaction among pupils with low levels of qualifications or assigned to the margins of the "general education" model. These young people are typically from deprived

social backgrounds and are particularly exposed to the experience of unemployment, both personal and in kin and friendship networks. The increasing importance of educational certification in gaining access to the labour market has left them at a particular disadvantage throughout the 1980s, and will continue to do so in the 1990s.

While a range of policy issues arise from this situation we have identified two particular immediate needs which can be tackled in a relatively clear-cut manner. Within the school system itself the impact of what individual schools do is clearly substantial, both on educational outcomes and on school leavers' satisfaction. Schooling practices – both between schools and within schools – need therefore to be monitored, and changed where necessary. Inequality between schools in terms of pupil intake characteristics and resources available should be a crucial part of any such evaluation. Secondly, the educational system itself needs to be made far more flexible, and mechanisms provided so that second chance education, work-education linkages and post-school training are made much more accessible, particularly for those who have failed at earlier stages. Schools, in other words, should be much more corrective in their functioning. In these ways the cumulatively disadvantaging nature of the current educational-training system could at least begin to be tackled.

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