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HIDDEN DISADVANTAGE?

A Study on the Low Participation in Higher Education by the Non-Manual Group

Selina McCoy, Delma Byrne
Philip J. O'Connell, Elish Kelly & Cliona Doherty

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Higher Education	HE
Higher Education Authority	HEA
Rational Action Perspectives	RAT
Survey of Income and Living Conditions	SILC
Central Statistics Office	CSO
Higher Education Institution	HEI
Economic and Social Research Institute	ESRI
Central Admissions Office	CAO
Labour Market	LM
Other Education and Training	Other ET
Leaving Certificate	LC
Leaving Certificate Applied	LCA
Leaving Certificate Vocational	LCVP
Post-Leaving Certificate Course	PLC
Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools	DEIS
European Socio-economic Classification	ESeC
Intermediate Non-Manual	INM
Other Non-Manual	ONM
Institute of Technology	IOT
United Kingdom	UK
Training and Employment Authority: Foras Áiseanna Saothair	FÁS
Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development	OECD
Further Education	FE

Foreword by Michael Kelly

Chair of the HEA

The HEA welcomes the publication of this report *Hidden Disadvantage? A Study of the Low Participation in Higher Education by the Non-Manual Group*. The study has been conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) on behalf of the Higher Education Authority (HEA). It is a valuable addition to the existing body of research on access to higher education in Ireland.

The report was prompted by research findings contained in *Who Went to College 2004? A National Survey of Entrants to Higher Education* (2006). That study reviewed the patterns of entry to higher education and revealed that, although participation had increased steadily since the 1960s, the general improvement it reflected masked continuing social inequality in access and entry to higher education among particular socio-economic groups.

In the period between 1998 and 2004, the average entry rate to higher education in Ireland increased substantially from 44% to 55%. In this period of sustained improvements in opportunities to access higher education, the non-manual group stood out as the only socio-economic group to buck the trend. Participation rates among this group fell from 29% in 1998 to between 25% and 27% in 2004. Given that 20% of households in the country are classified in this socio-economic category, further examination of the reasons behind this decline in participation was deemed necessary alongside an analysis of the potential barriers to higher education for students from the group and of other factors impacting on their post-school choices.

This study combines quantitative analysis of trends with valuable qualitative research exploring the attitudes, experiences, aspirations and expectations of young people from the non-manual group. The findings indicate that their social and cultural context impacts significantly on their objective chance of success in accessing and attaining higher education. It emerged that their perceived low chance of success was exacerbated by the lack of experience of higher education among their parents and peers. Higher education is viewed as entailing too much financial hardship and the perceived financial barriers have implications for young people's aspirations. Worryingly, the evidence suggests that non-participants in higher education from the non-manual group were disaffected from an early age. Furthermore, those that did reach third level displayed lower levels of retention in tertiary education suggesting barriers in integrating upon entry.

The report offers useful insight into the complexity of educational disadvantage and provides a compelling argument for an accessible and flexible higher education system than can cater for all groups. The findings

emphasise the need to challenge the negative perception of higher education among this group by providing clear route maps to higher education, and better information and advice in relation to graduate employment and the financial returns of different education and career paths. The picture presented of integration into college life suggests a need for further examination of young people's experiences upon entry to higher education with particular reference to attainment and progression. Although the objectives set out in the document will be challenging, particularly in the current economic climate, they are in line with the broader strategic aims regarding up-skilling, life-long learning, and the pursuit of equality in higher education.

On behalf of the Authority, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in producing this report, in particular the lead authors Selina McCoy and Delma Byrne and their colleagues Philip O'Connell, Eilish Kelly and Cliona Doherty from the ESRI. I also wish to acknowledge the input of the Policy & Planning unit of the HEA and of the National Office of Equity of Access to Higher Education. The report provides an informed and insightful basis for further policy planning in regard to access and equality of opportunity in higher education.

Michael Kelly
Chair of the Higher Education Authority

Executive Summary

Participation in Higher Education (HE) has risen steadily in Ireland since the 1960s, with particularly dramatic increases apparent in more recent years. While there is evidence of some narrowing of relative inequalities, clear socio-economic disparities persist. Trends in the patterns of participation among the non-manual socio-economic group are particularly distinct, with this group unique in showing a decline in HE entry rates over time. This study sets out to explain the processes underlying such low participation levels. It combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research methods to allow a much fuller understanding of the processes underlying HE entry and non-entry among this group.

Overall nearly one-in-five of the adult population are located within the non-manual group. However, the group is composed of two distinct sub-groups: the intermediate non-manual and other non-manual groups. The former comprised of a number of relatively high status positions such as Garda sergeants and government executive officials, while the latter group is dominated by lower level service workers. In further examining the profile of these groups it becomes apparent that, across a range of educational and economic characteristics, occupants of the other non-manual group share many similarities with lower manual groups, while the intermediate non-manual group do not.

At second-level the other non-manual group display patterns largely on a par with those from (lower) manual groups – in terms of retention levels, senior cycle programme and examination performance. This has important implications for the pool of young people eligible for HE entry. The intermediate non-manual group, in contrast, fare considerably better at second-level, which leaves this group better placed in terms of accessing HE.
The results clearly show that patterns of participation of the intermediate non-manual group most closely resemble the employer/manager group, while the pattern for the other non-manual group most closely resemble the semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups. From the outset, young people from intermediate non-manual backgrounds have higher rates of application than those from other non-manual backgrounds: across all socio-economic groups, young people from the other non-manual background have the lowest application rates. Further, among those who succeed in gaining access, similar distinctions emerge between the two non-manual groups in terms of the type of HE institute attended, the level of course pursued, receipt of financial aid (in the form of a grant) and drop-out.

Some of the main issues emerging from the study are:

- The results point to the crucial importance of the value placed on (higher) education for different social groups. It is clear across social groups, and even between intermediate and other non-manual groups, that families have differential access to various forms of cultural, social and economic capital and resources, which differentially frame the educational choices that different families can or will make.
- Differences in the second-level experiences of young people from different socio-economic groups were noteworthy, leading to large variations in the proportions reaching eligibility for entry into HE. There was clear

evidence that a number of the non-participants in HE from the other non-manual group were alienated and disaffected from school at an early age. These young people from lower non-manual backgrounds saw HE as an extension of school, and for this reason it was viewed as something to be avoided.

- Many of those from the other non-manual group who did not progress to HE had negative constructions of the advice received at school. Guidance was variously absent, only focused on certain groups of students (such as the 'honours' class), narrowly focused, or directed away from HE. Some felt they would have liked more help in actually evaluating the range of post-school options, rather than just supplying information. Furthermore, parents did not have experience of HE, while siblings and peers were also not necessarily familiar with the HE process and choices therein. Hence, they were far more reliant on the supports and encouragement available from their school and these supports played a much more significant role in the choices made by these young people.
- Financial issues emerge in various forms impacting on the decisions of young people from the other non-manual group to pursue HE. For some, the financial commitment to study was seen as too great or would entail too much hardship. Many felt that they would not be eligible for financial support, or even where they were eligible they felt it would not have been sufficient. It is also clear that financial supports and the cost of HE were insufficiently understood among some of these young people. Perceived financial barriers were also found to have implications for young people's aspirations. Finally, among young people achieving eligibility for HE, we see financial factors playing an important role in the significant fall-off in the pursuit of HE among young people from lower non-manual backgrounds.
- It was also clear, particularly for males from lower non-manual backgrounds, that the pull of the labour market was an important process underlying their non-participation in HE.
- Young people from lower non-manual backgrounds also displayed lower levels of retention in HE, suggesting that these groups face greater barriers in terms of integrating into Higher Education.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction: Trends in Higher Education Participation

Participation in higher education (HE) has risen steadily in Ireland since the 1960s, with particularly dramatic increases apparent in more recent years. The most recently published data indicates that participation rates in HE have now reached 55 per cent[1] (O'Connell *et al.*, 2006a)[2] . Furthermore, the progression rate of young people who completed the Leaving Certificate in 2005 to HE was 60 per cent (Byrne *et al.*, 2009). These growing participation rates reflect two underlying trends: increasing progression of school leavers into HE, alongside the growing entry of 'mature' students into HE. Therefore, the average HE student is now older, with the greater entry of mature students and the emergence of more diverse and flexible entry routes to HE (ibid.).

For the most part, such patterns mask continued social inequality in access and entry to HE. There is evidence of some narrowing of relative inequalities as those from less advantaged backgrounds have increased their levels of participation. However, clear socio-economic disparities exist and persist, with over-representation of the children of professional and farming groups among entrants to the point that such groups have now reached 'saturation'. Differences between social groups are also evident in entry to universities as opposed to institutes of technology, the type of course taken and the duration of courses.

Within this context, trends in the pattern of participation among the non-manual socio-economic group are distinct, with this specific group showing a decline in HE entry rates over time, a trend which makes them unique - they are the only socio-economic group to show a decline. This was a key finding from the 'Who Went to College in 2004?' (ibid.) report. While the overall admission rate (to full-time study) had increased from 44 per cent to 55 per cent between 1998 and 2004, representing improved participation rates for all socio-economic groups, there was one exception: the non-manual socio-economic group. As shown in Table 1.1 below, the children of those in the non-manual socio-economic group saw a decline in their estimated participation rate – from 29 per cent in 1998 to between 25 and 27 per cent in 2004, a decline which is part of a longer-term trend in the relative position of this group.

1 Participation rates are based on a comparison of the distribution of college entrants with the distribution of the national population of college entry age in the previous census. In the case of this study this was based on the mean of the numbers in the population aged 15, 16 and 17 in 2002.

2 While new entrants to undergraduate HE are increasing in the university sector, this is not the case for the institute of technology sector (IoTs, HEA, 2009). New entrants to the university sector increased by 4.8 per cent between 2006/2007 and 2007/2008; compared to a 7.2 per cent increase in the previous year. New entrants to the IoTs continued to decline in 2007/2008: in total there was a 9.7 per cent decrease in the new entrant intake between 2003/2004 and 2007/2008.

Table 1.1: Estimated Participation Rates in Higher Education by Father's Socio-Economic Group (New Classification), 1998 and 2004

	1998	2004 Census Data	2004 Adjusted Census Data [3]
Employers & Managers	0.65	0.60	0.65
Higher Professional	1.11	1.25	1.36
Lower Professional	0.63	0.59	0.65
Non-Manual	0.29	0.25	0.27
Skilled Manual	0.32	0.60	0.50
Semi-and Unskilled	0.23	0.40	0.33
Own Account Workers	0.39	0.60	0.65
Farmers	0.65	0.82	0.89
Total	0.44	0.55	0.55

Source: Survey of New Entrants to Higher Education in 2004 and derived from Clancy 2001. Published in O'Connell *et al.*, 2006a.

As a result, the '*Who Went to College in 2004?*' report identified the need for further examination of the issue, in particular addressing the potential barriers to HE for those from non-manual backgrounds and the processes impacting on their post-school choices. This report now presents results from this recommendation.

1.2 Overview of the Research

In addressing the relative position of the non-manual group, this research has been conducted in two phases and encompasses the use of mixed methods. The first phase used existing data sources to examine the experiences of the non-manual group relative to other socio-economic groups in their second-level, post-school and HE experiences and attainments. This phase also considered the income levels of the non-manual group relative to other socio-economic groups.

The second phase adopted a qualitative research methodology to address the issue of the post-school choice processes and decision making of school leavers. This approach was used to give greater insight into the factors influencing young people's post-school decisions than the survey data analysed in phase one, as young people themselves could identify and articulate the issues which were influential in their choices and why some from non-manual backgrounds take the decision not to pursue HE and why others take this path. This qualitative sample was achieved by selecting individuals from the non-manual group who participated in the School Leavers' Survey 2006. In all, three groups of individuals from the other non-manual group were identified: those who entered the labour market immediately after completing second-level; those who entered Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses; and those who progressed to HE (including both individuals who entered directly from second-level and those who entered after completion of a PLC course). The research focused, in particular, on the pathways young people took within the schooling system, their attitudes to, and experiences of, second-level education, their post-school aspirations and expectations, the factors influencing their post-school choices and their experiences of these post-school pathways.

3 The adjusted figures are based on re-calculating participation rates to include the 17 per cent of cases in the Census 2002 where socio-economic group was unknown – see O'Connell *et al.*, 2006a (Chapter 3) for further details

1.3 Policy Focus

The issue of equality in educational participation has been prominent on the national policy agenda in recent years and is evident in key policy reports published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA). These key policy reports include:

- 'Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education' (DES, 2000).
- 'Access and Equity in Higher Education' (Skilbeck and Connell, 2000).
- 'Report of the Action Group on Access to Third-Level Education' (2001).
- 'Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning' (DETE, 2002).
- A major review of Higher Education in Ireland conducted by the OECD (2006).
- 'Action Plan on Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland 2005-2007' (HEA, 2004).
- 'National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013' (2008).

The policy framework adopted by the HEA has set out to
'encourage or require the Irish higher education institutions to adopt a more pro-active approach than hitherto to the implementation of equity policies in higher education' (HEA 2000).

This policy framework is also adopted through the initiation of legislation such as the Universities Act 1997, the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, and the Equal Status Bill (1999).
In terms of HE, much of the focus has been on increasing access and participation for under-represented groups and a partnership approach has been adopted in approaching the equity issue at HE. In fact, the most recent report outlines that the challenges identified in addressing educational disadvantage, equity and social exclusion, will require joined-up strategies across education levels and across government departments. This resonates clearly with the results presented in this report.

The current National Access Plan aims to build on the achievements of recent years in relation to increased participation and greater equality in HE access. It is timely then to assess the relative position of the non-manual group, given the current target of an overall national participation rate of 72 per cent of the relevant age cohort to be achieved by 2020 from 55 per cent in 2004, and that all socio-economic groups will have entry rates of at least 54 per cent by 2020. These challenges and targets are particularly pertinent given the current economic conditions we find ourselves in. That is, this study is placed in a context where the achievement of further growth in HE will require continuing progress in relation to widening access. Furthermore, the achievement of the national objectives in relation to up-skilling the population will require further success in extending HE opportunities to groups that have traditionally been under-represented in HE.

1.3.1 Definition of Socio-Economic Disadvantage

The integration of equity with other objectives and roles of institutions of HE raises difficult and complex issues, such as the definition of disadvantage (HEA, 2000). Groups targeted as being under-represented include students with a disability, lone parents, mature students, those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, members of the Travelling Community and refugees.

Young people from 'socio-economically disadvantaged' or 'lower socio-economic backgrounds' have been of particular focus in previous policy. Groups targeted as being from 'socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds' typically include groups from the unskilled-manual, unemployed and agricultural worker categories. One recent policy statement, for example, 'Achieving Equity of Access to HE in Ireland 2005-2007' (2004) sets a target for the percentage of new entrants to HE who come from the unskilled and agricultural worker groups.

Within this context it is important to note that those from socio-economic groups outside of these traditionally 'disadvantaged' groups, including the non-manual group, have received relatively little policy attention despite the fact that the evidence indicates that their levels of participation in HE do not exceed those for the groups traditionally classified as 'disadvantaged'. That is, despite their poor relative position in relation to entry to HE since the late 1990s, the non-manual group have generally failed to be regarded in policy terms as a 'disadvantaged' group.

However, recent policy documents have noted a shift in emphasis with the most recent publication (HEA, 2008) setting overall targets for HE entry, but also targets for sub-groups (including the non-manual group) and a minimum threshold - a 54 per cent entry rate - which all groups must attain by 2020. In terms of the non-manual group, targets of 42 per cent entry in 2013 and 54 per cent in 2020, represent substantial projected increases on the current entry rate of 27 per cent (ibid.) and are likely to pose the greatest challenge to policymakers and the HE sector in general.

1.4 International Research on Socio-Economic Inequality in Educational Participation

We now move from the polity sphere to the evidence-based sphere in relation to socio-economic inequality in participation at HE. In doing so, we address the body of international research examining issues of access, differentiation and stratification in HE and inequality at second level.

1.4.1 Hidden Disadvantage?

It should be stated from the outset that, in many ways, it is difficult to assess the relative international position of those classified as 'non-manual' in Irish classifications, given the enormous variability across countries in the coding of occupations and the classifications used. While there have been attempts to develop international occupational classifications, much of the focus tends to be on the differential experiences of those variously classified as 'disadvantaged', 'working class' or 'blue collar' relative to those from more 'advantaged', 'professional', 'service class' or 'middle class' backgrounds.

A review of the international literature uncovers a small number of exceptions when the lower socio-economic groups have been examined in detail. One study, in the UK context (Gallacher, 2006), drawing on the NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification), examines the proportion of students from the lowest four socio-economic classes (small employers; lower supervisory and technical occupations, semi-routine occupations and routine occupations). While the bottom two classes correspond with 'manual' workers in many classifications, some individuals in the other two categories (small employers and lower supervisory and technical occupations) would fall into 'non-manual' groups under the classification used in this report. The study found that the percentage of students from these classes in HE was lower in Scotland than in the other countries of the UK. However, the research did not examine the experiences of the four groups individually, but only as a collective group, thus failing to distinguish distinct patterns within these groups. Another study in the UK context examines the lowest groups (including low-skilled non-manual) in their choices close to the time of making an application for entry to HE (Connor, 2001). However, as with other studies the author does not differentiate the results for the non-manual group relative to manual groups, again failing to distinguish distinct patterns within and between these lower class groups.

A major international publication, Shavit, Arum and Gamoran (2007), examines how class inequalities in access to HE vary across systems with different levels of expansion, institutional differentiation and funding mechanisms. Collaborating with research teams in 15 countries (Ireland is not included), the study examines the extent of inequality in eligibility for HE, entry into HE and entry into first tier HE. As with much of the research in this area, inequality is measured in terms of the differences between those in professional/managerial classes and the skilled working class, thereby offering little insight into the relative experiences of 'intermediate' groups, such as the non-manual category.

1.4.2 Inequality within Higher Education

Shavit, Arum and Gamoran (2007) report that overall, across the 15 countries, expansion in HE has the effect of making education increasingly inclusive, because it extends a valued good to a broader spectrum of the population[4] . While the international literature has largely been concerned with socio-economic inequality in entry and access to HE, more recently the debate has moved away from concern about equity of access towards issues of differentiation within HE, a concern that was central to the Shavit *et al.* (2007) study. As Osborne (2003) notes;

> 'many more people in Europe benefit from increased and wider participation [in HE]. However, the gains may not be as widespread as the champions of access would wish and equity in terms of entry to HE is differentially spread across Europe within the panoply of institutions offering HE and within discipline areas' (p.18).

Similarly, Clancy and Goastellec (2007) note that new forms of differentiation emerge even when access is 'massified', with a:

> 'stubborn persistence of social background determining both the extent of access and the types of higher education to which access is being accorded' (p.138).

As Osborne notes (2003):

> 'while much attention has focused on "getting in"; '"getting on" and "getting beyond" are another matter, and even if some aspects of access are "solved", attention now must be turned to questions of retention and progression if the gains of access are to be consolidated'.

This study, while primarily concerned with access to and participation in HE among those from non-manual backgrounds, also considers the nature of their HE experiences, examining issues such as the type of college entered, the qualification level being pursued and socio-economic disparity in drop out[5] .

1.4.3 Inequality before Entry to Higher Education

Alongside a concern with differentiation at HE, there is growing recognition among researchers that the key processes impacting on HE entry occur much earlier in the educational process. As Adnett (2006) notes:

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4 It also finds that in all of the countries studied, men's relative advantage has declined; only in 3 countries do men still hold a small advantage relative to women in the odds of entering post-secondary education.
5 Issues related to inequality within HE are undoubtedly seen as areas of priority for future research. The analysis of the School Leavers' Survey data for 2006 and 2007 allows some consideration of the issue of retention over the first two years in HE and the extent to which students from non-manual backgrounds differ from other social groups in their retention patterns. This analysis also allows us to consider whether young people from traditionally under-represented groups who succeed in entering HE, face difficulties in maintaining their studies and completing their courses.

> 'increasing higher education participation among non-traditional student groups primarily requires interventions into pre-primary, primary and secondary schooling targeted at raising aspirations and attainments in groups with a low probability of attaining higher education entry requirements'.

This has been supported across institutional contexts. In the UK, Raffe *et al.*, (2006) find that social class differences in entry to HE can largely be attributed to class differences in achieving the qualifications for entry to HE (p.1). This has also been recognised in the Irish context, with O'Connell *et al.* (2006b), arguing that inequalities do not simply emerge at the point of entry to HE, rather that the main socio-economic differentiation continues to occur during primary and second-level education viewing social selectivity in access to HE as 'a cumulative process.

These issues have guided the analyses presented in this report. In doing so, this study places particular focus on the life-course perspective, examining the educational experiences and attainments of young people from the non-manual group through their second-level schooling, as well as their experiences on leaving school, drawing on School Leavers' Surveys over the last decade. The qualitative research has adopted a life-course perspective, focusing on the pathways young people took within the schooling system, their attitudes to, and experiences of, second-level education, their post-school aspirations and expectations, the factors influencing their post-school choices and their experiences of these post-school pathways. This approach allows for a more comprehensive picture of the relative experiences of those from non-manual backgrounds, encompassing both the nature of the post-school pathways taken, their experiences in accessing HE and the sectors and courses in which they are enrolled. The next section discusses theoretical approaches to understanding class inequalities in educational outcomes, followed by a specification of the research questions which guide this study.

1.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Inequality in Higher Education

This section now considers theoretical perspectives which offer an explanation for inequality in HE. Attempts to explain the existence and persistence of class differentials in educational attainment have used a multitude of contrasting approaches spanning macro- and micro-sociological approaches, as well as theories of the middle range. These theories, while typically pitched in terms of working-class versus middle class attainment, do provide valuable insights into the processes potentially underlying participation in HE of those from non-manual backgrounds. A central argument of this study posits that while non-manual workers are generally considered (lower) 'white collar' workers, in many ways this is a contradictory class position. Many non-manual workers have relatively little autonomy and little control over work processes; job characteristics that generally typify white-collar jobs. Hence, one could argue that the job characteristics of (lower) non-manual workers could, in some respects, be considered as being more in line with the characteristics of working class jobs. The following draws on two perspectives that are prominent in educational research; cultural theories and rational action perspectives.

1.5.1 Cultural Approaches

Cultural approaches, evident in the work of Bernstein (1961), Willis (1977), Lareau (2000), as well as Bourdieu (1973), are at the fore in educational debate. Referred to as 'pushed from behind' approaches (Gambetta, 1987), they emphasise mechanisms related to cultural causation; such as norms, beliefs and sub-cultural values, as they shape preferences, expectations and, ultimately, choices. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) also take a culturalist approach to educational reproduction in an attempt to explain the fact that:

> '... the fraction of the school population which eliminates itself before entering the secondary stage or during that stage is not randomly distributed among different social classes'.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) consider the educational system directly involved in the perpetuation of class inequalities through the imposition of the 'cultural arbitrary' of the dominant groups in society on other groups. Bourdieu and Passeron proceed to invoke the terms 'cultural capital' and 'habitus' to explain the processes by which this occurs. Each social class has its own individual and distinct habitus, 'a system of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action'. Pedagogic work carried out in educational settings is, Bourdieu asserts, largely undertaken within the habitus of the dominant (professional) class. Consequently, those outside the dominant class (including those from non-manual backgrounds) do not have the habitus to generate the cultural capital necessary for success in the educational system.

> 'By doing away with explicitly giving to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

This leads to those outside the dominant class quickly recognising that their objective chances of success are low. Consequently, they lower their aspirations to coincide with their objective chances of success, and many either eliminate themselves from the educational system or fail to progress to post-secondary educational opportunities. Hence, these aspirations and actions are no more than their objective chances of success intuitively perceived and gradually internalised.

Bourdieu and Passeron have, however, been criticised for being overly deterministic in their analysis of the importance of cultural capital in shaping outcomes. Cultural capital:

> '... practically obliterates the person who is actually the main constructor of the home/school relationship. The student is treated mainly as a bearer of cultural capital, a bundle of abilities, knowledge and attitudes furnished by parents' (Connell *et al.*, 1982; p.188).

No consideration is given to the role of the educational system in enabling social mobility for traditionally less successful groups and the role of schools in creating cultural capital, as well as reproducing it. Viewing cultural capital as a primordial handicap disregards this role of education and overlooks the substantial body of research that demonstrates the influence that schools and educational institutions, and their organisation, methods and ethos, have on the educational attainments of their students. The fit between objective structures and internalised structures, Harker (1990) maintains, is never absolute, as evidenced, for example, in the educational success of considerable and increasing numbers from disadvantaged backgrounds, a trend recently established in the Irish context (O'Connell *et al.*, 2006a). This criticism is aptly captured by Giroux (1982) who holds Bourdieu's theory to be:

> '... a theory of reproduction that displays no faith in subordinate classes and groups, no hope in their ability or willingness to reinvent and reconstruct the conditions under which they live, work and learn'.

This study allows us to consider the nature of differentiation in educational outcomes and to assess whether such

cultural approaches help in our understanding of processes of inequality and, in particular, the relatively low levels of entry into HE among young people whose parents are employed in non-manual occupations. In considering the multitude of cultural perspectives presented in the above literature, two hypotheses synthesise the processes potentially underlying the low levels of educational attainment among young people from non-manual backgrounds from this perspective:

- Young people from non-manual backgrounds do not possess the cultural capital necessary to succeed within an educational system geared towards the dominant class.
- Occupants of the non-manual group do not themselves have experience of HE, and, in line with lower chances of successfully accessing HE, have lower educational aspirations which are shaped by their social context and structural opportunities.

1.5.2 Rational Action Perspectives

Rational Action Perspectives (RAT), another school of thought to explain class differentials in educational attainment, by and large, do not invoke 'cultural' or 'normative' differences between social classes to explain their differing educational orientations, decisions or outcomes. Rather, such differences are explained with reference to differences in the resources and constraints faced by occupants of social class positions. Essentially, individuals and their families are viewed as acting rationally in the context of their circumstances, as choosing among the varying educational choices available to them on the grounds of their perceptions and evaluations of their costs and benefits and of the perceived probability of their successful achievement.

In constructing a more recent account of RAT, Goldthorpe (1996a) draws on the work of Boudon (1974) and Keller and Zavalloni (1964). These, and other writers in this area, argue that variations in the actions and achievements of social class groups arise from the relative distances from social origin that have to be travelled to achieve a certain level. In other words, aspirations of individuals should be judged not in absolute terms but relative to their position of origin. To illustrate, it would entail considerably greater aspirations and a greater cultural shift on the part of non-manual children to pursue university education relative to their middle-class counterparts. Hence, Goldthorpe contends, it should not be assumed that the tendency of children from lower social strata to pursue less ambitious educational careers than children from 'privileged' families derives from a 'poverty' of aspiration. Instead, the patterns of aspiration and choice across the social classes could be comparable given their differing positions of origin.

Goldthorpe argues that there has, by and large, been little convergence in class-specific evaluations in educational decision-making, citing two further arguments to support this. Firstly, the persistence of conditions in which the perceived costs and benefits of educational options entail children in less advantaged positions requiring greater certainty of their successful completion than their more advantaged counterparts. Secondly, the changing educational propensities over time can be viewed as having a rational basis, when consideration is given to the resources, opportunities and constraints that continue to typify differing class positions.

However, models of rational action have been criticised on a number of points. First, these models are inadequate in understanding human behaviour because they do not examine the origin of beliefs and values. They are merely theories about the way in which individuals, given their values and beliefs, make choices. No reference is made to cultural or normative differences between social classes to explain their differing educational choices or outcomes. It appears essential to take account of the macro-sociological context and constraints within which people operate, as RAT does so well. However, failure to take account of the cultural differences between individuals and social classes does constitute a weakness. As findings of Irish studies (Clancy, 2001; O'Connell *et al.*, 2006a; Clancy *et al.*, 1995; Clancy 1996; Clancy, 2007) demonstrate, the importance of cultural factors should not be ignored. For instance, the high third-level admission rates from western counties of Ireland, which are linked to high retention

rates at second-level, reflect a cultural orientation in many families which, despite modest cash income (although capital resources may be relatively high), foster and realise high educational aspirations. Furthermore, RAT also tends to bracket off primary effects (such as 'ability' and performance), focusing attention predominantly on secondary effects – the educational choices young people and their parents make. However, recent work (Erikson *et al.*, 2005) examining class differences in progression to HE (in England and Wales) indicates that when primary and secondary effects are actually decomposed, the former are shown to be roughly three times the size of the latter. It can also be noted that RAT commentators tend to have little to say about processes shaping educational achievement, with schooling emerging as a 'black box'.

Breen and Goldthorpe (1996) have made some progress towards accounting for cultural differences between social classes. They consider cultural differences existing between classes as epiphenomenal, that is, as adaptations to the underlying structural situation. Hence, in the event of changes in the preferences, constraints or resources faced by individuals, corresponding adaptations of their cultural attributes will follow. Drawing on the example of the west of Ireland again, such an argument would account for high levels of attainment in rational choice terms. In a context of both few labour market opportunities and poor quality jobs, education provided often the best opportunity to secure a good quality of life. Those from other regions/urban localities, on the other-hand, were not as dependent on educational qualifications as jobs permitting a reasonable standard of living were readily available to poorly educated people. In this illustration, objective opportunities and constraints faced by individuals transformed cultural norms, values and aspirations regarding educational attainment.

It can also be noted that RAT is useful in the current context as it typically views educational attainment as a sequence of decisions – decisions which must be examined in a step-by-step basis, rather than solely in terms of highest educational attainment or entry into HE, for example (as examined by Hillmert and Jacob, 2002). The student and his/her parents must make decisions at each stage in the educational process (transition into second-level, completion of Junior Cycle, persistence beyond the compulsory schooling-age, choice of senior cycle programme, completion of second-level, progression to further study or entry to the labour market). While RAT perspectives have typically been adopted to examine decisions within the compulsory school system among individuals from different social backgrounds, this study is concerned with both decisions within the school system and also decisions on leaving school (principally, the decision to pursue HE). For this reason we are not primarily concerned with the decisions of parents and their attempts to ensure the 'family's class position', but regard the young person themselves as being the primary decision-maker. In this context, educational decisions are based on educational/social background, the value system of the home environment, the expectations of success and 'relative risk aversion' (attempts to ensure that children have a position in life that is not worse than their parents), and also on the individual's own preferences and aspirations.

Drawing on the RAT perspective, two hypotheses can be identified:

- In viewing the aspirations of young people relative to their position of origin, young people from non-manual backgrounds are less likely to enter HE as to do so requires considerably higher aspirations relative to their middle-class counterparts.
- Young people from non-manual backgrounds are less likely to enter HE as a result of the higher relative costs of doing so, the greater opportunity cost and the lower likelihood of success.

Cross-cutting these theoretical perspectives, this study also considers the role of the school, both as context and constraint, with recent work identifying a number of school characteristics that influence the transition to HE in Ireland (Smyth and Hannan, 2007; Byrne, 2009). Hence educational decisions are examined both within the second-level system and on leaving school, where school leavers (who reach this level) typically face three alternative options:

- Higher Education.
- Other (shorter) education and training opportunities – which do not necessarily preclude the possibility of HE later on.
- Labour market.

Our focus is primarily on the experiences and outcomes of the non-manual group, to assess the decisions of young people from this group relative to other social groups. Chapter Two details the mixed-method research approach taken to addressing these research questions.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on a review of the literature, dominant policy concerns, and guided by the theoretical perspectives presented, the following research questions have been derived to guide the analyses of the study:
Why is the HE participation rate of the non-manual group so low relative to other social groups?
Are the non-manual group a homogenous group, broadly similar in educational profile? Or can sub-groups with differing characteristics and outcomes be identified?

- How do young people from non-manual backgrounds fare within broader patterns of differentiation in educational outcomes?
- Do differences arise in early educational experiences which have implications for patterns of access to HE?
- Beyond educational experiences and attainment, what are the main processes explaining the under-representation of these groups in HE?
- Do similar patterns arise in relation to differentiation within HE and retention?

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

2.1: Introduction

This report is based on a mixed method approach drawing on findings from a range of existing quantitative data sources, alongside qualitative interviews with recent school leavers. This mixed method approach is very much to the fore of educational research today, as researchers move beyond the use and integration of mixed methods to arrive at more synergistic understandings (Day *et al.*, 2008). A sole reliance on either quantitative or qualitative methods has been the subject of some debate, with researchers arguing that research programmes that grow out of one perspective tend to:
'illuminate some part of the field ... while ignoring the rest ... [and hence] the danger for any field of social science or educational research lies in potential corruption by a single paradigmatic view' (Shulman, 1986).

Hence mixed method approaches have gained favour as an alternative to the exclusive reliance on either a positivist or metaphysical orientation (Day *et al.*, 2008).
Further, the field of access research[6] in particular has been criticised for the dominance of quantitative methods, which are judged:
'to be more trustworthy and capable of replication', leading to a neglect of qualitative studies which attempt to unpack the black box behind the statistics in policy discourse (Bernard, 2006, p.28).

This research, in adopting such a mixed method approach, combines the strengths of these two methods to allow a much fuller understanding of the processes underlying HE entry and non-entry among young people from lower white collar backgrounds. Furthermore, it has been noted that there is a need in this field for 'research which considers not the barriers to entry but, rather, the reasons for the success of those from lower socio-economically backgrounds who did access HE' (Bernard, 2006). By undertaking in-depth interviews with young people who succeeded in gaining access to HE as well as those who did not, this research also unpacks the processes underlying success in entry to HE. The following details the survey data utilised in the analysis, followed by details of the primary qualitative research undertaken.

2.2 Data Sources: Quantitative Data Sources

In terms of quantitative data the results are based on analysis of the 2004 New Entrants' Survey, School Leavers' Surveys spanning 1997-2007 and the EU SILC 2006 data. These data sources allow an examination of a range of issues for the non-manual group: their second-level completion rates and examination performance levels, the post-school destinations of these students, their HE participation levels, the characteristics of those from the non-manual group who enter college and the income levels associated with individuals from the non-manual group. The following provides some further information on these three main data sources, data that allow us to examine different aspects of HE participation among those from non-manual backgrounds relative to other socio-economic groups.

The first data source, the New Entrants' Survey 2004, is based on those who entered HE for the first time in 2004 and looks at a range of factors at that point of entry to college. The occupational classification scheme used in this data is from the Census of Population (1996), which is based on the UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC). The data gives valuable insights into the second-level and HE characteristics of new entrants from different socio-economic backgrounds. Among the issues examined are the age profile; year of leaving school; type of school attended; HE institution attended and receipt of grant for individuals from different socio-economic

6 Access research is the term that has been assigned to research examining access to HE.

backgrounds. Particular attention is placed on those from non-manual backgrounds to assess how they compare to other socio-economic groups.

While providing valuable insights into (and contextual analysis of) the characteristics of those who succeed in gaining entry to HE, this data is of limited value in considering the factors shaping participation in HE, given that the study gives no consideration to those who, for whatever reason, do not enter HE. Entry to HE in the Irish context is largely contingent on completion of second-level education and at least reasonable performance in the Leaving Certificate examination. Drawing on pooled results of School Leavers' Surveys conducted during the 1990s and 2000s, attention switches to explaining key processes underlying HE participation over time, again focusing specifically on the experiences of those from non-manual backgrounds relative to other social groups.
The decision to enter HE is not one made simply at the point of leaving school, but stems from a sequence of decisions and educational outcomes throughout the formal schooling years, as well as at the point of leaving school. The analyses of School Leavers' Surveys over time, married with qualitative interviews with young people, provides comprehensive insights into both the relative educational success and the pathways chosen by those from non-manual backgrounds during the second-level and post-school period. This allows much greater understanding of the factors shaping HE entry for those from non-manual backgrounds and an assessment of their relative representation and 'success' in a range of post-school pathways, including further education, training and the labour market, as well as HE.

Throughout the period, the occupational classification used for the School Leavers' Survey is based on the Census of Population 1986[7] . The analysis draws on two measures of socio-economic background. The first is based on the traditional approach whereby socio-economic background is based on father's occupation. However, increasingly in studies of social background and education, a 'dominance approach' (Erikson, 1984; Smyth, 1999) is used in the definition of social background. Under this approach, socio-economic background is based on the mother's rather than the father's position if she is in employment and has an occupational position higher than her husband. The 'parental socio-economic status' variable will be used as the primary measure of socio-economic background in the analysis of the School Leavers' Survey data while tables outlining fathers socio-economic status can be found in Appendix C for each of the dependent variables used in the study.

Neither the New Entrants 2004 data nor the School Leavers' Surveys provide information on the income levels of those from different socio-economic groups, data which is essential in assessing the extent to which individuals from the non-manual group are eligible for financial assistance (in the form of grants) in the event they gain entry to HE. Chapter 3 draws on the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2007. This is an annual survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). This data is central to the study as it allows us to obtain information on the income and living conditions of different types of households and the individuals living in them and, in particular, to analyse income levels among different socio-economic groups. The occupational classification used is the 'European Socio-Economic Classification' (discussed further in Chapter 3).

Drawing on information from the School Leavers' Survey 2007, and the insertion of additional questions in this survey, the report also examines the extent to which students from the non-manual group apply to participate in HE; the reasons why some do not apply; whether they were offered a place on a course; the extent to which students from this group decline such course places and; the reasons why they reject such places.
Finally, to note much of the school leavers' analysis is based on pooled data (1997 and 1998 surveys, 2002 and 2004 surveys and 2006 and 2007 surveys), thereby boosting sample numbers and providing more reliable results and better estimates of the relative position of young people from non-manual backgrounds and changes in that position over time.

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7 A list of the occupations classified as 'intermediate non-manual' and 'other non-manual' are contained in Appendix A.

The following provides further details on the main data sources.

2.2.1 New Entrants' Data

The focus of this data is on new entrants to HE in Ireland in 2004. New entrants to HE are defined as first-time undergraduates in the first year of study in full-time HE in the Republic of Ireland. The definition of first-time undergraduates excludes repeat students, students who previously enrolled in HE on another programme in the same college or in another HE college. Thus the number of new entrants is not the same as the number of first-year students. The definition of HE is defined as courses offered in recognised HE institutions (hence Post-Leaving Certificate courses, which are delivered through second-level institutions, are excluded) and which normally demand a minimum entry requirement of a Leaving Certificate with at least grade D in five subjects (almost all colleges admit some mature students who may not have reached these required educational credentials). In total, 40 HE Institutions (HEIs) are included in this data[8]. Within this total, we distinguish four groups of HEIs; Universities, Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education and Other Colleges.

With these parameters, the ESRI managed and coordinated a postal survey of a representative sample of the entire population of 34,700 individuals who had entered HE in Ireland through the CAO system in 2004, to collect information on parents' socio-economic characteristics and educational attainment. The CAO undertook the fieldwork for the survey, posting the questionnaire to each of the new entrants between November 2004 and January 2005. The overall response rate was 42 per cent. As is standard practice the data were re-weighted using sampling control parameters.

2.2.2 School Leavers' Surveys

The ESRI has been undertaking the Annual School Leavers' Survey since 1980, initially for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (formerly the Department of Labour) and more recently for the Department of Education and Science. School Leavers' Surveys provide comprehensive and unique insights into the position and experiences of young people as they leave school – capturing both their school experiences and their post-school pathways. The surveys are based on a stratified random sample of those leaving the official second-level system, with respondents being interviewed 18-24 months after leaving school. The survey records detailed information on school leavers' school experiences (attitudes towards their schooling, decisions taken at school, programmes taken, stage left and examination performance), their post-school pathways (labour market, further education or training) and crucially their social background characteristics. This allows us to look at the second-level achievements of young people from the non-manual group, as well as their post-school destinations and relative rates of entry into HE, further education, training and apprenticeships and the labour market. To look at changes over time in the relative experiences of young people from non-manual backgrounds, we pool data from the 1997/98 surveys and make comparisons to more recent surveys undertaken in 2002/04 and 2006/07. This gives sample numbers of 5,622 in 1997/98, 5,309 in 2002/04 and 4,024 in 2006/07.

8 There are 41 institutions listed with the CAO in 2004. The American College Dublin did not return data for the study, but this does not affect our results as the American College Dublin accounts for less than half of one percent of new entrants to HE in Ireland in 2004. St. Catherine's College of Education for Home Economics had no intake for 2004.

2.3 Qualitative Research: Life Course Interviews

2.3.1 Introduction

As this part of the study seeks to elicit opinions and feelings about educational pathways and post-school decisions in some depth, open-ended interviews were conducted with recent school leavers to explore their decisions and the processes underlying their school and post-school pathways. These social research methods are useful for understanding meaning and how individuals make sense of their world and their experiences (Creswell, 1994). A qualitative, in-depth approach particularly allows for the 'primacy of respondent' treating them as 'experts who provide valuable information' (Sarantakos, 1988: 256). Therefore this approach offers an ideal means of exploring the perspectives of participants in this study and the processes influencing their choices.

The framework of the interview schedule was within a life/oral history context. As Thompson (1988) highlights, using a life/oral history framework covers the underpinnings of 'the decisions which individuals make' (Thompson, 1988: 298). Additionally, an oral history is useful as it allows researchers to collect 'personal recollections of events, their causes and their effects' (Creswell, 1998:49). In particular oral history has the advantage of revealing 'the meanings of lived experience' (Yow, 2005: 23). Using this framework allows the study to focus on the factors which influenced young peoples' decision-making with regard to their post-school choices. Consequently, the research captures the essence of what shaped their decision to attend HE or to pursue other pathways (for example, full-time employment).

2.3.2 Themes and Topics

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, with a list of themes and key questions serving to guide the interviews. However, given the wide range of factors and processes influencing young peoples' post-school choices, the interviews were sufficiently fluid to allow for a full exploration of the experiences of individual participants. The following were the main areas of questioning covered, with some interviews deviating quite considerably and exploring a range of issues relevant to those individuals:

- Area (rural/urban), economic profile
- Social life (clubs/sports etc); part-time employment

- Parents' Careers
- Siblings (educational pathways and aspirations)

- Type of school
- Opinions on school/teachers/subjects
- Programme choices (including TY, LCA)
- Examination performance
- Career guidance advice received

- Expectations and aspirations regarding career and labour market position
- Views on HE while at school, awareness, contact with HE institutions
- Plans to pursue HE - applied/offered place
- Barriers and supports; financial circumstances

- Details of main economic activities
- Details of current position (education or labour market)

- Would you do anything differently (regarding post school choices)
- What would have helped to do things in a different way
- Advice to a school leaver today

- Where do they think they will be in five years
- Is further study part of their future plan

2.3.3 Theoretical Sample

We set out to select a total sample of thirty school leavers, who completed their schooling, drawn from the 2006 School Leavers' Survey. As discussed earlier in the chapter, this survey examines the school and post-school experiences of those who left the official second-level school system during the 2003/04 academic year. We focus on four main pathways and set out to achieve the following target sample:

Pathways	Target Sample
School leavers who progress to HE immediately after school	6
School leavers who pursue a PLC or Apprenticeship	8
School leavers who enter HE after undertaking a PLC course	4
School leavers who enter the labour market after school	12

Within these groups, we aimed to achieve a mix of students in terms of gender and examination performance. In addition, we were anxious to ensure a good representation of young people from both intermediate and other non-manual backgrounds (based on either their father's or highest parents' occupation).

Every effort was also made to ensure a good mix of respondents in terms of:
- Grant and non-grant holders (HE participants)
- HE Sector (university and institute of technology)
- School disadvantaged status (DEIS)
- Wide geographical spread

2.3.4 Achieved Sample and Profile of Respondents

Initially, a sample of approximately fifty young people was selected in an attempt to achieve the above target sample. However, small numbers expressed a willingness to participate, despite the offer of a small financial incentive of €50 to cover their expenses. As a result, the full cohort of young people from intermediate and other non-manual backgrounds that completed their second level education were ultimately contacted by letter and

asked to participate in the study. In total two hundred and fifty young people were contacted, with twenty-nine indicating that they were willing to be interviewed.
Table 2.1 indicates the profile of participants. In total thirteen young people entered the labour market on leaving school, seven progressed to HE immediately and the remaining nine entered other forms of education and training (mostly PLC and apprenticeship programmes; two such participants have since progressed to HE). A total of sixteen members of the sample are male and sixteen lived in County Dublin while at school, with the remainder spread across the country.

Pathways	Achieved Sample
School leavers who progress to HE immediately after school	7
School leavers who pursue a PLC or Apprenticeship	7
School leavers who enter HE after undertaking a PLC course	2
School leavers who enter the labour market after school	13

For the purposes of this report, respondents are divided into three main groups: those who enter HE on leaving school; those who enter the labour market full-time and those who (immediately) pursue other forms of education and training (most either Post-Leaving-Certificate courses or an apprenticeship programme). The groups are labelled HE, LM and Other ET respectively. Information from the School Leavers' Survey 2006, from which the sample was drawn, shows some important initial differences between these three leaver groups, particularly in terms of their social background, the senior cycle programme taken while in school and their performance in the Leaving Certificate examination. In total, thirteen out of the twenty-nine participants came from other non-manual backgrounds (where one or both parents were employed in such an occupation). Among those progressing to HE, the vast majority came from intermediate non-manual backgrounds, while greater numbers of the labour market and other education/training groups came from other non-manual backgrounds. It should also be noted, that while the group of twenty-nine young people interviewed all came from non-manual backgrounds, their economic positions varied quite dramatically. Some came from highly economically disadvantaged urban areas, while others came from relatively affluent 'middle-class' communities, one of whom attended a fee-paying school.

Table 2.1: Profile of Participan

Name	School Type	LC Programme	Intermediate Non-manual (INM) or Other Non-manual (ONM)	Father's Education	Mother's Education	LC Performance
Labour Market Entrants ('LM' Group)						
Sarah	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	JC	LC	Pass
Aideen	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	Primary	Primary	Pass
Rachel	Comprehensive DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	JC	----
Declan	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	Diploma	Diploma	Pass
Vincent	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LC	INM	JC	JC	Less than 5 pass grades
Michael	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	LC	LC	Pass
Mark	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LCA	INM	Diploma	Diploma	----
Mairead	Comprehensive DEIS	LCA	ONM	JC	Primary	----
Tony	Secondary Non-DEIS	LCA	INM	LC	LC	----
Dermot	Vocational DEIS	LC	INM	LC	Diploma	1-3 Honours
Lynda	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LCA	ONM	Primary	JC	----
Sally	Secondary Non-DEIS	LCA	ONM	LC	LC	1-3 Honours
Noel	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	JC	Pass
Higher Education Entrants ('HE' Group)						
Eamon	Vocational DEIS	LC	INM	JC	LC	4+ Honours
Patrick	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	LC	JC	4+ Honours
Josephine	Comprehensive DEIS	LC	INM	Primary	LC	----
Philip	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	LC	4+ Honours
Gerard	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	Degree	Degree	4+ Honours
Paul	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	Diploma	Diploma	----
Daragh	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	Diploma	Diploma	----

Name	School Type	LC Programme	INM or ONM	Father's Education	Mother's Education	LC Performance
Other Education and Training (PLC/Apprenticeship 'Other ET' Group)						
PLC						
Fiona	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	JC	1-3 Honours
Tracey	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LCA	INM	Diploma	LC	----
Sharon	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	Primary	1-3 Honours
Ruth	Comprehensive DEIS	LC	ONM	LC	JC	----
Roger	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	Primary	Primary	Pass
Emer	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	JC	Pass
Apprenticeship						
Charlie	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	ONM	JC	Primary	Pass
Cian	Secondary Non-DEIS	LC	INM	LC	LC	4+ Honours
Emma	Vocational DEIS	LCA	INM	JC	Primary	----

Six members of the group had taken the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (LCA) during senior cycle. It is interesting to note that the bulk of these young people entered the labour market on leaving school. For those who took the established Leaving Certificate (LCE) (or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), a variation on the established Leaving Certificate), examination performance appears to differ somewhat between the three groups, with those progressing to HE more likely to perform well in the examination and achieve 4 or more C grades (or better) on Higher Level papers.

These three groups of young people differ considerably in their school and post-school experiences and, for this reason, are largely discussed separately in three chapters exploring HE entry, other education and training participation and labour market entry among school leavers. Chapter 5 considers the school experiences and attainments of these three groups of young people and examines the question to what extent do experiences while at school impact on the post-school choice young people make and whether they progress to HE? In addition, Chapter 10 discusses differences across the three groups of young people from these intermediate and other non-manual backgrounds. It assesses whether differing early experiences impacted on the pathways taken by these young people and identifies the processes underlying their choices regarding HE entry.

2.3.5 Analysis

Interviews with the twenty-nine study participants were recorded (with their consent) and transcribed verbatim. The data was then analysed using the QSR N6 package to identify emerging themes and differences between the three main school leaver groups. To preserve anonymity, all individuals have been assigned pseudonyms, and any other identifying information is omitted from the report.

2.4 Format of the Report

The remainder of the report is set out as follows. Chapter three explores the size and characteristics of the non-manual socio-economic group. Drawing on Census data the analysis considers the proportion of the population in non-manual occupations and whether this has changed over time. The New Entrants' Survey then provides useful insights into the demographic and school characteristics of entrants to HE and the types of institutions and courses attended. The chapter then considers the average income levels of different socio-economic groups, with a view to assessing their levels of eligibility for state financial support. Finally, drawing on School Leavers' Survey data, the chapter examines the types of schools attended by young people of different social backgrounds, with this analysis giving us the opportunity to look at two main sub-groups within the non-manual category.

Chapter Four examines patterns of second-level participation and attainment for young people from different socio-economic backgrounds, placing particular emphasis on the relative position of the intermediate and other non-manual groups. The second-level experiences of these groups are further examined in Chapter Five, where findings from the qualitative research are considered with particular reference to the second-level experiences of those who take diverse post-school pathways.

Chapter Six examines patterns of application to HE and entry rates across socio-economic groups, along with the factors influencing HE entry and dropout. Drawing on interviews with young people from non-manual backgrounds who successfully transferred to HE, the chapter also explores their experiences of the transition and the factors underlying that decision. Young people who pursue forms of post-school education other than HE are considered in Chapter Seven, where entry into PLC, apprenticeship and other state-sponsored training programmes are examined, again focusing on the patterns for our two non-manual groups relative to young people from other

social backgrounds. Finally, young people who enter the labour market full-time on leaving school are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Nine presents a full discussion of all results, with particular reference to the choice processes of young people from non-manual backgrounds.

CHAPTER 3

Setting the context: The Characteristics of the Non-Manual group

3.1: Introduction

This chapter serves two main purposes. Firstly, it provides the context and examines the overall composition of the intermediate and other non-manual groups. Secondly, it considers the characteristics of occupants of the non-manual groups – in terms of occupations they are found in, income levels with a view to assessing the levels of eligibility for state financial support, educational levels, and their educational experiences in terms of the types of second-level schools they attended and the types of courses and colleges they have accessed among the sub-group who were successful in gaining entry to HE. In doing so, a range of data sources are used and the following section provides an overview of the measurement and classification of socio-economic groups used across these data sources.

3.2 Classification of the Non-Manual Socio-Economic Group

This chapter draws on a number of data sources in order to consider the characteristics of the non-manual socio-economic group. In doing so, there is an issue with regard to the classification of socio-economic positions which should be addressed at this point. The term 'socio-economic position' is used to reflect how societies are stratified. Social stratification refers to social inequalities that may be attributed to the way a society is organised, to its socio-economic structure. Socio-economic classifications all share in common the idea that in market economies it is market position, and especially position in the occupational division of labour, which is fundamental to the generation of social inequalities. The life chances of individuals and families are largely determined by their position in the market and occupation is taken to be its central indicator; that is the occupational structure is viewed as the backbone of the stratification system.

Table 3.1 outlines each of the data-sets used in this chapter and their corresponding measure of the non-manual socio-economic group. While data from the Census 1996, 2002, 2006 and New Entrants data record an aggregate measure of the non-manual group, the Census 1986, School Leavers' Survey data record a breakdown of the non- manual group into the intermediate and other non-manual groups. SILC data derives socio-economic background from the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC) and two categories are of particular relevance to the CSO 'Non-Manual Category' – the Intermediate Occupations and the Lower Services, Sales and Clerical Occupations.

Table 3.1 Summary of Measures of Non-Manual Groups Used in Data Sources

Data Source	Measure of Non-Manual Group	SEC Scheme Used
Census 1986	Non-Manual Group can be broken into Intermediate Non-Manual and Other Non-Manual	Census Class of Occup '86
School Leavers Survey (all)	Non-Manual Group can be broken into Intermediate Non-Manual and Other Non- Manual	Census Class of Occup '86
SILC Data (2006)	Intermediate Occupations and Lower Services and Technical Occupations	ESeC
Census 1996, 2002, 2006	Non-Manual Group Aggregate Group	Census Class of Occup '96
New Entrants Data 2004	Non-Manual Group Aggregate Group	Census Class of Occup '96

Using these data sources and corresponding measures of the non-manual socio-economic group, this chapter now considers the size, composition and characteristics of the non-manual group.

3.3 Size and Composition of the Non-Manual Group

Drawing on Census data since the mid 1990s, Table 3.2 presents the proportion of the adult population (aged 15 years and older) in each of the main socio-economic groups. Overall, nearly one-in-five are located within the non-manual group, with little change over time. This highlights the importance of addressing low levels of participation in HE among young people from non-manual backgrounds, given that the issue relates to a significant share of the population.

The socio-economic classification presented in Table 3.1 was introduced in 1996 and aims to bring together persons with similar social and economic statuses on the basis of level of skill or educational attainment required. In defining socio-economic group, this classification does not attempt to rank groups in order of socio-economic importance. Furthermore, the socio-economic group is determined by occupation and employment status and results in one single non-manual group.

Table 3.2: Total Population (Aged 15 years and over) 1996, 2002 and 2006 Census Results

Socio-Economic Group	1996 %	2002 %	2006 %
Employers and Managers	10.8	14.1	15.3
Higher Professional	4.4	5.1	5.8
Lower Professional	8.4	9.9	10.7
Non-Manual	18.0	17.6	19.3
Manual Skilled	13.3	10.6	10.1
Semi-Skilled	9.6	8.3	8.4
Unskilled	7.7	5.3	3.8
Own Account workers	5.2	4.5	4.3
Farmers/agricultural workers	10.8	6.8	4.6
Unknown	11.9	17.9	17.8

The broad 'non-manual' socio-economic group is however comprised of two main sub-groups: intermediate non-manual and other non-manual. As indicated in Section 3.2, the distinction between the intermediate non-manual group and the other non-manual group can be derived using the 1986 Census of Population socio-economic classification, which is the main classification used in the analyses of School Leavers' Survey data in this report. As shown in Appendix A, these two non-manual groups have somewhat distinct occupational profiles – the former is comprised of a number of relatively high status positions such as Garda sergeants and lower ranks and government executive officials. In contrast, the latter, 'other non-manual' group, is dominated by lower level service workers – including bus drivers, barbers/hairdressers, air stewards and waiters/waitresses.

Changes have occurred in occupational classifications between the 1986 Census and 1996 Census and Table 1 in Appendix B then makes an attempt to compare the 1986 Census classification with the 1996 Census classification.[9] What is particularly evident is that many of the occupations in the intermediate non-manual group have been re-coded to Managerial and Technical and Lower Professional socio-economic positions. This is particularly the case for proprietors of services, and government executives. In relation to the other non-manual group, we find that many occupations are now classified as 'Skilled Manual' occupational groups and this is particularly the case with occupations such as bus drivers, taxi drivers. However, what is clear is that a number of occupations in both groups have remained consistent and the distinction between the intermediate non-manual group and the other non-manual group also remains consistent. The remaining occupations classified as 'other non-manual' are likely to have experienced a worsening of their position over time, particularly in the context of expansion and growth in part-time employment contracts. Some of the remaining occupations in this group indicate less formal access routes and perhaps a lower reliance on formal education or training requirements for entry (particularly in the case of street traders, waiters and waitresses). In addition, these occupations may be less reliant on entry-level qualifications, and have less beneficial working conditions and remuneration and so represent economic positions which are likely to have considerable impact on educational attainment and HE access. As a result, we find that these two groups remain occupationally highly distinct. Analysis of SILC data later in the Chapter allows us to examine the income levels of these groups, while analysis of New Entrants' and School Leavers' Survey data gives us the opportunity to gain a much fuller picture of the profile of these groups and their position relative to traditionally disadvantaged groups.

9 This comparability exercise has been conducted by the authors of this report. It should be noted that a certain degree of caution should be exercised in relation to making comparisons between the two coding schemes.

Composition of the Non-manual Group

Table 3.3 indicates that the actual size of the non-manual group before and after the change in Census classification of occupations in 1996 has reduced from 26 per cent in 1986. In 1986 the composition of the non-manual group was comprised of 57 per cent intermediate non-manual and 43 per cent other non-manual.

Table 3.3: Total Population (Aged 15 years and over) 1986, 1996, 2002 and 2006 Census Results

Socio-Economic Group	1986 %	1996 %	2002 %	2006 %
Non-Manual	26.4	18.0	17.6	19.3
of which				
Intermediate Non-manual	57.0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other Non-manual	43.0	N/A	N/A	N/A

More recent estimates of the composition of the non-manual group can be derived from the School Leavers' Survey and are presented in Table 3.4. We estimate that the size of the intermediate non-manual group has increased over time, while the size of the other non-manual group has decreased over time to a ratio of 40:60 with the intermediate non-manual group.

Table 3.4: Estimates of the Composition of the Non-manual Group 1997-2007

Socio-Economic Group	SLS 97+98 %	SLS 02+04 %	SLS06+07 %
Non-Manual	31.8	34.5	37.4
of which			
Intermediate Non-manual	53.7	53.9	59.7
Other Non-manual	46.2	46.0	40.2

3.4 Income Levels and Grant Eligibility Associated with the Non-Manual Socio-Economic Group

This section now examines the extent to which resource differences may account for class inequalities in access to HE by considering the income levels associated with the non-manual socio-economic group. In doing so, we use SILC data to capture the income levels associated with each of the different socio-economic groups as measured using the European Socio-Economic Classification (ESeC). Income is an important consideration in any study of participation in HE given that insufficient resources may represent a key barrier to participation. In the Irish case, the HE Grant Scheme was established to provide support for students whose family income would not otherwise be sufficient to support them through HE. While an exploration of the uptake of the HE Grant Scheme by the non-manual group is delayed until Chapter 6, this chapter considers the income levels of socio-economic groups and eligibility for the HE Grants scheme.

As outlined in Table 3.1, SILC data uses the European Socio-Economic Classification (ESeC)[10] and two ESeC categories are of particular interest and relevance to this study in defining the non-manual socio-economic group. These are the Intermediate Occupations and the Lower Service, Sales and Clerical Occupations.

Intermediate Occupations

These are 'higher grade white collar workers'. Positions in this class typically exist within bureaucratic structures and share similar conditions to managers and administrators in terms of salaries, incremental scales and autonomy with regard to time. Typical occupations here include most clerical occupations and administrative assistants, occupations which involve working alongside managers and professionals in ancillary roles. Often these positions involve employees in adhering to and carrying through bureaucratically defined rules with little in the way of discretion but some emphasis on efficiency.

Lower Services, Sales and Clerical Occupations

These are 'lower grade white collar workers'. It is possible that the expansion and high degree of part-time employment in many occupations in this class has led to a worsening over time of overall employment contracts compared with Intermediate Occupations where many of these occupations might once have been placed (e.g. retail assistants). Equally, there may be some positive employment relations' effects of working in large organisations in the public and private sectors. Typical occupations are shop workers (retail assistants) and care workers.

Table 3.5 presents annual gross household income in 2006 for each individual aged 16-20 by socio-economic group. Gross household income is a useful indicator of class differences in resources available to those individuals who are close to college-going ages. In this analysis we are concerned with the relationship between class of origin and availability of resources. Accordingly we confine the analysis to households with children, with at least one child close to college-going age. This excludes households composed of working adults or of students. The former are excluded because we are primarily interested in the resources available to young people of college-going age who are financially dependent upon their parents. Students recorded by the survey as resident in their own households have presumably already made the transition to HE by the time they are surveyed and we cannot relate their household income to their parental family income. We use a broad age range in order to boost numbers supporting the analysis. However, employing a narrower age range (e.g. 17-19) yields a very similar income distribution.

10 The ESeC is an occupationally based classification and the information needed to create ESec is occupation coded at the 3-digit level of EU variant of the ISCO 1988, details of employment status, number of employees in a workplace and whether a worker is a supervisor.

Table 3.5: Gross Annual Household Income in 2006 of Individuals aged 16-20 by European Socio-economic Classification

	Mean	Std Deviation	Median	N cases
Professionals, Administrators & Employers	116,768	79,896	99,340	276
Intermediate Employee	64,485	36,801	67,554	63
Small Employer & Self-Employed	67,610	44,399	54,269	118
Low supervisory & Technical / High Grade Blue Collar	85,212	48,659	76,428	52
Lower Services, Sales and Clerical/ Lower White Collar	63,225	38,613	60,799	118
Low Technical/ Skilled Manual	66,323	38,467	54,837	61
Routine/ Semi & Unskilled Manual	52,733	37,965	49,241	183
TOTAL	**78,267**	**59,835**	**65,739**	**871**

Source: Special Analysis of 2007 SILC

We find from Table 3.5 that mean and median incomes for both Intermediate and Lower Services, Sales and Clerical (Lower White Collar Employees) (shaded rows in Table 3.5) are substantially lower than the national average and substantially lower than other white collar classes (the salariat, employers and the self-employed) as well as higher grade blue collar workers. Mean incomes of Intermediate Employees and of Lower Services, Sales and Clerical (Lower White Collar Employees) occupy an intermediate position, lying somewhat below those of skilled manual workers but well above those of semi- and unskilled manual workers. However, median incomes of both Intermediate Employees and of Lower Services, Sales and Clerical (Lower White Collar Employees) classes exceed those of the manual groups, and indeed those of small employers and the self employed. The comparison of mean and median incomes between the non-manual and manual groups suggest that a substantial proportion of the non-manual groups – in the lower income groups - had incomes that fell well below those of the manual groups. These data would suggest that young people from Lower White Collar backgrounds face similar economic barriers to participation in HE as their counterparts in the skilled manual class, but not as severe as those from semi- and unskilled manual classes. However, the top half of the income distribution among Intermediate Employees and Lower White Collar Employees lay above the median among manual workers, while among the lower income quantiles, the income of non-manual groups fell well below that of the manual groups.

Income Levels and Higher Education Grants Scheme

How do these income levels relate to the HE Grants Scheme?[11] Table 3.6 shows the distribution of income at various cut-off points by ESeC. The important cut-off points are:

- Less than €37,365, corresponding to eligibility for a full grant, including maintenance and registration fees in respect of a family with less than 4 children;
- Less than €46,700, corresponding to eligibility for partial grant aid;
- More than €46,700 but less than the median income €64,845;
- Incomes below the median - less than 1.5 times and greater than 1.5 times the median.

11 It should be noted that the incomes reported here do not match income measurement in the HE Grants scheme in two respects: (1) The Grants Scheme is based on parental + candidate income, while household income relates to total income of all household members – further analysis will be needed to align the different income units (2) Gross income reported here includes a number of income categories that are not included in calculating grant eligibility (e.g. Child Benefit, Family Income Supplement, Carers Allowance etc.).

Table 3.6: Distribution of Gross Household Income (2006) by Grant Eligibility and Median Income by European Socio-economic Classification

	Full Grant <€37,365	Part Grant <€46,700	< Median (€64,845)	Median to 1.5* Median	> 1.5* Median		N of Cases
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Professionals, Administrators & Employers	9.2	3.6	9.1	26.5	51.6	100.0	276
Intermediate Employee	37.9	1.5	8.2	33.5	18.9	100.0	63
Small Employer & Self-Employed	20.5	1.9	33.2	26.4	18.0	100.0	118
Low supervisory & Tech/							
High Grade Blue Collar	11.6	19.3	9.6	31.0	28.5	100.0	52
Lower Services, Sales and Clerical/ Lower White Collar	36.1	8.1	15.0	29.5	11.2	100.0	118
Low Tech/ Skilled Manual	26.2	8.6	26.7	19.7	18.9	100.0	61
Routine/ Semi & Unskilled	38.1	9.8	25.8	16.2	10.1	100.0	183
TOTAL	24.2	6.3	18.9	25.2	25.4	100.0	871

Source: Special Analysis of 2007 SILC
Note: Asterisks denotes multiplication

In relation to grant eligibility, Table 3.6 shows:
•At the lower end of the income distribution, about 38 per cent of children from Intermediate Employee Backgrounds, and about 36 per cent of those from Lower White Collar Backgrounds would be eligible for full grant aid.

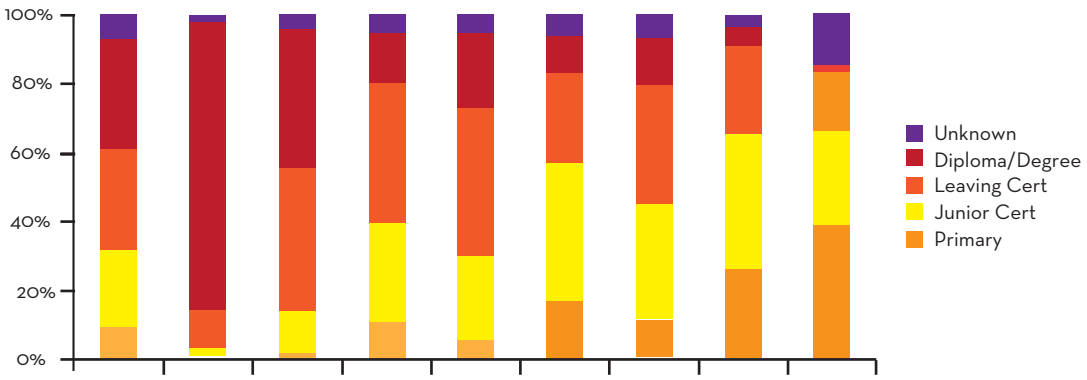
•These two non-manual groups are similar in full-grant eligibility to semi- and unskilled manual classes.
•8 per cent of the Lower White Collar class, but only 1.5 per cent of the Intermediate Employee class are eligible for partial grant aid – compared to 10 per cent of those from Routine (semi- and unskilled) Manual class backgrounds.
•8 per cent of the Intermediate Employee class, and 15 per cent of those from Lower White Collar have household income in excess of grant eligibility but below the median income of €64,845. This may be a group whose incomes exceed grant eligibility but whose family income is nonetheless insufficient to support participation in HE. The proportion of both these non-manual groups in this income band is substantially smaller than the manual classes.
•Over 30 per cent of the Intermediate employee group and the Lower White Collar group are in the income band between median and 1.5 times the median (€64,845-€97,267). This is higher than the overall average and substantially higher than the manual groups, the shares in respect of both of which fall below 20 per cent.
•Only 11 per cent of the Lower White Collar Group and 19 per cent of the Intermediate Employee group have incomes greater than 1.5 times the median (€97,267), a group that should have sufficient resources to finance participation in HE. In this respect the lower white-collar group are very similar to the semi- and unskilled manual group.

On balance, our analysis suggests that the non-manual or white-collar group appears to consist of two distinct classes: Intermediate Employees and Lower White Collar Workers. The Lower White Collar group have low incomes, and levels of eligibility for HE grants that would be comparable to manual working class groups, which also show relatively low rates of participation in HE.

3.5 Educational Profile of Non-manual Group

Drawing on recent School Leavers' Survey data (2006 and 2007 surveys) we now consider the extent to which occupants of different socio-economic positions have differing educational profiles and attend different types of schools. We also examine the distribution of recent school leavers across schools, in particular examining the extent of concentration of young people of differing social backgrounds in schools targeted under the 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' programme (henceforth referred to as DEIS) and different school types (vocational, secondary and so on).

Figure 3.1: Parental Socio-Economic Group and Parental Education

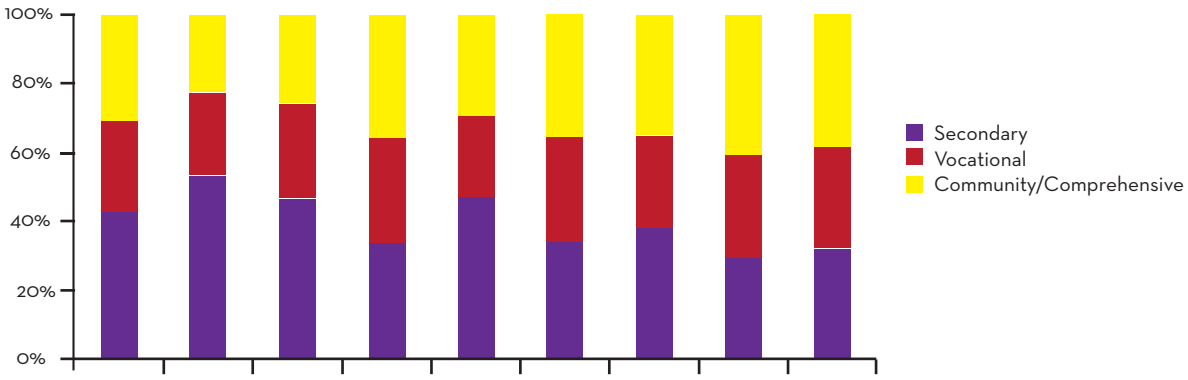


Source: School Leavers' Surveys 2006/07

In considering the educational attainment of the different socio-economic groups, Figure 3.1 illustrates considerable variation both across socio-economic groups and between the two non-manual groups. Parents in professional occupations are considerably more likely to have secured HE qualifications than those in other social groups. While 84 per cent of the professional group have achieved a diploma or degree qualification, this is the case for just 3 per cent of the non-employed group. The bulk of parents in farming and intermediate non-manual positions have attained Leaving Certificate level education. Parents in semi- and unskilled manual occupations and other non-manual jobs are most likely to have left school prior to completion of second-level (65 and 57 per cent respectively) alongside the majority of those in non-employed households. It is clear that the two non-manual groups have highly distinct educational profiles – with the other non-manual group much more likely to have left school early relative to the intermediate non-manual group. It is clear that occupants of the intermediate non-manual group have much higher levels of HE participation.

Figure 3.2 considers the type of school attended by young people from different socio-economic backgrounds. While over four-in-ten school leavers attend schools in the secondary sector, participation ranges from 53 per cent for the professional group to less than 30 per cent among young people from semi- and unskilled manual backgrounds.

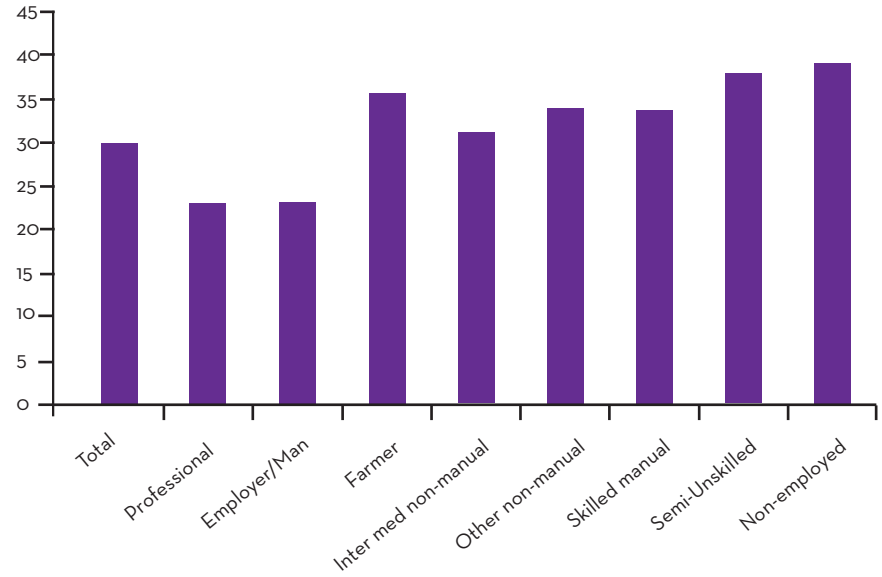
Figure 3.2: Parental Socio-Economic Group and Type of School Attended



Source: School Leavers' Surveys 2006/07

Attendance at vocational schools is relatively constant across groups, although school leavers from farming and other non-manual backgrounds are slightly more likely to attend this type of school. The community and comprehensive schools in many ways cater for the opposite of the secondary sector – young people from semi- and unskilled manual backgrounds are much more likely to attend these schools, with professional and employer/manager groups relatively under-represented. It is interesting to note that the other non-manual group display school type patterns largely on a par with the skilled and semi/unskilled manual groups. The intermediate non-manual group, in contrast, has higher levels of attendance at secondary schools and has a profile much more similar to the employer/manager and professional groups.

Figure 3.3: Proportion of School Leavers who Attended a 'DEIS' School by Socio-Economic Group



Source: School Leavers' Surveys 2006/07

Of the total, nationally representative population of leavers from second-level schools (both early school leavers and those who completed second-level), three-in-ten attended a DEIS school (Figure 3.3). Given the nature of the DEIS programme, it is not surprising to find variation across groups: participation levels range from 23 per cent of young people from professional backgrounds to nearly 40 per cent of young people where neither parent is in employment. Given that the DEIS programme is one of the main policy mechanisms addressing educational disadvantage at second-level and promoting access at HE, it is of some concern that 60 per cent of young people from non-employed backgrounds do not attend a DEIS school, alongside 62 per cent of young people from semi- and unskilled manual backgrounds. The intermediate and other non-manual groups do not differ widely – 31 per cent of school leavers from the former group and 34 per cent of the latter attended DEIS schools. This leaves the majority of young people from these backgrounds outside of schools currently targeted for particular attention at both second level and HE.

3.6 Educational Experiences of the Non-manual Group

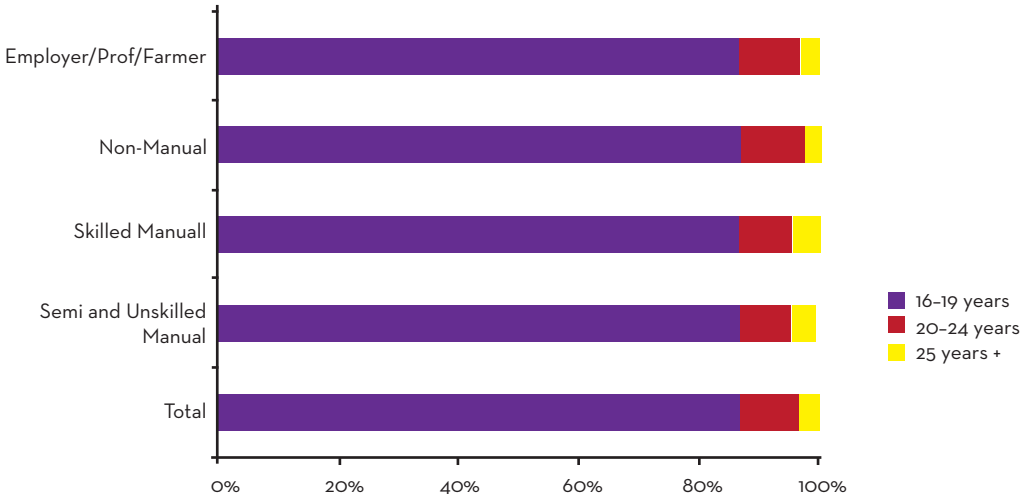
This section now changes direction and directs attention on the sub-group of the population who enter HE and considers the nature of socio-economic patterns in access to HE overall and access to different courses (sector and course level). In terms of the characteristics of new entrants to HE in 2004, the analysis is predominantly focused on comparing the position of those from the aggregate non-manual socio-economic backgrounds with those from other social backgrounds[12] . This section draws on data from the New Entrants' Survey to consider the age and school characteristics of those attending college for the first time in 2004, as well as the type of institution attended, the level of course taken and whether the student is in receipt of a grant.

Second-Level Educational Experiences

In terms of the age profile of college entrants, those from non-manual backgrounds are not particularly distinct (Figure 3.4). Overall, 87 per cent of new entrants fall within the 'traditional' 16-19 age bracket, with non-manual entrants not deviating from the average. The only noteworthy difference is among those from manual backgrounds, where students are more likely to be older (25 years or more).

12 As discussed in Section 3.2, given the different socio-economic classification used in the New Entrants Survey (2004), it is not possible to differentiate sub-groups within the non-manual category in this analysis.

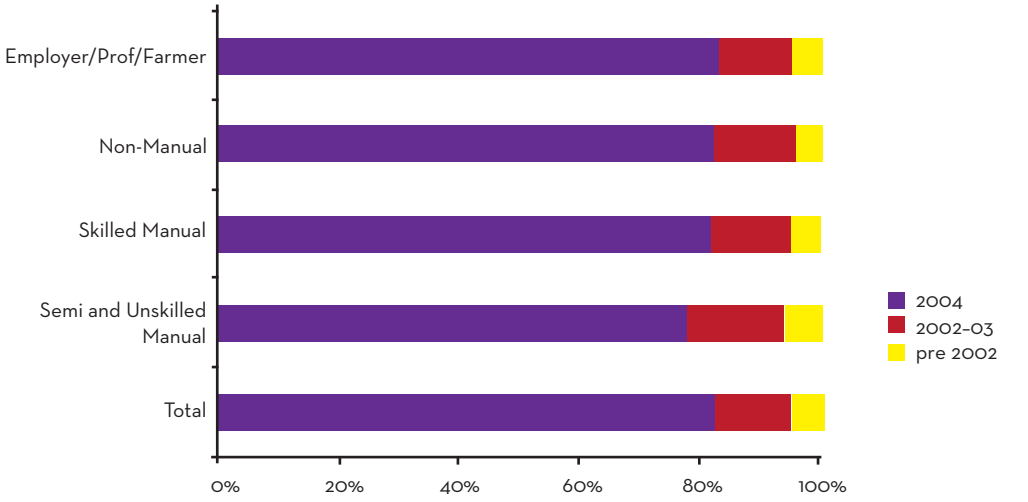
Figure 3.4: Age Profile of Higher Education Entrants 2004 by Parental Socio-Economic Group



Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

Similar patterns emerge when we examine the year in which new entrants sat their Leaving Certificate examination in Figure 3.5. While four-out-of-five entered HE in the year of sitting their Leaving Certificate, those from manual backgrounds are more likely to have taken their examination prior to their year of entry.

Figure 3.5: Year of Sitting Leaving Cert of Higher Education Entrants by Parental Socio-Economic Group



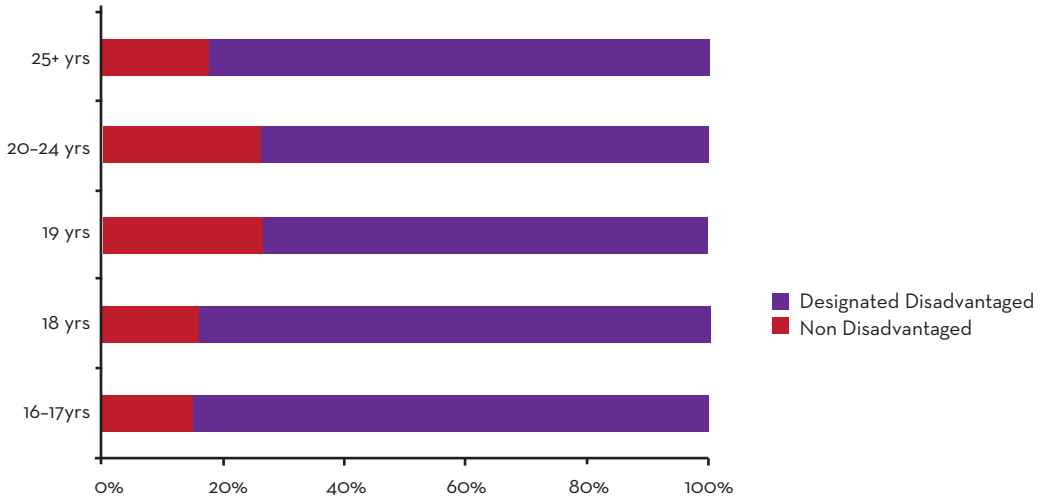
Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

A delay in entry to HE after taking the Leaving Certificate may be due to participation in further education or other forms of education/training, taking a 'gap-year' or returning to education after a period in the labour market. Those from non-manual backgrounds are slightly more likely than those from professional backgrounds to have

delayed entry to college for a year or two, but the difference is small. Chapter 7, drawing on School Leavers' Survey data, will examine the extent to which this difference may be explained by different rates of participation in further education for those from non-manual backgrounds.

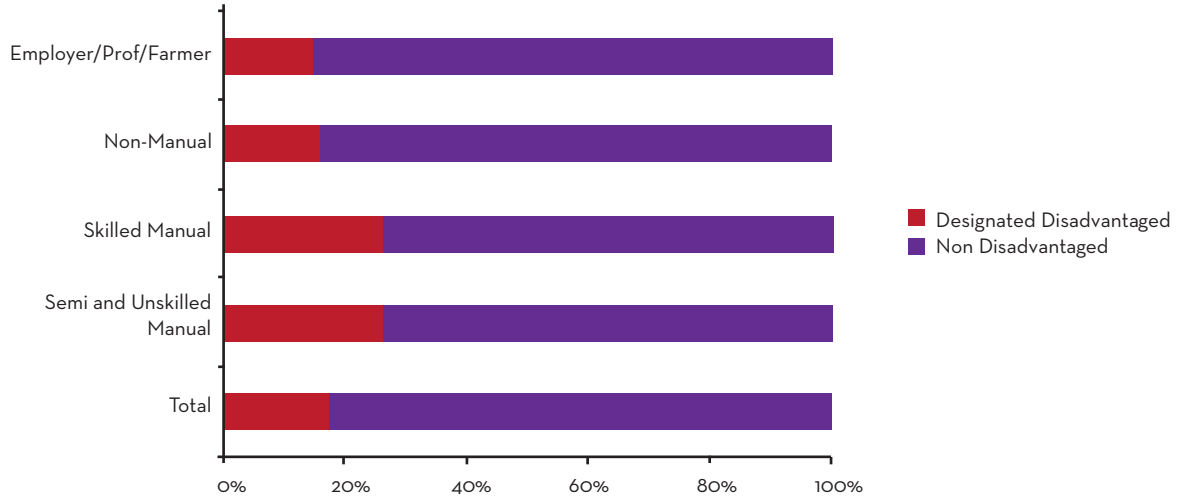
When we consider the school background of HE entrants, important differences emerge across socio-economic groups. First, we examine whether the college entrant attended a school targeted under the DEIS programme. In total, 12 per cent of new entrants came from such a DEIS school. Clear differences emerge across age-groups, with younger entrants (16-17 years) and those aged 20-24 years more likely to have attended schools which now fall within the DEIS classification (Figure 3.6). It is interesting to note that those aged 18 and 19 years are least likely to have attended a school now targeted under DEIS, as are those over the age of 25 years, although this latter result should be interpreted with caution given the small numbers who are aged 25 years or older.

Figure 3.6: Proportion of New Entrants who Attended a 'DEIS' School



Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

Figure 3.7: Proportion who Attended a 'DEIS' School by Parental Socio-Economic Group



Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

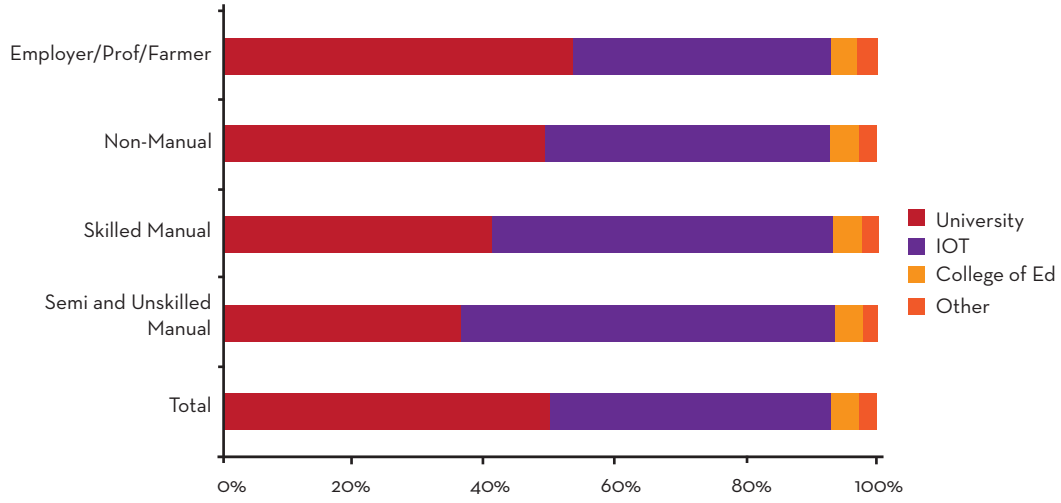
Figure 3.7 examines the proportions of new entrants who attended DEIS schools for each socio-economic group. While one-in-four students from manual backgrounds attended such a school, just 15 per cent of those from non-manual backgrounds similarly attended a DEIS school. Across all socio-economic groups, male new entrants are more likely to have attended a DEIS school than females.

Higher Education Experiences

When we consider the types of institution attended by new entrants and the level of course taken, differences across social groups are more marked (Figures 3.8 and 3.9). In terms of college type, the pattern for students of non-manual background largely mirrors the overall total breakdown of students across different types of colleges. Almost half of new entrants from non-manual backgrounds attend colleges in the University sector, with 44 per cent attending Institutes of Technology. Just 4 per cent attend Colleges of Education and the remaining 3 per cent attending Other Colleges. These patterns can be compared to higher levels of representation in the University sector among those from professional backgrounds and considerably higher levels of participation in Institutes of Technology among those from manual backgrounds.

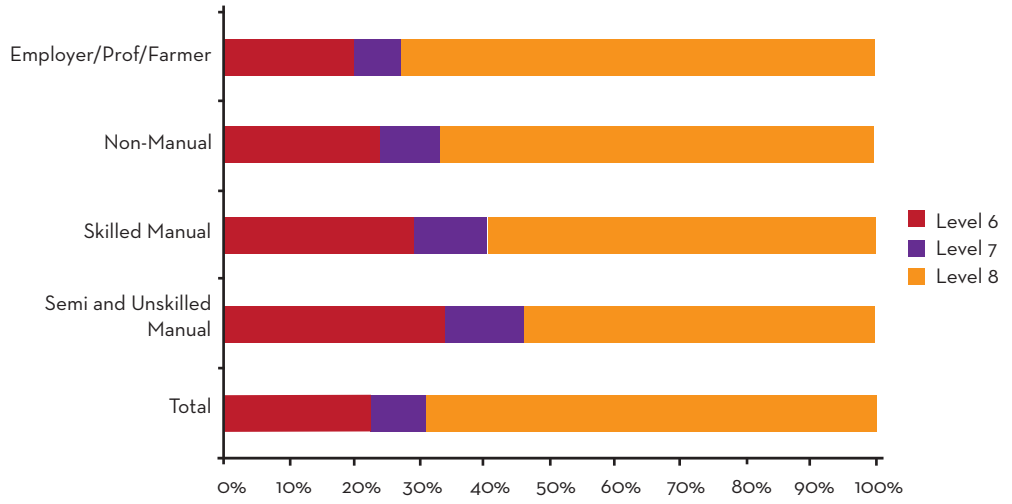
In terms of level of study, just under two-thirds of students from non-manual backgrounds are pursuing Level 8 (Honours Degree) courses, with 10 per cent taking Level 7 (Ordinary Degree) and one-quarter registered for a Level 6 (Higher Certificate) course of study. Once again, the non-manual group occupies an intermediate position with those from professional backgrounds considerably more likely to be enrolled on Level 8 courses (nearly three-quarters), while those from manual, particularly semi- and unskilled manual backgrounds, are more likely to be pursuing Level 7 and, most notably, Level 6 courses. Hence, while the profile of new entrants to HE has become more diverse over time, patterns of differentiation among those who succeed in gaining entry to HE by college type and course level remain prominent.

Figure 3.8: Institution Attended by Parental Socio-Economic Group



Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

Figure 3.9: Course Level by Parental Socio-Economic Group

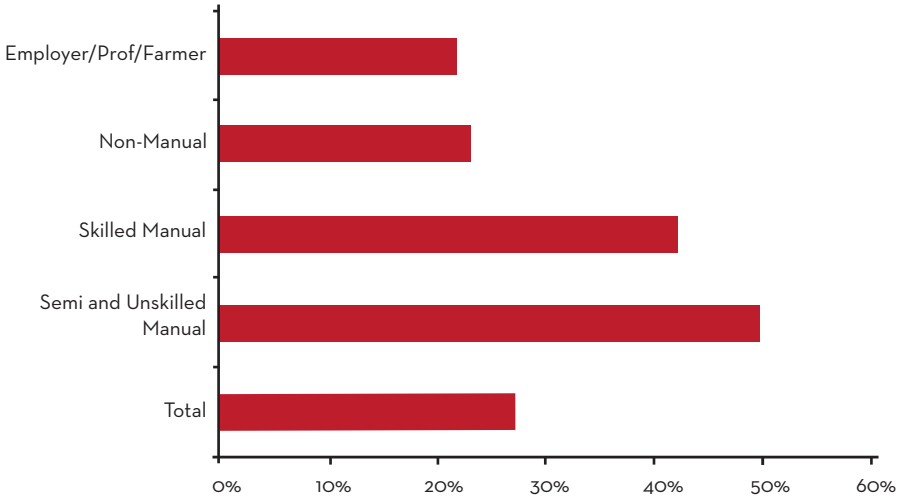


Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

Finally, the extent to which college entrants were in receipt of financial support in the form of a 'registration grant' (i.e. exempt from the college registration charge/student service fee) varies greatly across socio-economic groups, in line with criteria for eligibility for financial support. As displayed in Figure 3.10, while overall 27 per cent of 2004 new entrants were in receipt of financial support, individuals from non-manual backgrounds were less likely to be in receipt of support with less than one-quarter receiving such a registration grant. Half of new entrants from semi- and unskilled manual backgrounds were receiving financial support, while those from skilled manual

backgrounds were just below this, with 43 per cent in receipt of support. The next section further considers the issue of eligibility for state support, examining the average income levels of different socio-economic groups.

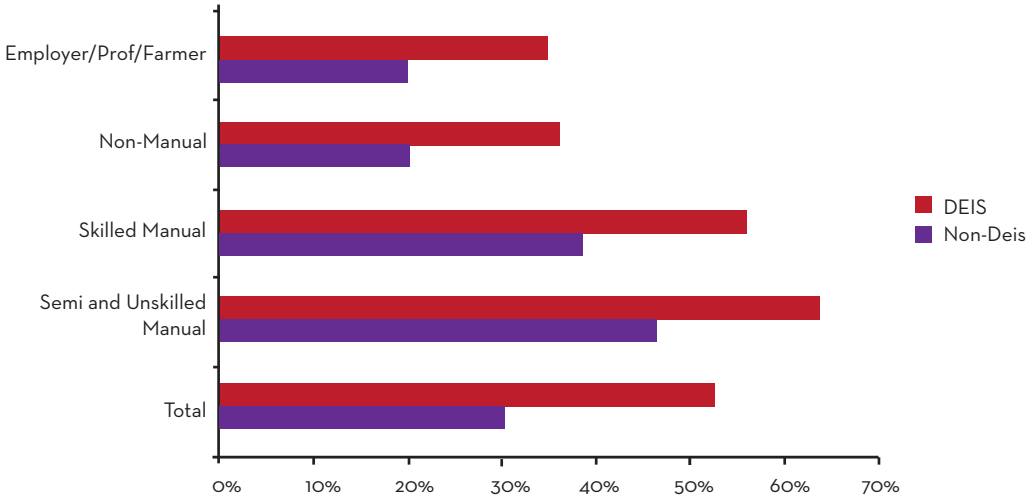
Figure 3.10: Percentage in Receipt of Grant by Parental Socio-Economic Group



Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

It is interesting to note that receipt of financial support is also strongly related to whether the student had attended a school targeted under the DEIS programme, even when we consider the social background of that individual (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11: Percentage in Receipt of Grant by Whether Attended School Categorised as 'DEIS'



Source: New Entrants' Data (2004)

Across all social groups, individuals who attended DEIS schools were more likely to receive financial support than those who attended schools not targeted under the initiative. Among students from non-manual backgrounds, 36 per cent of those who attended DEIS schools were in receipt of financial support relative to just one-fifth of those from schools not targeted under the DEIS programme.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has set out to provide a context for the remainder of the report by presenting an overview of the non-manual group in terms of its size and composition, and to consider the characteristics of the non-manual group in terms of income and education levels, eligibility for grant receipt and educational experiences at second-level and HE in terms of the types of institutions that they attend.

The chapter began by providing an overview of the complexity of classifying the non-manual group into two distinct groups (intermediate non-manual and other non-manual) using the available data sources. In doing so, it provided an overview of the importance of considering socio-economic position when faced with the issue of social inequalities and the stratification of life chances.

The non-manual group represents approximately 20 per cent of the population and is clearly comprised of two distinct sub-groups, intermediate non-manual and other non-manual. The non-manual group are largely comprised of the intermediate non-manual group, with a ratio of approximately 60:40 between the intermediate and other non-manual groups. Despite being categorised as one non-manual group in more recent socio-economic classifications, we find that these two non-manual groups have distinct occupational profiles, with the intermediate group comprising a number of relatively high status positions while in contrast the other non-manual group is dominated by lower level service workers. Despite the changes that have occurred over time in socio-economic classifications, these distinctions with the non-manual group clearly persist. In fact, we posit that there has been less occupational mobility over time for those engaged in other non-manual positions relative to those in intermediate non-manual positions. It is likely that remaining occupations that have been classified as other non-manual have experienced a worsening of their position over time, particularly in terms of working conditions. Much of this chapter has been dedicated to profiling the non-manual groups, in terms of their income levels (and thus eligibility for financial aid through the grant system), education levels and educational experiences. It is clear that across a range of educational and economic characteristics, occupants of the other non-manual group share many similarities with lower manual groups. Analysis of income data from the 2007 SILC allowed us to compare the average income levels of these groups and we found that lower white collar groups, which overlap considerably with the other non-manual group, display income patterns and grant eligibility levels largely comparable to semi- and unskilled manual groups. The other non-manual group is also much more similar in profile to the semi- and unskilled manual groups in terms of their educational attainment and representation of HE graduates among the group. Those representing the intermediate non-manual category are themselves much more likely to have attended HE, which one would expect will have implications for the numbers of children of such workers who similarly progress to HE. There are also differences between these two groups in terms of the types of schools attended among their children.

Overall, in profiling the non-manual socio-economic group, we have identified clear disparities between the intermediate and other non-manual groups. It is clear that across a range of educational and economic characteristics, occupants of the other non-manual group share many similarities with lower manual groups. The next chapter considers patterns of attainment at second-level education as a prerequisite for entry into HE. Based on the findings presented here, one might expect that the other non-manual group will reflect patterns comparable with lower manual groups rather than the intermediate non-manual group, although greater policy concern with the latter manual groups may have impacted on this.

CHAPTER 4

Equal Chances of Entry into Higher Education? Patterns of Attainment at Second-Level among Socio-Economic Groups

4.1: Introduction

This chapter examines the second-level experiences of school leavers over the last decade, exploring their educational attainment, the type of Leaving Cert programme taken and performance in the Leaving Certificate examination; performance which is strongly associated with entry into HE given the numerus clausus system operating. It focuses particularly on gender and socio-economic background which both have a strong impact on attainment at second-level education. The chapter outlines the patterns of educational attainment at second-level among school leavers over time, and then considers the relative chances of each socio-economic group in terms of second-level attainment using multivariate analyses. The multivariate analyses are explained in the following section.

4.2 Multivariate Analyses

Multivariate analyses are employed to generate a statistical model of the observed factors that influence attainment at second-level education. Specifically the factors considered are gender, socio-economic background, the local area that a person lives in and the type of school attended. While the full statistical models are presented in Appendix D, tables and figures are presented throughout the chapter which summarise the statistical models.

There is an issue of statistical principle regarding the presentation of the data that follows. Social disadvantage among young people attending second-level education can be defined and measured in various ways. The survey asked respondents about parental employment situation, parental occupation and parental education levels and the survey could identify the type of school that the respondent attended, whether it was a secondary, community, comprehensive or vocational school and if the school has been assigned a DEIS[13] status. Each of these factors are known to exert some degree of advantage/disadvantage. In the data, these variables are all correlated with each other to some degree. That is, on average, respondents whose parents are of higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to be more highly qualified. When handling data of this type, with significant correlations between similar variables, there is a danger of presenting spurious findings. Decisions about which relationships to highlight in the charts and tables that follow are informed by the multivariate analysis. To avoid this problem, the data were analysed with appropriate multivariate methods, details of which are provided in Appendix D. For the vast majority of models presented, the reference case is a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, from Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community/comprehensive school with disadvantaged (DEIS) status. When changes are made to the reference case (due to small numbers) this is stated in the text. The regression coefficient (β), standard error and odds ratio (exp(β)) are given, together with an indication of statistical significance.

When appropriate, the graphs present parental socio-economic background using the following eight category classification distinguishing between the intermediate non-manual group and the other non-manual groups, based on the 1986 Census Classification of Occupations:

- Farmer/Other Agricultural;
- Professional Higher and Lower;
- Employer/Manager;
- Intermediate Non-Manual;
- Other Non-Manual;
- Skilled Manual;
- Semi and Unskilled Manual;
- Non-Employed.

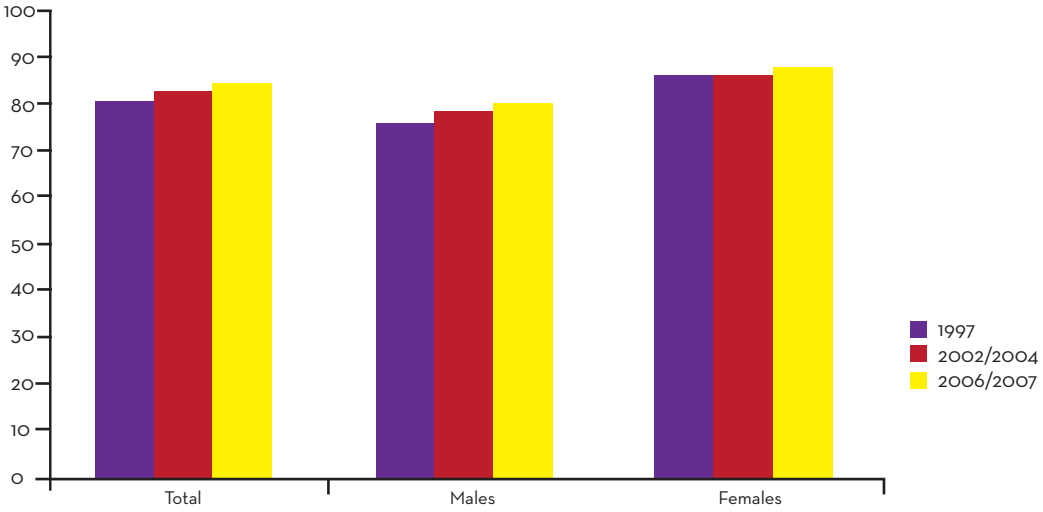
13 A DEIS school is a school deemed to have a high concentration of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and thereby receives additional funding under the DEIS programme.

4.3 Second-Level Retention and Progression

4.3.1 Second Level Retention

Figure 4.1 shows that second-level retention rates over the decade between the late 1990s and mid/late 2000s remained relatively stable between 80 and 82 per cent. Gender differentials are evident and persistent, with females being significantly more likely to remain in school and complete their Leaving Certificate (or equivalent) than males. In 2006/07, a total of 80 per cent of males completed their second-level schooling, relative to 88 per cent of females[14] .

Figure 4.1: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate (or equivalent)



Second-level retention patterns are also highly differentiated according to socio-economic background. Figure 4.2 displays such retention levels according to parental socio-economic group, using the 'parental dominance' measure, which takes highest parental socio-economic group as an indicator of social background. Corresponding tables using father's socio-economic group can be found in Appendix C. In line with earlier studies (see, for example O'Connell *et al.*, 2006a), retention rates are significantly higher among professional and employer-manager groups.

Given that our focus is on those from non-manual backgrounds, it is interesting to note considerable variation in retention patterns between those from 'intermediate non-manual' backgrounds and the 'other non-manual' group. In this respect, what is particularly evident from Figure 4.2, is that while overall national retention levels have remained largely constant over this 10-year period, young people from manual and non-manual backgrounds show some improvement in their second-level completion rates. We now find that the retention rates of young people from an intermediate non-manual background remain relatively persistent at around 85 per cent over time and are substantially higher than for those from other non-manual backgrounds. However, some improvement is evident

14 Each of the graphs presented in this chapter have an accompanying table in Appendix C.

among those from other non-manual backgrounds when this definition is taken into account (parental socio-economic group) with retention rates increasing from 73 to 77 per cent over the period. Furthermore, using both measures of socio-economic background, we find that young people from non-employed households have the lowest levels of retention (See Table 2 in Appendix C).

Figure 4.2: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate by Parental Socio-Economic Group

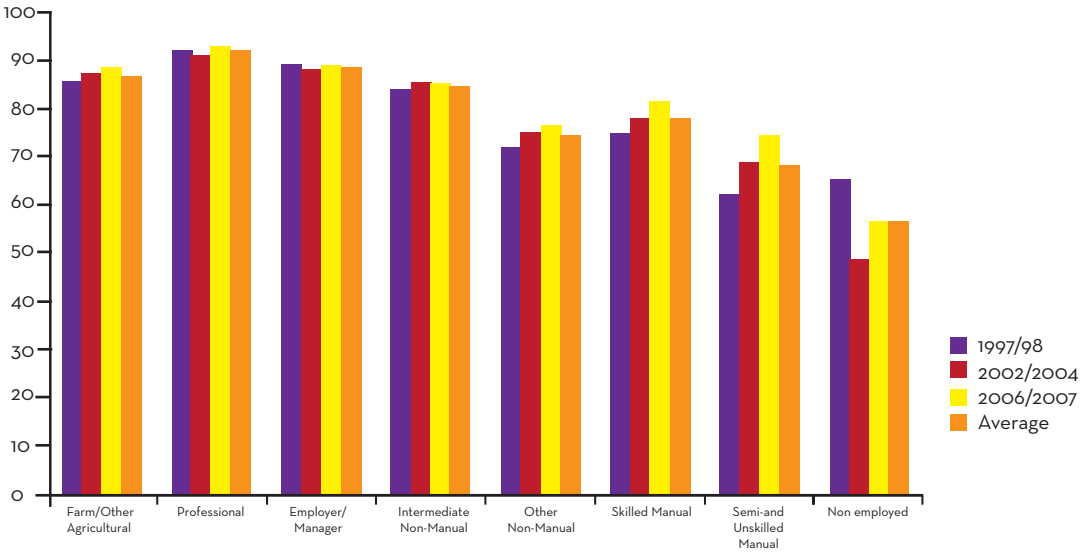
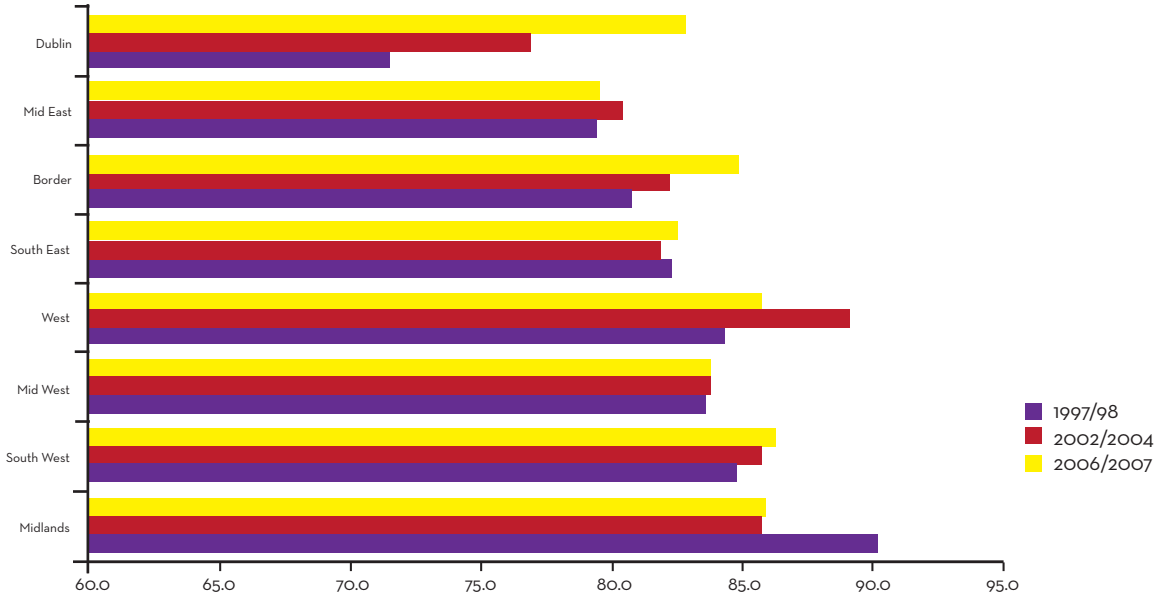


Figure 4.3 displays regional variation in retention levels over the period. What is particularly evident is that retention has vastly improved in some regions (Dublin and the Border counties) while retention has decreased among those in other regions (Midlands). However recent data from the School Leavers' Surveys 2006 and 2007 suggest that current retention levels show much less variation across regions and range between 80 and 86 per cent across regions.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate by Region



Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

The descriptive results show that there are clear socio-economic disparities already at play in terms of retention at second-level education; a finding that is of obvious interest to those who would like to increase the percentage of each socio-economic group who enter HE, because it identifies those from other non-manual socio-economic backgrounds as a group to target with measures that seek to raise participation at HE. At this point it is useful to try to gauge not only whether the effect of the other non-manual group is significant, but how disadvantaged this group may be relative to other disadvantaged groups. A helpful comparison is to examine the extent to which the second-level attainments of non-manual young people vary relative to those from semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds.

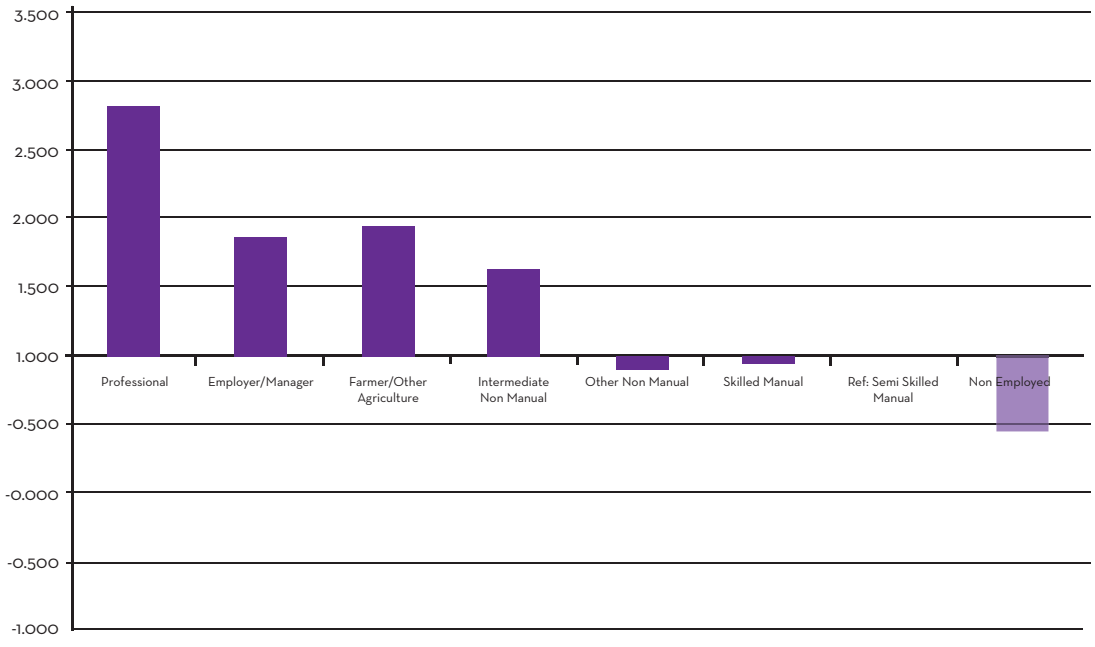
The multivariate model developed in Table 1 of Appendix D allows a relatively straightforward comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that people complete second-level education. From these models, it is possible to calculate odds ratios, which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will complete second-level education relative to a different case. Table 4.1 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of gender, parental education and school type attended (DEIS/non-DEIS), when controlling for region, socio-economic group and school type attended (sector).
The reference case is a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, living in Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community/comprehensive DEIS. The first set of findings of Table 4.1 indicates that gender is a major factor that determines completion of second-level education: the odds of a female, with the same characteristics, completing second-level education are almost four times higher than for males. Furthermore, parental education is a key determinant of completion of second-level education, with students whose parents have a degree level education being over five times more likely to complete second-level education. We also find that students attending non-DEIS schools are more likely to complete second-level education than those attending DEIS schools, all else being equal. This suggests that a concentration of socio-economic disadvantage has an additional multiplier effect above and beyond the impact of an individual's social background.

Table 4.1: Odds Ratios for Second-Level Attainment

	Completing Second Level	Transition from junior cycle to senior cycle
Male	1.00	1.00
Female	3.70	3.17
Primary or Less	1.00	1.00
Junior Certificate	2.43	2.53
Leaving Certificate or Equivalent	4.51	4.65
Diploma	5.27	5.42
Degree	5.33	5.39
Non DEIS school	1.63	1.70
DEIS school	1.00	1.00

The odds ratios presented in Table 4.1 are an indication of the influence of gender, parental education and school type on completion of second-level education. This provides a ready comparison for the impact of socio-economic background, which is illustrated in Figure 4.4. The reference case is still a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, living in Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community/ comprehensive DEIS school. We now see how students from higher socio-economic backgrounds have higher odds of completing second-level education: nearly two and a half times for a person from a professional background, almost two-fold for a person from a farming or employer/manager background and over one and a half times for a person from an intermediate non-manual background. The overall findings suggest that the chances of completing second-level education do not vary significantly among those from other non-manual backgrounds, skilled manual backgrounds or semi-skilled manual backgrounds. Furthermore, interaction effects (shown in Table 1 in Appendix D) tell us that social class moderates the effect of gender.

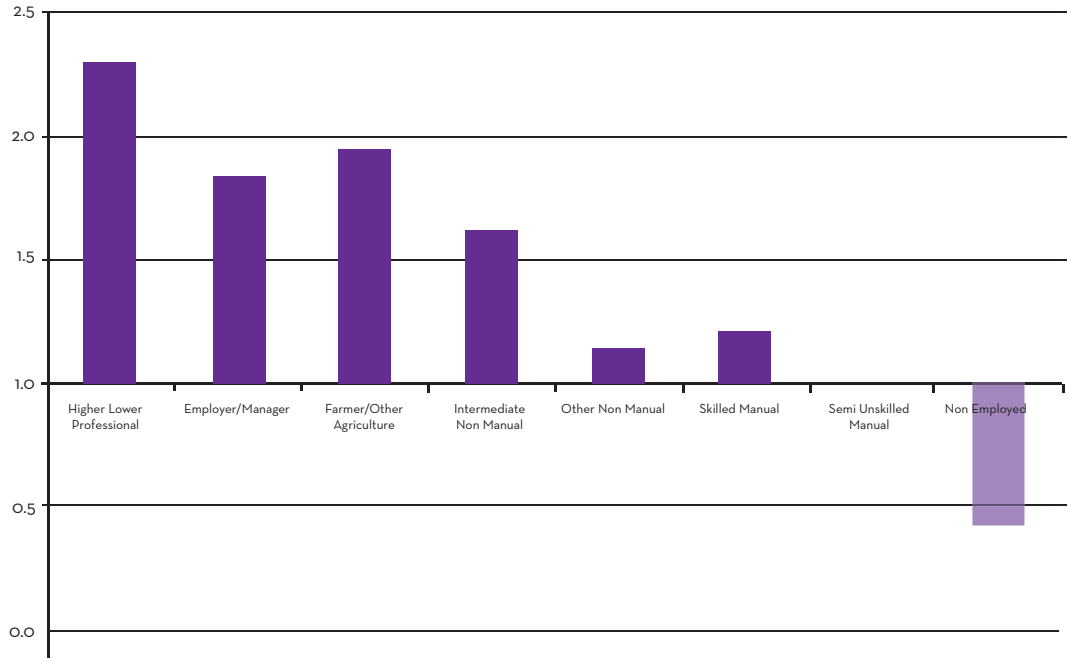
Figure 4.4: Odds Ratios for Completion of Second-Level Education



4.3.2 The Transition from Junior to Senior Cycle

The multivariate model developed in Table 2 of Appendix D estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that people make the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle. Again, from the model it is possible to calculate odds ratios which express the odds that a person will make the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle. The second column of Table 4.1 provides the odds ratios that summarize the effect of gender, parental education and school type when accounting for all variables and interaction terms in the model. Again, we find that gender is a major determinant as we see that the odds of a female making the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle are almost four times higher. Furthermore, parental education is a key determinant with people whose parents have degree level education having odds of six times higher than a person with the same characteristics whose parents have primary level education. The type of school is also important, with persons who attend a non-DEIS school having a greater probability of making the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle than those attending a DEIS school. Figure 4.5 illustrates socio-economic differences in the odds of making the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle, controlling for all variables in the model.

Figure 4.5: Odds Ratios for Making the Transition from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle



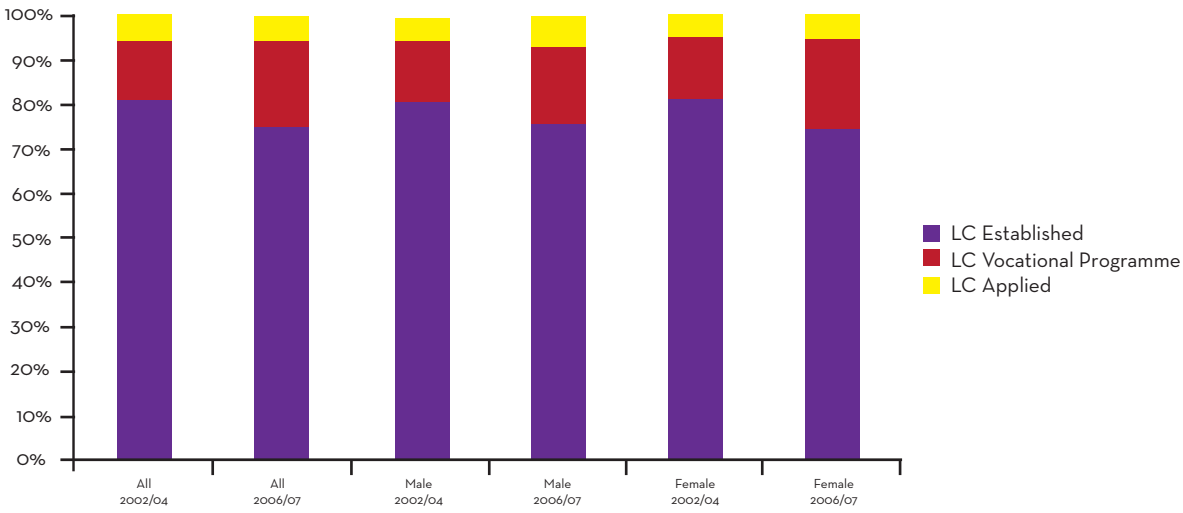
We see again how students from higher socio-economic backgrounds have higher odds of making the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle: over two-fold for those from professional backgrounds, almost two times for a person from a farming background and one-and-a-half times for a person from an intermediate non-manual background. We clearly see that the odds of making the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle for the other non-manual group are similar to those from the skilled/semi-skilled or unskilled manual group[15] .

15 The overall findings suggest that the chances of making the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle do not vary significantly among those from other non-manual backgrounds, skilled manual backgrounds or semi-skilled manual backgrounds (See Table 2a in Appendix D).

4.4 Leaving Certificate Programme Type

Figure 4.6 illustrates the type of Leaving Certificate programme pursued by school leavers over the period 2002/04 – 2006/07. Increased differentiation at senior cycle has resulted in a decline in the share of school leavers completing the established Leaving Certificate programme. While an increase in the share of school leavers completing the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme is evident, the proportion completing the Leaving Certificate Applied programme has remained stable.

Figure 4.6: Type of Leaving Certificate Programme Taken by School Leavers



The first time point indicates that in 2002/04 four out of five (80 per cent) school leavers took the established Leaving Certificate programme while the second time point (2006/07) indicates that this had reduced to 75 per cent of school leavers. This decline is most evident in an increase of school leavers who complete the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme. This has increased from 14 per cent to 19 per cent over the period. Just 5 per cent had taken the Leaving Cert Applied[16] (LCA), with no change over time in levels of participation. The next section considers the profile of students taking the Leaving Certificate Applied and levels of participation among non-manual students, as students taking this programme are not eligible for direct entry into HE.

Table 4.2 displays socio-economic variation in the proportion of school leavers who completed second-level education who pursued each of the different Leaving Certificate programmes (for the 2002/04 and 2006/07 time points).

16 The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) was introduced into fifty schools on a developmental basis in Sept 1995. The LCA was initiated to meet the needs of students who are not catered for by the two other Leaving Certificate programmes, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The curriculum and approach of the LCA focus on preparing students for the transition from school to adult and working life. Its primary policy aim is one of retaining as many students as possible in the second level education system until the age of eighteen (Report National Evaluation of the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, Department of Education and Science, 2001).

Table 4.2: Distribution of Programme Pursued by those who completed second-level education by Parental Socio-Economic Background

	2002/04			2006/07		
	LCE	LCVP	LCA	LCE	LCVP	LCA
Farmer/Other Agricultural	80.2	14.3	5.4	65.3	27.0	7.7
Professional	89.3	9.2	1.4	80.3	17.5	2.3
Employer/Manager	86.3	11.1	2.6	82.6	16.2	1.2
Intermediate Non-Manual	82.5	13.5	4.0	78.4	16.4	5.2
Other Non-Manual	74.1	19.0	7.0	75.2	16.2	8.6
Skilled Manual	75.3	19.3	5.5	67.2	24.4	8.4
Semi and Unskilled Manual	72.6	15.6	11.9	68.6	21.1	10.3
Non-Employed	75.8	12.9	11.3	54.1	31.1	14.9

We find that socio-economic differences are evident in the share of school leavers who complete the established Leaving Certificate. Levels of completion of the established Leaving Certificate are highest among those from professional, employer/manager and intermediate non-manual socio-economic backgrounds and lowest among those from non-employed backgrounds. Notable differences emerge between the two non-manual groups, with the intermediate group significantly more likely to follow the established Leaving Certificate programme; students from an intermediate non-manual background have a higher representation in the established Leaving Certificate relative to those from other non-manual backgrounds. Figure 4.7 then illustrates that both these groups represent a similar intermediate position relative to other socio-economic groups in their participation in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

What is particularly evident from Table 4.2 is that the other non-manual group have a higher representation in the LCA programme relative to those from the intermediate non-manual group, 9 per cent compared to 5 per cent relatively. Levels of LCA participation among the other non-manual group are closer to those of the semi and unskilled manual groups, while the patterns for the intermediate non-manual group more closely resemble those of the professional/employer groups. As noted, these findings on senior cycle pathways are important in that eligibility for HE varies according to programme taken, with LCA participants not eligible for direct entry to HE.

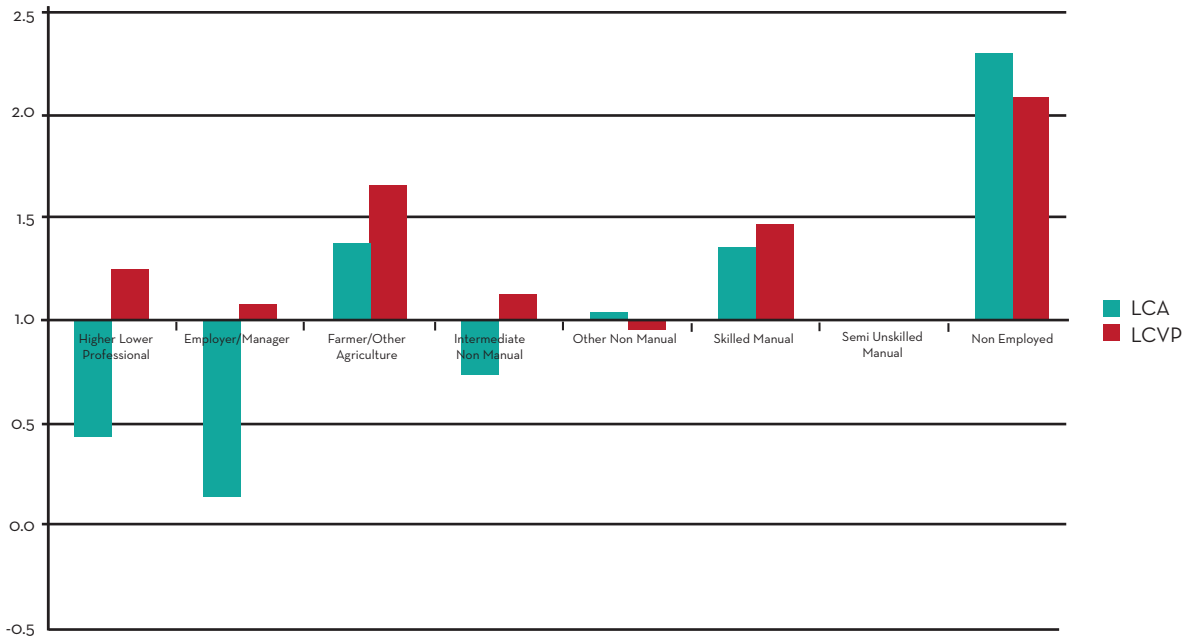
Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

Turning to the determinants of completing the LCA or LCVP relative to the LCE, the patterns now differ somewhat. Using multinomial regression methods, multivariate analyses were employed to generate a statistical model of the factors that influence programme type in senior cycle and to consider whether socio-economic differences exist in relation to the programme pursued at senior cycle among those who completed second-level education (see Table 3 in Appendix D). As before, the reference case is a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, from Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community/comprehensive DEIS school. As before gender differences are clearly evident with females being significantly less likely to complete the LCA than the LCE relative to males.

In relation to parental socio-economic background, again we find clear differences among the intermediate non-manual group and the other non-manual group. The coefficients in Table 3 of Appendix D and the first column of Figure 4.7 indicate that, compared to those from a semi-skilled/unskilled background, students from a professional/employer/manager background and those from an intermediate non-manual background are somewhat less likely

to complete the LCA rather than the established LC. The other non-manual group, in contrast, does not differ from any of the manual groups in terms of senior cycle programme taken (See Table 3 in Appendix D). This finding again indicates the differences between the two non-manual groups in terms of the pathways pursued at senior cycle, which has important implications for the pool of young people from different socio-economic backgrounds eligible for entry into HE.

Figure 4.7: Odds Ratios for Programme Completed at Senior Cycle



4.5 Examination Performance

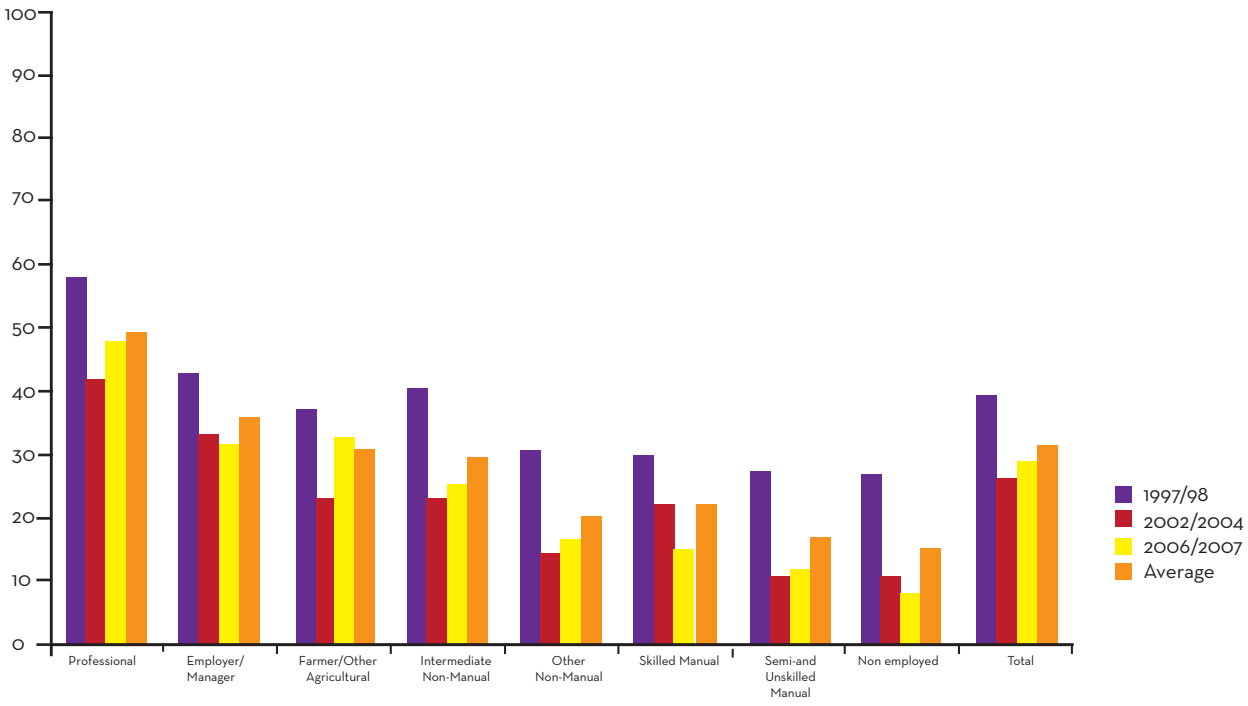
Performance in the Leaving Certificate examination is an important predictor of entry to HE, with the vast majority of places awarded on the basis of 'points' achieved in the examination and entry to more 'prestigious' courses demanding particularly high performance levels. Table 4.3 presents the average performance levels of male and female school leavers for the three time-points. Overall, between 60 and 65 per cent of school leavers (who completed the Leaving Certificate) achieved two or more 'honours' in this exam over the last ten years. Across each time-point, there is no visible gender difference in the proportions attaining two or more 'honours'. However, gender differentials are more apparent when we examine the highest performing group (five or more honours), where females considerably out-perform their male counterparts. In 2006/07, for example, while 35 per cent of females achieved 5 or more 'honours', just one-quarter of males had performed equally highly.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Examination Performance over Time by Gender

LC, Less 5 Passes	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Total	4.7	5.6	4.9
Males	5.4	4.6	6.4
Females	4.0	6.6	3.6
LC, 5+ Passes			
Total	24.5	26.8	27.4
Males	24.2	26.4	26.1
Females	24.9	27.2	28.6
LC, 1 Honour			
Total	5.6	8.7	10.5
Males	6.7	10.2	10.7
Females	4.5	7.2	10.4
LC, 2-4 Honours			
Total	25.7	32.5	27.8
Males	27.4	35.0	31.5
Females	24.1	30.1	24.6
LC, 5+ Honours			
Total	39.5	26.4	29.3
Males	36.2	23.7	25.2
Females	42.4	28.9	32.9

While retention patterns and programme undertaken at senior cycle were highly patterned by socio-economic background, so too are levels of performance in the Leaving Certificate examination. Again those from more 'advantaged' backgrounds are most likely to perform highly in the exam, with achievement of five or more honours considerably higher among professional and employer/manager groups. Among the non-manual groups, performance levels for the other non-manual category are notably distinct from the intermediate non-manual group with the latter again more closely resembling more 'middle class' patterns. While 14 per cent of other non-manual school leavers in 2002/04 achieved five or more 'honours' in the Leaving Certificate, almost a quarter of intermediate non-manual leavers recorded such high achievement levels.

Figure 4.8: Percentage of School Leavers Who Achieved 5+ Honours in LC by Parental Socio-Economic Group



As with previous sections, multivariate analyses were conducted to determine the probability of achieving at least two honours in the Leaving Certificate examination among those who completed the LCE and LCVP programmes. The results of the multivariate analyses are summarised in Table 4.4 and Figure 4.9. (The full model can be viewed in Table 4 of Appendix D).

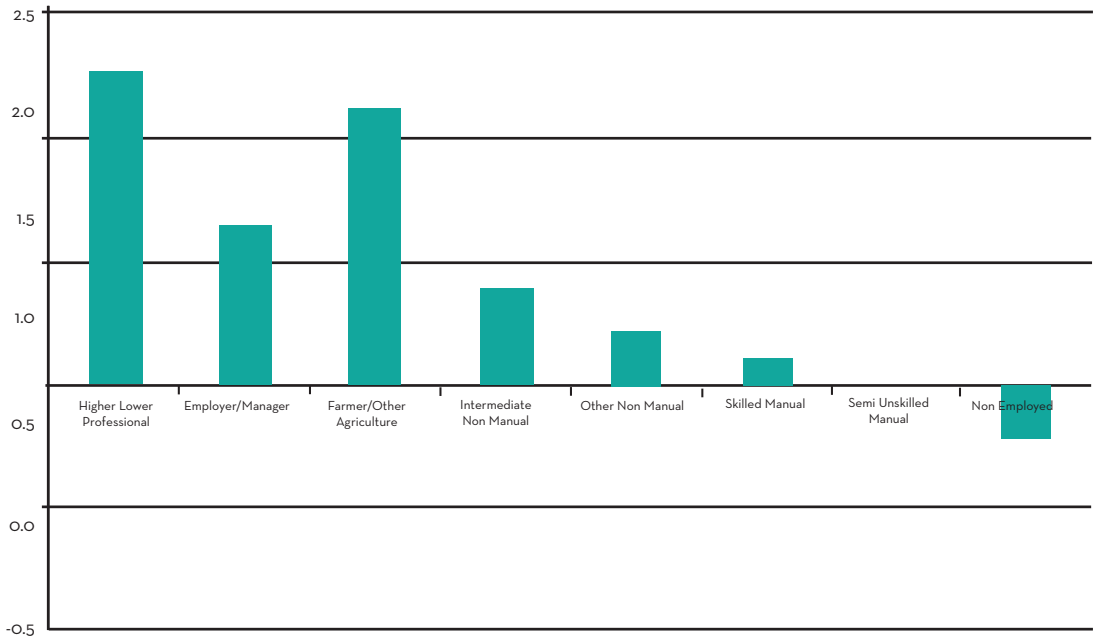
The figures presented in Table 4.4 are estimates of the relative odds of achieving this level of attainment. The odds ratios tell us that persons attending non-DEIS schools are almost twice as likely to achieve at least two honours in their Leaving Certificate examination, than people who attend a DEIS school. Parental education is also considered. As before, we find that persons whose parents have a degree-level education are three times more likely to attain at least two honours in the Leaving Certificate than those whose parents have primary education.

Table 4.4: Odds Ratios for Attaining At Least 2 Honours in the Leaving Certificate

Attaining At Least 2 Honours in LC	
Male	1.00
Female	1.16
Non DEIS school	1.80
DEIS school	1.00
Primary or Less	1.00
Junior Certificate	1.25
Leaving Certificate or Equivalent	1.85
Diploma	2.72
Degree	3.07

As before, this analysis points to significant differences between the non-manual socio-economic groups and the position of these two groups relative to other groups. Figure 4.9 illustrates that students' from professional, employer/manager socio-economic backgrounds, as well as those from farming and intermediate non-manual backgrounds, are more likely to achieve at least two honours in the examination than those from a skilled, semi-unskilled manual background (See Table 4 in Appendix D). Again, we find that the other non-manual group, while showing a slight relative advantage, do not differ significantly from the semi-skilled/unskilled manual group in their probability of performing highly in the Leaving Certificate examination.

Figure 4.9: Odds Ratio of Attaining at Least 2 Honours in the Leaving Certificate



4.6 Summary

This chapter set out to consider the patterns of attainment at second-level education of the non-manual group relative to other socio-economic groups; and to consider differences in the patterns of attainment within the non-manual group. In doing so, it considers the route to eligibility for HE.

We have empirically demonstrated that second-level retention rates are highly differentiated according to gender and socio-economic background, with females being more likely to complete second-level education than males. While some improvement is evident among both non-manual groups in retention rates over the ten year period, recent estimates based on the parental dominance measure of socio-economic group indicates that retention rates are considerably higher for the intermediate non-manual group compared to the other non-manual group (85 per cent relative to 77 per cent). Multivariate analyses confirm these findings and, all else being equal; the intermediate non-manual group are over one and a half times more likely to make the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle and to complete second-level education, while the other non-manual group display similar odds to the semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups.

The international literature has pointed to clear socio-economic disparities in terms of who follows different tracks in the second-level education system. The Leaving Certificate Applied does not provide direct access to HE. The non-manual group as a whole occupy an intermediate position in rates of LCA take-up. Between 2002 and 2007, the share of the intermediate non-manual group taking the LCA increased from 4 per cent to 5.2 per cent; while the corresponding increase for the other non-manual group was from 7 per cent to 8.6 per cent. In fact, levels of LCA participation among the other non-manual group are closer to those of the semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups, while the patterns for the intermediate non-manual group more closely resemble those of the professional and employer/manager groups. Multivariate analyses further confirm these findings.

In terms of examination performance in the Leaving Certificate examination (LCE, LCVP students only), a higher proportion of the intermediate non-manual group achieve at least two honours in the examination than the other non-manual group (24 per cent relative to 15 per cent), suggesting that a higher share of intermediate non-manual students are eligible for HE than their other non-manual counterparts. Multivariate analyses confirm these findings and, all else being equal; the intermediate non-manual group are almost one and a half times more likely to attain this level of examination performance while the other non-manual group display similar odds to the skilled manual group.

This chapter has shed considerable light on some important differences between the two non-manual groups and the remarkable similarity between the other non-manual group and those groups traditionally identified as educationally disadvantaged and targeted for particular policy attention – i.e. semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups. In particular, the other non-manual group display second-level patterns very similar to those for manual groups – in terms of retention levels, senior cycle programme and examination performance. This has important implications for the pool of young people eligible for HE entry. The intermediate non-manual group is faring considerably better at second-level, which is likely to leave them better placed in terms of accessing HE. While chapter six explores HE entry patterns across the groups and the impact of social differentiation in attainment and performance at second level on patterns of HE entry, the next chapter considers the educational experiences of the non-manual group at second-level education, drawing on the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 5

Second-Level Experiences of Different Groups of School Leavers

5.1: Introduction

The previous chapter presented nationally representative data on the second-level attainments of each socio-economic group, placing particular emphasis on the experiences of those from non-manual backgrounds. The analyses showed the other non-manual group faring relatively poorly in terms of a number of retention and performance measures, having important implications for the numbers of young people from this social background achieving eligibility for HE entry. This chapter now explores in greater detail the school experiences of recent school leavers from non-manual backgrounds, examining the implications of these experiences for their post-school aspirations and pathways. As discussed in Chapter 2, our sample of participants in the qualitative component of the study is divided into three main groups:

- those who progressed to HE (HE group);
- those who progressed to alternative education and training courses (Other ET group);
- Those who entered the labour market full-time (LM group).

This chapter provides an overview of the reflections of each of these three groups in terms of their school experiences and performance, followed by a discussion of the extent to which school experiences varied across the three groups and the implications this had for their post-school pathways and, particularly, their decision to progress to HE.

5.2 Higher Education Entrants

5.2.1 General School Reflections

As shown in Table 5.1, the majority of this group attended a voluntary secondary school (none of which fall within the DEIS programme), one participant (Josephine) attended a comprehensive school (which is included in the DEIS programme) and Eamon attended a vocational school, which is also categorised as disadvantaged under the DEIS programme. It is interesting to note that, with one exception, all of our participants in the qualitative research who progressed to HE came from intermediate non-manual backgrounds – very much reflecting the higher levels of progression to HE among those from the intermediate as compared to the other non-manual group, as discussed in some detail in Chapter Six.

Table 5.1: Demographic Details of the Higher Education Group

Name	School Type	INM or ONM	Sector
Eamon	Vocational DEIS	INM	IOT
Patrick	Voluntary Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	University
Josephine*	Comprehensive DEIS	INM	IOT
Gerard	Voluntary Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	University
Paul	Voluntary Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	IOT
Daragh	Voluntary Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	University
Philip	Voluntary Secondary Non-DEIS	ONM	University

*Dropped out of HE during first term

For the most part, participants in this group attended their local primary and secondary schools. One participant (Gerard) attended fee-paying primary and secondary schools. Naturally all members of this group completed their Leaving Certificate (as did all participants in this study) and none of them took the LCA programme (it was not on offer in any of the seven schools). In order to get a sense of the school environment, participants were asked to describe the ethos in their school. The majority of participants felt school personnel encouraged students to attend HE. There appeared to be a strong emphasis on progression to HE in the seven schools, with the general assumption among respondents being

> 'it was only when we had the graduation that it actually kind of dawned on us that we were leaving, leaving the school now, that we were going to college'.

Eamon believed that the school he attended had a lot of 'messers' and the class ethos mattered more than the school ethos. When asked to elaborate on this point he explained

> '... it's the ethos of a particular class and you could be lucky or unlucky and I think our year was lucky because we had a good cohort of students who, at least by fourth year, had maybe got out of their shell and were able to tell the people who just wouldn't shut up talking to actually shut up. But that wouldn't happen in first, second or third year, you're still building your character'.

The 'messing' that Eamon refers to included 'a couple of instances of slapping the teachers on the behind that type of carry on. But that was only with the new teachers'. This experience was the exception rather than the rule amongst this group but raises an important point about the need for schools to have clear policies on disruptive behaviour.

Overall the participants in this group felt they had a positive school experience and enjoyed school. When asked what they liked about school answers included particular subjects, sports and the social aspect of school. While students who entered the labour market on leaving school talked about enjoying practical subjects and a desire to see more practical subjects on offer in their schools, the HE group tended to be more academically oriented and talked about liking the more academic subjects such as English, Maths, History and Geography. It appears that the HE group seemed to be more satisfied that the subjects on offer in their schools were those they were happy to choose.

5.2.2 Relationship with Teachers

In general participants in this group spoke of having had positive interaction with their teachers. This was illustrated in several ways. Most participants found their teachers approachable and felt they gave them help, for example with their CAO applications, if required. Eamon spoke about some teachers who gave extra help to students in their final year:

> '... he was another teacher who was willing to stay after [school] an awful lot and he'd correct your essays even though he didn't have to. I didn't even have him but I still gave them to the two teachers and they both you know correct them so at least I got feedback that way'.

Other participants spoke about how teachers could make a difference to how they felt about a particular subject. For instance, Patrick felt that some teachers 'would have inspired you to become interested in the subject'. Similarly Josephine (who went on to study accountancy) spoke about her two favourite subjects: 'I had a brilliant maths teacher and a brilliant accountancy teacher they were absolutely excellent, you know absolutely brilliant'. Finally, Gerard summed this point up by saying:

> '... that's one of the reasons I liked history so much, I had this teacher who made it so interesting, it was almost

> as if they loved what they were doing. That really kind of you know encapsulated you because if you are just sitting there and someone is just droning on up on the board about something it's very boring'.

Hence participants generally believed that certain teachers had the ability to capture a person's interest in a subject.

Philip believed his school was stricter on younger students and, as students progressed to Leaving Certificate year, students were given more autonomy and it was up to individuals themselves to put in the effort. Thus, teachers treated students more leniently as the Leaving Certificate year approached. He believed that, by the time students were in their final year, teachers 'concentrated more on the people who showed more ambition'. Philip thought this was a 'fair' strategy and felt:

> '... some people have different ambitions when it comes to the Leaving Cert, they might go into a trade or they might go into something practical rather than going to college so they push really to get as much points as they can. Whereas others were trying to get top points so they were the ones under pressure, you know [they] needed some more help than others'.

Daragh also raised this point and felt that as students progressed towards Leaving Certificate year teachers treated students with more 'respect' and they 'weren't looked down upon' by teachers. The feeling amongst this group was the changing relationship between students and teachers, as students progressed to Leaving Certificate was almost assumed. Paul spoke about this changing relationship 'you would have had a better one [relationship with teachers] in fifth and sixth year than throughout the other years just because you always do, don't you'.

Finally, as Gerard put it about the changing relationship between students and teachers 'when you first went in, in first year you are kind of looking at them and it's a bit of us and them mentality. But then that sort of amalgamates as you get older'.

These views contrast somewhat with the experiences of members of the other leaver groups, some of whom felt they were treated differently by teachers as they were not seen as academic and often given less attention by teachers. This issue is discussed in section 5.5.

5.2.3 Subjects

Participants in the HE group were happy with the availability of subjects for their Leaving Certificate. Generally, participants choose the subjects that they were more interested in. However, one participant Patrick based his subject choices on those he felt would maximise his 'points'. Patrick explained that this was the way students made choices in his school:

> '... your careers guy tells you, that 'I know it mightn't seem like what you want to do, but it's probably best to keep in mind the subjects that you know you're good at, to get the points. And then you can move into, in third-level, you can move into a subject that you're actually interested in you know?' So, I would've, yeah, I think many people would've been kind of unhappy with that process, you know they would have, they wanted to pick subjects that they were interested in, 'cause at that age as well you know you were, you don't want to be doing stuff you, you know, boring subjects'.

This issue of students choosing subjects in which they were likely to perform highly was specific to the HE group and did not emerge in any other groups, which is not surprising given that most participants in the LM and PLC/ Apprenticeship groups were not particularly oriented towards HE while at school.

Two participants in this group (Philip and Gerard) spoke about receiving extra tuition (grinds) in Leaving Certificate year, coincidentally for the same subject, Maths. They both believed receiving extra tuition was helpful for them and a common occurrence in their schools. Analysis of School Leavers' Survey data for these individuals (the first point of contact with the respondents, 18 months after leaving school), showed that participation in grinds was common across all leaver groups and hence does not appear to be particular to those who progressed to HE after leaving school[17] .

5.2.4 Transition Year

The option to take Transition Year was open to all members of the HE group. Five participants chose to take Transition Year and two chose not to take it. When asked why he decided not to take Transition Year, Daragh replied:

> 'I didn't mind not doing it, when you're at that age you want to get out of the school as quick as you can I suppose, everyone that did it though, they said it was very good, they enjoyed the year, it was a bit of a doss year at our school'.

However, Josephine regretted not taking Transition Year. When asked to elaborate on this she replied 'I just thought it was a waste of a year but I wish I had now, when I'm older'. When asked why she felt that way she replied 'well because I think you'll be more mature going to college, I was very immature going to college, I was too young'.

The prevalence of Transition Year participation among this HE group is also reflected in the literature, which has shown that students who are most academically oriented and those with higher aspirations are more likely to opt to take the Transition Year programme (Smyth, Byrne and Hannan, 2004).

The remaining participants in this group spoke very positively about their Transition Year experience. When asked to describe the aspects of Transition Year that they liked, the feedback centred on three main issues. Firstly, from a social point of view some participants felt it was 'a nice break' from studying (Eamon) and a year that students found time to 'relax' (Gerard). Participants in this group also felt it was 'the year when you really got to interact with others' (Gerard). As Patrick put it 'the friends I would have made in fourth year would probably be my best friends now today'.

Secondly, from a more academic perspective, participants spoke about the opportunity to sample subjects they had not chosen for Junior Certificate. Furthermore, a number commented on the value of the work experience they had undertaken as part of the programme. For example, Gerard secured a placement with a law firm commented;

> 'I used to be able to go down to the District Court and the High Court and see all these cases and everything, it was class … definitely work experience is invaluable'.

For Gerard and a number of others such Transition Year work experience played an important role in identifying possible fields of study and career paths they might pursue.

Finally, comments also centred on the impact of Transition Year on maturity, as Eamon comments 'I think all of us that particular year matured a lot'. In sum participants in this group who chose to take Transition Year felt it was 'a good year [...] it was just a year out basically' (Paul) and a worthwhile experience. These views contrast somewhat

17 In any case, grinds have been shown to have no net affect on examination performance, controlling for the characteristics of grind participants (Smyth, 2009).

with the experiences of the other school leaver groups, who expressed more mixed views of the programme. As discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4, some of those in the LM and PLC/Apprenticeship groups who took the Transition Year programme were critical of their experiences and felt the year had 'turned them off learning'. Again this is consistent with the research, which shows that Transition Year does not suit all students (Smyth *et al.*, 2004). It may also relate to the nature of provision of the programme in schools, as some students who took Transition Year in the LM and PLC/Apprenticeship groups were more likely not to have had a choice given that participation in the programme was compulsory in their schools. As Smyth *et al.*, (2004) conclude 'it may be the case that an obligatory extra year in schools causes some students to become disaffected and leave school early or under-perform academically if they do remain in the system'.

5.2.5 Career Guidance

Participants were asked to comment on the career guidance available in their school. For those in the HE group the majority spoke very positively about the career guidance they received. However one participant, Josephine, said there was no career guidance provided in her school. Josephine also commented that her younger brother (at the time of her interview) was attending the same school and the career guidance he was receiving had greatly improved. In terms of the CAO application process, Josephine also commented that there was no help or advice available for this and she sought the advice of her parents when she was completing her CAO application form. This issue is of some importance, as parents are likely to vary in their knowledge of (and experience of) HE, which will have implications for the level of expertise they have on this issue and their capacity to offer their son/daughter guidance through this process. As noted in Chapter 3, parents located in the other non-manual group are unlikely to have themselves participated in HE, and therefore the extent to which young people from this group can rely solely on their parents for information and guidance on issues around HE choices and processes is an important issue. This issue is discussed in some detail in Chapter 9.

The other member of this group who was critical of the career guidance offered in his school was Gerard who felt the career guidance in his school was too academically focused:

> 'there was plenty of lads in my year like although their parents were fairly well off and that their interest was in cars and being mechanics. But you are not given the option of ... that'.

Gerard also commented that he did not receive help with his CAO application but this was not an issue for him:

> 'I think it's one of those things that if you get a problem you can just ask one of your friends. There was no need to tell people about it, you know. Just everyone knew and if you didn't you just asked someone' [in relation to his CAO application].

The remaining five participants in this group spoke very highly about the career guidance in their schools and felt they had ample information and advice about their available options. They all commented that help was available in relation to the CAO form if required; this included filling out mock CAO forms. Other career guidance included one-on-one meetings with the career guidance teacher to discuss available options, aptitude tests, attending the careers day in the RDS as well as open days in individual colleges and universities. In some instances past pupils returned to their school to talk about college life, and guest speakers were invited to the schools to talk about particular career paths. Overall, most expressed satisfaction with the guidance support they received, as Daragh states 'everything I wanted she [the Guidance Counsellor] got for me, [the same for my] friends as well, anything they wanted they were given information about'. Similarly Eamon comments:

> '... there was a great career guidance teacher ... he put in the time for you and he wasn't really relevant

> [interested in] how much money he was getting or anything like that; he didn't want anything from it. But yet any of the information that we wanted was given to us, [he] told us our options and … he always asked previous students who went to college to come back and talk to the fifth and sixth years about their experience in college'.

While much of the focus in these schools was on HE preparation and the CAO process, other post-school pathways were also covered in a number of schools. As Patrick observed:

> 'I think there was about one hundred and fifty students in sixth year and I'd say thirty-five, forty at least would've went straight into a trade … the career guidance counsellor … he had as much information … on third-level as he did on trades or going into the army or police … there would've been roughly one hundred students who would of went on to third-level, so that was the majority of the attention was put on that, but the guys who were going for trades, there was something for them as well'.

Finally, Josephine (who dropped out of college) raised an interesting point about one element of career guidance she believed was missing in her school: preparation for college life. She felt that 'drop-out was a big issue' for HE students. One of the main reasons for this was a lack of 'awareness and knowing' about college life; she felt that students should be more prepared socially and there should be 'more emphasis on going out when you're in college and [so that students do] not to let it affect your studies'. Furthermore, she felt that a good Guidance Counsellor should ensure that 'students are going to go on to college and make the right choices and go on to college and do the right course, not drop out'. In essence, preparation for life in HE should form an important part of guidance provision, alongside advice on HE application processes and assisting students in making rigorous course and college choices.

In sum, those who progressed to HE were positive about the advice and guidance they received while at school, although a greater emphasis on the social aspects of HE was sought.

5.2.6 Examination Results and Performance

As noted in Chapter Two, all members of the HE group performed highly in the Leaving Certificate examination, with the majority achieving four or more C grades (or higher) on Higher Level papers. Participants were asked if they were pleased with these Leaving Certificate results. In this group three participants (Philip, Patrick, Daragh) were satisfied with their results and got their first CAO choice. Josephine and Gerard both got their preferred CAO choice but they were disappointed with their results. Eamon got his third choice on his CAO but on reflection was happy with the particular course he is doing. Finally, Paul got his last choice on the CAO form as the points for his higher choices increased. As he explained 'everything I put down one to ten on the degrees [list] I didn't get, I got my last choice and this hurts […] And I only put them down just because my dad made me like, just to be on the safe side' (his last choice was with an institute of technology rather than a university). When asked how he felt about this he said he was glad that he had 'got into college' and rather than feeling disappointed he felt 'shocked' (Paul).

Overall, the participants in this group spoke positively about their second-level school experiences. This included good relationships with their teachers, their experiences of Transition Year and their subject choices, as well as accessible and valuable career advice. Generally participants in this group felt the ethos in their schools encouraged students to go on to HE. However it must be noted that not every student in each of these schools attended HE, but for these seven individuals, positive school experiences coupled with high expectations at home led to successful transitions into HE. Further discussion of the experiences and aspirations of the HE group are included in Chapter Six, where attention is focused on the characteristics of those who progress to HE and the processes underlying this choice of post-school pathway.

5.3 Entrants to other forms of education and training

5.3.1 School Environment

Nine respondents in the qualitative phase of the research progressed to some form of post-school education and training (other than HE) on leaving school. In this sample three participants attended an apprenticeship (Charlie, Cian and Emma) and six participants progressed to a PLC course (Fiona, Ruth, Sharon, Roger, Tracey and Emer) directly after completing their Leaving Certificate. In contrast to the HE group, the majority of this group came from other non-manual backgrounds, with just three (Cian, Emma and Tracey) from the intermediate non-manual group. Just one member of the group (Emma) had attended a school designated disadvantaged and she was also the only member to have attended a vocational school.

Table 5.2: Demographic Details of the Other ET Group

Name	School Type	INM/ ONM	Location	Progression
Charlie	Secondary Non-DEIS	ONM	Dublin	Apprenticeship
Cian	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	Dublin	Apprenticeship
Emma	Vocational DEIS	INM	Dublin	Apprentice-ship*
Fiona	Secondary Non-DEIS	ONM	Dublin	PLC
Ruth	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	Mayo	PLC
Sharon	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	Dublin	PLC
Roger	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	Dublin	PLC
Tracey	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	INM	Dublin	PLC
Emer	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	Co Cork	PLC

*Apprenticeship incomplete due to illness

All participants in this group attended their local primary and secondary schools. Most of the participants in this group pursued the regular Leaving Certificate programme; just two participants (Emma and Tracey) opted for the Leaving Certificate Applied programme.

Respondents in this group had somewhat mixed opinions of their second-level schooling. To get a sense of how they felt about school, participants were asked what they thought of school. Two participants commented that although they enjoyed primary school they did not enjoy second-level (Charlie, Sharon). Charlie felt his teachers did not hold his interest. He enjoyed 'learning', but felt that the teaching standards in his school 'weren't up to scratch'. He felt so strongly about this that he left school in the January of his Leaving Certificate year and studied independently at home. Cian thought school was just 'okay', largely because 'it was too slow' for him. Ruth commented that she 'loved' school, while Tracey said she 'liked learning' and some of her teachers. Emma, Fiona and Emer thought school was 'okay' and Roger felt that overall he did not really enjoy school. In sum participants

in this group had mixed feelings about their schooling, which contrasts sharply with the generally positive views relayed by the HE group. The majority of participants in this group felt their school had a good reputation and encouraged students to go on to further education. However, for some participants this was not the case. This is discussed further in the next section.

5.3.2 School Ethos

To get a sense of the nature of the environment and ethos of the schools participants attended, the young people interviewed were asked to describe the ethos of their school and if they felt many students went on to further education. It must be noted here that when young people in this sample refer to college it may imply a PLC or a HE course; unlike for the HE group, the term 'college' has somewhat broader connotations for this group.

Two participants in this group felt that teachers treated students differently and more 'academic' students received more attention. As Sharon explained:

> 'they had their favourite kids, if they thought like you were academic like they'd love you but if they thought you were a bit laid back they'd just leave you'.

Similarly Charlie commented on this issue:

> 'If the teachers were into you, you got away with loads, and if you didn't, you were stung'.

This was also brought up by one person in HE group, who felt that teachers gave more attention to those who were trying for high points in Leaving Certificate. Similarly Emma felt that:

> 'you'd find that the teachers wouldn't give people in the lower class, not that they wouldn't give them as much attention, but they wouldn't be doing as much work as the rest of the other class ... if you're in a higher class you benefit more, you'd get a lot more back from the teachers and that if you were in a higher class'.

This issue is discussed further in section 5.3.3 where the young people's views of their teachers are discussed more generally.

Fiona spoke about attending study sessions three evenings a week that were organized by the school, which she felt were a great way to study. However she also believed that:

> 'they let anyone into it, you know, there was some people who went and they were messing and, you know, flicking rubbers at people and, you know, you'd this kind of stuff that was distracting you'.

When asked if there was supervision at these sessions she said:

> 'Yeah the kind of like, if they saw them they'd tell them to stop but half the time they wouldn't see them because they'd always be down the back'.

Roger felt his school was in a 'rough' area and had a very bad reputation. In his opinion about 8-10% of students from his school attended HE. The remaining participants in this group felt their school had a good reputation and some students at their schools went on to study at HE (Cian, Emma, Ruth, Tracey, Emer).

In common with a number of members of the LM group, a number of male participants felt they did not work hard while at school and had little interest in school generally. As Roger reflects:

> '... nothing could hold my attention ... just messing all the time, be hiding each others stuff and all, filling each other's bags with grass ... I suppose maybe for the last month I started going to the library ... that was about a month out of 6 years you know'.

Charlie felt that school activities did not keep his attention and as a result he 'switched off' and became disengaged from school:

> 'I'm learning something new [in his apprenticeship] ... something I haven't worked on yet, keep[s] me interested and I think that's part of the reason why I lost interest in school, you know, because it wasn't kept interesting'.

While a number of the girls had more positive views, as Ruth put it 'I loved it [school]', Sharon felt that teachers didn't respect students in her school:

> 'I didn't like secondary school because I didn't think like they kind of gave us the respect. I think they kind of tried to speak us down like and wouldn't let you have your opinion in the classroom and stuff'.

5.3.3 Teachers

Members of this group were somewhat critical of the teachers in their schools for a range of reasons. Charlie felt one of his teachers couldn't maintain control in the classroom, which had implications for his motivation to learn: She hadn't got the control of the class at all. I felt sorry for her like, to be honest, because she'd come in and she'd just get abused, like that was the way it was. The boys took nothing from her at all, and you're sitting there ... and you're going 'what's the point' like.

Conversely, Charlie felt that he had a much better learning experience in a class where the teacher was strict:

> 'I had another teacher for business, and he gave you no option but to do the work, you know, you were afraid of this chap, but it was just as well, you know what I mean, and he would just, you done it, that was the end of it ... And we done it, I had him for two year, he was a great teacher now'.

A number of participants held that their teachers did not have high expectations for them. Sharon, for example, observed 'I remember my class tutor told me in sixth year that I'd amount to nothing and I'd fail me Leaving Cert'. She went on to explain:

> '... if they thought you were an honours student they'd like do everything for you but if they thought you weren't good they'd just kind of leave you there do you know that way, I don't think they pushed us enough, do you know that kind of way, they just kind of left some of us'.

In common with the other groups, participants in this group also raised criticisms over the quality of some of the teachers in their schools. Emer, for instance, talked about a Maths teacher who was considered ineffective by the student body and had led her to develop difficulties in Maths. Despite an approach to the Principal, who said 'oh I'll sort this out', nothing was ever done about the situation. Emer went on to contend that 'good' teachers are more likely to capture a student's interest in the subject matter and promote their enthusiasm for the subject:

> '... if you've a good teacher I think, it totally reflects in your marks and it reflects in yourself as well because you enjoy going to the subjects and you don't dread going in and not listening because they're just going to stand there and look at a blackboard anyway and read it out of a book'.

Sharon was also critical of her second-level teachers, noting:

> 'I think they kind of tried to speak us down like and they wouldn't let you have your opinion in the classroom and stuff. So I think like they could have tried and helped you out a little bit more and made it more interesting'.

She talked about her favourite teachers, who:

> 'I think just because they made it interesting and they made you feel kind of, not important but they'd time for you do you know that way, so they were me two favourite teachers'.

While Tracey observed 'then some of the teachers were okay, the rest of them weren't really nice'. Charlie also refers to teachers who, in his view, were less than effective:

> '... the first three years I had a teacher, he was a science teacher, and all we did in the class was laugh and joke with him'.

Similarly, in another class:

> '... they put me into this class, and I'm not joking, everybody in the class, we used [to] call it cabbage Irish, because we done nothing, nobody knew anything, nobody learned anything, the teacher was diabolical like unbelievable'.

However, not everyone was critical of their teachers. Emma, for instance felt that she had some 'very good teachers' (Emma), adding 'some of the teachers were friendly ... if you had a problem you could approach them ... some of them were very approachable'.

Finally, one participant was critical about the pace of instruction followed in his classes. As Cian notes 'it was too slow for me, I could have done it in ... it just drags on like, when you're in a class the speed of the class is kind of the speed of the slowest fella there, it is just boring'.

5.3.4 Subjects

Participants in this group were broadly happy with the subjects on offer in their schools. Comments tended to refer more to subject levels and the restrictions they felt were imposed on them in that regard. Sharon, for example, was 'forced' to take foundation level maths, which she felt limited her post-school opportunities, in particular her prospects of progressing to HE:

> '... six of us were kicked out of the class and told you're not able for ordinary level maths and they made us do foundation maths but it was basically because we were messing, it wasn't because we weren't able for it. And I kept on saying I'm not going to do foundation, I want to go to a proper college, if I don't have maths I can't [go to a] proper college ... So for my Leaving Cert I was basically made do foundation [level] but I got an A in that'.

She went on to contend that students in the higher level classes 'looked down' on students taking lower levels:

> '... one of the girls dropped down from honours and went to ordinary level, she was saying 'the things they used to be saying [in the higher level class]', I don't think in that respect that they should have been kind of making students [in the higher level class] feel like we're better than other people just because they did honour[s]'.

5.3.5 Transition Year

A number of those interviewed had participated in Transition Year. Many of the participants in Transition Year felt the year had been of benefit in helping them to decide what they might do when they leave school.
Emer commented on the career guidance focus in Transition Year in her school: 'I suppose we got the most career guidance, we were kind of encouraged then to decide what we wanted to do'. Similarly Emma contended:

> '... it was more of a year where you've to kind of decide on what you want to do with your future. They give you a lot of different options like they give you work experience and you get to go to try different kind of jobs... some lady had actually come in and talked to us about what we wanted to do in the future, like she gave us like options of all different colleges and things like that and all different FÁS stuff'.

Fiona also found the year helped her in deciding on what career she might pursue after school:

> 'I wanted to join the guards when I left school and in Transition Year I got the opportunity to go down to the college for a week and see what it was like down there and after being there then I decided no that's not for me ... so in a way I'm glad I did do Transition Year.

However, a number of Transition Year participants felt the year had 'turned them off' learning and they found it particularly hard to settle into fifth year. This was comparable to the views of the LM group who participated in Transition Year who also felt they had become disengaged from school work after participating in the programme. As Roger advised:

> 'I don't recommend it at all ... I forgot stuff I used to know ... it was much harder to get back into, like doing homework and all, getting back into being in school properly ...I wasn't that interested in school anyway but after that, ah it was shocking'.

For those who didn't take Transition Year, a desire to complete school as quickly as possible often lay behind their decision not to participate in the programme. Charlie and Cian both held such views, as Cian stated 'No I wanted to get out of school as soon as possible'. Sharon decided not to take Transition Year as her brother found it difficult to re-adjust to the more academically oriented fifth and sixth years:

> '... [I did not take Transition Year] 'cause like my brother did it ... all the Transition Year you got real lazy because you know the way there would be some days they'd be off early and so they'd just spend fifth and sixth year, he wasn't into school after it'.

5.3.6 Leaving Certificate Applied Programme

Two of this group, Emma and Tracey, took the LCA programme. In common with the LCA participants from the LM group, both spoke positively about their experiences of LCA. As Tracey summed up about her experience of LCA:

> '[The LCA] was great … we'd go out on different trips like and a lot of assignments and all that so it was grand; there was a lot of merit and that'.

She also referred to the distinct nature of assessment in the programme:

> '… half of your exams is gonna be done during the two years that you've sat the LCA in and you already have half your points and then you get your other half of the points when you sit your exams'.

However, Emma raised some concerns about the programme and, in particular, was somewhat confused about her options after leaving school:

> '… they said well it'll give you a Leaving Cert but it's gonna be easier than the normal Leaving Cert but you'll get into colleges but it won't be a good rate college but you'll still further your education … but a lot of [other] people told me then as well that you wouldn't get into colleges with this Leaving Cert, it's just, it's a lower Leaving Cert, you know, you wouldn't qualify to get into college but you'll pass'.

Her comments suggest that not all students are fully cognisant of the implications of taking the LCA programme for their post-school options and particularly their eligibility to progress to HE directly.

5.3.7 Examination Results and Performance

Regarding their Leaving Certificate performance, young people in this group performed somewhat lower than the HE participants, but slightly better than the LM group. All passed their examination, with some achieving a number of 'honours'. Cian was distinct in performing highly in the examination achieving six higher level A grades.

Participants were asked how they felt about their examination results and whether they achieved the grades they needed. Charlie, expressed negative views about his results and felt that he didn't perform particularly well in the examination, which he attributed to poor teachers and a lack of hard work on his part;

> 'I'm not putting all the blame on the teachers, but I got lazy then as well, and I just couldn't have been arsed then'.

Others were broadly happy. Fiona, for instance, indicated that 'overall I was happy with the results that I got'. A number suggested that they might have achieved higher grades had they worked harder in school:

> '[I] got five honours and two pass, well I say honours, only a couple of them were honour level but like I got Bs and Cs like so I didn't, there was only two I got Ds in … I know myself if I had of put more work in I would have got better results over the years but it was really like the month or two coming up to it'. (Sharon)

Emer and Ruth had both identified alternative routes to HE, if they did not gain sufficiently high points to secure a place on their preferred HE course. In Ruth's case, for example she felt she 'wasn't going to do awfully well but I was really pushing myself to pass'. She had aimed to get into a HE childcare course, but was happy to enter a PLC course if she did not get the results and progress to college later. In the end she wasn't offered any courses on her CAO application 'I didn't get anything', but did progress to HE after taking a PLC course.

Finally, Emma contends that some students are simply 'brainier' and hence have the ability to go to college, while others are not similarly endowed. Her views are discussed further in the next section.

5.3.8 Career Guidance

Many of the respondents received career guidance classes while in the latter years of school, alongside opportunities to have one-on-one meetings with the Guidance Counsellor to discuss their post-school options. In reflecting on their career guidance, some participants were quite positive about the advice and support they received. As Charlie noted:

> '... the Guidance Counsellor in fifth year, we did do a, he gave us a list of different jobs, and different lines of work, it was sort of you mark one over here, you mark one over here ... and it tells you what you really want to do'.

Similarly, Ruth was positive about the advice she received, particularly on her PLC options:

> 'If you wanted to do, yeah all different courses, engineering, she had loads of leaflets from different colleges about the prospectuses, she had all the prospectuses ... I thought that was really good too. Like in general that was really good, that service in the school was really good ... the teacher she really knew all about everything and really encouraging as well like, she did loads of them kind of personality things like'.

Others were more negative in their assessments, identifying certain biases in the nature of guidance classes in their schools. Sharon, for instance, felt that the Guidance Counsellor focused attention on the more academic students:

> '... the Guidance Counsellor was one of the teachers that knew like you weren't [an] honours student, so they'd kind of say ah we'll let you just get a job or do whatever you want, they didn't kind of say alright what can we do to help you, do you want me to just do anything to bring you anywhere to show you things like'.

Conversely, Roger felt that the Guidance Counsellor focused too much attention on HE and the CAO process, pressurising students to take this pathway:

> '... go to college, just college, CAO, CAO, that's all they ever talked about, they'd give you about fifty CAO forms a day, I have the last one you gave me, I'm not filling it in, I'm not going you know.' (Roger)

It is interesting to note that others, such as Charlie, would have liked more encouragement to consider HE:

> 'So I settled for the apprenticeship, and like I said, I know that if I had of been pushed to do something, or if I had of been kept interested, I most likely would have gone to college'.

As with the other groups, many of the participants attended open days in various HE colleges. Respondents had somewhat mixed views of these open days. Emer considered them of benefit:

> 'I went to an open day in the DIT and UCC ... they were really good ... you got to talk to students that were on the course and then you got to talk to lecturers and you could ask any kind of questions that you wanted'.

However, Charlie, who also went to a number of open days, didn't take them seriously and hence received little benefit:

> 'We had a choice to go to the Open Days alright ... to be honest like we started milking that then ... we seen it as an option just not to go to school'.

Emma noted that only the 'higher classes' were given the opportunity to attend open days, which she felt was unfair to other students who may have an interest in progressing to HE. This was viewed to send out a message to students that certain 'brainier' students were destined to go to HE, but this option was not open to all students.

> 'No I never got the opportunity [to go to Open Days] but the higher, now the school did do it but it was always the higher classes, I think they always thought maybe the higher classes would go on I think ... they were the brainier ones so they were kind of guaranteed to definitely get into a college, you know that kind of way, so that's just the way we looked at it, they were brainier than us, they were gonna get into a college'.

5.3.9 Application to college

Five of the group filled out the CAO application and a number were offered places but decided not to take up the offers. Ruth applied for a range of courses in a specific field but did not perform sufficiently well in her Leaving Certificate, so then pursued a PLC in that area with the intention of progressing to HE afterwards. In Cian's case he was offered a place and was also awarded a scholarship but turned it down:

> 'I got a scholarship in [university] for [name of course] ... but I didn't do it, I wasn't really interested in college at that time'.

Similarly, Roger applied only because 'me ma made me', but he had no interest in progressing to HE at that time, despite the efforts of his Guidance Counsellor, as well as his parents.

For those who didn't apply, they generally felt college was not for them and they had their sights set on alternative post-school options, as Fiona reflects;

> 'I didn't even fill out, you know the CAO, I didn't even fill that out, I'd no interest in it at all'.

5.4 Labour Market Entrants

5.4.1 General School Experiences

Interviews were undertaken with thirteen school leavers who did not immediately progress to further study or training on leaving school - six females and seven males. The group were fairly evenly split in terms of social background with seven having at least one parent occupying an intermediate non-manual job and the remaining six with a parent employed in the other non-manual sector. In terms of educational level of parents, the group varied somewhat. Over half of the group indicate that one or both of their parents did not complete their second-level education; with four of these parents terminating their education prior to the second-level stage.
Three individuals, Mark, Mairead and Lynda, took the LCA programme, with the remainder taking the established Leaving Certificate programme or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). For the individuals for whom we have examination result information, the bulk of this group performed moderately in the Leaving Certificate examination; in contrast to the picture for HE entrants, none of the LM group performed particularly well in the examination. In common with the patterns for other groups, the bulk of the LM group had been engaged in paid employment while at school.

Table 5.3: Demographic Details of the Labour Market Group

Name	School Type	INM or ONM	Education or Training Participation
Sarah	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	PLC
Aideen	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	PLC
Rachael	Comprehensive DEIS	ONM	-
Declan	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Vincent	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Michael	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	-
Mark	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Mairead	Comprehensive DEIS	ONM	-
Tony	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Dermot	Vocational DEIS	INM	-
Lynda	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	-
Sally	Secondary Non-DEIS	ONM	PLC and FÁS Course
Noel	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	-

For the purposes of the analyses presented here, the LM group can be differentiated into two main groups: firstly, those who enter the labour market on leaving school and remain there for the duration of the period since leaving school (3-4 years typically) and, secondly, those who enter the labour market and later progress to some form of education or training course – many taking either a PLC course or entering an apprenticeship programme. In total, six members of the LM group remain in the labour market and the balance participated in an education or training course. Three of the group had attended a DEIS school, all of whom have remained in the labour market since leaving school.

Analyses of the School Leavers' Survey data shows that three members of the LM entrant group – Michael, Mark and Sally - indicated that they had engaged in truancy while at school. No members of either the HE or other ET groups had similarly engaged in truancy regularly. In-depth interviews with those who entered the LM throw further light on their attendance patterns and the reasons underlying the poor attendance of Michael, Mark and Sally. It also explores the school experiences of the other members of the LM group, and assesses the role such experiences played in their post-school choices.

A number of the LM group reflect on their school experiences very positively. As Aideen states;
'I had a great time like, most of my class now we all loved it like ... it was great'.
Lynda, Tony and Rachael had similarly positive comments to make. Dermot felt he was able to enjoy school as he wasn't destined for HE and so wasn't under the pressure to perform well in his examinations:

> 'It was good craic ... I wasn't there for an education reason, I knew I wasn't going to be going to college ... because I was going to join the Gardaí ... I enjoyed it and it was good fun'.

Mark and Sally, both of whom had poor attendance while at school, felt they enjoyed their school life but were largely unmotivated. As Sally comments:

> 'I enjoyed school but I wasn't motivated enough, I didn't know what I wanted to do ... School was fine, I got on with all the teachers, I got on with everybody, just I didn't have a sense of direction'.

Clearly, not everyone in the LM group spoke positively about their school days. Several members of the LM group, all males bar one, spoke quite negatively about their school experiences. For some this stemmed from a lack of interest in school activities:

> 'I had no interest in school, I just did not like school at all, the sooner the better I could get out of there … I just I didn't have the head for it at the time I don't think … the fault was with me, I had no interest in it … it was just this be in for nine o'clock and so strict and into your class and no talking and I don't know I just didn't have the head for it at the time'. (Declan)

Others found schoolwork a struggle:

'I wasn't really an avid outgoing person, I wasn't really involved in team sports or anything like that so, I kind of just went to [school] … I was a slacker, I was always good at turning in English and History but they were just easy, but everything else was a constant struggle'. (Mark)

While Sarah suggests that difficulties with her peers made school life difficult for her:

> 'I didn't really like it [school] because of the simple reason I had trouble with friends there … you know that way it's very hard to go in to school and face them every day'.

For many who found school difficult or uninteresting, their response very much reflected that they had disengaged from school life, as Michael reflects:

> 'I wasn't in school that much … it's long hours and very boring some of it … I skipped school a lot … I just preferred chilling around town like, I regret it now obviously. School was mundane … nothing spectacular happened in school like, it is pretty much what it does on the tin like, just teachers teaching you stuff'.

Similarly, Vincent felt that he didn't listen or work hard at school owing to immaturity:

> 'I mean you're going to follow the trends, if your best friend is smoking a fag, you're going to start smoking a cigarette, you just follow the trend and eventually you will mature but sometimes it is too late'.

Such disengagement from school life also reflected a desire to be working and earning, as in Noel's case:

> 'I didn't want to be there [in school] … I'd rather be out working and that like, earning a bit of money and that.

He felt he had only stayed in school as his parents wanted him to stay. He goes on to contend that most people don't like going to school and only go to please their parents:

> '… just stupid school do you know what I mean like, not everyone likes it … well I can't see anyone having a liking to do it anyway, but obviously there must have been one or two in there that would like it alright'.

And why do you think most people go to school then?

> 'I'd say most of them go, obviously to get an education, but I'd say most of them are just made go by their mother and father'.

In evaluating their school life, many of the respondents' comments centred around four main aspects of school:

- Teachers

- Subject Provision
- Transition Year
- Leaving Certificate Programme

5.4.2 Views of their Teachers

Teaching Style

A number of members of the LM group were vocal about the quality of their teachers and felt that their learning was somewhat compromised by the presence of ineffective teachers. As Aideen states about one of her teachers: I'd just like to say she wasn't very good at teaching other people stuff … she is not good at simplifying stuff to students … she'd put stuff on the board and she'd talk in her own language for like a half an hour and then everyone was just looking at her going what like, we wouldn't know what she was after saying.

Similarly, Tony felt that the quality of teachers at his secondary school was poor which led to him moving to a private grind school for his Leaving Certificate year:

> '[teachers in his school] just wasn't the best teaching wise, you know that way the teachers weren't the best … they weren't the greatest … so [I changed school and] started at [name of private institution] … it was parallel to none like, they're the best like, yeah they're really, really good'.

Many of these school leavers expressed a desire for varied teaching techniques and not just copying notes from the board or reading from a book:

> '… like History class … she's just be like, start us off there, so we'd read for about two chapters between us, everybody would read a paragraph and that's the class like, that's not teaching at all, that's just reading in class'. (Michael).

> '… forty per cent [of teachers] didn't give a damn, they were just standing there holding the book, reading out and you'd just keep writing, writing, writing like'. (Vincent).

The respondents spoke about teachers who took different approaches that enabled them to learn better in class:

> '… there's some brilliant teachers … my Geography teacher… we'd be doing erosion and stuff like that and there's four methods and he'd be like kit-kat boys, kit-kat there's four pieces of it right and stuff like that'. (Michael).

Similarly teachers who were motivated and passionate about their subject were seen to be more effective in capturing the attention of students:

> 'If they're more exuberant in class … you'd be inclined to listen'. (Michael).

> 'Geography, I did it for my junior cert, I had no interest in it whatsoever but the teacher was brilliant and he was good fun and he'd get you interested in it … I done very well in Geography in the end'. (Declan).

A number commented that younger teachers were more likely to display such enthusiasm and relate well with students:

> 'I loved it [the subject] in school … it was a lot to do with the teacher … she was really nice and kind of motivated us a lot and worked with us, she was young as well'. (Sally).

> '[the good teachers] were younger … they know more about life or something than the other people like the older teachers'. (Noel).

Three participants would have liked to have seen their teachers being stricter and felt that a more disciplined environment would have kept them focused and stopped other students disrupting their classes:

> '… if they're more stricter they're going to make you, they're going to get you to do more work like, if they're kind of laxi-dazy they're not going to, you're not going to learn really anything'. (Noel).

> 'I just felt that sometimes the teachers could have been a bit more strict on [students], you know in [terms of] classroom behaviour or if they were distracting other people, you know just things like that'. (Rachael).

> '… they just let you away with too much … you could just walk all over some of them. … And just some of them are kind of strict and some of them weren't but the ones that weren't got took advantage of by people'. (Mairead).

Teacher Expectations and Support

The LM group were evenly split between those who felt their teachers encouraged them to progress to further ET after school and those who felt they received little support or encouragement. In Dermot's case, for example, he felt that teachers did little to encourage students to think about post-school options, apart from distributing literature on courses available.

Would you say teachers in your school encouraged you to go on to higher education?

> 'Not really no, no. Maybe a couple of teachers … no not really … When people came round with the sheets, you know giving out all the stuff for colleges, sheets of information … none of them really talking to you, they just handed you the sheet, told you to put it away and look at it a different time and get on with your work, they don't really chat about it'. (Dermot).

Conversely, a number of these school leavers were broadly happy with the support they received and felt they were encouraged to consider a range of post-school options:

Did you feel there was much of an expectation among teachers that a good few students would go on to college?

> 'Yeah that most of us would and I think a lot of us did go, a lot of the class did go on to college [HE OR PLC]'. (Rachael).

Would you say your teachers encouraged you to go on to do something?

> 'Yes they did definitely … people with all [the] information on all the courses and they'd be telling us how we could get to where we wanted to go and what course would be best' . (Lynda).

Furthermore, some participants felt that different groups of students had been given different levels of support and encouragement. Some felt students who participated in the LCA programme were encouraged to enter the labour market rather than progress to further study. Vincent felt that female students were given more encouragement to progress to college than their male counterparts.

Were the same expectations there for that [LCA] group?

'No'.

What were the expectations?

'That they'd find work after school'.

Did they expect the students to go on to further study?

'I think they did in girls, like a lot of the time they gave girls a lot more preference in like oh are you going to college? (Vincent).

The issue of information, advice and expectations regarding HE opportunities is discussed further in section 5.4.7, where the experiences and views of the LM leavers on guidance provision in their schools are discussed.

5.4.3 Subject Provision

Each respondent had their favourite and least liked subjects. However, a number of the labour market group were somewhat dissatisfied with the subjects on offer to them and would have liked a wider range of subjects (Michael and Declan) and more hands-on, practical subjects:

> '... it would have been better like if there was a wider range of subjects you know rather than the customary subjects that's mightn't apply to the field that you want to go into'. (Michael).

> 'I would have liked more hands on subjects, I applied for woodwork I didn't get it, there was only so many places allowed and it was a lottery, so I didn't get that'. (Declan).

Dermot was unhappy with the way in which subject choice was constrained in his school:

> 'the way they were put into groups of subjects and you can only choose one from each group ... I would have preferred different subjects'.

Finally, Mark was critical of the range of subjects on offer and the lack of availability of more alternative subjects, which he would have preferred:

> '... alternative like subjects are never really promoted ... it is always like you want to go into business, you want to do, be a solicitor because your dad says you have to, there is only a certain number of career options and stuff like film maker and all that, that just happens in other schools'. (Mark).

5.4.4 Transition Year

Five of the group took Transition Year; for some of the others the programme was not offered in their school and for the remainder, they decided not to take it (Declan 'just wanted to get out of school as quickly as possible'; Dermot 'just wanted to get out of there'; and Sarah similarly stated 'I just wanted to get out of school'). For those who participated in Transition Year, views were somewhat varying. For some they found the year a worthwhile experience and were glad they took it, while for others they regretted the year. Aideen, Vincent and Mark spoke most positively about their experiences in Transition Year:

> '... oh it was great like, we done loads of stuff in Transition Year'. (Aideen).

> '... Oh brilliant, the best ... it kind of matured me because just that year made me kind of go ok well I better do well for the Leaving Cert ... Just the freedom and you could approach a teacher a lot more easily than what you could in the previous years or the after years ... you get to know everyone else as well'. (Vincent).

However, a number of participants were critical of their experiences in Transition Year, and felt, in particular, that they lost focus and interest in school work after Transition Year:

> '... he'd just give you take down this and that would be it, that's your work done... that's in fourth year like ... you'd just be kind of well if they're not bothered I'm not going to be bothered about me working, why should I? It is just a stupid year... I think it's just a waste, like the waste of year, because they just ask for money off you for trips to go there and wherever else, you just get lazy and then people just start messing then and that's why you get kicked out in fourth year or fifth year because they're just so used to dossing around like... You just can't get back into motion ... like from not doing anything throughout a year and then all of a sudden into mad studying and things like that ... you just get too lazy'. (Mairead).

5.4.5 Leaving Certificate Applied

Just four of the group took the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme in senior cycle. For those who didn't take the LCA, it was either not available in their school or they felt it was not for them: 'I thought I was smarter, like I am smarter than that' (Dermot). Even those who took the LCA felt that other students 'looked down' on them: 'smart students thought of it as a complete joke' (Mark).

For Mark, Mairead and Lynda taking the LCA programme was an intentional choice and one which they were aware would have implications for the choices open to them on leaving school. As Mark commented;

> '... I just didn't really see myself going to college, didn't know what I would want to do if I went to college'.

However, they did believe that taking the LCA would not preclude them from getting to HE indirectly, through a PLC programme for example:

> ' ... I was told basically that yes you can get into college through like all you have to do is like a PLC course after this or whatever and yeah this is a great way to go to college as well'.

However, one of the LCA participants, Mark, felt that it was unfair that LCA leavers need to 'go through like an extra few years ... and by the age of 30 you'll still be in college'. Rather the expectations (within the school) for the LCA class was 'that they'd find work after school' (Mark).

Mairead knew little about the restrictions of the LCA in terms of accessing post-school educational opportunities (HE):

> '... all I knew was that the normal Leaving Cert was that you had to do all your subjects ... and the Leaving Cert Applied ... was attendance for the two years and then the tasks that you [had] done, that was it, that was all I knew... [I should] have paid more attention to everything really ... I should have asked about opportunities when I'm leaving school like, what opportunities I had with like, you see I done the Leaving Cert Applied, like what I can do and what I can't do ... what courses are there to do, instead of going for them and getting turned down'.

Overall, for each, they were glad that they had taken the LCA and found the experience a positive one:

> '[The LCA was] Great, yeah I'd recommend it to anybody'. (Lynda).

Lynda particularly liked the project work and continuous assessment, which suited her better than examinations where she would 'just go blank'. Similarly, Mairead felt:

> 'I preferred it anyways, because I don't think I would have been able for the work, for the normal [Leaving Certificate examination]'.

Furthermore, she too liked the nature of assessment in the LCA:

> 'Like the normal Leaving Cert [the examinations are in] just one year, but the LCA was within two years, it was attendance for the two years and then the tasks that you done'.

Mark also commented on the less academic aspects of LCA:

> 'there was a lot of emphasis on, not character building but team building and you know working with other people and that was pretty good for say shy students'.

However, perceptions of the programme by teachers and fellow students were of concern to Mark, who felt that LCA students were not always sufficiently challenged and were treated differently by the teachers:

> 'Some of them [the teachers] would treat it like, what would you call it a special Ed class .... Some of the teachers did talk down to some of the [LCA] students a small bit'.

5.4.6 Examination Performance

While some participants were happy with their performance in the Leaving Certificate examination, others were dissatisfied (in one or more subjects) and felt they could have done better if they had taken their schoolwork more seriously.

Noel was generally satisfied and felt he performed sufficiently well to secure an apprenticeship place, which was his objective.

> '... yeah I was [happy with his examination results], to tell you the truth I wasn't too sure about passing my Leaving Cert, but I did pass ... it weren't great or anything ... I think it was 180 points or something like that'.

Aideen, Rachael and Sally were all disappointed with their performance in one particular subject – in Aideen and Sally's cases their disappointment related to Maths, while for Rachael failing (Higher Level) Irish was a major disappointment and had serious repercussions for her HE opportunities:

> 'I failed me maths so that was the only thing I wasn't happy with, everything else was grand, I was raging that I failed me maths'. (Aideen)

> 'I was happy with most of my subjects, the only one I was really unhappy with was Irish because I failed Irish but I really needed it for everything that I picked for my, for college, so it kind of all went down the drain... it gets to me, when I think about it, it really does because I didn't want to do higher level and the teacher kind of pushed and pushed and she brought my mother up to the school and I done the higher level and I failed it and I knew'. (Rachael)

Rachael did think about repeating Irish but decided against doing so:

> '... but we were the last year of a set course, so next year was completely, so I would have had to start completely from scratch ... I wouldn't have been able to do the poems or the literature that we'd done, I would have had to learn completely new ones and that just kind of put me off [repeating]'.

Sarah, who was reasonably happy with her Leaving Certificate performance, decided to repeat the examination the subsequent year (with her friends) with the hope she would get higher points and get a place on her preferred HE course. However, she did not improve on her original performance and did not secure a place in the HE course.

A number of the male participants felt they performed poorly in the Leaving Certificate examination solely as a result of their failure to work hard. Dermot, Declan, Michael and Tony all accepted that their low performance in the examination was of their own making, and they could have done better had they put in the effort. Tony, for example, wasn't particularly happy with his Leaving Certificate results, because he 'wasn't bothered' and didn't work very hard. For Declan, who had performed well in the Junior Certificate examination, lost interest in school once he decided he was going to be an electrician on leaving school and for that reason would not need a strong performance in the examination:

> '... the interest was gone ... about halfway though fifth year I'd say, I just decided I wanted to become an electrician and that was the end of it [study] ... I wanted to finish up school and go off and do that but my father wanted me to finish up school'.

Michael, who dropped to ordinary level in most subjects, felt his performance would have been better if he had made the effort to attend school regularly:

> '[I] was doing honours everything up until the day of the exams and then I just dropped down to pass like for pretty much everything ... Well I passed everything in the Leaving Cert, so if I would have gone in more I would have done a lot better'.

Finally, Vincent also expressed dissatisfaction with his examination performance. However, unlike Dermot, Declan, Michael and Tony he felt he worked hard and had invested in grinds. However, he concludes that these grinds did not seem to make the difference he was hoping for:

> 'I got maths grinds, I spent a lot of money on maths grinds and I still only ended up with a D in ordinary level ... I definitely thought after investing in grinds on a one to one basis I was a lot better, so I thought I would

> have done better but it just didn't work out'.

Lynda, Mark and Mairead, who took the LCA programme, were broadly satisfied with their performance, although Mairead, in her assessment of her performance, felt she could have achieved higher grades.

> 'I was happy with them because I was like well I didn't fail. That was the only thing that I didn't fail, so that was a good thing, other than that I thought I could have done better in them'. (Mairead)

5.4.7 Career Guidance

Most received career guidance in school – usually focused on aptitude tests and CAO application procedures. However, some found it difficult to identify an area they might be interested in pursuing after leaving school and others felt they didn't receive enough support or advice in school.

Many of the LM group were critical of the career guidance they received while at school. Some had little contact with the guidance counsellor, like Lynda who had very little contact with the Guidance Counsellor and as a result received little information on her post-school options. Similarly, Sally stated:

> 'I didn't have a sense of direction, I didn't know where to go, I had no guidance like, when it came to careers or anything'. (Sally).

For some, limited contact with the Guidance Counsellor, stemmed from the voluntary nature of that interaction with the guidance counsellor and them taking the decision to not make contact:

> '... we'd a career guidance teacher but it wasn't a must that you go and see her, you know that way so you never really bothered going to see her'. (Tony).

Those who appeared to have fairly regular contact with the guidance counsellor (through a time-tabled guidance class) were critical of the nature of the class and, in particular, the extent to which students actually had an opportunity to discuss their post-school options. Rachael, for example, comments:

> 'I know taking us to open days I mean we went to quite a few ... but I think then when we came back we should have talked about them more, if you found a course you were interested in you should have like, she should have come around and said 'did you see anything you were interested in?' and got you more information on it and said well this is what you'll be doing in one year and two years, this is what job you can get and if you stay to do your four years this is what job, I think it should have been explained in those kind of terms not just [be] given the prospectus and read it and decide for yourself'.

Similarly, Aideen felt the career guidance she received was limited:

> '... she just went through the CAO form, she helped us, the whole class kind of not individually like, just fill it out and she just kind of said if you need me just make an appointment. So there wasn't really much like [discussion], she obviously would hand out leaflets but there wasn't much kind of advice like, that was basically it like'.

Some were critical of the capacity of their Guidance Counsellor to inform them of careers and post-school choices:

> '... well there was a guidance counsellor but he was a bit of a disaster.'

How come?

'Oh sure I'd say he was at the job too long, now he didn't have too much of an interest'. (Declan).

'We never really paid attention [to the Guidance Counsellor] because I don't think she knew what she was on about herself … she wouldn't really give you much information like because they would be always busy with something else … Or they'd be like oh meet me after school and you'd be waiting for them for like half an hour and you'd go home and then you'd say to them then the next morning 'where were you' … and they'd be like 'oh I forgot all about it' … so sometimes you just didn't even bother'. (Mairead).

Rachael felt her guidance counsellor was critical of her suggestions and dismissive of her interest in studying Law:

'I was thinking I wanted to do law, now I knew I probably wouldn't get the points but like she didn't give me any help to say well you could do this [course] and then go on and do further [courses] … I just think she could have led me … She just kind of shot me down and said 'no you won't get the points for that' and do you know when you're coming up to your Leaving Cert that's not something you want to hear, you want to hear someone say yeah if you want to do the law that's brilliant and these are other options if you don't get the points that you need, that could give you like a backdoor'.

Others would have liked their Guidance Counsellor to adopt different approaches, to make such classes more interesting and useful:

'… it was kind of another doss class, people probably looked at it as a break from everything else… they should just show it to people on the TV instead of reading it out of a book … you'll just look out of the window rather than listen to her reading out of the book … [they should] make a good DVD showing the third-level colleges, showing trades, like exactly what is involved in them'. (Vincent).

One participant commented on the nature of advice offered by his guidance counsellor and felt the focus was predominantly on traditional careers:

'Like you become a solicitor, you become an accountant, you become a guard, all very good paying, well respectable jobs'. (Mark).

While Noel was advised to leave school early and enter an apprenticeship:

So what information did she [CG] give you?

'To leave'.

Did she, when?

'After third year'.

And do an apprenticeship?

'Do an apprenticeship, she just said you'd be better off … you'll be qualified nearly by sixth year'.

Vincent was also encouraged to enter an apprenticeship after school, although such advice seemed to come from outside school rather than within school:

'It was like you were kind of forced into a trade at that time … like not you know pushed in but you were always, if you're a fella, you were kind of going oh I'll go for the trade you know … Just close friends, cousins, dad [would be encouraging me to take a trade] … my dad would be like seeing people around making great

> money doing the trades like, plasterers, electricians, everything making a fill of money, so even he said like get a trade like'. (Vincent).

A number of members of the LM group were unclear about what they wanted to do when they left school, as Sally commented:

> 'I didn't have any notion what to do [after school] ... I don't think the school could have done anything because they were very accommodating'.

Given that this group did not progress to further education or training upon leaving school, a number came to the decision to pursue further study a year or two years after leaving school, by which stage they no longer had the support or advice of school personnel. They relied on their own investigation of possible courses and opportunities, sometimes with the assistance of peers or family. Sarah, for example, took the decision to pursue a childcare course a year after leaving school having researched the area using Qualifax (which her sister informed her about). This raises an important issue over the need for young people to have skills to identify and pursue HE and other ET opportunities after leaving school; in particular career preparation at school needs to move beyond the narrow focus on the immediate school leaving decision which many of our participants talk of, to encompass broader life skills relating to career identification, job search and life-long learning more generally.

Subject/Level Advice

Rachael failed higher level Irish and as a consequence did not get a place in her chosen course. She felt she had been pushed by her teacher to take a higher level paper against her own wishes and expectations:

> 'she kept pushing for the higher level and I felt that I couldn't do it but do you know when somebody keeps pushing and pushing'.

The remainder of the group were more positive about the advice they received on subject and level options.

5.4.8 Post-school advice

Some found school personnel (GC and teachers) of great help and support in making post-school decisions, as Sarah noted 'they did arrange meetings with the career guidance, they tried to get you to go to college'. Similarly: Would you say your teachers encouraged you to go on and do something?

> 'Yes they did definitely ... They'd be telling us how we could get to where we wanted to go and what course would be best'. (Lynda).

Would you say that students were encouraged to go on to college?

> 'Yeah absolutely, we were always doing our university like going to open days and stuff like that'. (Michael).

Others felt they weren't interested in progressing to HE and, for that reason, did not avail of any information or advice on the matter. As Mairead comments:

> 'They'd be like you can do this for so many years or you can do it for so many months and you have to pay so much for this and it doesn't take as long ... but ... I wasn't really paying attention ... I'm just not a college person like I wouldn't like to go to college'.

A minority of participants didn't seem to receive much in the way of post-school advice:

> 'I didn't really talk to anyone about my career though to be honest, I knew I liked nursing but I didn't know if it was an option for me so I kind of didn't have a notion what to do'. (Sally).

In some of the schools attended by the respondents, dropout was a major challenge faced by the school, with the result that few of the cohort actually persisted in school to complete their Leaving Certificate examination:

> 'In my class there was about 15 or 16 in me class ... because they were all after dropping out from the third year ... [they] just couldn't be bothered to do it like'. (Mairead).

A number of the participants, with the assistance of their guidance counsellors, attended college open days and careers events, while some also attended the FÁS Opportunities event in the RDS. Most school leavers found these experiences of use and helpful in making their decisions. Participants were particularly positive in their assessment of the FÁS Opportunities event, which is not surprising given that many of this group did not aspire to HE when they were in school. As Noel and Vincent comment about this event:

> 'Yeah I brought a bag full of leaflets so I did about what you can do with you apprenticeship and what apprenticeships take and what you'll end up doing ... it was worth going for a day'. (Noel).

> '... it's an enjoyment kind of day and you can actually go in and see you know you have the air force there and you have the army, you have the guards, you have plumbing ... I think that it is very good'. (Vincent).

Some of the participants filled out the CAO application form, although a few participants did so without any real interest in attending HE. Michael filled out the CAO form on two consecutive years; each time he was offered a place on a course but felt he would not like the respective courses and he turned down the offers. Similarly, Declan completed the CAO application and was offered a place but declined it as he felt he was too immature at the time to undertake a HE course:

And were you offered any places?

> 'Yeah I was offered [name of course], didn't want to do it ... I would go back there now [the college] but not at the time, I wouldn't have, I just would not have done a tap, I know I wouldn't have, definitely too immature at the time, definitely'.

A number of those who applied were not offered a place on their chosen course(s). Rachael, for example, applied but did not get a place as she failed higher level Irish, and notes 'the courses that I did pick, they relied on you passing Irish so that was a big let down'. Vincent and Sarah both applied but received no offers of places; in Sarah's case her brother and sister assisted her in filling out the application form. Aideen, who felt she didn't know what she wanted to do and didn't have enough time to decide, didn't get any of her choices:

> '... we just had to fill it out, so it was kind of just 40 minutes, just quick decide, one, two or three what you wanted ... I didn't know what I wanted to do so it was just a matter of 40 minutes fill it out and that's it, you don't really have long enough to decide'.

The remaining participants did not apply to the CAO. In Dermot's case, he had set his sights on entering the Gardaí (like his father), so felt he would not need to apply elsewhere. In Mairead's case, she felt she received insufficient advice on her post-school options:

Did you apply for [HE] courses then?

> 'No because I didn't know, I never got the opportunities of what to even go for, like I was never saying well you can go for this because you've got so many marks, or you can't go for that because you can't do it with the LCA or things like that I never got told'. (Mairead).

Most received advice on how to complete the CAO form – but many commented that the advice was largely confined to the mechanics of filling out the form rather than advice on what options people might choose. As Aideen reflects:

> 'she [the Guidance Counsellor] just went through the CAO form, she helped us, the whole class ... there wasn't much kind of advice'.

5.5 Summary

Chapter 4 has outlined how the other non-manual group fare relatively poorly in terms of a number of retention and performance measures compared to the intermediate non-manual group, and that their patterns more closely resemble that of the semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups. This chapter has set out to contextualise the second-level school experiences of the non-manual groups, examining the implications of these experiences for their post-school aspirations and pathways.

In terms of students' perceptions of their school experiences, the group of HE entrants were much more positive as a group about their school experiences relative to entrants to alternative education/training or labour market entrants. The HE entrant group comprised mostly students from an intermediate non-manual background, and it was clear that the school ethos encouraged progression to HE. This group generally relayed positive experiences about their schooling, enjoying the academic aspect of school, demonstrating positive relations with teachers, and emphasised the importance of gaining points for HE entry. The entrants to alternative education and training were comprised mostly from the other non-manual group and reported mixed feelings about school. They spoke about their schools having a good reputation, and being encouraged by school staff to progress to HE. What was particularly evident was that this group were much more critical of their teachers and the teaching they had received. Some of the young people we interviewed felt that teachers made a distinction between those who would go on to HE and who would not, which then influenced how they were treated by teachers. What was particularly interesting was that many of this group had applied to go to HE, but also had alternative education or training pathways earmarked if they did not gain access or did not obtain their HE preference. The labour market entrants were a mix of young people from intermediate and other non-manual backgrounds. While some of this group were positive about their school experiences, they often attributed their underperformance to themselves, rather than to their experiences in school. However, it was clear that this group were critical about their teachers and often spoke about the poor quality teaching they had received. They spoke about attending schools where some students would be considered for HE while others would not.

A clear distinction was also evident between the HE entrants and the other two groups in terms of how subject choice was determined, which may shed some light on differences between the two non-manual groups. The HE entrant group were happy with the subjects that were on offer, and tended to choose subjects that they were most likely to achieve high points in the Leaving Certificate examination. In contrast, the remaining two groups did not tend to adopt this tactic. In fact, some of the other non-manual students felt that they had been forced to choose lower subject levels, and were often dissatisfied with the subjects on offer.

It was also clear that members of the intermediate non-manual group who successfully progressed to HE were much more positive about the career guidance they received while at school. In contrast, members of the other non-manual group were often directed away from HE, perceived that they were not considered HE 'material' by teachers and guidance staff and, where they did get information on HE, it was often about the mechanics of applying rather than discussing what they might like to do. As a result, a number of (particularly male) members of the other non-manual group left school unsure about what they wanted to do and clearly lacking any real direction. It can also be noted that for the intermediate non-manual group, even where guidance was lacking, they were able to rely on the assistance of parents who were themselves familiar with the CAO process and HE in general (having themselves participated). The other non-manual group, in contrast, are much more reliant on school-based advice, hence signifying the importance of comprehensive advice at school and a supportive environment where expectations are high.

It was also evident that males from the other non-manual group were much more likely to fall into cycles of negative interaction, poor behaviour and failing to take school seriously. This had led to a process of gradual disengagement from schoolwork and a desire to 'get away' from education. This raises crucial issues around school climate, and has many parallels to the findings of a longitudinal study of second-level students (see Smyth *et al.*, 2006; Byrne and Smyth, forthcoming). It points to the importance of promoting a positive school and classroom climate, where good relations between students and staff are fostered, positive reinforcement is promoted and students are encouraged to become involved in school both at formal (student councils for example) and informal (sports and extracurricular) levels.

Finally, it was clear that the pull of the (then booming) labour market represented an important motivating factor for males, particularly those from other non-manual backgrounds. It meant that leaving school without further education plans was an easy option and didn't seem to be challenged by teachers (and was even encouraged in some cases). While some of these young people now reflect on these choices with some regret and see themselves as more vulnerable than college-educated peers, it seems that teachers and guidance counsellors should place a greater emphasis on highlighting the implications of taking various post-school options in the longer-term.

Chapter 6 now draws on both qualitative and quantitative data to consider the HE decisions among the intermediate non-manual and the other non-manual groups.

CHAPTER 6

The Higher Education Decision: Higher Education Entrants and Non-Entrants

6.1: Introduction

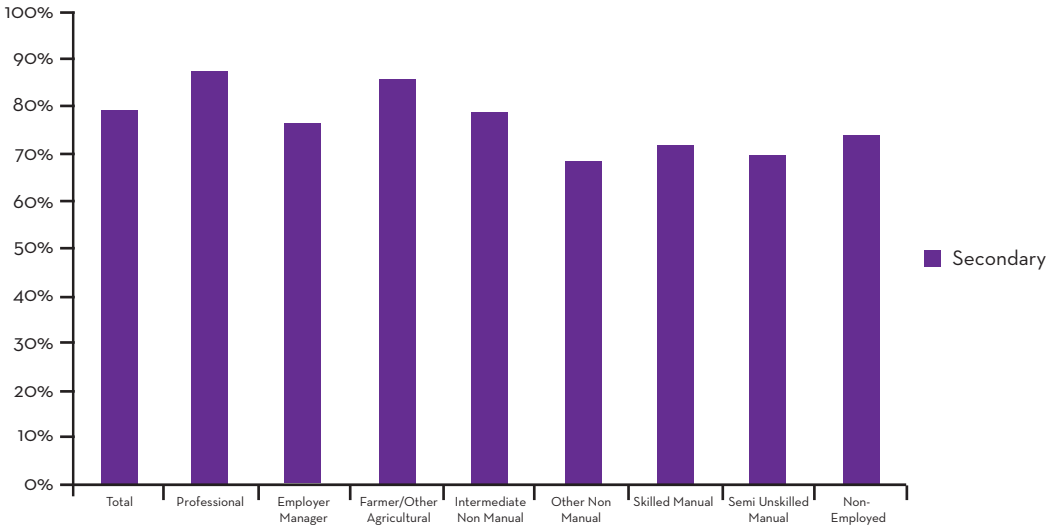
This chapter draws on both the qualitative and quantitative data to consider HE application and acceptance patterns, participation levels at HE and the factors associated with participation in HE (typically two years after leaving school). As in earlier chapters, the main focus is on the relative position of those from non-manual backgrounds and the differential experiences of intermediate and other non-manual groups.

6.2 Higher Education Application Patterns

One approach to understanding the nature of participation is to identify the social characteristics of those who do not participate and then to explore why they might not be represented in the HE population. The School Leavers' Survey of 2007 included an additional thematic component, asking respondents about whether they applied for a place in a HE institution; among those not applying their reasons for not applying; whether they accepted any places offered; and if they declined a place their reasons for doing so. As in earlier analysis, the discussion is particularly focused on the patterns for the intermediate and other non-manual groups, relative to all other socio-economic groups.

Figure 6.1 illustrates that in total 80 per cent of young people who complete the LCE or LCVP programmes apply for a place in HE in Ireland and/or overseas, with no significant variation by gender. For the vast majority of young people, the application is completed through the CAO process, with just 5 per cent applying directly or through access programmes. Levels of application vary considerably across socio-economic groups, with strong differentiation between the two non-manual groups once again apparent (Figure 6.1). Young people from intermediate non-manual backgrounds have high rates of application with 79 per cent submitting an application. Those from other non-manual backgrounds are the group least likely to apply for a HE place, with just over two-thirds of young people from this group applying, a pattern which is somewhat lower than the application rates for the manual groups and substantially lower than the rate of application for the intermediate non-manual group. Almost 90 per cent of those from professional backgrounds apply for a place in HE, alongside 86 per cent of those from a farming background. The position of the other non-manual group is alarming: we have seen large numbers of these young people not eligible for HE entry as a result of dropout from second-level (Chapter 4), now coupled with low levels of HE application among those eligible for entry. The next section explores the reasons behind the decision of school leavers not to apply for a place in HE.

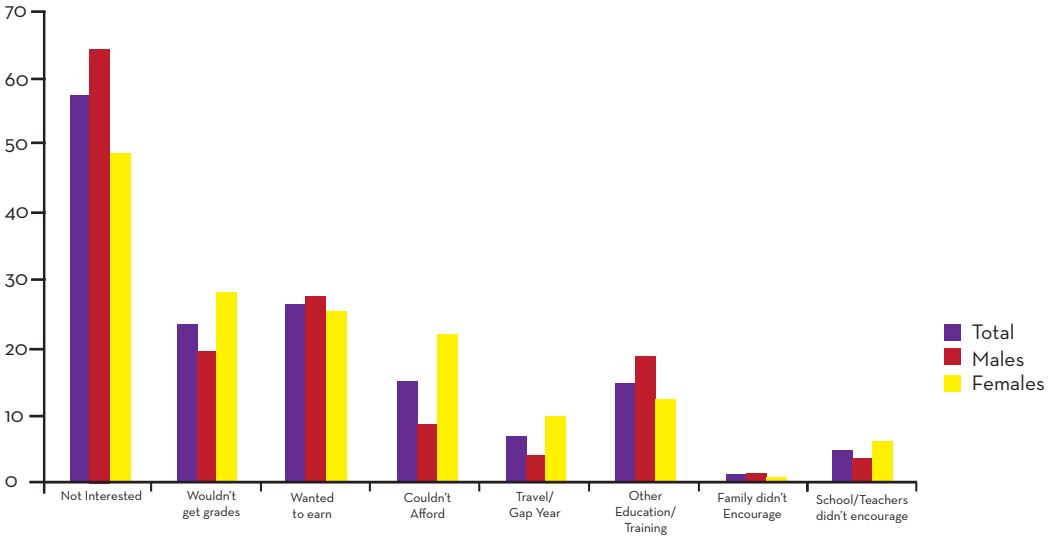
Figure 6.1: Proportion of School Leavers Who Completed LCE and LCVP Who Applied to Enter Higher Education by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)



6.2.1 Reasons for Not Applying

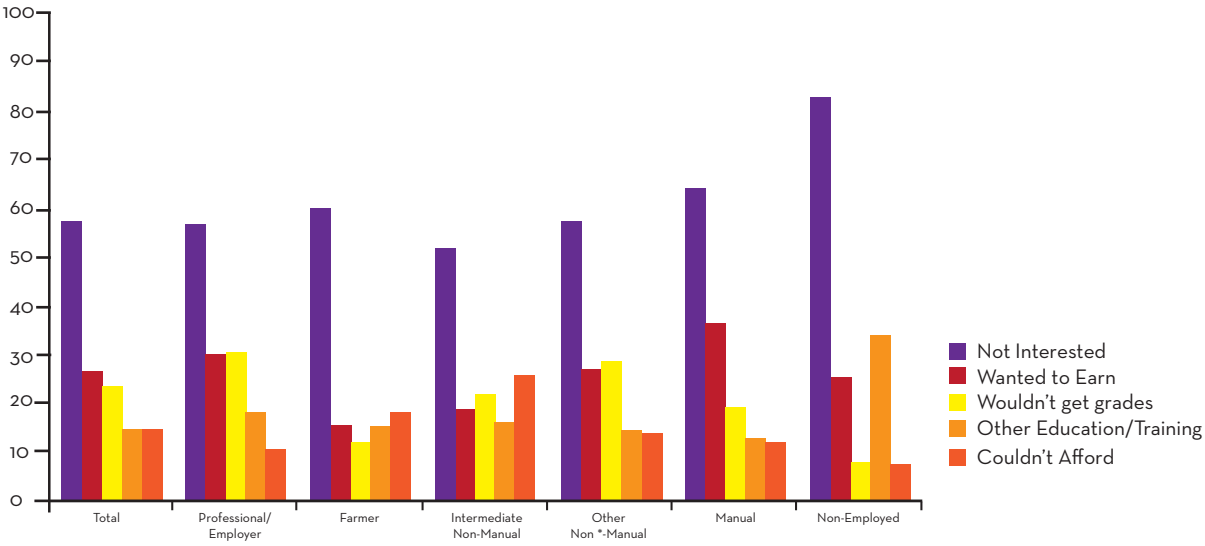
For those who chose not to pursue HE, respondents were asked to indicate the reason(s) behind that decision. For policy makers interested in raising participation in HE, this is a key consideration. Figure 6.2 illustrates that the overwhelming reason underlying the decision not to seek entry into HE is related to the intrinsic value of HE to these young people – they felt that it was not for them, particularly among males. This echoes the discussions around HE decisions in the qualitative interviews where young people spoke about HE as being 'not for me'. There was also evidence that working and earning at the earliest opportunity were an important motivation for some young people. In line with research in the UK context (Connor, 2001, for example), clearly financial issues figure in young people's choices – a desire to earn money and/or concerns over being able to afford HE were indicated by a considerable share of over one-third of young people who did not apply for HE. There is also evidence that academic self-image plays a role for some potential applicants, particularly females. Almost a quarter of young people not applying to HE cite low performance expectations as a reason for their decision, with nearly 30 per cent of females attributing their non-application to low expectations in the Leaving Certificate examination. Finally, one-in-six indicate that they had identified alternative (non-HE) education/training aspirations and for this reason did not pursue the HE pathway. Males are more likely to have identified non-HE aspirations.

Figure 6.2: Reason(s) for Not Applying to Higher Education by Gender (2007)



The extent to which different socio-economic groups vary in their motivations for not applying to HE is presented in Figure 6.3. The intrinsic value of HE is an important underlying factor for all groups, but most particularly for the non-employed group relative to other groups. Concerns about performance in the Leaving Certificate examination were strongest among non-applicants from professional and other non-manual backgrounds. Those from non-employed households are considerably more likely to have set their sights on non-third-level educational opportunities – over one-third of this group indicate this as a reason for not applying to HE.

Figure 6.3: Reason(s) for Not Applying for Higher Education by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)



* Note: Small numbers in the non-employed category make these results unreliable.

What is particularly evident is that financial concerns surface for all groups – either in the sense of a priority to secure earnings or concern over being able to afford to attend HE[18] . However, young people from manual backgrounds are considerably more likely to cite one or both of these factors – while 45 per cent of those from the manual group indicate financial issues behind their decision not to apply; this is the case for just 30 per cent of the farming group. A total of 36 per cent of the other non-manual group indicate one or both of these factors, slightly higher than 32 per cent for the intermediate non-manual group.

The School Leavers' Survey did not ask young people about why they decided to apply to HE. Research conducted in the UK indicates that the main motivating factor which encourages potential students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to apply to HE is a belief that a higher qualification will bring improved job and career prospects and also improved earnings and job security (Dewson *et al.*, 2001). Their research indicated that students from lower social class backgrounds take account of a wider range of issues than their counterparts in higher social class groups when taking the decision to enter HE, and they tend to place more emphasis on the expected beneficial outcomes of HE than do students from higher social class groups.

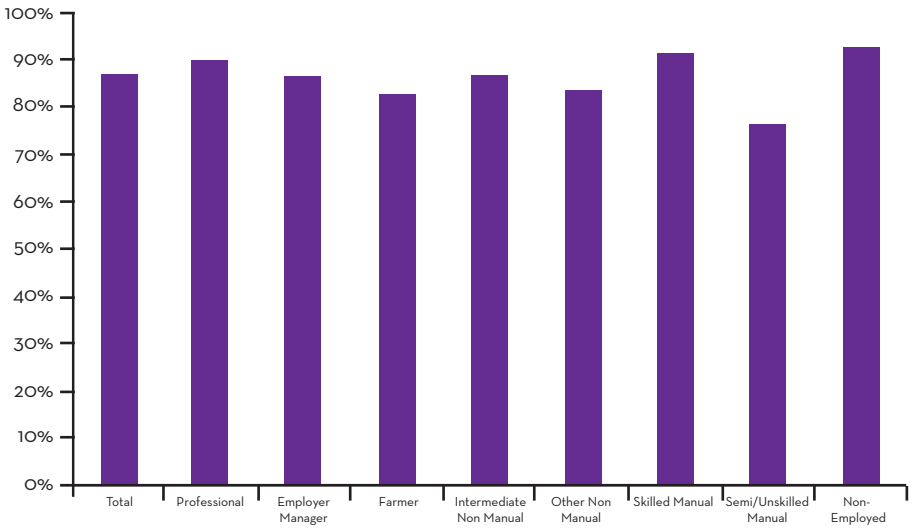
18 These findings have also been replicated in the UK. Dewson *et al.*, (2001) found that the primary discouraging factors mentioned by the research respondents focus on employment and financial issues. The main reasons why people from lower social class groups interviewed in the research had decided against going into HE study, though qualified to get a place, were twofold: they either wanted to start employment, earn money and be independent at an earlier age (39 per cent) or they were worried about the cost of studying (28 per cent). Many respondents felt that there was a need for more relevant and timely information concerning HE, particularly concerning student finances. However, finance was just one of a range of issues of concern expressed by respondents when discussing their decisions to enter HE. Others include being able to cope with academic pressures and workload, gaining the entry qualifications, the application process itself, and personal issues such as childcare.

6.3 Higher Education Offer and Acceptances

Trends in applications to HE in the UK suggest that there is a higher rate of rejection by universities of applicants from social class groups other than professional and intermediate class groups (Collier *et al.*, 2003). According to the School Leavers' Survey, in total 90 per cent of applicants are offered a place on a HE course in Ireland and/or overseas, with those from professional backgrounds more likely to be offered a place. However in the Irish context, there is little variation evident according to socio-economic background.

Acceptance rates by applicants are high – 88 per cent of those who are offered a place (or multiple places) accept the offer. Female applicants are slightly more likely to accept a place than their male counterparts (89 versus 87 per cent). However, patterns across socio-economic groups are noteworthy and are illustrated by Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4: Proportion of students who accepted a place on a Higher Education course (2007)



Over 90 per cent of young people from professional backgrounds accept a place, relative to just three-quarters of those from the semi- and unskilled manual group. Young people from the other non-manual group also have a below average rate of acceptance, as do those from farming backgrounds. Again we find that the intermediate non-manual group compare more positively with acceptance rates that are relatively high and on a par with the employer/manager group.

6.3.1 Main Reason for Not Accepting Offer

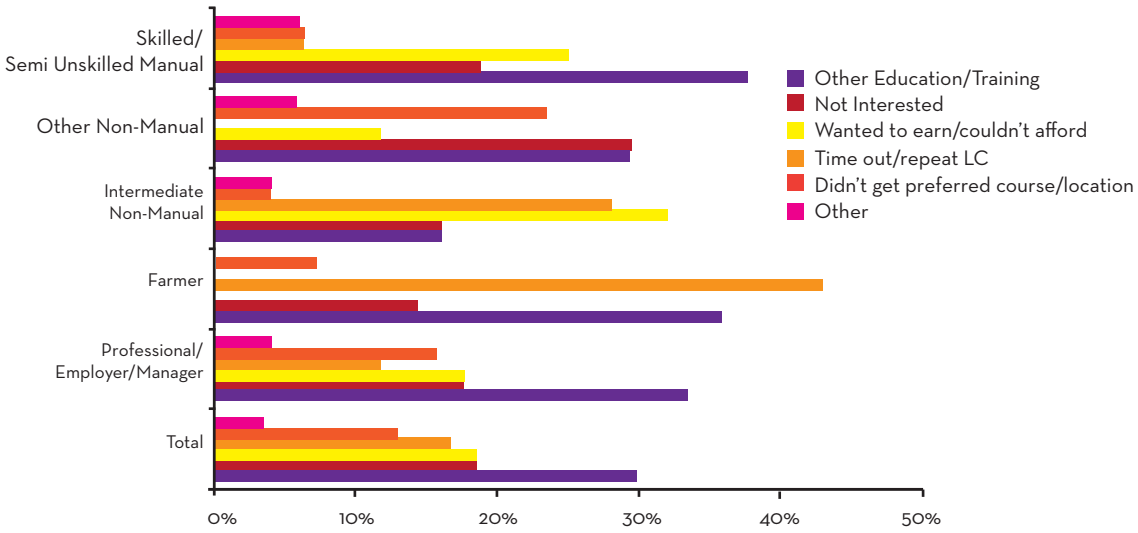
Respondents were asked to indicate the main reason for not accepting a HE place which they were offered, results of which are considered for males and females and for different socio-economic groups. Nearly 40 per cent of males who did not accept a place have identified alternative educational or training opportunities, considerably higher than females (23 per cent). Females in contrast are much more likely to decide to delay their entry to HE either to take a 'gap year' or to repeat their Leaving Certificate examination, most likely with the aim of improving their examination performance and securing a place on a preferred course.

Table 6.1: Main Reason for not accepting a Higher Education place by Gender (2007)

	Total	Male	Female
Other Education/Training	30.5	38.5	22.7
Not interested	17.6	20.0	15.2
Wanted to earn/couldn't afford	17.6	20.0	15.2
Time out/ repeat LC	16.0	4.6	27.3
Didn't get preferred course/ location	13.7	13.8	13.6
Other	4.6	3.1	6.1

Across socio-economic groups, reasons for not accepting a Higher Education place are quite variable (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: Main Reason for Not Accepting Place in Higher Education by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)



For the intermediate non-manual group financial concerns figure strongly – perhaps suggesting that this group are more likely to seriously consider HE but fall at the final hurdle owing to financial pressures or perhaps ineligibility for state financial support. In common with the farming group, those from intermediate non-manual backgrounds are much more likely to cite taking time out of education or repeating their Leaving Certificate, i.e. delaying entry to HE, as a reason for their non-acceptance of a place. In some respects the other non-manual group display a pattern similar to that for the manual group – 60 per cent cite either a lack of interest or alternative education pursuits as the main reason. However, financial concerns figure much more prominently for the manual group (25 per cent) than the other non-manual group (12 per cent). What is particularly interesting is that school leavers from the other non-manual group are more likely to indicate that not being offered a place on their preferred course or in their preferred college was the reason for their non-entry to HE (24 per cent for other non-manual compared to 6 per cent for manual group).

6.4 Participation in Higher Education

6.4.1 Overall Participation

The preceding discussion points to marked variations in HE application between different socio-economic groups and by gender. This section examines patterns of participation in full-time HE over the 10-year period 1997 – 2007. The analyses presented throughout this section are confined to participation in HE of school leavers when interviewed at the time of the survey (18-24 months after leaving school).

Figure 6.6: Participation in Full-Time Higher Education Among school leavers who completed senior cycle by Gender

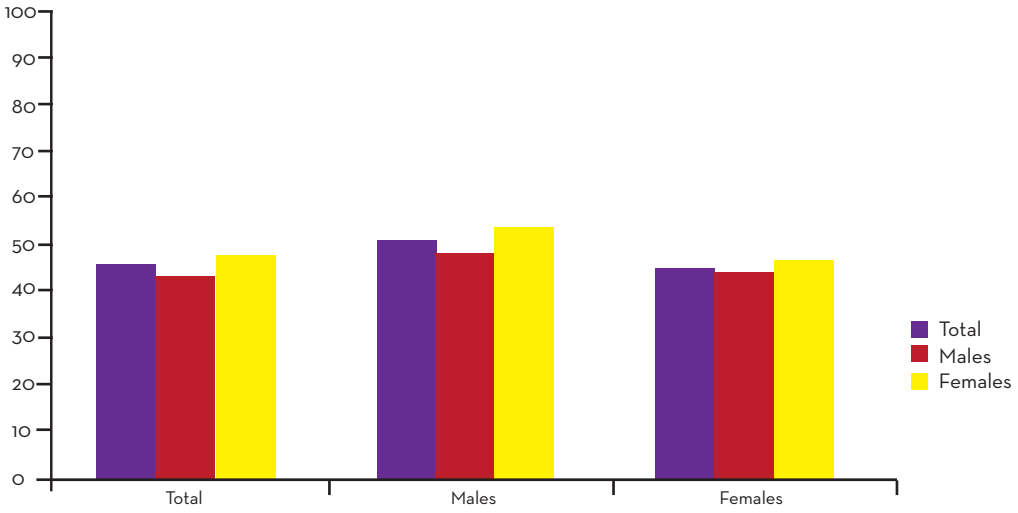
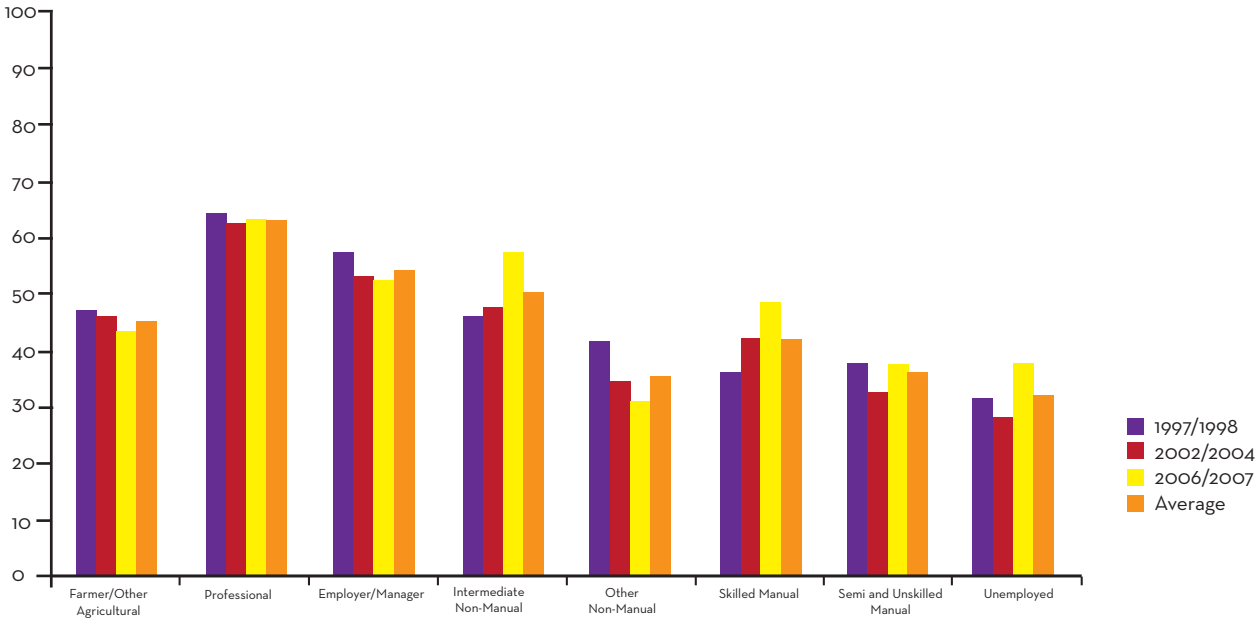


Figure 6.6 displays overall HE participation rates among those who completed their second-level education (including LCA students[19]). Of those completing the Leaving Certificate (or equivalent), 48 and 53 per cent of males and females respectively are participating in HE at the time of the 2002/04 surveys, with 44 and 47 per cent at the time of the 2006/07 survey.

Figure 6.7 displays levels of participation by parental socio-economic group across the three time-points. What is particularly evident is that participation in HE at the time of the survey has remained relatively stable across each of the socio-economic groups over time. The average participation rate across time indicates that strong disparities are evident across socio-economic groups, whether measured in terms of father's occupational attainment or highest parental occupation (for patterns by father's socio-economic group see Table 8 in Appendix C)[20] .

19 LCA students are included because, at this stage, LCA students may have completed a one year PLC course and then progressed to HE.
20 Differences may be evident in participation rate estimates using the New Entrants' Data and the School Leavers' Survey data as the former records the participation rate of socio-economic groups enrolled at a HE institution relative to the size of the population in each socio-economic group while the School Leavers' Survey data records the participation rate of those who completed second-level education and subsequently made the transition into HE.

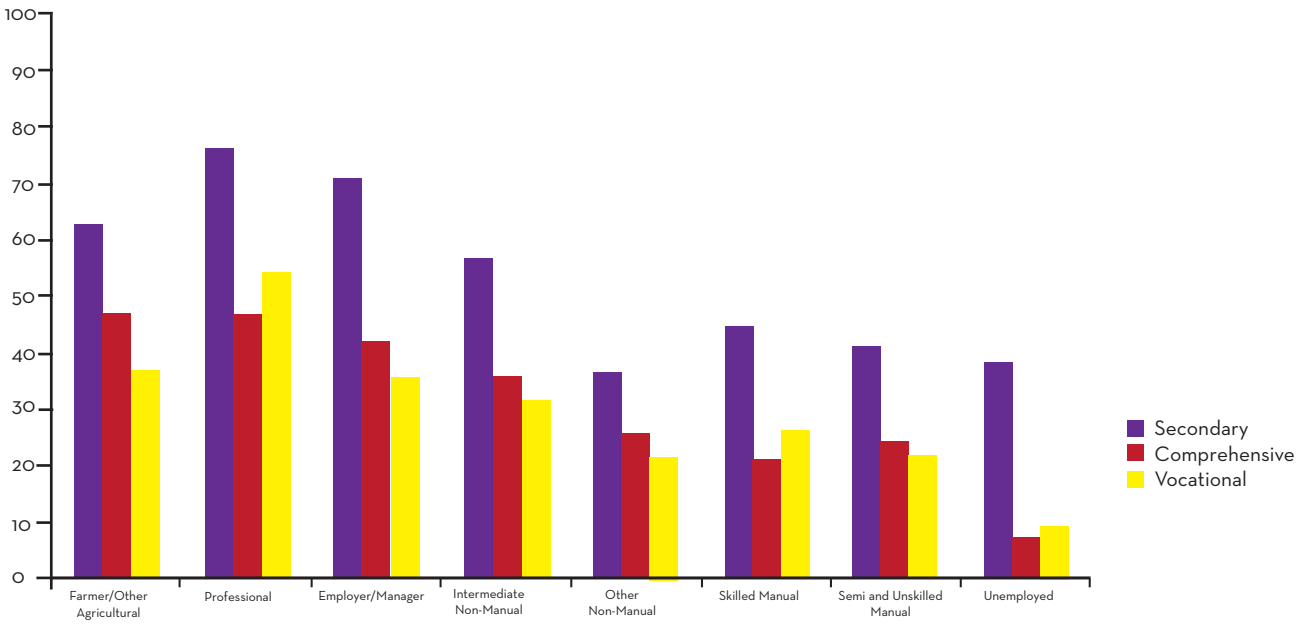
Figure 6.7: Participation in Full-Time Higher Education among Senior Cycle Leavers by Parental Socio-Economic Group



While patterns of participation for school leavers from other non-manual backgrounds are remarkably similar to those from semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds, patterns of participation of the intermediate non-manual group closely resemble those of the employer/manager group. From the most recent data, we find that levels of participation among those from other non-manual backgrounds are among the lowest, with just 28 per cent in HE at the time of the survey. The intermediate non-manual group have significantly higher levels of HE participation at 45 per cent of the cohort; 20 percentage points higher than the other non-manual group using the most recent data.

As well as social characteristics, research suggests that school characteristics can influence individual educational attainment and entry into HE (Smyth, Hannan, 2007). Figure 6.8 illustrates levels of full-time HE participation among school leavers of different social backgrounds according to the sector of second-level education they attended. Among those who completed second-level education, young people who attended schools in the voluntary secondary sector typically have highest levels of HE participation, and this pattern is evident across all socio-economic groups.

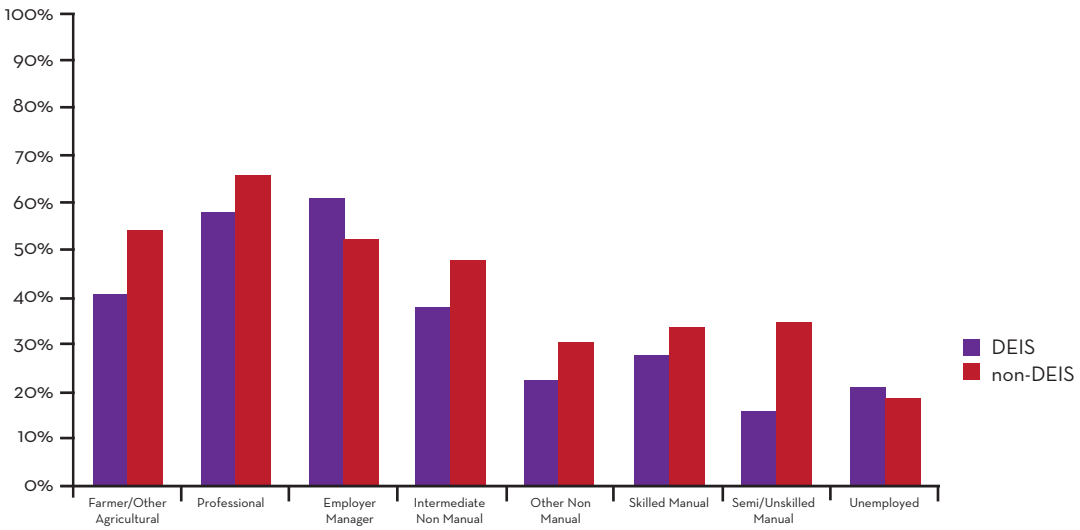
Figure 6.8: Higher Education Participation Levels by Parental Socio-Economic Background and School Type Attended



Patterns of HE participation also vary between schools categorised as DEIS (see Chapter 1 for a discussion) and other schools. Confining attention to those who competed second level, Figure 6.9 displays such participation rates for each socio-economic group for those who attended DEIS and non-DEIS schools. Across most of the socio-economic groups, students who attended DEIS schools display lower levels of participation in HE, with the exception being those from an employer/manager background and those from a non-employed background. The effect of disadvantaged status on individual attainment is likely to reflect the socio-economic composition of schools classified as DEIS. A body of school effectiveness research indicates that, alongside the impact of individual social background, the social mix of a school has an additional impact on educational outcomes (see, for example, Smyth, 1999[21]). Among school leavers from non-manual backgrounds, 22 per cent of those who attended DEIS schools are participating in HE in 2006/07, relative to 31 per cent of those from non-DEIS schools.

21 This research found that the social context of a school has an additional effect on pupil outcomes. Working-class pupils in predominantly working-class schools tend to have lower grades, higher absenteeism and higher drop-out rates than those in predominantly middle-class schools (Smyth, 1999, p.216-217).

Figure 6.9: Higher Education Participation Rates in DEIS and non-DEIS schools by Parental Socio-Economic Group



Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

The descriptive results show that there are clear socio-economic disparities at play in terms of application, acceptance and participation in HE. Again, this finding is of obvious interest to those who would like to increase the percentage of each socio-economic group who enter HE, because it identifies those from other non-manual socio-economic backgrounds as a group to target with measures that seek to raise participation at HE. At this point it is useful to try to gauge not only whether the effect of the other non-manual group is significant, but how disadvantaged this group may be relative to other disadvantaged groups. A helpful comparison is to examine the extent to which participation rates of non-manual young people vary relative to those from the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds. In doing so, a further distinction will be made among those who completed second-level education (LCA, LCVP or LCE) and those who completed the LCVP or LCE and who achieved at least two honours in the Leaving Certificate examination.

The multivariate model developed in Table 5 of Appendix D allows a relatively straightforward comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that people participate in HE. From this model, it is possible to calculate odds ratios, which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will participate in HE relative to a different case. Table 6.2 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of gender, parental education and school type attended, when controlling for socio-economic group, region and school type attended (sector). The reference case is a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, from Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community or comprehensive DEIS school for our sample.

The first set of findings of the table indicates that gender is a major factor that determines completion of second-level education: the odds of a female, showing the same characteristics, participating in HE are 1.2 times higher than for males. Furthermore, parental education is a key determinant of participation in HE; students whose parents have a degree level education are almost 4 times more likely to participate in HE. We also find that students attending non-DEIS schools are more likely to participate in HE than those attending DEIS schools.

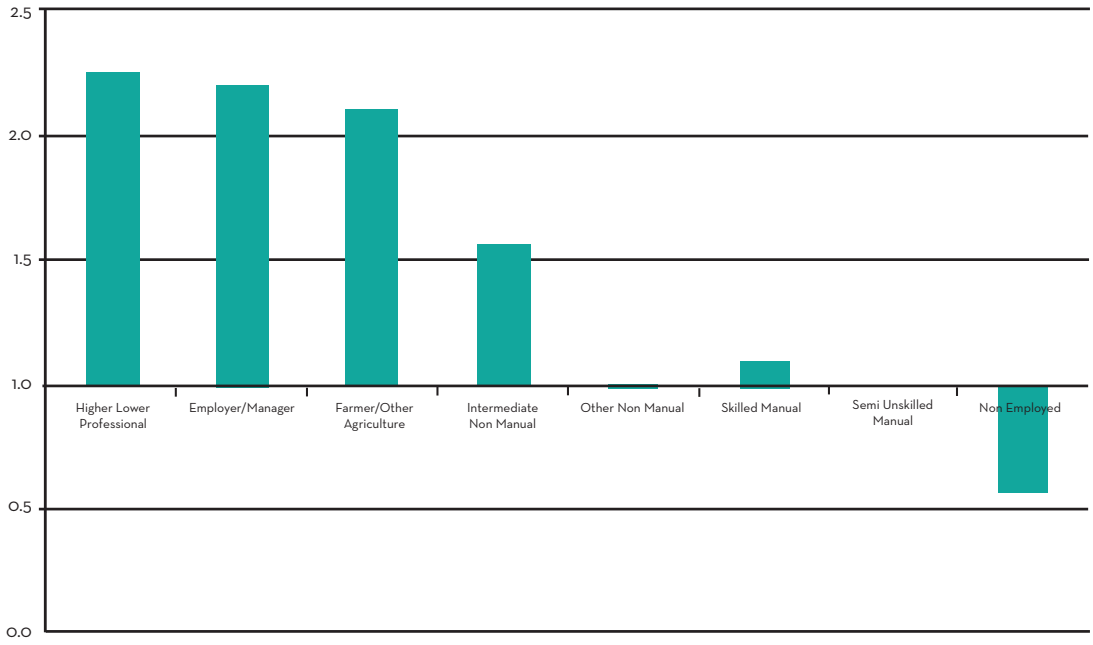
Table 6.2: Odds Ratios for Participation in Higher Education

	All Who Completed Senior Cycle	All who completed senior cycle and obtained 2+ Honours
Male	1.00	1.00
Female	1.25	1.16
Primary or Less	1.00	1.00
Junior Certificate	1.47	.946
Leaving Certificate or Equivalent	2.30	1.03
Diploma	2.42	.945
Degree	3.90	1.64
Non DEIS school	1.38	1.12
DEIS school	1.00	1.00

The odds ratios presented in Table 6.2 are an indication of the influence of gender, parental education and school type on participation in HE among those who completed second-level education. This provides a ready comparison for the impact of socio-economic background, which is illustrated by Figure 6.10. The reference case is still a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, from Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community/comprehensive DEIS school. We now see how students from higher socio-economic backgrounds have higher odds of participating in HE: over two-fold for a person from a professional background, employer/manager background and farming background, and almost one and a half times for a person from an intermediate non-manual background[22] . While those from the professional/employer/manager, farming and intermediate non-manual backgrounds are more likely to be in HE, the same cannot be said for those from the other non-manual backgrounds. Indeed, their probability is even lower than the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual group.

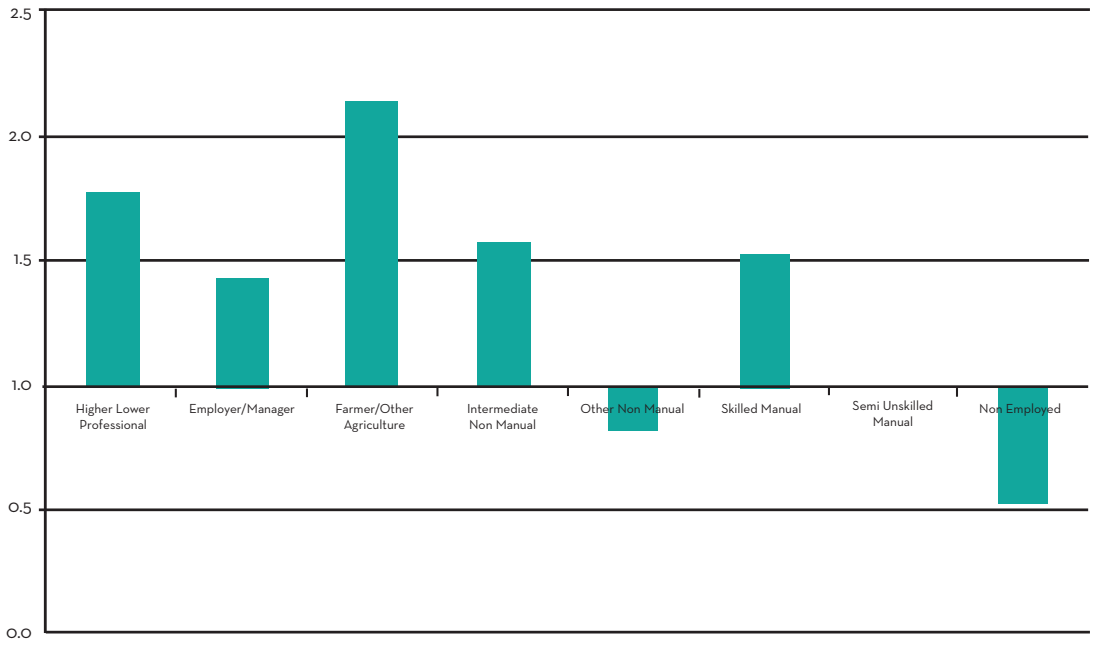
22 Interaction effects were tested between gender and socio-economic background, but no evident interaction was found.

Figure 6.10: Odds Ratios for Participation in Higher Education (All Entrants)



When we consider those who have achieved at least 2 honours in the Leaving Certificate examination, we find that these socio-economic disparities hold and even become more pronounced (Figure 6.10a).

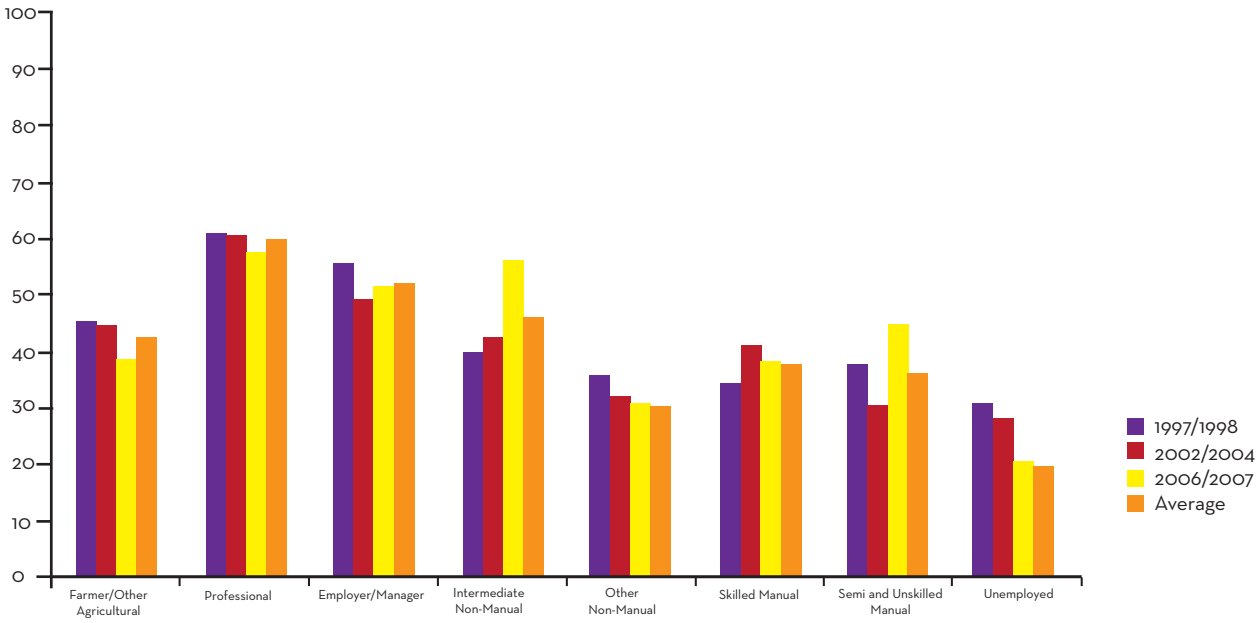
Figure 6.10a: Odds Ratios for Participation in Higher Education (those who achieved at least 2 honours in LCE or LCVP)



6.4.2 Higher Education Sector

Differentiation in the sector of HE that young people enter into is prominent, with school leavers from more advantaged backgrounds much more likely to enrol in university courses than any other institute (Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education or Others). As shown in Figure 6.11, while almost two-thirds of HE participants from professional backgrounds enter university courses, less than one-third of those from the other non-manual backgrounds similarly enter courses in this sector.

Figure 6.11: Enrolment in University courses among Higher Education entrants by Parental Socio-Economic Background



The type of institution entered by other non-manual school leavers is similar to the pattern for semi- and unskilled manual youth: while 35 per cent of other non-manual HE participants enter university courses, 33 per cent of the semi- and unskilled manual group similarly enrol on university courses. Young people from intermediate non-manual backgrounds, as well as being more likely (than the other non-manual group) to succeed at school and progress to HE, are also more likely to enter courses in the university sector.

Strong impact of Socio-Economic Background

In order to consider whether socio-economic disparity exists in terms of the type of HE sector that young people enter, we consider the sector of HE that non-manual young people enter relative to those from the semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds through the use of odds ratios as before. The multivariate model developed in Table 6 of Appendix D allows a relatively straightforward comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that young people enter a university versus any other type of HE institution. As before, from these models, it is possible to calculate odds ratios, which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will attend HE at a university relative to a different case. Table 6.3 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of significant variables, when controlling for gender, socio-economic background, parental education, region, socio-economic group and school type attended (DEIS, sector).

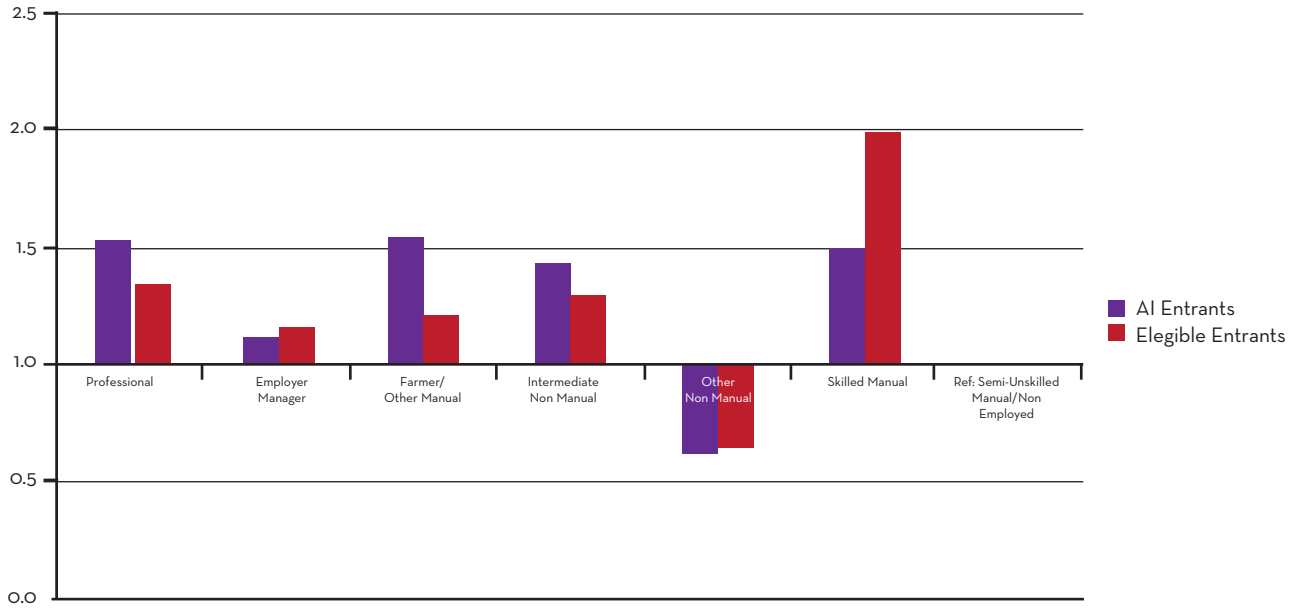
The reference case is a male from a semi-unskilled manual background, living in Dublin, whose parents have primary level education, who attended a community/comprehensive, DEIS school for our sample.

Table 6.3: Odds Ratios for Participation at a University v Other Institution (All Higher Education Entrants)

	All HE Entrants	Eligible Entrants
Parental Education		
Degree	3.15	2.34
Primary or Less	1.00	1.00

We find that apart from socio-economic background, parental education is also a determinant of attending HE at a university: students who have a least one parent with a degree level education are over three times more likely to attend a university. Figure 6.12 then illustrates the impact of socio-economic background among all entrants. The blue bars indicate how students from professional, farming and skilled manual socio-economic backgrounds are over one-and-a-half times more likely to attend a university than any other type of HE institution than those from a semi-unskilled or non-employed background. Those from an intermediate non-manual background show considerably higher odds of attending a university institution relative to those from an other non-manual background, the former displaying odds lower than those from the semi-unskilled manual and non-employed backgrounds. Interestingly, those from employer/manager backgrounds also show similar odds of attending a university as the reference group . The red bars then confine the analyses to only those who have achieved at least two honours in the Leaving Certificate (and so LCE and LCVP students). Again, we find that the patterns of odds of attending a university relative to any other HE type are structured in different directions for both the intermediate non-manual group and the other non-manual group.

Figure 6.12: Odds Ratios for Attending a University versus any other HE Type



As noted in an earlier footnote, a certain degree of caution should be exercised when interpreting these results due to the smaller number of observations in the sample as groups are disaggregated based on their trajectories. However, a model with gender and socio-economic background tells us that the other non-manual group are significantly less likely to enter a university relative to the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups. In this refined model when the disaggregated socio-economic categories are included in the model, we find that the other non-manual have a similar probability to each of the manual groups in terms of entry to universities (not shown here).

6.4.3 Course Level

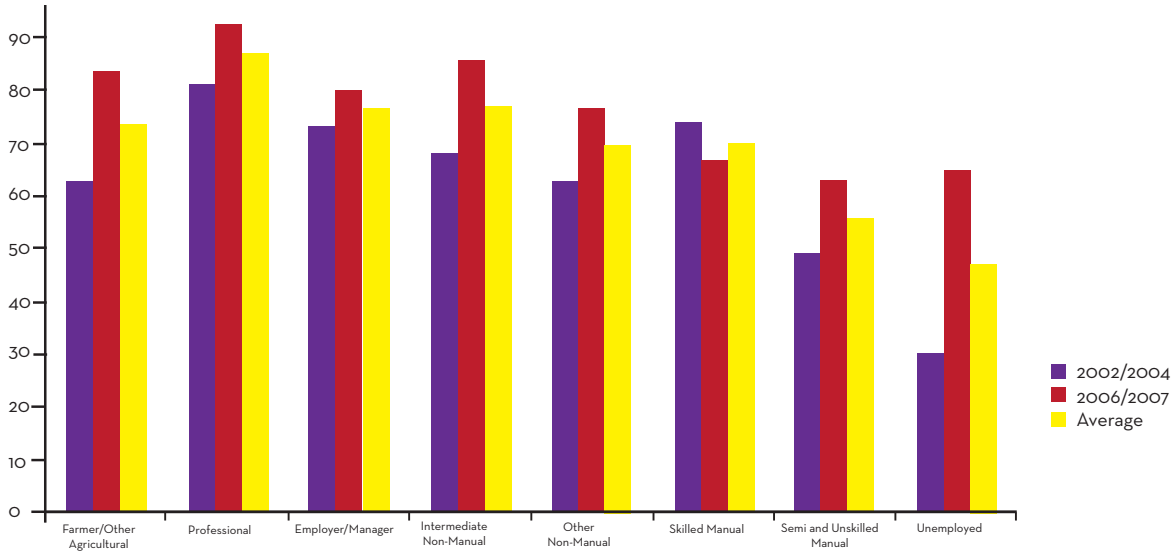
Table 6.4 considers the proportion of HE participants (confining the analyses to data from SLS 2002/04 and 2006/07) who pursue an honours degree course. Among the 2002/04 entrants nearly seven-out-of-ten school leavers are taking honours degree courses, while among the 2006/07 entrants this has risen to eight out of ten. A higher proportion of females than males opt for honours degree-level courses and this is particularly evident among the 2006/07 school leavers.

Table 6.4: Percentage of School Leavers in Full-Time Higher Education pursuing an Honours Degree on Completion of their Course, 2006/07

	2002/04	2006/07
All	69.7	84.2
Males	69.5	81.4
Females	69.8	86.6

Figure 6.13 then considers differentiation across socio-economic groups. Once again differentiation across socio-economic groups is noteworthy with a higher proportion of those from professional backgrounds enrolled on honours degree courses relative to those from working class backgrounds. For example, 92 per cent of those from a professional background opt for an honours degree course while this is the case for just 76 per cent of the other non-manual group. In total 85 per cent of those from the intermediate non-manual backgrounds pursue honours degree courses. Young people from other non-manual and semi- and unskilled manual backgrounds are least likely to enter higher status honours degree courses.

Figure 6.13: Percentage of School Leavers in Full-Time Higher Education who will Receive an Honours Degree on Completion of their Course by Parental Socio-Economic Background



Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

Figure 6.13 illustrates that there are clear socio-economic disparities evident in terms of who pursues an honours degree level course while at HE. Again, this finding is of obvious interest in those who would like to reduce socio-economic inequalities in entry to HE. At this point we now gauge the extent of socio-economic disparity evident at this stage, paying particular attention to the non-manual groups relative to other socio-economic groups.

The multivariate model developed in Table 7 of Appendix D allows an unambiguous comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that people pursue honours degree level courses at HE. From this model it is possible to calculate odds ratios as before, which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will pursue an honours degree level course upon entry to HE relative to a different case. Table 6.5 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of gender, parental education and school type attended, when controlling for other variables in the model[23] .

Table 6.5: Odds Ratios for Pursuing an Honours Degree Level Course

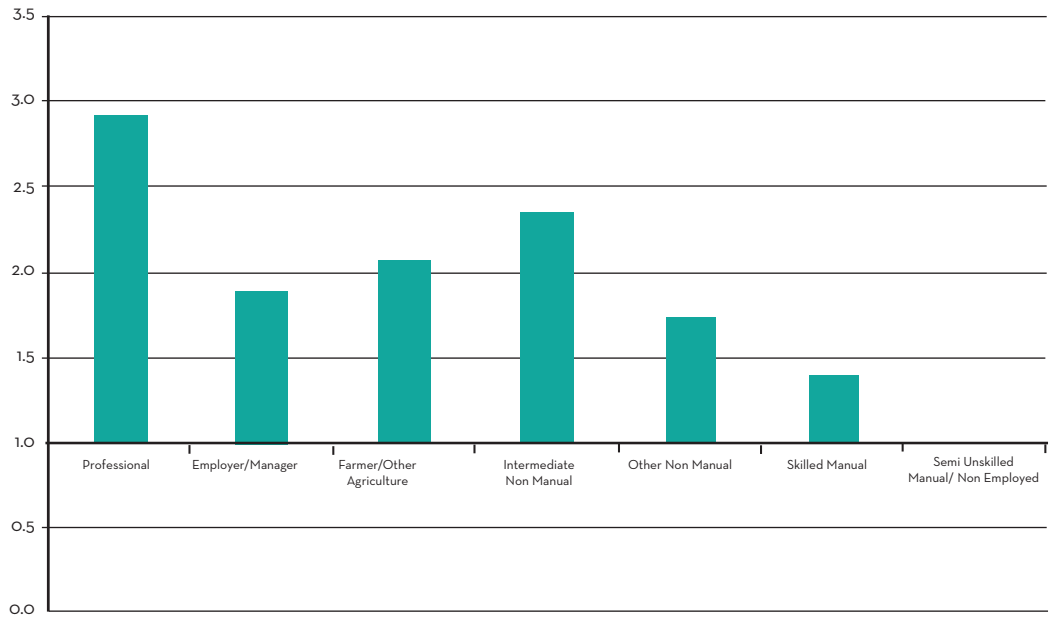
	Odds Ratio
Males	1.00
Females	1.44
Parental Education	
Degree	2.40
Primary or Less	1.00
Vocational School	.548
Secondary School	1.00
Community/Comprehensive	1.00

23 The reference case is a male from a semi-unskilled manual or non-employed background, from Dublin, whose parents have primary level education and who attended a community/comprehensive DEIS school.

Again, we find significant gender differences in terms of the level of HE pursued, with females being 1.4 times more likely to pursue an honours degree than males, all else being equal (that is, showing the same characteristics). Furthermore, parental education levels also approach significance, with students whose parents have a degree level education being almost two and half times more likely to pursue an honours degree than students who share the same characteristics but whose parents have a primary level education. We also find that students who attended vocational schools are less likely to pursue an honours degree at HE.

These odds ratios suggest considerable variation with regard to the characteristics of young people who pursue honours degree level courses at HE. In terms of socio-economic disparities, Figure 6.14 shows how students from professional, farming and intermediate non-manual socio-economic groups are more likely to pursue an honours degree level course at HE. That is, these students have higher odds of pursuing an honours degree level course relative to students from manual socio-economic groups. While the other non-manual group are somewhat more likely to display higher odds of pursuing an honours degree level course, the probability of this is not statistically significant (see Table 7 in Appendix D)[24] .

Figure 6.14: Odds Ratios for Pursuing an Honours Degree Level Course (All Entrants)



6.4.4 Receipt of Grant

Overall, the proportions of HE participants in receipt of State Financial Support (in the form of a grant), fell over the ten year period (Table 6.6) from 47 per cent in 1997/98 to 35 per cent in 2006/07. In all years, female HE participants are more likely to be in receipt of a grant than their male counterparts.

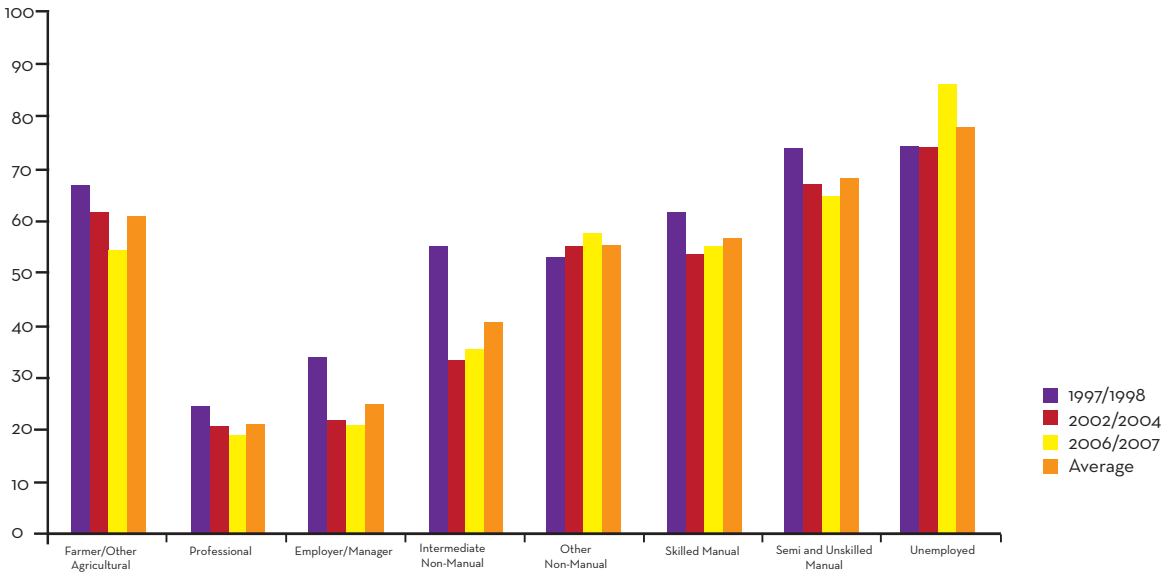
24 In order to test if these findings are applicable relative to all manual groups, Table 7a and Table 7b in Appendix D consider this model including only gender and socio-economic background. When using the disaggregated measure of socio-economic group, we find that the other non-manual group are no more likely than each of the manual groups to pursue an honours degree level course at HE.

Table 6.6: Percentage of Full-Time Higher Education Entrants receiving a Grant

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
All	46.9	37.3	34.4
Males	43.7	35.5	32.3
Females	49.6	38.8	36.2

Figure 6.15 then illustrates grant receipt for each socio-economic group and we see a decline in grant receipt by many socio-economic groups over this time period. Given that eligibility for financial support is, in most cases, based on parental income, it is not surprising to find that those from more advantaged professional and employer socio-economic backgrounds are least likely to be in receipt of a grant, while those from semi- and unskilled manual and unemployed backgrounds are most likely to receive a grant (Figure 6.15). The proportion of HE students from the other non-manual group in receipt of a grant are largely similar to proportions for the skilled manual group, while grant receipt is somewhat lower among the intermediate non-manual group, particularly in more recent years, suggesting that this group has been impacted greatest by changes in income eligibility thresholds over time. Further discussion of this issue is detailed in a recent study on the costs of participating in HE (McCoy *et al.*, forthcoming). We also find that grant receipt has increased somewhat among entrants from the non-manual group. It is interesting to observe high levels of grant take-up among those from a farming background.

Figure 6.15: Percentage of Full-Time Higher Education Participants Receiving Grant by Parental Socio-Economic Background



Impact of Socio-Economic Group on Grant Receipt

To consider socio-economic variation in grant receipt, we consider the extent to which young people from non-manual backgrounds receive grants once entry into HE has been navigated relative to those from the semi-skilled/unskilled manual/non-employed groups. The multivariate model developed in Table 8 of Appendix D estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood of gaining a grant once people enter HE.

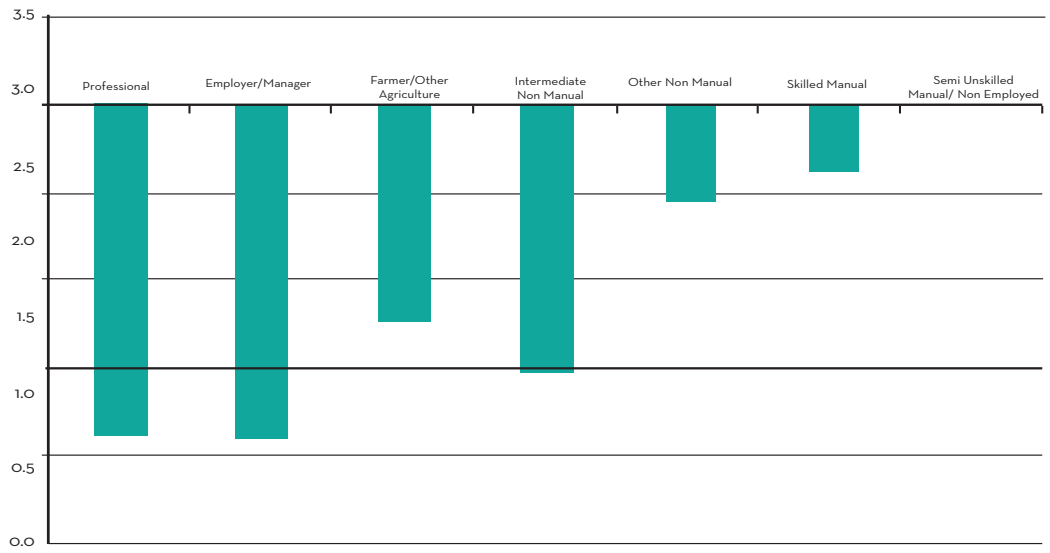
As before, from this model it is possible to calculate odds ratios which express the odds that a person (of particular characteristics) will receive a grant. Table 6.7 displays the odds ratios that summarise the effect of parental education, when controlling for all variables in the model. We find that the higher the level of education that a young person's parents hold, the lower the odds of receiving a grant.

Table 6.7: Odds Ratios for Receiving a Grant

	Odds of Receiving a Grant
Parental Education	
Primary or Less	1.00
Junior Certificate	.345
Leaving Certificate	.272
Diploma	.230
Degree	.110

Figure 6.16 illustrates the impact of socio-economic group on grant receipt. We now see how students from professional, employer/manager, farming and intermediate non-manual groups have similar odds of not receiving a grant while students from other non-manual and skilled manual groups have similar odds of receiving a grant.

Figure 6.16: Odds Ratio of Receiving a Grant (All Entrants)



6.4.5 Dropout from Higher Education in 2006/07

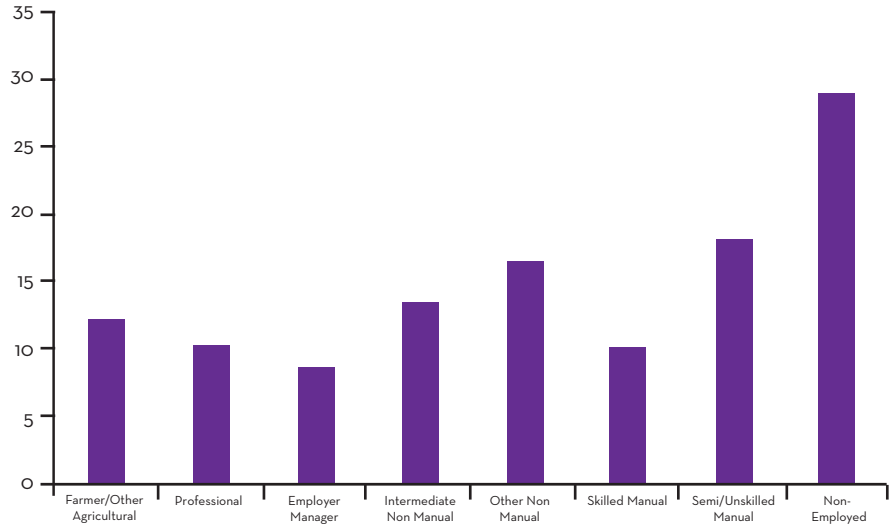
The most recent cohorts of the School Leavers' Survey data allow us to consider the prevalence of dropout among HE participants. Dropouts from HE are defined as those who indicate that they enrolled in HE at some point after leaving school but who are no longer enrolled at the time of the survey (2 years after leaving school). Table 6.8 suggests an overall dropout rate of approximately 12 per cent, with males displaying higher dropout levels than females: 15 per cent relative to 10 per cent.

Table 6.8: Percentage of Higher Education students who dropped out (within 2 years of entry)

	Drop Out
	2006/07
Total	12.4
Males	14.8
Females	10.4

When examining dropout across socio-economic groups we find wide variation with those from other non-manual, semi and unskilled manual and non-employed backgrounds displaying much higher dropout rates than those from higher socio-economic groups (Figure 6.17). Again those from more advantaged socio-economic groups display much more favourable results – with dropout rates of around 10 per cent among professional and employer groups. The other non-manual group has a drop out rate of 17 per cent, which is 4 percentage points higher than the corresponding rate for the intermediate non-manual group. Dropout rates are particularly high among those from non-employed backgrounds (three-in-ten), raising questions over the adequacy of supports (financial and otherwise) at HE to assist those from disadvantaged backgrounds in meeting the costs of fully participating in college life and integrating into the full range of student (academic and non-academic) activities (see McCoy *et al.*, forthcoming for a fuller discussion of these issues).

Figure 6.17: Percentage of School Leavers Who Ever Participated in Higher Education and Who Left Within the First Two Years by Parental Socio-Economic Group



Evidence from this chapter points to lower rates of application to HE among the other non-manual group, and that this group are also less likely to accept a place on a HE course than other groups. However, the story is less rejection than non-acceptance. This may be partially due to differences in entry qualifications, so any conclusions in this respect must be viewed with caution. The context then is one of apparent educational exclusion, linked to socially isolated forms of disadvantage in terms of economic and educational background. How is this situation to change? Irish government policy is committed to increasing participation rates to 72 per cent by 2020, a

minimum of 54 per cent for each socio-economic group (HEA, 2008). The aim is to enhance access by widening participation in ways that specifically target potential students from disadvantaged groups, in particular from poorer backgrounds. For such policies to succeed, it becomes important to develop a fuller understanding of the factors which may influence the educational decisions/choices of potential working class and lower-middle class applicants and their decisions about whether or not to apply to study at HE. The following section explores the role played by such factors, through qualitative interviews with young people who attended HE.

6.5 Young Peoples' Experiences of the Transition from School to Higher Education

Within the qualitative research sample of 29 school leavers, seven participants (six male and one female) attended HE. Among this group, one participant Josephine dropped out of HE during first year. Another participant, Daragh, attended one university for a year and then changed to a different degree course in another university. At the time of the interviews all participants in this group (with the exception of Josephine) were still attending HE and most were in the final year of their undergraduate courses. As shown in Table 6.9, the majority of this group attended a voluntary secondary school (none of which fall within the DEIS programme), one participant (Josephine) attended a comprehensive school (which is included in the DEIS programme) and Eamon attended a vocational school, again which is categorised as disadvantaged under the DEIS programme. Four members of this group grew up in Dublin (Eamon, Gerard, Paul, Daragh) while the remaining members grew up outside Dublin, Patrick in Co. Kildare, Josephine in Co. Mayo and Philip in Co. Cork.

Table 6.9: Demographic Details of the Higher Education Group

Name	School Type	INM or ONM [26]	Sector
Eamon	Vocational DEIS	INM	IOT
Patrick	Voluntary Secondary Non/DEIS	INM	University
Josephine*	Comprehensive DEIS	INM	IOT
Gerard	Voluntary Secondary Non/DEIS	INM	University
Paul	Voluntary Secondary Non/DEIS	INM	IOT
Daragh	Voluntary Secondary Non/DEIS	INM	University
Philip	Voluntary Secondary Non/DEIS	ONM	University

*Dropped out of HE during first term

The following sections outline these young peoples' experiences of making the transition from school to HE. In doing so it outlines their experiences of home life and parental expectations of entry into HE, their attitudes towards finishing school, their experiences of the transition to HE and their outlook for the future.

25 INM=Intermediate Non-manual, ONM=Other Non-manual

6.5.1 Home Life and Parental Expectations

Regarding the socio-economic background of this group, the parents (one or both) of six participants are employed in intermediate non-manual jobs and the father of the remaining participant, Philip, is from an other non-manual socio-economic background[26] . Just one participant has parents who attended HE and one participant has a parent who is currently pursuing an Arts degree as a mature student. Gerard was somewhat distinct out of the group, in that his father 'was the only one out of his whole family who went to college like, so he sort of puts a huge emphasis on education'.

When participants spoke about their siblings it transpired that the majority of this group have a sibling who had attended or was currently attending HE. Only one participant (Josephine) did not have a sibling who attended HE but has a younger sibling in Leaving Certificate year who she believes will 'definitely' progress to HE. The influence of parental and sibling expectations and choice in relation to HE were powerful for these individuals. In comparing the influence of peers relative to siblings, for instance, Philip responds:

Do you think it might have discouraged you if none of your friends were going to college?

'Not really, I suppose it is more the family really, my brothers and sisters went to college'.

A number of them talked about the impact of having an older sibling in HE; Patrick, for example, spoke of the impact of his older brother:

> 'I would have been going into junior cert, third year. He went, he started college, so I kind of got a taste of what college was like you know, through him, and as far as I can remember he was set to go to college ... he was brilliant... he got 600 points in his Leaving like, so he was always geared towards going towards college'.

In relation to their own post-school pathways, the general feeling in the group was that HE was a natural progression for them. As Eamon stated about his life stages:

> 'you go to pre-school, primary school, secondary school, college and then to work'.

Participants were questioned about when the decision to attend HE was reached. The general consensus among this group was that progression to HE was simply 'assumed' (Gerard). When asked to elaborate on when and how the expectation to attend HE developed, Gerard relayed that it was

> 'just sort of like unspoken, I wouldn't even have talked about it'.

Similarly as Paul put it, rather than discussing if he was going to attend HE:

> 'the first question would have been what college are you going to'.

Philip made a similar comment:

> 'Yeah I was definitely going to go to college it was just a matter of how many points I got and what courses I got accepted into'.

---

26 This contrasts with members of both the labour market entrant and PLC/Apprenticeship groups in the following chapters of this report, half of whom came from other non-manual backgrounds.

Likewise, Daragh simply states 'I always thought I was going to get to college'. When asked if there was a time when he made that decision, he reflects it was:

> 'just always there, there was never a time where I decided yeah I'll go to college'.

Additionally participants spoke about growing up in an environment where HE was valued and there was always a strong likelihood that they would attend. Josephine summed up this point when referring to her mother's positive opinion of HE:

> 'well I suppose because she recognises that if you have a degree or you have a profession, you're going to get on better in the world than if you don't and it's the truth'.

Overall the participants in this group felt they were encouraged rather than as Paul felt 'pushed' by their parents to attend HE. This is important to note as it may indicate that other factors may have a role to play in young peoples' decisions to attend HE, such as peer or school influences. On the other hand, it could suggest that participants in this group were always likely to attend and developed such aspirations early on, so their parents (or other significant others) never needed to 'push' them.

This contrasts with the experiences which other young people may face, as Eamon contends the influence of the local environment and HE participation in a local area can be important:

> '... where do they live? What's their social standard? You know does everyone in there [that area] go to college [or] there's no-one in your area go to college, I mean that's a big thing ... you got your good areas and you have bad areas and statistically you know good areas go to college and bad areas don't go to college or move in to the lower end jobs'. (Eamon)

6.5.2 Attitudes towards finishing school

In order to gauge how happy participants in this group were with their options they were asked to describe how they felt when leaving school. All participants in the HE group described being optimistic about their future. Naturally some members of this group relayed feelings of sentiment at the prospect of leaving their school friends, thus feeling a mixture of emotions. As Eamon put it:

> 'in a way getting out of sixth year it's time to move on to the next stage. But you know at times it's sad you know who your friends are and everyone is going separate directions. [I was] generally positive about getting into college and starting'.

The general feeling amongst the participants in this group was that they were looking forward to starting college and life after school. As Paul said:

> 'I remember there was a real buzz around who was going to where and you found out friends that you were in class with going to the same college. Yeah, I remember that, that was really good'.

6.5.3 Experiences in Higher Education

In general this group spoke positively about their experiences in HE. There was variation in the type of institution attended by participants in this group i.e. three attended institutes of technology and four enrolled in university courses. Amongst this group, four individuals did not receive grants (Eamon, Gerard, Paul, Daragh), whilst the re-

maining three were eligible for a grant. It is interesting to note that no member of this group raised lack of finance during their college years as an issue of major concern to them. On the other hand the majority of the group lived in their family home while attending (with the exception of Josephine). On the issue of finances some members of this group raised the point that while they attended HE they forwent earnings compared to peers who entered the work force or began an apprenticeship directly after finishing second level. However, for the most part those who raised this point felt that their earning potential would increase due to their academic qualifications and therefore realised the opportunity cost of HE.

A number of respondents raised the issue of parents financially supporting them while they attended college and the important role this plays for other HE students. As Eamon notes, for many students:

> 'there's no need for them to go to work now because the chances are their parents are gonna pay for them through college and you just have to look around this college, I mean most of the students they aren't working or anything they're just, how they're able to get the money to live their life and it's probably coming from the parents because the economy is doing so well'.

However, Eamon's experiences were by no means common to all participants; Eamon, and Philip, were in the minority in not having a regular part-time job while attending HE, in Philip's case savings from summer-time employment alongside money from his parents provided him with sufficient funds to support him during the academic year. However, Daragh, Gerard, Josephine and Paul all rely heavily on the income they receive from their part-time employment. For some, much of their earnings were to maintain a car and for socialising:

> 'all the money I have now is just for pleasure more so than anything else'.

Others used the funds for basics such as food, college materials and travel. However, as noted earlier almost all members of this group of HE entrants lived at home with their parents and hence did not have the additional expenses of maintaining an independent household.

Participants identified a range of factors that influenced their college choice processes. Patrick spoke again of the impact of the college his brother attended:

> 'I had kind of decided I would go to [name of university] cause my brother went there and he was, he was very pleased with it, seemed to be getting on well and I would've visited him in college a few times, before I actually went into college and I liked the look of the place'.

Almost all participants spoke of attending college open days and careers events (such as the annual event hosted by the RDS):

> 'Well I went to the open day there [name of college] and it just seemed like a good college and socially it seemed to be a good place as well' (Philip).

Participants were also quite instrumental in their course choices, while career goals played a somewhat less prominent role. Most felt that there would be plenty of opportunity during the course of their degree to fine-tune their specific career path:

> 'I suppose it was always in the back of your mind, what you're going to end up working as. But there was no, no real concerns, just like oh you know maybe in ten years time what are you going to be? ... there was never any serious thought put into it, it was more so, you go to college and then you worry about it [your career] afterwards'. (Patrick)

> Most of the participants chose 'broad' courses which would allow them to make more specific career plans later.
>
> 'Well at the time I wasn't interested in anything too specific like, so it seemed like a broad enough course' (Philip),

However, there were exceptions, and a minority of respondents were quite focused on their career prospects in choosing a course:

> 'I wouldn't have any particular passion for it really but I think you'd get a good job from it … having good career prospects would be the most important thing in my opinion' (Philip).

Some found that work experience they had undertaken while at school helped to identify areas of interest or not of interest. Paul found that a period of Transition Year work experience in manual employment reinforced his interest in progressing to HE and furthering his education:

> 'I did my work experience with the lads, I worked over in [name] hospital and I knew the maintenance guys and I did my work experience … they sent me to all departments, the carpentry, the electricians and the plumber … I really didn't like it'.

As mentioned earlier, only one participant (Josephine) in this group is currently not attending a third-level institution. Josephine believes one of the main reasons why she dropped out was because, at 17 years of age, she was 'immature' when she entered HE. She felt delaying entry to college by one year would mean young people are 'more mature' when they go. Josephine realised that the 'freedom' she encountered in HE was an important part of college life for her. In her own admission, when asked what she liked about college, she replied:

> 'the freedom' and when asked if she disliked anything about college, she also replied 'the freedom'.

It is interesting to note that only one member of this group mentioned immaturity as an impediment to HE, whereas it is raised by a higher number of participants in the other two groups. In particular, a number of members of the LM group express the view that they were immature during the latter stages of their schooling and on leaving school, which led to poor behaviour and poor choices, which they now regret.

One criticism about life in HE raised by several members of this group related to the scale and size of the institutions. Daragh started a degree course in university, which he left shortly after the Christmas of his first year, for two main reasons. First he felt the subjects in this course did not suit him and he believed his guidance counsellor should have given him more 'clear, concise information about the course'. Secondly, he criticised the scale and size of the university he attended and felt 'there's no real atmosphere' in a bigger university. By the time Daragh had made a decision to leave that university he had already decided to start a different course in another college. He found the new college more suited to his needs as:

> 'the college is completely different as well as college life, it's a more homely atmosphere, it's small and small classes so you get to know your lecturer and you can interact with the lecturer better' (Daragh).

Two other members of this group raised this point. Gerard described the university he attended as:

> 'just like an institution, you know. It's like a sheep factory or something you just go in there maybe meet a couple of people and just out the other door'.

Whereas he felt a smaller college may allow students to 'get to know the lecturers on a one-to-one basis'. Gerard elaborated on this point:

> '... if you were speaking to a person you'd meet them the first week, you might see them the next week and go oh right you know how's such and such getting on. You'd remember speaking to them about something. Like in [name of university] by and large ... you are talking to you know a girl or fellow beside you and you are not going to see them again. ... you are making small talk conversation with everyone you meet. And you've a lot of these kind of, you know acquaintances more so, like you'd see them but you wouldn't have any dealings with them. So that's why like the likes of [institute of technology] and that all their classes, you see their classes and they are all mates, they've only known each other for like, it's pretty much like we were in school. You know when a new lad came into school you made friends with them. I find the [name of institute of technology] lads are a lot closer than [name of university] lads'.

Paul, who is attending an institute of technology, also raised this issue: when asked what he liked about the college he replied:

> 'It's small and you know everyone and lecturers, it's real personable. And [name of university] is great, I would have loved to go there but everyone I've spoken to they loved it for a year and then it's just so big, like they just get tired of it. It's tiresome'.

Overall, participants in this group were happy with their decision to attend HE. It would appear respondents place a value on this education and feel attending HE is not only an important part of life but also allows a good quality lifestyle. Daragh illustrated this point when he spoke about having an opportunity to join the Gardaí when he finished secondary school. In the end he decided to attend HE rather than join the Gardaí, and when asked why, he replied:

> 'I knew it was better to get a degree first'.

He then went on to explain that

> 'I was too young, [referring to joining the Gardaí], thought I'd have no life you know, where I could go travelling during the summers or I could go off to Australia for a year' (Daragh).

However, one respondent, Eamon, felt that those who had entered the labour market on leaving school had secured a (short-term) earnings advantage, which was illustrated by their ability to get on to the property ladder:

> 'Those guys who didn't do their Leaving Cert or who did crap in the Leaving Cert, didn't go to college, one of them is a revenue manager of a hotel ... another guy he went in to do plastering ... he just bought a house. Another guy went and worked for the rail service again has just bought a house ... it's pretty impressive really and we're all in college you know living off daddy's back pretty much. ... So I'm four years behind now when I go into employment ... will I earn enough money to make that back? You can debate it'.

When asked what they liked about HE answers ranged from an educational perspective , such as learning to be being critical (Patrick), to a more social point of view – for example, enjoying the student bar (Gerard). Two participants mentioned that the industry in which a person would like to work should dictate if a person attends HE, rather than feeling it is a necessity. They felt that doing a trade and gaining an apprenticeship could be just as valuable as a degree (Philip, Eamon). Eamon went on to suggest that some individuals from certain backgrounds might naturally follow in their parents' footsteps and enter a trade for example.

Patrick captures the essence of HE education for him when he states:

> 'I definitely would not regret going to college, I think I've learned more in college than I have anywhere else … in the social or political realm, college was … you find you're able to get a proper kind of understanding, as opposed to repeating what people say. You get into it yourself … it encourages you to be kind of critical of you know things, that's probably the essence of college degrees anyway, it's to encourage you to be kind of analytical and critical of things … I think college has been hugely beneficial in that respect'.

This point was also illustrated when participants were asked how to motivate someone to go to college. In general the responses were of three categories. One, to explain the social side of college, which young people in this sample felt would tempt anyone to college (Patrick, Paul). Second, that unless a person showed a desire to attend they should not be forced as they should 'have an interest in it' (Gerard). Others referred to the career prospects and personal fulfilment of achieving HE qualifications, as Josephine relayed:

> 'I'd just say well what do they want for their life, do they want to be in dead end jobs for the rest of their life or do they want to you know have a profession or you know be happy'.

6.5.4 Reflection on Post-School Pathway

Participants were asked to reflect on their post school pathway and consider if they were currently doing what they felt they would be doing when they were in their final year of school. One participant could not really comment on this as he felt he never thought too much about his future when he attended second-level school (Paul). Josephine felt at this stage she would be completing her final year in college. The remaining participants in this sample felt that, while they may not be doing the exact course they envisaged, they were at the stage of their education they felt they would be at. It is important to note that no participant spoke about expecting to do an apprenticeship or entering the workforce directly. Again this reiterates the point made earlier that participants in this group generally felt (from a relatively early stage) that they would attend HE. To probe this issue further participants were asked if they could describe what they felt influenced them most in choosing HE as their post school pathway. Participants found this difficult to pinpoint. Only one respondent could identify a main influence on their decision to attend HE. This was Daragh who felt his elder sister was his main influence. She was always unhappy in her job and she encouraged him to attend so he would have more career options. As most people in this group could not pinpoint any specific influencing factor on their decision to attend this could signify how 'innate' attending HE is for this group.

Participants were asked if they were happy with their post school choices. Also if they would prefer to do things a different way, they were asked what would help them. The majority of this group were happy with their post school pathways. However, one participant (Eamon) felt if he was to change anything he might do a degree by night and work during the day. This was due to financial reasons.

Respondents were also asked their views on their peers who did not progress to HE. A number of respondents accepted that HE was not necessarily for everyone. As Philip comments on his peers who did not go to HE, their decision may have stemmed from a less academic orientation or a different emphasis in their (home) environment:

> 'I mean maybe they just weren't you know academically that well or anything or they preferred to do something more practical in their life like art … [or] a trade or something like that. I wouldn't say they were discouraged from it like, but maybe they weren't pushed into an academic kind of lifestyle'.

Participants were asked to give three pieces of advice to someone currently doing their Leaving Certificate. For

the most part the advice suggested by participants reflected their individual experiences. For example, Eamon suggested studying harder to get more points, as not everyone (including himself) will get their number one option.

In general the advice centred on two main issues. First, respondents emphasised studying harder in school to ensure maximum points in the Leaving Certificate, which would improve the chances of securing their highest CAO preference. Most young people in this group felt that higher Leaving Certificate examination results will lead to more options in the long term. Second, participants advised students to thoroughly research college courses to ensure that subjects taken on different modules would be of interest. This would allow young people to make an 'informed decision' (Gerard) on their CAO preferences. It is important to note that the advice given by this group focuses heavily on HE issues, again illustrating the importance they attach to HE.

6.5.5 Future Thoughts

Finally, participants in this group were predominantly positive about their future plans. Josephine felt she would continue with her QFA accountancy modules and remain in employment simultaneously. The most common thought amongst participants in this group was to travel abroad when they finish their degrees (Philip, Eamon, Patrick, Gerard). They felt they would delay looking for a 'proper job' until after they had travelled abroad (Philip). The remaining participants felt they would do a postgraduate course. As Paul explained:

> 'Well I think everyone's going to college these days so like I don't know, I think a Masters now is the, it's what college was fifteen years ago a Masters is now'.

One participant (Philip) ruled out further education as an option for his immediate plans.

It is important to note that most participants in this group felt that they needed more time to decide on the area in which they would seek employment. Daragh felt his best option was to take a year out after college and decide during that year the area where he would like to work. As he explained:

> 'It's just yourself, it's up to you to decide, as you get older and more mature, you're going to be able to make your decisions. I suppose experience as well, if I get the experience of teaching and I don't like it, I'll know then it's not for me'.

At no point did any participant in this group relay negative feelings about their capacity to gain employment when they finished their course.

6.5.6 Summary of the experience of higher education entrants

Considering the family expectations that they spoke about coupled with their positive school experiences it is unsurprising that these individuals always believed HE was on their agenda. It is interesting to note that only one member of this group could pinpoint what influenced him to attend, this being a family member. Thus it could be argued that for some young people attending HE is somewhat internalized in their psyche.

As discussed in Chapter Five, in relation to second-level, one participant in this group mentioned disruptive behaviour in class and another brought up poor quality teaching. However, in general the participants in this group spoke positively about their school days and by their own admission felt encouraged by their school environment to attend. They indicated this when they spoke about the changing relationship they felt they had with their teachers as the Leaving Certificate examination approached. This positive experience of second level has continued on to HE and even as far as the optimistic outlook they feel for their future careers. The only main

criticism of their experiences to emerge was the issue of adjusting to the scale and size of some HE institutions.

It is important to note that the majority of young people in this group realised the opportunity cost of a third-level education, when they compared their career prospects to those of their peers who did not attend. However, it is also important to note that young people in this group also acknowledged that HE was not the only acceptable post school route. The group acknowledged that HE is challenging in itself and should only be attempted if a person has a genuine interest in a subject. Thus career ambitions and interests should dictate entry. Some of this group viewed an apprenticeship/trade as an equally valid option. As Philip summed up when talking about how to motivate someone to attend:

> 'Well I'd say they should really find an interest in something, whether it is a trade or college, especially if they want to go straight into work then they're not going to have any qualifications or anything, unless they go into work as a tradesperson or as an apprenticeship, you know something that they can take away, experience and a trade as well, so I'd definitely try and influence that person to you know get an interest in doing something'.

Overall, this group did not relay any regrets about attending and they seem to place great value on their HE experiences. This is summed up nicely by the only member of this group with children. When asked if she would like her own children to attend HE she replied:

> 'Well if I have to sit beside them in college they'll go to college' (Josephine).

6.6 Summary

The approach taken in this chapter to understand the nature of the HE decision was to use a mixed-methods approach utilising the quantitative data to examine HE application patterns, (including reasons for not applying), HE offer and acceptance patterns (including reasons for not accepting a CAO offer) and to examine the characteristics of HE entrants relative to nonentrants; and to use the qualitative data to further explain why the decision to enter HE differs within the non-manual group.

This summary begins by reporting on empirical findings from this chapter which are at the heart of this report. Among those who have completed second-level education the intermediate non-manual group have a higher average participation rate in full-time HE over time than the other non-manual group (51 per cent relative to 36 per cent). The analyses in this chapter empirically show that the pattern of participation of the intermediate non-manual group most closely resembles the employer/manager group, while the pattern for the other non-manual group most closely resembles the semi-skilled and unskilled manual groups. These patterns identified by descriptive analyses were reinforced in the multivariate analyses which indicated that, all else being equal, the intermediate non-manual group are over one and a half times more likely to participate in full-time HE than those from a semi-unskilled manual group, while the other non-manual group have similar odds of participation relative to those from semi-skilled manual groups.

In order to explain why participation rates differ within the non-manual group, we consider application, offer and acceptance patterns. The chapter began by empirically demonstrating that HE application patterns indicate substantial differentiation between the two non-manual groups, and we see from the offset that young people from intermediate non-manual backgrounds have higher rates of application than those from non-manual backgrounds (79 per cent relative to 69 per cent). In fact, across all socio-economic groups, young people from

the other non-manual background have the lowest application rates. Using School Leavers' Survey data the chapter then considered why it is that some young people do not apply for HE in the first instance. This nationally representative data indicates that most young people do not apply because they are 'not interested' in attending HE. Indicating a 'non interest' in HE is particularly evident for males and this pattern may be linked to favourable labour market opportunities and/or attractive education/training alternatives (see Byrne, McCoy and Watson 2009, 2009). However, financial considerations (wanting to earn money/inability to afford to go to HE) was also a frequently occurring reason for not applying to HE, but it is highly likely that these two reasons are intertwined. For example, it is likely that if a young person knows that their family does not have the financial resources to pay for the costs of education, they may well adjust their expectations and indicate a 'non-interest' in applying to HE. The complexity behind such decision-making is an important consideration given that the other non-manual group were somewhat more likely to indicate that they were not interested in going to HE or that they wouldn't get the grades necessary for HE than the intermediate non-manual group. The endogeneity of the decision to apply for HE is tied up with individual and structural theories of educational decisions which consider whether the decision was 'intentional' or 'un-intentional'. For example, various versions of rational action theory (Boudon 1974; Keller and Zavalloni 1964; Erikson and Jonsson 1996; Becker 2003; Breen and Yaish 2006) argue that if individuals can obtain their social status position through alternative education/training opportunities, then this provides a less risky and more cost efficient strategy for the individual and their family. Alternatively, differences within the non-manual groups in terms of application to HE could be explained by structural theories emphasising the role of the school and the role of the family. The qualitative interviews with HE participants in this chapter support this cultural argument in that we saw examples of how parents of HE entrants set a high value on education and were better equipped to encourage and promote educational success on the part of their children, as well as provide the financial resources needed to achieve this level of education. Furthermore, all of the HE entrants in this chapter had positive experiences of second-level education in schools where there was a culture of progression to HE, thus school did not constitute a barrier to HE.

Unlike in the UK, there is no clear evidence of socio-economic disparity in relation to HE offers. However, there are clear differences in acceptance rates both across socio-economic groups and within the non-manual group: the nationally representative data indicates that the intermediate non-manual group has a higher acceptance rate than the other non-manual group (87 per cent compared to 84 per cent). Chapter 5 indicated that some labour market entrants and entrants to other forms of education and training had been offered places through the CAO process but did not accept these offers. Reasons for not accepting these offers generally ranged from not obtaining their preferred course (Ruth, Michael), expressing a preference for the apprenticeship route (Cian), or delaying entry to HE because of age (Declan). Nationally representative data from the School Leavers' Survey also indicates that while the intermediate non-manual group are more likely to cite financial or gap year (delayed entry) considerations in their reason for not accepting a CAO offer, the other non-manual group are more likely to cite not getting their preferred course or demonstrating a preference for alternative education/training courses. Again, while the non-manual group do not articulate financial considerations as a reason for not accepting a CAO offer as clearly as the intermediate non-manual group, it does not suggest that financial costs are irrelevant.
The language of preferences is important in this respect as preference is tied to the notion of the likelihood of success. The investment risk, as articulated by Erikson and Jonsson 1996 in the rational action framework, is a combination of the expected costs and the expected success of accessing or attending HE. Thus, if the likelihood of success seems too low, or the investment risk seems too high, young people may indeed reject a CAO offer for an education/training or labour market alternative, or indeed express a 'preference' for an alternative route.

The chapter then went on to consider the quality or type of HE that young people from different socio-economic groups experience once access has been negotiated, in terms of the type of HE institute attended, the level of course pursued, receipt of financial aid (grant) and drop out. Figure 6.12 illustrated that over time, the intermediate non-manual group have been more likely than the other non-manual group to secure a HE place in a university

than any other type of HE (47 per cent relative to 30 per cent), and this finding was reinforced in the multivariate analyses. It was interesting to find in the qualitative interviews with young people who attended HE that the scale and size of the institution was a consideration in their decision, with some indicating a preference for smaller institutions (and thus types of HE other than universities which tend to be large). Furthermore, the intermediate non-manual group have been more likely than the other non-manual group to secure an honours degree course than an ordinary degree or higher certificate (77 per cent relative to 69 per cent), and the multivariate analyses indicated that the intermediate non-manual group have a higher odds of pursing an honours degree course relative to those from the other non-manual group (2.3 versus 1.6)[27]. In terms of financial aid through grant receipt, we find that a higher proportion of the other non-manual group receive a grant than the intermediate non-manual group (55 per cent relative to 41 per cent). In fact, patterns of grant receipt for the intermediate non-manual group are more similar to those of higher professional, employer/manager and farmer groups while the other non-manual group are similar to the skilled manual group. Finally, in terms of drop-out, we find that the other non-manual group has a higher drop out rate than the intermediate non-manual group (17 per cent relative to 13 per cent).

An established body of research now exists in the sociology of education which debates why working-class children are diverted from university or perceived-to-be-prestigious forms of education (see Becker and Hecken 2008; Byrne 2009). Some of these debates argue that working class families decide in favour of a short and less ambitious education because of earlier decisions that are made in the educational trajectory of young person which hamper or obstruct access to more 'prestigious' forms of later education. This could include educational underperformance or the influence of tracking mechanisms at second-level. Alternatively, favourable economic conditions can provide attractive education/training alternatives (such as apprenticeships) which might divert working-class children from the attainment of a HE education. In reality, it is likely that a combination of these explanations can be used to explain differences in the type of HE pursued by the intermediate non-manual group and the other non-manual group.

27 While the other non-manual group are doing better than the reference group in this regard, it should be noted that the reference group has expanded to include the non-employed group.

CHAPTER 7

Entrants to Forms of Education other than Higher Education

7.1: Introduction

This chapter considers the pathways into other forms of education other than HE made by young people. In doing so, it considers the characteristics of those who pursue Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, Apprenticeships and other State Sponsored Training Programmes.

7.2 Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Courses

Overall levels of participation in PLC courses among school leavers declined over the 1997/98 – 2002/04 period but increased again between 2006/07[28] . Gender disparities are particularly evident as female school-leavers continue to dominate entry to this sector (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programme among those who Completed Senior Cycle

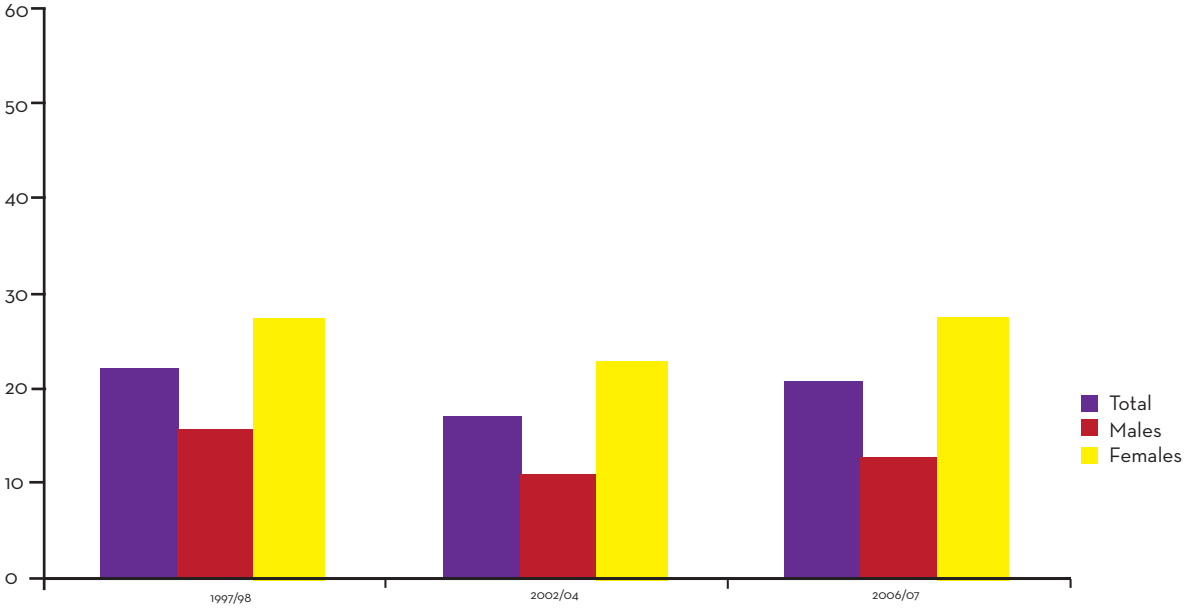
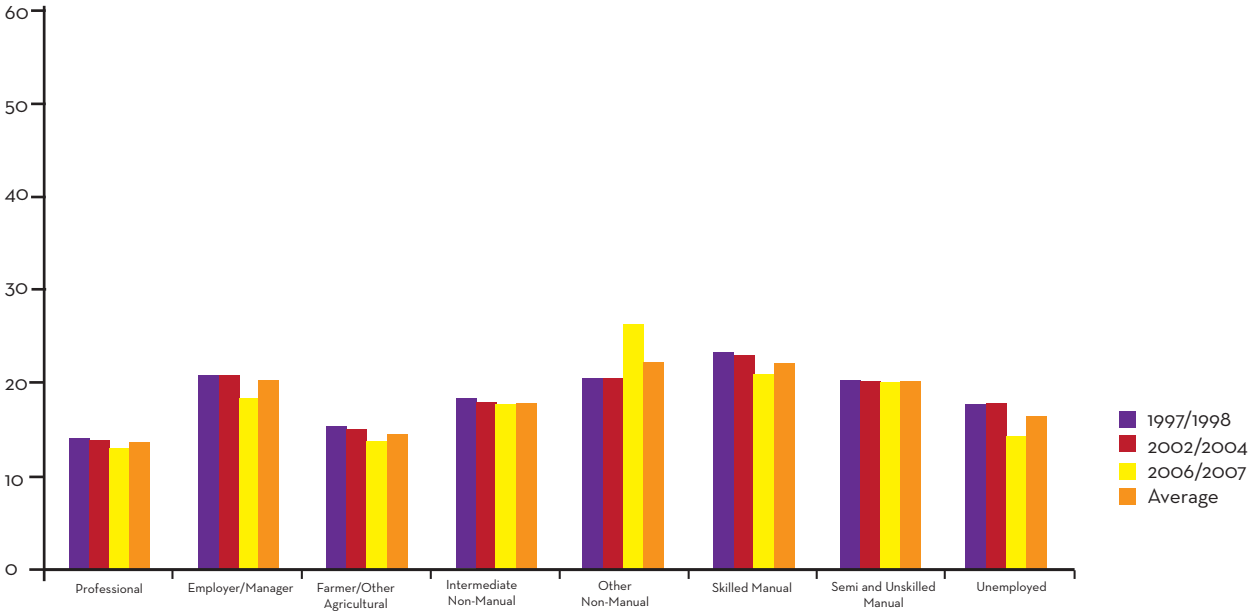


Figure 7.2 illustrates that patterns of participation by parental socio-economic group show relatively high levels of entry into this form of post-school education among young people from other non-manual backgrounds and skilled manual backgrounds, with young people from professional and farming backgrounds less likely to pursue this educational path.

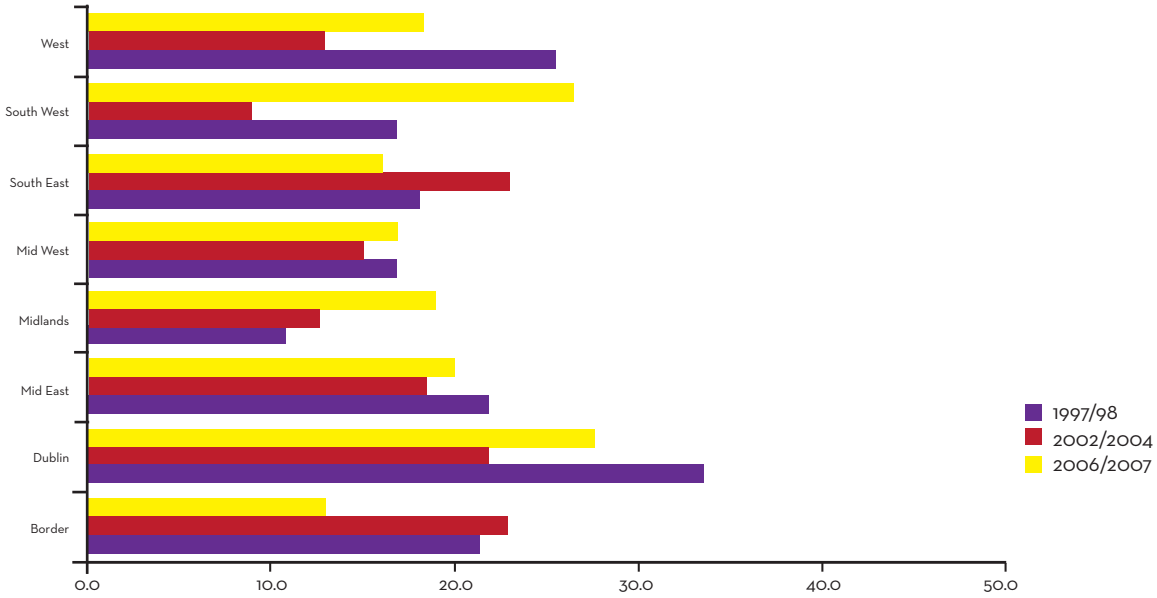
28 Overall participation in PLC courses has, however, risen over the period, reflecting increasing take-up of such courses among 'older' people rather than the traditional school leaving population (see Watson *et al.*, 2006).

Figure 7.2: Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programmes by Parental Socio-Economic Background



Patterns of participation in Post-Leaving Certificate programmes also show some regional variation (Figure 7.3), with, for the most recent cohort, school leavers from south-west, mid-east and Dublin regions most likely to enrol on PLC courses, perhaps reflecting variability in the provision of (large-scale) PLC courses (an issue which was examined in greater depth in Watson *et al.*, 2006).

Figure 7.3: Regional Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programmes among those who Completed Senior Cycle



Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

Figure 7.2 illustrates that there are clear socio-economic disparities at play in terms of participation in Post-Leaving Certificate courses. It is useful at this point to examine not just levels of participation in PLC courses among the non-manual groups; as before, comparison with young people from the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds is also important.

The multivariate model developed in Table 9 of Appendix D allows a relatively straightforward comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that people participate in a Post-Leaving Certificate course. The aim of the analysis is to examine the extent to which participation in the PLC sector is more likely among the other non-manual group relative to other groups. From this model, it is possible to calculate odds ratios which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will participate in a PLC relative to a different case. Table 7.1 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of gender and type of school that young people attended while at school, when controlling for socio-economic background, region, parental education levels, region and DEIS status of the school and attainment in the Leaving Certificate examination. The reference case is as before, a male from a skilled/unskilled manual background, living in Dublin, whose parents have primary level education and who attended a community or comprehensive DEIS school for our sample.

Table 7.1: Odds Ratios for Participation in PLC

	Model 1	Model 2
Male	1.00	1.00
Female	3.37	4.21
Secondary School	0.03	0.04
Vocational School	2.63	2.90
Community/Comprehensive	1.00	1.00
LC less 5 passes		1.00
LC 5+ passes		0.69
LC 1 Honour		0.94
LC 2-4 Honours		0.36
LC 5+ Honours		0.04

The first set of findings indicate that gender is a major factor that determines participation in a PLC course: the odds of a female showing the same characteristics of participating in a PLC course are 3.4 times higher than for males. Furthermore, school type attended is a key determinant of participation; students who attend a vocational school are just over two and a half times more likely to participate in a PLC course. These odds ratios now provide a ready comparison for the impact of socio-economic background, which is illustrated in Figure 7.4.

The odds ratios in Figure 7.4 indicate how students from professional and farming backgrounds have lower odds of participating in Post-Leaving Certificate courses: these groups are just about half as likely to participate relative to students from a manual background, while students from the other non-manual group have similar or somewhat higher odds of participating in a Post-Leaving Certificate course, particularly when controlling for previous attainment in the Leaving Certificate examination relative to students from a manual background.

Figure 7.4: Odds Ratios for Participation in PLC Courses

7.3 Participation in Apprenticeships

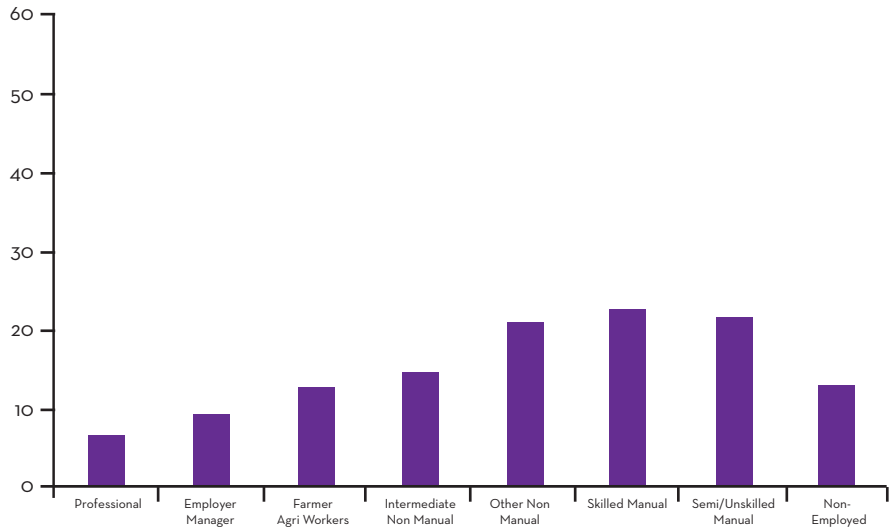
Apprenticeships represent a further form of alternative education and training to HE participation. It is difficult to get an estimate of the percentage of school leavers who have traditionally opted for the apprenticeship route however it is likely that this has grown until recent times. Among the 2006/07 cohorts, levels of participation are at 7 per cent, and this form of further education is dominated by males, of whom 13 per cent opt for an apprenticeship upon leaving school.

Table 7.2: Percentage of 2006/07 School Leavers who completed Senior Cycle who Entered Apprenticeships

	2006/07
Total	6.6
Male	13.1
Female	0.8

Figure 7.5 illustrates variation in uptake of apprenticeships by males who have completed senior cycle education by parental socio-economic background. What is particularly evident is that levels of participation are highest among those from the other non-manual socio-economic group and the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual socio-economic groups, which is perhaps not surprising given that many of the school leavers in this latter group have parents employed in sectors dominated by apprenticeship entry routes, such as jobs in the construction sector.

Figure 7.5: Parental Socio-Economic Variation in Participation Rates in Apprenticeships among those who Completed Senior Cycle (Males only)



Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

Figure 7.5 illustrates that there are clear socio-economic disparities at play in terms of participation in apprenticeships upon leaving school. It is useful at this point to gauge not only whether the effect of the other non-manual group is significant in participation in apprenticeships among males. As before, a helpful comparison is to examine the extent to which participation rates of non-manual young people vary relative to those from skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds.

The multivariate model developed in Table 10 of Appendix D allows a relatively straightforward comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that male school leavers who have completed the LCE or LCVP participate in an apprenticeship. From this model, it is possible to calculate odds ratios which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will participate in an apprenticeship relative to a different case. Table 7.3 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of parental education and previous attainment in the Leaving Certificate, when controlling for socio-economic background, region, parental education levels, region and DEIS status of the school. The reference case is as before, a male from a skilled/unskilled manual background, living in Dublin, whose parents have primary level education and who attended a community or comprehensive DEIS school for our sample.

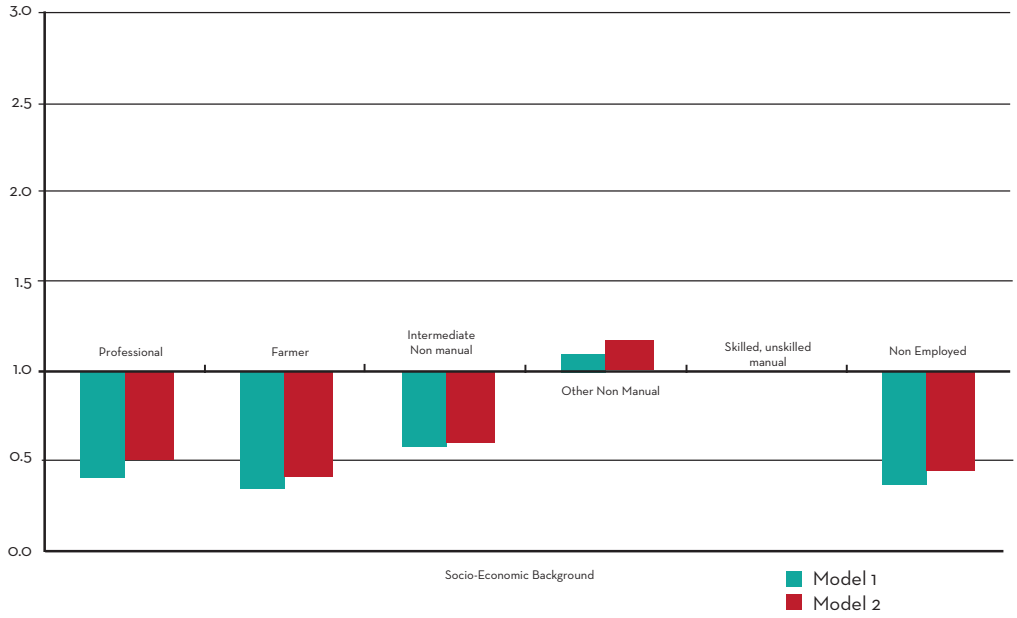
Table 7.3: Odds Ratios for Participation in Apprenticeships

	Model 1	Model 2
Primary or Less	1.00	1.00
Degree	0.29	0.38
LC less 5 passes		1.00
LC 5+ passes		1.45
LC 1 Honour		0.68
LC 2-4 Honours		0.98
LC 5+ Honours		0.13

The first set of findings indicate that parental education can determine participation in an apprenticeship for males: the odds of a young person whose parents have a degree level education are less than for the odds of a young person whose parents have primary level education. Furthermore, previous educational attainment in the Leaving Certificate is a key determinant of participation; students who achieve a lower level Leaving Certificate qualification are more likely to participate, while those who perform better are less likely to participate. These odds ratios now provide a ready comparison for the impact of socio-economic background, which is illustrated in Figure 7.6.

The odds ratios in Figure 7.6 indicate how students from the other non-manual socio-economic backgrounds have similar odds of participating in an apprenticeship as the manual group.

Figure 7.6: Odds Ratios for Participation in an Apprenticeship (Males only)



7.4 Participation in State Sponsored Training

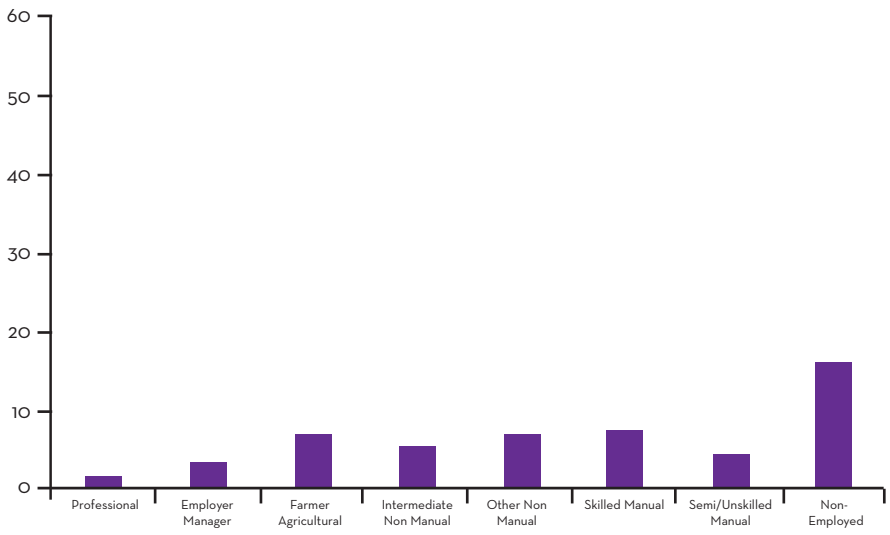
State-sponsored training includes FÁS Training schemes, programmes with Failte Ireland, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, Teagasc and Youthreach, but not apprenticeships. Among the 2006/07 cohorts, levels of participation in State Sponsored Training are at 5 per cent, and this form of further education is undertaken by both males and females, with 6 per cent of males and 4 per cent of females opting for this form of further education (see Table 7.4). It is important to note the diverse nature of participants in the 'state-sponsored training' category – some are accessing specific training courses to secure higher qualifications while others are pursuing second-chance education/ training which confers second-level qualifications.

Table 7.4: Percentage of 2006/07 School Leavers who Entered State Sponsored Training

	2006/07
Total	5.0
Male	5.9
Female	4.2

Figure 7.7 illustrates variation in uptake of state-sponsored training by males and females who have completed senior cycle education by parental socio-economic background. What is particularly evident is that levels of participation are highest among those from non-employed households. In addition, Figure 7.7 illustrates relatively high levels of participation among young people from farming backgrounds, most likely reflecting entry into Teagasc-run courses.

Figure 7.7: Parental Socio-Economic Variation in Participation Rates in State Sponsored Training among those who Completed Senior Cycle



Strong Impact of Socio-Economic Background

It is useful at this point to guage whether there is an effect of being from an other non-manual group on participation in state sponsored training programmes. As before, a helpful comparison is to examine the extent to which participation rates of non-manual young people vary relative to those from the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual backgrounds.

The multivariate model developed in Table 11 of Appendix D allows a relatively straightforward comparison to be made. The model estimates the relative influence of all the different variables on the likelihood that school leavers who have completed the LCE or LCVP participate in a state sponsored training programme. From this model, it is possible to calculate odds ratios which express the odds that a person of particular characteristics will participate in a state sponsored training programme relative to a different case. Table 7.5 provides odds ratios that summarise the effect of gender, parental education and school type attended, when controlling for socio-economic background, region, parental education levels, region and DEIS status of the school. The reference case is as before, a male from a skilled/unskilled manual background, living in Dublin, whose parents have primary level education and who attended a community or comprehensive DEIS school for our sample.

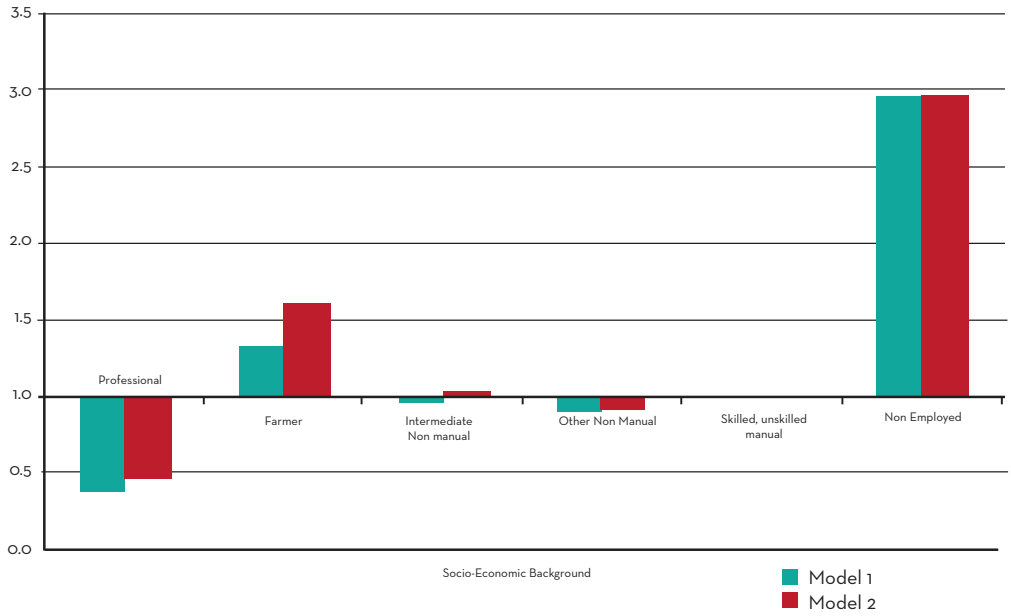
Table 7.5: Odds Ratios for Participation in State Sponsored Training

	Model 1	Model 2
Female	.59	.63
Male	1.00	1.00
Leaving Certificate	.44	.49
Primary or Less	1.00	1.00
Vocational school	1.82	1.73
Community Comprehensive	1.00	1.00
LC 2-4 Honours		.39
LC 5+ Honours		.05
LC less 5 passes		1.00

The first set of findings indicate that gender is a key determinant of participation in a state sponsored training programme: the odds of a female are less than for the odds of a male. Furthermore, parental education is also a key determinant of participation: students whose parents have a Leaving Certificate level education are less likely to participate than those whose parents have primary or less education. Furthermore, the type of school that young people attend is also important with students who attend a vocational school are 1.8 times more likely to participate in a state sponsored training programme upon leaving school. These odds ratios now provide a ready comparison for the impact of socio-economic background, which is illustrated in Figure 7.8.

What is particularly evident from the odds ratios presented in Figure 7.8 using Model 1 and Model 2 is that students from a professional background have lower odds of participating in a state sponsored training programme than the reference group while students from a non-employed background have higher odds of participating in a state sponsored training programme: these students are almost 5 times more likely to participate.

Figure 7.8: Odds Ratios for Participation in State-Sponsored Training



7.5 Young Peoples' Experiences of the Transition from School to other forms of Education

7.5.1 Introduction

In this sample three participants attended an apprenticeship (Charlie, Cian and Emma) and six participants attended a PLC (Fiona, Ruth, Sharon, Roger, Tracey and Emer) directly after completing their Leaving Certificate. At the time of the interviews Charlie and Cian were in the final year of their apprenticeships. However, Emma had left her apprenticeship in the third year due to illness and was working in a different area at the time of her interview. For those who attended a PLC course immediately after second level, their career paths after their PLCs were notably varied. Ruth entered the labour market after her PLC. At the time of her interview she had returned to education to do a degree course. Likewise Emma went on to do a degree course straight after her PLC. Roger went on to do a degree course in the USA but dropped out after 2 years. He has subsequently secured employment in an area unrelated to his PLC or college course. After some time in the workforce, Sharon was completing a FÁS training course at the time of her interview. Fiona secured employment but not in the area of her PLC. Tracey was unemployed at the time of her interview.

Table 7.6: Profile of Other ET Participants

Name	School Type	INM/ONM	Location	Progression
Charlie	Secondary Non/ DEIS	ONM	Dublin	Apprenticeship
Cian	Secondary Non/ DEIS	INM	Dublin	Apprenticeship
Emma	Vocational DEIS	INM	Dublin	Apprenticeship*
Fiona	Secondary Non/ DEIS	ONM	Dublin	PLC
Ruth	Comprehensive Non/DEIS	ONM	Mayo	PLC
Sharon	Comprehensive Non/DEIS	ONM	Dublin	PLC
Roger	Comprehensive Non/DEIS	ONM	Dublin	PLC
Tracey	Comprehensive Non/DEIS	INM	Dublin	PLC
Emer	Comprehensive Non/DEIS	ONM	Co Cork	PLC

*Apprenticeship incomplete due to illness

As can be seen in Table 7.6 the majority of this group grew up in Dublin (Charlie, Cian, Emma, Fiona, Sharon, Roger and Tracey) and the remaining two participants were from outside Dublin, Ruth was from Co. Mayo and Emer from Co. Cork.

7.5.2 Home Life and Parental Expectations

Regarding the socio-economic background of this group the parents of six participants are classified as other non-manual and the remaining three participants are classified as intermediate non-manual. This information is illustrated in Table 7.6.

When participants in this group spoke about their siblings it transpired that some of them had a sibling who attended HE (Charlie, Cian, Roger) while others did not (Emma, Ruth-only child, Sharon and Emer). Fiona and Tracey each had a sister who also did a PLC course. One of the participants (Emer) has a sibling who left school early ('he just wasn't getting on with the school') and now works as a labourer, while Sharon has a number of siblings who left school early, but later returned to education and training courses:

> 'at the start it was just you'd go to work but then you'd kind of realise you wanted to go back to college and stuff like that [speaking in relation to her siblings and herself]'.

Most participants felt encouraged by their family to attend HE and believed there were other factors involved in their decision not to attend. Charlie felt that if he had been 'pushed' by teachers he may have attended HE however he also commented:
'

> it is partly my own fault, I'm not putting all the blame on the teachers, but I got lazy then as well, and I just couldn't have been arsed then' (Charlie).

Cian (who scored a very high Leaving Certificate) felt he was 'not academic at all, I didn't like school at all' so he decided to pursue an apprenticeship, which was his preferred option for two reasons. First, he felt he 'always liked work' so he 'just wanted to go out and work'. Second, as his Leaving Certificate approached he did not know which subject he wanted to study in university and felt it was not the right time for him to attend HE. As he explained:

> 'You only get one free degree, so if you have to go work for a few years and then go back and do it; actually know what you want to do, that might be a better idea, than going straight into college. If I had of gone straight into college after school like, I would have wasted a degree and then if I changed my mind, I have to pay the full fees and I mightn't have the money to do it. Whereas if you go working for a few years, till you get your head sorted, because at 17 you're not going to know what you want to do really'.

Ruth had applied for a range of HE courses but did not perform sufficiently well in the Leaving Certificate examination: 'I think my family was a bit disappointed that I hadn't got on as well, maybe the older members of the family probably were a little bit more annoyed at me'. However, later she contends that her family did not have high expectations for her anyway:

> 'My family was … worried that I was going to go downhill and that I wasn't going to do that great … but I don't think my family had … [they did] not [have] great faith in me'.

In terms of the educational attainment of the parents of the Other ET group, a number had not completed their second-level education (as shown in Table 2.1). As Sharon noted 'they were back in the day when you'd leave [school] at 14 and go working'. This had implications for the expectations parents had for their children. As Charlie notes his mother:

> 'just wanted me to do the Leaving Cert, and I could see why she wanted me to do the Leaving Cert in fairness, she always, growing up, said you have to have your schooling sort of thing'.

A majority of the parents had not participated in HE, but there were a couple of exceptions. Cian's father enrolled in Arts:

> 'but dropped out after a couple of months because he said it was a load of crap, he wasn't interested'. Tracey's father took an evening course to qualify him to be a juvenile liaison officer.

As noted earlier four participants progressed to HE courses, although not immediately after leaving school. Emer, Roger and Ruth decided to enrol on a PLC course in order to secure a place on a HE course. Ruth and Emer are both currently enrolled on HE courses. Roger went on to college in the USA but left after two years. In order to establish if HE was ever an option for them, the remaining participants in this group were asked if they ever considered attending HE. The responses to this question were varied.

Tracey and Fiona never felt HE was an option for them for different reasons. As Fiona explained:

> 'I had no intentions of going to college to do more kind of studying as such, I'd had enough in school (laughs) … I didn't even fill out, you know the CAO, I didn't even fill that out, I'd no interest in it at all'.

When asked if there was any reason in particular that she felt like this Fiona replied:

> 'You didn't really have a choice going to school like but college was your kind of choice, you know, like I mean you have to go to school, that's the end of it like. I felt no, it's my choice I'm not going to college, I don't wanna go back into that kind of environment again'.

When asked if she ever thought about going on to do another course after her PLC Tracey replied:

> 'No, because soon after I left college [PLC course] I got pregnant so I couldn't do much'.

Emma spoke negatively about the idea of attending HE, as financially it was never an option for her. While in school she recalled receiving a lot of information about different college courses. However she felt:

> 'it's very hard if you don't have any money to think you're gonna go on to college or that. One of the reasons why I don't think I actually went ahead with anything was the prices, they were all pretty expensive like, for all the courses and that'.

Similarly, after her PLC Sharon worked in a variety of positions before returning to do a FÁS course. When asked if she ever considered returning to do a college course she replied:

> 'if I had of gone to a college course that I had to pay for and not getting home money every week, I wouldn't have been able to go back'.

Hence, like Fiona she also felt finances were a barrier to HE.

The majority of participants in this group felt their parents were happy with their post school pathways. However, Cian spoke of his mothers opinion of his decision not to attend HE (despite achieving almost maximum points in the Leaving Certificate):

> 'She would have preferred me to go to college, even though like she sees it as a sort of an achievement, whereas I see it as a waste of four years. She would have, she places more value in a third-level education than I would, I place very little value in it in itself'.

7.5.3 Attitudes towards Finishing School

A number of those who entered PLC/Apprenticeship programmes on leaving school indicated that they were encouraged by their schools to consider HE. However Roger felt that students were being forced to progress rather than being made aware of the range of post-school options:

> '... they [Guidance Counsellors in his school] had the idea that everybody should go to college and some people just aren't going to ... they don't want to, they can't afford to, there's loads of reasons why people just aren't going to go. But like other than, all they kept trying to say to us was go to college, go to college and people just wouldn't listen because they wouldn't listen to anything else, they wouldn't listen to people saying they wanted to do other things'.

For those who didn't seriously consider HE, it often stemmed from being disengaged and disinterested in school, as Charlie asserts:

> 'if they [teachers] had of kept me interested, now I'm not saying it's their fault like, but if I had of stayed interested in school, I would have went to college'.

Many of these young people spoke about peers who progressed to HE, so HE was not an alien concept or one of which they were not aware. As Charlie simply states:

> 'there was a good few like, they did go to college'.

While Cian estimates:

> 'I think UCD was our main school, I think we sent ... there's about one hundred and twenty in a year, I think one thirty, we sent about thirty to UCD and about thirty to DCU'. 'All of my personal friends [in school] went to college'.

Similarly Emer and Ruth maintained that many of their peers progressed to HE:

Of your year group, did many students go on to third-level, on to university?
'Yeah I would say, god nearly, over three-quarters anyway'. (Emer)

> '... more people definitely did go to college than didn't go'. (Ruth)

However, this was not the case for all and for some being asked about numbers progressing to 'college' meant entering either a PLC course, or HE, despite attempts to clarify the term 'college'. As Tracey stated:
'well me and my twin sister were in the same class and we went on to college [PLC] and our friends did'

Fiona, Emma and Sharon all observed that only a few progressed to HE in their schools. Emma notes that in her school many of her peers simply didn't know what they wanted to do when they left school:

> '... a few out of my class [progressed to HE and] ... are still in college at the moment, yeah but they kind of always knew what they wanted to do, [but] there was a lot of people in my school that didn't know what they wanted ... they were kind of they wanted to do this and they wanted to do that but didn't think they were good enough as well so never went ahead with it'.

In Sharon's school, large numbers progressed to PLC courses, many doing so because they felt they wouldn't get sufficient 'points' for HE:

> '... a lot of them went on to do PLC courses ... a lot of them were worried about the points for the, you know the way you have the big points [for HE courses] ... I think they all kind of put their name down for the PLC because they knew they'd kind of more or less get that ... So that was kind of the preferred choice'.

7.5.4 Financial Barriers/Support to go to higher education

Some talked about the financial costs of attending HE and based their decision not to attend on such costs. As Emma notes:

> '... it was all money-wise and it's very hard if you don't have any money to think you're gonna go on to college

> or that. One of the reasons why I don't think I actually went ahead with anything was the prices, they were all pretty expensive like, for all the courses and that'.

She elaborates:

> '[in talking about another families' expenditure on books for their daughter attending HE] me Mam used to say straightaway God I don't know how their family's affording it, straightaway it was a big no kind of just from the books and that so I thought there was no way like I'm even gonna ask her like, it was a definite no straightaway'.

However, she contends that the situation has improved since she was leaving school and her younger sister has had a better experience:

> '... there's an awful lot of grants that people are given these days ... there was a lot more options for me sister these years than when I was in school'.

For those who progressed to PLC courses, and for a number subsequently to HE courses, they spoke about the importance of state financial support. Emer progressed to HE in the UK, after taking a PLC course in Ireland. She did not have to pay fees as these were funded by the UK government, and she has also been receiving a county council maintenance grant since starting her second year (her application form in first year was lost and as a result she did not receive a grant that year).

However, others taking PLC courses did not receive grants (Ruth, Tracey and Fiona); they funded their study through part-time employment, and some received support from their parents as well. As Tracey comments:

> 'Me Mam and Da [supported me financially], and actually I worked part-time as well like, while I was in college I worked in the supermarket so that helped as well like'.

Fiona also took out a credit union loan to support herself.

7.5.5 Experience Since Leaving School Experience of PLC Course

It is interesting to note that six participants, who entered PLC courses on leaving school, assessed their experiences by comparing them to their school experiences. To illustrate, Ruth really enjoyed her PLC course as she felt it was quite different to being at school, as she explains:

> 'I think [it is] absolutely ridiculous in the Leaving Certificate, to build it all up to that final week or whatever ... [assessment in the PLC] is so much less pressure, it is much easier, I learned so much more ... than what I ever learnt in all the years I went to secondary school'.

In sharp contrast, Tracey didn't particularly enjoy her PLC course as she felt it was like being back at school:

> 'I didn't like the [PLC] college actually, it was too much like being back at secondary school, like if we were sick or anything or we didn't come in we'd have to write our own note ... and they'd give you a roll call and I didn't like it ... It was the whole time as well, like you had to be in at nine and you're gone at three, that's secondary school hours ... break times were the same and the lunchtime and it was the same amount of time for your lunch and your break'.

Emer, Ruth and Cian progressed to HE after completing their PLC and apprenticeship programmes. Emer had initially been offered a place in HE in her Leaving Certificate year, but turned it down in favour of the PLC course. As she explains:

> 'I actually went to my career guidance [teacher] after filling in my CAO just before my exams and told her … I don't want to do this and basically told her what I wanted to do and she told me about this PLC course … it's an Access course to UCC, so I done that'.

Hence, Emer took the PLC course expecting to be able to transfer to a HE programme in an Irish university on completion, which didn't materialise as she expected:

> '… the pre-nursing course that I done, on the prospectus they had down on it, there would be, if you got so many distinctions then there would be access to go to UCC … a degree course in nursing but we didn't find out till half way through the year but there was actually only five places [reserved for PLC holders]'.

As a result Emer progressed to a HE course in the UK, which had links with the PLC college she attended. However, she felt that:

> '… there could have been more options for us [PLC participants] really, I don't, I think they could have linked up with more universities, more colleges maybe in Ireland … I don't think they [PLC qualifications] are recognised enough really … they let people go through these years, two year courses and then they don't really recognise them at the end, I think they should do really'.

Ruth also entered a PLC course with the intention of progressing to HE, which she has since achieved. She argues that doing the PLC course first has given her an advantage over those who enter HE directly from school:

> 'I have to say like it is [PLC course] absolutely great preparation, I think anyone who is going into [name of course] should do like a PLC course … I think about fifty per cent of the people in my class have done a PLC course and it has stood to them in some way or another, either work experience … plus like even theory wise'.

Experience of Apprenticeship Programme

The general picture emerging from the three young people who progressed to apprenticeship programmes was that they were happy with that decision and enjoy their work. As Cian states so positively:

> 'There is no course or career apart from winning the lotto that I could have done that would have given me the same payback as an apprenticeship … the way I have it at the moment is perfect'.

Furthermore, participants in apprenticeship programmes felt they had a better sense of the 'real world' than other young people, as Cian explains:

> 'Fellas I met through the apprenticeship, they'd have a lot more, they'd be a lot more knowledgeable about how [the] real world works … whereas all me friends [who went to college] they have sort of an idealised sort of view of the world that is totally incompatible with the reality … they'd be more immature. I'm definitely more mature than I was when I started [apprenticeship], I think if I went to college I'd still be an airhead'.

Two of those who took apprenticeships were happy to recommend that pathway to others.

However, Charlie does raise some concerns over earnings levels and suggests that he might have taken a different path if he had known:

> 'we weren't told the wages were so bad ... If I had of known that, I wouldn't have went into mechanics'. As with members of the LM group, a number commented on the economic slowdown and were worried as they saw 'lads are getting laid off in construction at the moment'.

7.5.6 Views of higher education

A number of these young people were reluctant to progress to HE on leaving school, simply because they saw HE as an extension of school (at least at that time). Charlie, Roger, Fiona and Cian all expressed such views:

> 'But in school, no, not really, and every day I went in, I disliked it more, you know what I mean, I wanted to get out, and after that was, what I said to myself was, basically I couldn't do this for another couple of years like'. (Charlie)

> '... like college wasn't an option, I wouldn't just go to college just to be there. I don't like school ... like because I wasn't that good in school first of all and I just wasn't interested you know'. (Roger)

> 'I'd no kind of intentions of going to college to do more kind of studying as such, I'd had enough in school, I told meself I wasn't going ...You didn't really have a choice going to school like but college was your kind of choice, you know like I mean you have to go to school, that's the end of it like. I felt no, it's my choice I'm not going to college, I don't wanna go back into that kind of environment again'. (Fiona)

> '... the opinion I had of college was it was, I wanted to go out straight into work, I didn't want to be still in school do you know what I mean. As I say I just don't like sitting at a desk, I hate it, I can't stand it'. (Cian)

7.5.7 Attitudes towards education (in the future)

Ruth is currently in HE and appears satisfied 'I'm just really enjoying college life', as are Emer and Cian. Cian was, at the time of interview, filling out the CAO form, with a view to commencing Medicine in September. He has saved some money to support himself and has also been offered a lecturing job, teaching a night course in DIT. He sees this as a backup plan, given difficulties emerging in the construction sector:

> 'We're noticing lads are getting laid off in construction at the moment ... I have a couple of certs but I've no real, I've no real insurance policy if something happens in the construction market here I'd have to go abroad and I don't want to do that'.

As noted earlier, Emer is currently studying for a diploma in the UK and plans to progress to the degree level next year, which would entail an additional 18 months at college.

Three respondents express a reluctance to consider HE, at least in the near future, owing to a reliance on their income from their full-time employment. Emma, for instance, is reluctant to pursue any further education in the short-term, largely due to her dependence on the income from her employment. She cites 'having to give up work' as the main reason for not considering other education options. Roger also indicates that he wouldn't consider going back to college, at least on a full-time basis, for financial reasons:

> 'I wouldn't be able to go back to college full-time ... I'm too used to having money now'.

7.5.8 Reflection on Post-School Pathway

Respondents were asked to reflect on their post-school pathway and assess whether they are happy with the choices they have made. Like for young people who entered the labour market on leaving school, a number of these young people express a certain regret about their choices so far. As Roger reflects:

> 'Just I'm more mature now, I know better like, I realise I would have been much better off if I had have just not messed and not done all the stupid things that just, so pointless like you know, it can leave you with big regrets that you'll never get rid of, will be there for the rest of your life'.

In addition, Roger regrets dropping out of his degree programme in US after two years and states:

> 'if I had the chance now I would have stayed, if I could make the decision again, there's no way I'd stay at home like you know. I was already half-way there, I could have just finished that and had a much better job'.

In a similar vein, when asked what they would say to Leaving Certificate students today, most participants in this group would advise them to study hard: 'if you want to get good grades and you want to go on and get a good job, if you want to go to college … study as best you can' (Fiona). Similarly Roger comments:

> '… just pay attention, it's not worth all the messing and joking, like at the end of the day you might think it's funny for a few minutes but to see your future … So like it's not worth it and to just work hard, put the hours in because at the end of the day … it's going to make a huge difference'.

7.5.9 Summary of the experiences of entrants to other forms of education and training

Young people who pursue non-HE post-school ET options represent the most diverse of our school leaving groups. They also have the highest representation of young people from other non-manual backgrounds (six out of the nine participants). Their parents have levels of education which appear somewhat below the levels of the HE group, but slightly higher than those of the LM group. In many ways, the experiences and views expressed by this group have some resonance with both the LM and HE groups.

In the first instance, a number of Other ET participants display a disengagement and disillusionment with formal education, which represented a major influence on their post-school pathways. While some accept such disengagement was of their own doing and they were lazy, others were critical of their school experiences and spoke somewhat negatively about the expectations teachers held for them and the levels of advice and encouragement they received. One participant was so discontent with his school that he studied independently at home from January of his Leaving Certificate year. Viewing HE as an extension of second-level schooling these young people exercised the choice not to progress, thereby leaving a system they were less than happy with (I 'had enough in school', 'I don't like sitting at a desk, I hate it, I can't stand it').

However, there was a second, more optimistic and self-directed group within the Other ET category. These young people pursued a range of post-school avenues, some with the explicit intention of progressing to HE indirectly (mostly through a PLC programme). These young people were more satisfied with their school days and more insightful in their goals for the future. A number have succeeded in accessing HE and have clear plans for their future careers. It is interesting to observe that some of those who initially displayed many of the characteristics of the former 'disillusioned' group, have since somewhat altered their outlook. In common with some members of the LM group, they reflect on their school days with some regret – wishing they had taken school more seriously

and worked harder. They now see themselves as more mature and in a better position to make choices about their future careers. They are more likely to recognise the value of education and the opportunities it can create and no longer see HE as an extension of school.

However, a number continue to see HE as not for them, and again, some of those who are accustomed to earning a full-time salary are reluctant to pursue further study simply because they are reliant on their earnings – as one participant commented 'I'm too used to having money now'. In essence, as young people reflect on their school leaving decisions four years on, some are more open to educational opportunities now, while others are more reluctant to consider them owing (partly) to dependence on their full-time income.

7.6 Summary

The approach taken in this chapter is to use mixed methods in order to understand why it is that some young people from the non-manual group do not progress to HE and choose alternative forms of education and training. In doing so, it utilises the quantitative data to consider the characteristics of those who pursue PLC, Apprenticeship or State Sponsored Training Programmes and the qualitative data in order to consider how they arrived at the decision to pursue these alternative options.

The chapter began by documenting patterns of participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Courses among young people who have completed second-level education. Figure 7.1 illustrated that overall levels of participation in PLC courses among school leavers has declined over the 1997/98 – 2002/04 period (22 per cent of the cohort relative to 17 per cent) but increased again between 2006/07 (21 per cent). Replicating findings from previous studies, females continue to dominate entry to PLCs (Watson *et al.*, 2006) and this was also reflected in the qualitative interviews. Clear socio-economic disparities exist with high levels of entry into this form of post-school education evident among young people from other non-manual backgrounds and skilled manual backgrounds, with young people from professional and farming backgrounds less likely to pursue this educational path. Clear disparities are also evident within the non-manual group as the share of intermediate non-manual students entering Post-Leaving Certificate courses is considerably lower than the share of other non-manual students (18 versus 23 per cent). In fact, as with other educational outcomes previously discussed in this report, the patterns of the intermediate non-manual group more closely resemble those of young people from professional, employer/manager and farming socio-economic backgrounds. Multivariate analyses confirm these findings, all else being equal.

Apprenticeships have become much more prevalent as a post-school pathway in recent years due to the favourable economic conditions for construction, and among the 2006/07 cohorts who completed second-level education, levels of participation were at 7 per cent. Apprenticeships are dominated by males, of whom 13 per cent opt for an apprenticeship upon leaving school (this was also reflected in the qualitative interviews). Clear socio-economic disparities are evident and levels of participation are highest among those from the other non-manual and the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual socio-economic groups, which is perhaps not surprising given that many of the school leavers in this latter group have parents employed in sectors dominated by the construction sector. Multivariate analyses confirmed that the other non-manual group displays patterns that are similar to manual groups.

We also considered entry into State Sponsored Training among young people who completed second-level education as an alternative education/training pathway. Among the 2006/07 cohorts, levels of participation in State Sponsored Training are at 5 per cent, and this form of further education is undertaken by both males and

females (6 per cent and 4 per cent respectively). While levels of participation are highest among those from non-employed households, the other non-manual group displays patterns that are more similar to the skilled manual group and farmers/other agricultural workers.

A further aim of this chapter was to consider how young people from the non-manual groups arrived at the decision to pursue these alternative options. For some the decision was framed as an intentional decision. Two of the young people we interviewed had explicitly incorporated an alternative education/training course as part of their pathway to HE. This was the case for Emer and Roger. However, Ruth had also been diverted to a PLC course because she initially didn't get the points for HE. Ruth felt that participation in a PLC course gave her an advantage over those who directly entered HE from second-level education, both academically and psychologically being prepared for HE. However, issues over the opportunities to progress from the PLC sector into HE did emerge.

For others, HE was not an option because of perceived financial constraints (Emma, Sharon). There was an impression from the interviews that some of the non-manual group or their parents did not have adequate (or even correct) knowledge of the grant system and their eligibility. Some even felt that they didn't want to face into an extended period of time in which they would be 'broke'.

For others, HE was not an option because of the importance of earning money as soon as possible (Emma, Roger) or because of their negative experiences at school (Charlie, Fiona, Cian). The role of the school was dominant in the discourse around the decision to pursue an alternative education/training pathway. Some argued that the school should have pushed them and challenged them more while others argued that the school did not recognise the value of alternative education/training options. Furthermore, many of this group knew people in their year group who had made the progression to HE; however, this seemed to be more prominent among the intermediate non-manual group than those from the other non-manual group.

It was also clear from the interviews that these alternative routes were often the pathways pursued by the respondents' siblings; only a few of the young people we interviewed in this group had siblings who had entered HE. However, despite an un-established route to HE within their families, most of our respondents had been encouraged by their families to attend some form of post-school education or training. There was an impression that education was valued in the home, irrespective of level of parental education. The qualitative analyses also indicated how this group rely heavily on their family background for advice regarding post school choices in the absence of effective careers guidance at second-level.

CHAPTER 8

Labour Market Experiences by Socio-Economic Background

8.1 Introduction

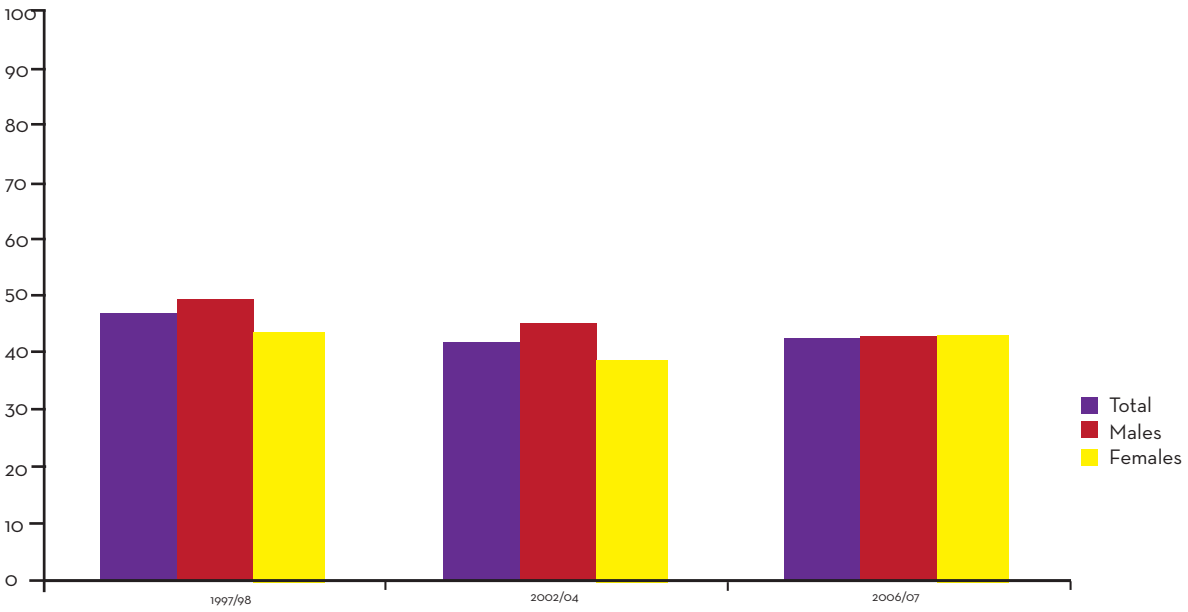
This chapter examines the experiences of school leavers who enter the labour market within one year of leaving school. As well as considering their experiences of unemployment, the chapter examines their earnings and the sector in which they are employed. The chapter then considers how this group of young people locate their labour market experiences and their decision to enter the labour market, rather than enter HE, using data from the qualitative interviews.

8.2 Labour Market Participation, Employment and Unemployment Rates

8.2.1 Labour Market Participation Rates

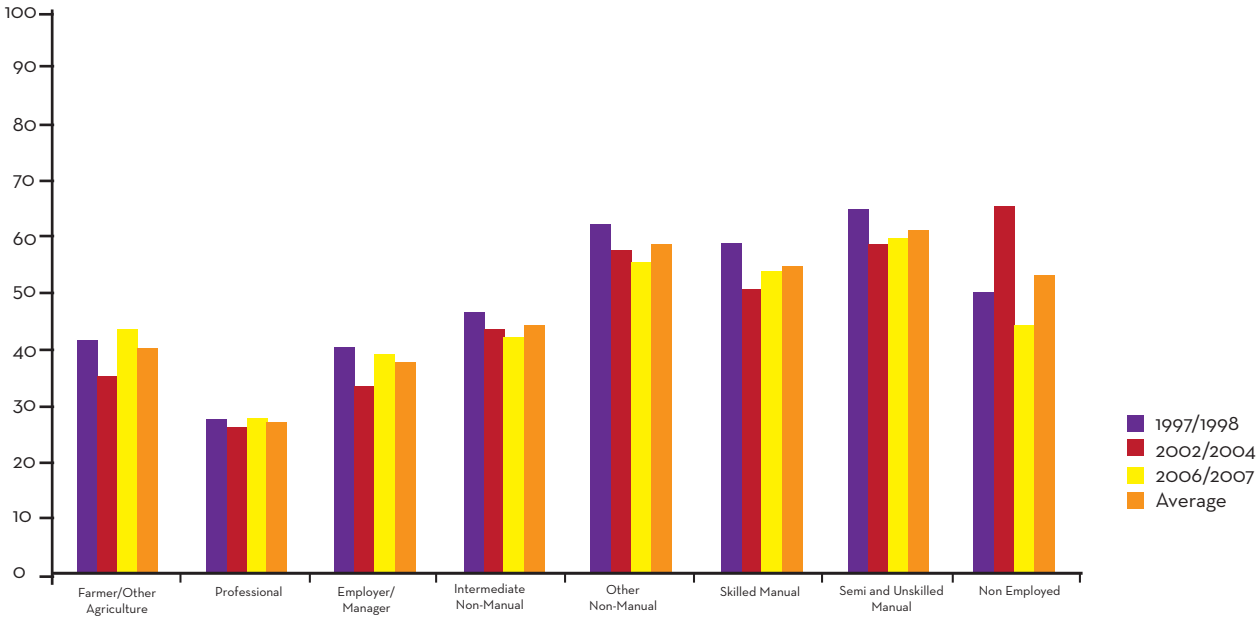
Overall labour market participation rates among school leavers who completed second-level fell from 47 per cent in 1997/98 to 42 per cent in 2002/04, with a slight upturn to 43 per cent in 2006/07 (Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Percentage of School Leavers who completed Second-Level Education who are in the Labour Market, One Year after Leaving School by Gender.



While in previous years males have had higher levels of entry into the labour market than females, given the rates of progression to apprenticeships among males, there is now little difference in entry into the labour market upon leaving school between males and females (Byrne *et al.*, 2009).

Figure 8.2: Percentage of School Leavers Who Completed Second-Level and Who Entered the Labour Market, One Year After Leaving School by Parental Socio-Economic Group



School leavers from other non-manual, manual and unemployed backgrounds are more likely to enter the labour market (Figures 8.2 and 8.3). Young people from intermediate non-manual backgrounds show relatively low levels of entry into the labour market at this stage, reflecting their relatively high rates of entry into post-school education and training opportunities.

8.2.2 Unemployment Rates

In line with overall economic trends, unemployment rates fell over the period, with 11 per cent of 1997/98 school leavers in the labour market unemployed one year after leaving school, falling to 8 per cent in 2002/04 and 9 per cent in 2006/07 (Figure 8.3). Over this time, the gender gap in unemployment rates has disappeared.

Figure 8.3: Percentage of School Leavers in the Labour Market who are Unemployed

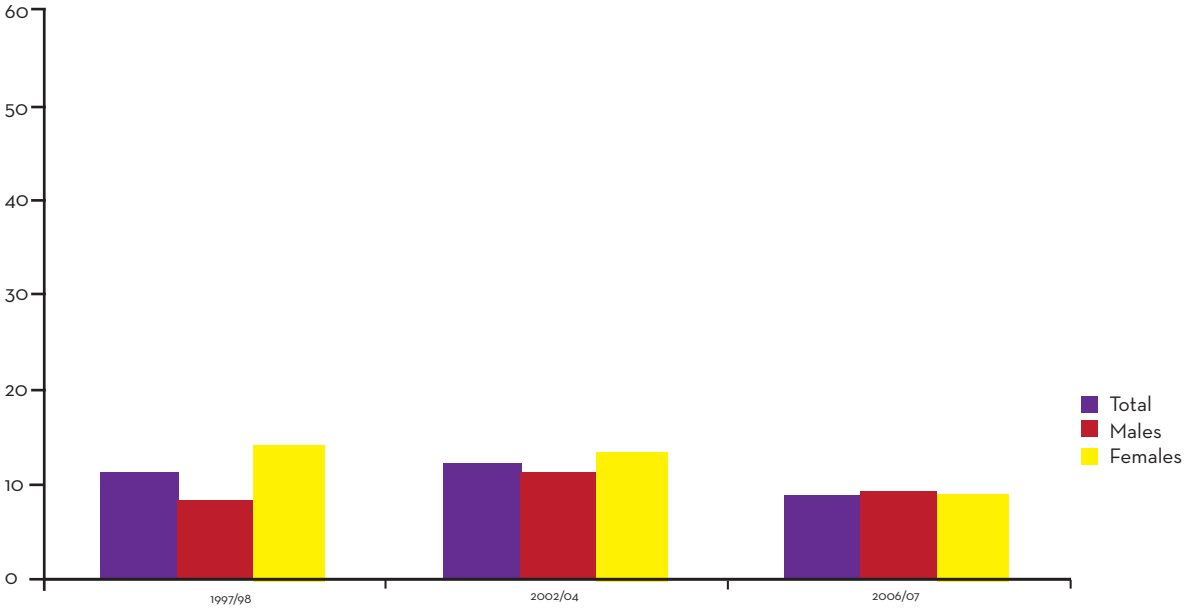
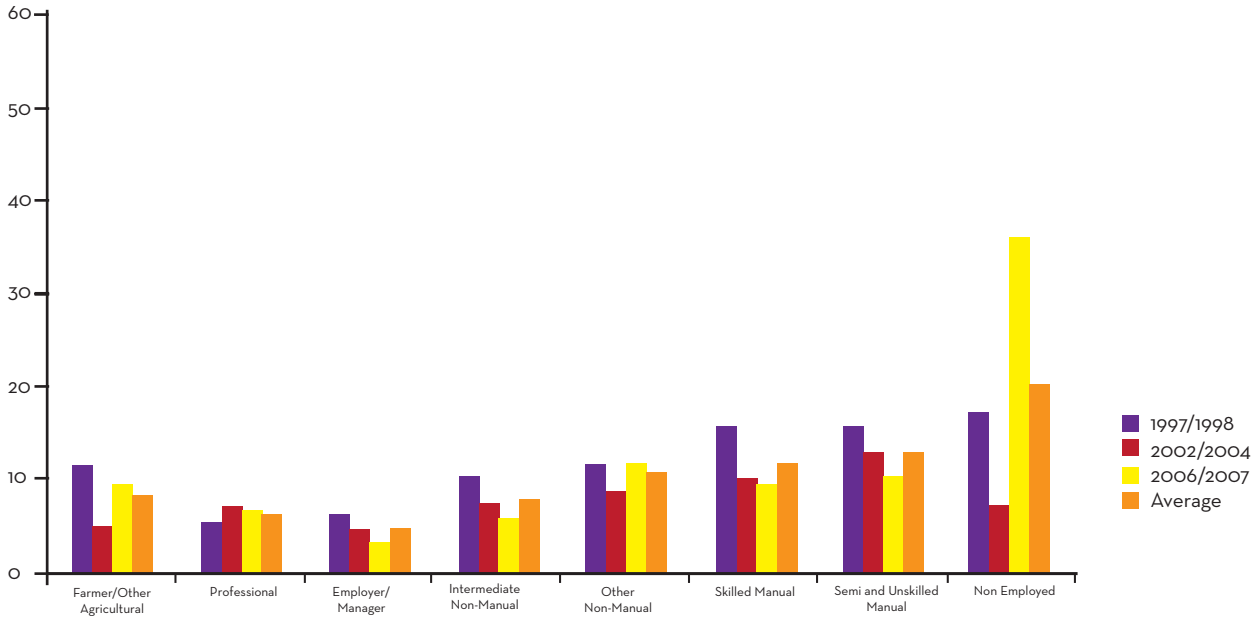


Figure 8.4: Percentage of School Leavers who Completed Second-Level and are in the Labour Market, Unemployed



Unemployment rates do not vary significantly across socio-economic groups, however, those from unemployed backgrounds experience particular difficulty in accessing employment. As shown in Figure 8.4, school leavers from other non-manual backgrounds have unemployment rates largely in line with the manual group (11 per cent and 12 per cent respective), while the intermediate non-manual group fares slightly better (8 per cent).

8.2.3 *Occupational Sector*

Among school leavers in the labour market, those from other non-manual and intermediate non-manual backgrounds differ in the types of jobs in which they engage. While other non-manual youth are more likely to enter manual employment, those from intermediate non-manual backgrounds enter service sector jobs in greater numbers. Overall employment in managerial/professional jobs among school leavers has declined over the period, while employment in services and clerical sectors has risen (Table 8.1)[29].

Table 8.1: Occupational Distribution of all School Leavers in Full-time Employment by Parental Socio-Economic Background, 1997/98, 2002/04, 2006/07 Cohorts

	1997/98					
	Managerial/ Professional	Clerical	Service	Agricul-ture & Fishery	Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	Other Manual
Professional/Employer/Manager	11.4	20.6	26.7	2.2	33.8	5.2
Farmer	5.6	9.8	22.2	17.9	39.2	5.3
Intermediate Non-Manual	5.0	12.8	33.3	2.3	41.6	5.0
Other Non-Manual	5.0	17.1	30.6	2.3	36.4	8.6
Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	3.3	14.2	34.6	1.5	39.1	7.2
Non-employed	4.8	14.0	28.6	1.9	45.4	5.3
	2002/04					
	Managerial/ Professional	Clerical	Service	Agricul-ture & Fishery	Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	Other Manual
Professional/Employer/Manager	5.7	14.3	43.1	1.7	32.5	2.8
Farmer	7.3	13.1	34.6	8.2	34.4	2.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	7.3	16.6	43.8	1.5	28.1	2.8
Other Non-Manual	4.5	14.6	41.4	0.7	35.3	3.5
Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	3.4	12.6	38.0	1.7	37.6	6.7
Non-employed	2.7	6.3	46.8	0.8	33.4	10.1
	2006/07					
	Managerial/ Professional	Clerical	Service	Agricul-ture & Fishery	Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	Other Manual
Professional/Employer/Manager	17.8	18.9	24.8	2.8	35.5	0.2
Farmer	6.8	7.7	30.3	6.3	48.9	0
Intermediate Non-Manual	6.9	16.4	32.4	1.5	40.2	2.8
Other Non-Manual	11.8	19.1	30.5	2.0	36.0	0.5
Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	4.5	9.5	30.7	2.5	49.8	2.8
Non-employed	9.0	11.9	44.2	3.5	29.7	1.7

29 The following Table presents the shorter version of parental socio-economic group because of small numbers.

8.2.4 Industrial Sector

Table 8.2 displays the distribution of school leavers in employment by industrial sector for the three cohorts. Overall patterns of employment remain largely unchanged over the period. In focusing on the non-manual groups, the intermediate non-manual group are slightly more likely to enter professional services jobs, while the other non-manual group enter personal services jobs in greater numbers. However, the main point of distinction between these two groups relates to employment in Industry and Distribution – a larger share of the intermediate non-manual group take up jobs in the latter industrial sector, while greater numbers of other non-manual leavers enter jobs in Industry (with the exception of the most recent cohort).

Table 8.2: Industrial Sector Distribution of all School Leavers in Full-time Employment by Parental Socio-Economic Background, 1997/98, 2002/04, 2006/07 Cohorts

	1997/98							
	Agriculture & Fisheries	**Industry**	**Distribution**	**Banking**	**Transport & Communica-tions**	**Public Administration**	**Professional Services**	**Personal Services**
Professional/Employer/Manager	2.6	32.3	23.6	13.8	6.0	1.0	6.6	14.1
Farmer	16.1	44.6	13.5	3.6	3.3	1.0	7.1	10.7
Intermediate Non-Manual	1.5	44.6	26.2	3.0	4.3	0.9	5.4	14.2
Other Non-Manual	0.9	44.3	23.9	4.7	5.1	1.5	4.0	15.6
Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	1.6	43.8	25.3	4.4	3.8	1.4	3.8	15.9
Non-employed	1.9	42.6	23.2	2.6	6.5	0.8	1.7	20.7
	2002/04							
	Agriculture & Fisheries	**Industry**	**Distribution**	**Banking**	**Transport & Communica-tions**	**Public Administration**	**Professional Services**	**Personal Services**
Professional/Employer/Manager	2.0	30.5	26.2	10.2	3.3	1.9	6.8	19.2
Farmer	8.4	34.4	24.3	7.4	4.5	0.9	2.4	1.7
Intermediate Non-Manual	0.4	29.8	32.9	6.4	2.1	3.1	5.7	19.5
Other Non-Manual	1.1	35.6	27.5	3.8	3.2	2.2	4.4	22.3
Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	1.1	41.7	26.6	4.0	2.8	1.7	3.6	18.4
Non-employed	2.5	35.9	20.6	5.2	0.6	1.4	2.7	31.0
	2006/07							
	Agriculture & Fisheries	**Industry**	**Distribution**	**Banking**	**Transport & Communica-tions**	**Public Administration**	**Professional Services**	**Personal Services**
Professional/Employer/Manager	1.8	29.3	28.7	8.7	3.7	2.4	5.3	20.2
Farmer	7.1	40.0	25.0	4.9	2	1.0	4.0	16.0
Intermediate Non-Manual	1.2	39.9	35.0	6.2	2.6	2.1	2.9	10.1
Other Non-Manual	2.4	48.3	22.0	6.7	4.3	1.0	3.1	12.1
Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Unskilled	3.5	35.8	25.0	1.9	3.3	0	0.0	30.4
Non-employed	0.0	20.7	31.5	4.2	15.8	1.9	1.9	23.9

8.3 The Labour Market Entrants

8.3.1 Overview

This section explores the experiences of young people who enter the labour market upon completion of their second-level education and, in particular, identifies the factors underlying their decision not to pursue HE or other education and training options (immediately after leaving school). Among the issues considered are the family background of these young people, their early expectations and labour market goals, the factors influencing their post-school choices, their experiences since leaving school and their reflections on their lives so far.

Interviews were undertaken with thirteen school leavers who did not immediately progress to further study or training on leaving school - six females and seven males. The group were fairly evenly split in terms of social background with seven having at least one parent occupying an intermediate non-manual job and the remaining six with a parent employed in the other non-manual sector. In terms of educational level of parents, the group varied somewhat. Over half of the group indicate that one or both of their parents did not complete their second-level education; with four of these parents terminating their education prior to the second-level stage.
Three individuals, Mark, Mairead and Lynda, took the LCA programme, with the remainder taking the established Leaving Certificate programme or the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). For the individuals for whom we have examination result information, the bulk of this group performed moderately in the Leaving Certificate examination; in contrast to the picture for HE entrants, none of the LM group performed particularly well in the examination. For the LCA leavers, participation in the programme was not viewed as having an impact on their post-school choices, as all three talk about not having an interest in HE. This issue is discussed in detail later in the chapter. In common with the patterns for other groups, the bulk of the LM group had been engaged in paid employment while at school.

For the purposes of the analysis, the LM group can be differentiated into two main groups: firstly, those who enter the labour market on leaving school and remain there for the duration of the period since leaving school (3-4 years typically) and, secondly, those who enter the labour market and later progress to some form of education or training course – many taking either a PLC course or entering an apprenticeship programme. In total, six members of the LM group remain in the labour market and the balance participated in an education or training course. Three of the group had attended a DEIS school, all of whom have remained in the labour market since leaving school.

Table 8.3: Demographic Details of the Labour Market Group

Name	School Type	INM or ONM	Education or Training Participation
Sarah	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	PLC
Aideen	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	PLC
Rachael	Comprehensive DEIS	ONM	-
Declan	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Vincent	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Michael	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	-
Mark	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Mairead	Comprehensive DEIS	ONM	-
Tony	Secondary Non-DEIS	INM	Apprenticeship
Dermot	Vocational DEIS	INM	-
Lynda	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	-
Sally	Secondary Non-DEIS	ONM	PLC and FÁS Course
Noel	Comprehensive Non-DEIS	ONM	

8.3.2 Home Life and Parental Expectations

Members of the LM group grew up in a variety of urban and rural settings, spread geographically across the country. The majority of the group spoke positively about where they grew up, although two participants commented that they grew up in more disadvantaged environments, one where there were 'loads of scumbags' and the other noting that 'it is not a very nice area to grow up in'. As noted earlier, about half of the group had at least one parent in an intermediate non-manual job. It is interesting to note that all of those who progressed to an apprenticeship programme since leaving school come from an intermediate non-manual background, while the majority of those who remained in the labour market come from the other non-manual group. It is also interesting to observe that, bar one, all of the parents of those who progressed to apprenticeship programmes had themselves completed second-level education and many had completed post-secondary education. A number of those who remained in the labour market or entered a PLC course had parents who had either not completed their second-level education or not progressed beyond primary school. These initial results suggest that the profile of students progressing to apprenticeship programmes is distinct to other members of the LM group.

In terms of parents' views of the choices made by these young people, most indicated that their parents were broadly happy, particularly the parents of those who subsequently progressed to a PLC or apprenticeship programme. As Aideen commented:

> 'they were delighted I actually went and done it',

while Declan observes

> 'they're happy with it [doing an apprenticeship], once I'm happy like, they are'.

In a similar vein Rachael felt:

> 'they were happy once I was happy … they didn't push college on me either', 'they never put pressure on me to do well at school, they always said do your best … they're just happy I'm doing what I enjoy'.

However, a number of participants felt pressure 'from family, friends, school everyone' (Declan) to take a certain pathway. For some this was pressure to pursue HE; 'yeah they always tried to get me to go to college' (Lynda). In a number of cases this stemmed from an older sibling taking this route (Michael). Michael went on to note the pride shown by his parents when his siblings had progressed to college, which may have placed a certain covert pressure on him to do the same:

> 'I think it is just because they never went to college themselves, so they're proud of like any kids who go to college … they were well proud of my brother and sister when they graduated'.

One individual was encouraged, from an early age, to follow in his father's footsteps and join the guards (as Dermot noted 'he keeps pestering me so he does, he keeps going on to me [to join the Gardaí]'). Conversely, a lack of interest in parental career choices left one respondent unsure of what options he could pursue:

> '… a lot of other people you know, you see one guard in the family, obviously enough if he has a son he has to be a guard, but no I wasn't going to be a guard and both their parents were farmers, [I] didn't want to be a farmer, so since I had no interest in sport or academia really, there didn't seem to be a whole pile available'. (Mark)

Others were encouraged by their parents to take advantage of the booming economy and enter the labour market as soon as possible (Noel). Similarly, Vincent was encouraged to pursue an apprenticeship:

> '[My parents were] mostly saying go for a trade because at the time there was a big boom and everybody was talking about trades .... [Dad] said get a trade like, four years get a trade, you can travel with it, look at Australia now crying out for people as well, Canada, America, once you've a trade like and once you're good at it, you'll get far'.

In Tony's case, his parents were initially disappointed that he did not go on to HE, but later accepted his decision to pursue an apprenticeship:

> 'Well they were a bit pissed off at the start to be honest, because they'd spent a lot of money on my education ... and I just went straight into a trade ... but after a while ... they just copped on and they were just like yeah it is probably better like that I didn't go to college, because I'm not the person to sit down and study ... They were against it but they came around in the end'.

Overall, participants felt their parents were largely happy with their choices on leaving school, with those who progressed to education and training opportunities later most likely to indicate that their parents were proud of their efforts. The extent to which these young people considered HE as a possibility for them is discussed later in the chapter, alongside a discussion of the factors underlying their non-progression to HE.

8.3.3 Attitudes towards finishing school

The LM group, like the other groups, were asked to reflect on their thoughts and feelings as they were leaving school. The responses reflected a range of emotions including a desire to be out of school and education more generally, uncertainty, nervousness and looking forward to a break from the routine of school. A number felt content to be leaving an environment in which they were not happy, as Declan comments:

How did you feel about leaving school?

> 'I was delighted, I really, I didn't like it at all.... I was just sick of it'. (Declan)

Others were more reminiscent and noted that they missed school, at least initially, as Dermot observed 'you missed [school] at the start ... you miss the craic'. Likewise Vincent felt that 'I suppose you're going to miss a lot of friends, like a lot of people that I was very close to in sixth year now I wouldn't be close to now at all'.
While Mairead observed:

> 'I didn't want to finish school'.

Did you not?

> 'No, just because it was just 9 to 4 like everyday, I just didn't want to leave because I got on with the teachers like ... some of them were like friends, you'd get a laugh off some of them, that's why I didn't want to leave'.

Some associated leaving school with a certain amount of uncertainty about what they might do next and about the future more generally. As Mark states 'I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do'. In a similar vein, Aideen comments:

> '... everyone just kept saying I just can't wait to get out of this school like for some reason, I don't know like and then we left and like oh god like what will I do because when you're in school you have a weekly timetable like you're always busy like and then you're saying how will I, what will my time keeping be like now, what will I do with me time like'.

Lynda and Mark refer to a certain nervousness and anxiety at that time, which reflected the loss of the support of school personnel and again uncertainty over the future:

How did you feel when you were finishing school?
'Nervous'.
And why were you nervous?
'Because just you're on your own now type of thing'. (Lynda)

'[I was] Anxious [with regard to leaving school] ... I didn't quite know what I was going to do'. (Mark)

Some appeared more content and looked forward to taking a break and then entering the labour force. As Michael reflects:

And were you thinking I'd like to study or I'd like to work? What were your first plans?
'Nothing really I just wanted to chill out for a couple of months'.
To do nothing for a while?
'Yeah'.
And what choices did you feel you had at that point?
'Choices, not a whole lot, just get a job pretty much'.

8.3.4 College Thoughts

As noted earlier, a small minority of the LM participants did have HE expectations and plans while at school, and reflected those intentions in completing the CAO application form. However, their lack of progression reflected a range of factors. As noted earlier in Rachael's case, failing higher level Irish left her without any HE offers, which she was bitterly disappointed about. However, she is optimistic about her future and does plan to progress her qualifications in the future:

'I'm the only one that can change that now, if I really want to do something I have to go for it ... I think there's a lot of options out there, I mean distance learning and flexi-learning'. (Rachael)

However, the majority of this group did not have specific plans to progress to HE while in school. Their reasons reflected a range of factors. Dermot, Mairead and Mark did not have any great interest in HE at the time, in Mairead's case she felt she would find it too difficult:

'I don't know I just don't see myself as a college person like, I don't know I just don't see myself going to college ... I was thinking people are complaining about 'oh the work is too hard' and I'm not good under stress, I'd go mad like ... if I wasn't able to do something and I'd think then I'd be in big trouble if I couldn't get it done ... So I just knew it wasn't for me like, I didn't even think of going'. (Mairead)

'I didn't kind of believe in the whole going straight into college after school thing, but that is because I wasn't really so keen on going'. (Mark)

Unhappy experiences in school led to a situation where a number of the LM group were 'turned off' the idea of learning or studying further at least in the short-term. For Declan, for example, initial disinterest in pursuing further study altered a number of years later. He progressed to an apprenticeship programme and greatly enjoyed the college placement component of his programme and observed that he had no difficulty in engaging in study and attending classes now:

> 'When I left school [I was turned off learning] but now it is not too bad, like seeing inside here like [an Institute of Technology study release component of the apprenticeship] it is no bother to study every hour of the day like it is grand. It is not so much of a chore; once you find something you're interested in. Like I had no interest in French or English or Irish or any of that'.

For Sally, a lack of direction and clear focus left her unsure about what she might do after leaving school: 'I just didn't know what I wanted to do so I had no sense of what to work towards … it was just I had no sense of direction that's what I think now'. The situation for Tony was similar, as he notes 'Well I didn't want to go to college, because there was nothing that interested me in college'. However, he since regrets his choices and performance at school:

> 'I kind of regret it now as well though, I wouldn't have minded going to college, being where I'm at now like … there is a lot of things that my friends are doing that I would have been interested in as well … when I finish my trade, I might decide to go back to college and do something'.

A number of LM participants do now accept that HE can confer certain advantages in life and improve your standard of living. Michael, who didn't have much interest in HE when leaving school, talks about the social and financial benefits of attending HE:

> 'It keeps your brain sharp and it gives you qualifications so you'll be getting paid more than minimum wage, you know like if you're going into a specialised sector, you'll make a decent living for yourself'.

So would you say the benefits are really in terms of the job you get?

> 'Well pretty much like, you'll make friends that you'll keep for life in college and stuff as well'.

While Vincent alludes to the differences between the work he is currently doing as an apprentice in the construction sector and the jobs HE graduates might pursue:

> '… [college] leads into a lot of better jobs I think and you're not up to muck and dirt everyday of the week and the cold weather like today out working on building sites.

Finally, Sarah reflects on the importance of furthering ones qualifications:

> '… in my head I was like 'right that's it you have to go to college' because all my friends are finishing and I'm only starting so I was like 'ok you have to go because you know you have to eventually go to college like you know you are not gonna get that far without like [qualifications]'.

For some, they had firm plans to pursue others forms of education or training or other career options that did not require HE qualifications. As Lynda indicated 'I just always wanted an office job', and felt she would not need a HE qualification to achieve that. Dermot's ambition to enter the Gardaí meant he did not seriously consider any other options, which he now regrets:

> 'If the teachers would have sat down and told you like, it mightn't happen the way you think it is going to happen and just better keep your options open and sit down and walk you through it instead'.

8.3.5 Importance of having an Income

For nearly half of the LM group, a keen interest in securing an (full-time) income as soon as possible was the main factor underlying their lack of interest in HE or other post-school ET options:

And was it important that you got a job and had an income?

'Oh yeah very important yeah'.

And what would you say was the most important thing to you?

'Get an income, obviously I suppose get your keep and that like'.

So that was kind of a big priority for you?

'Yeah well it would be like because do you know around the time of the social welfare, you can't really be kind of handing out money because you get very little money on social welfare'. (Noel)

Such income orientation was also uppermost in the minds of Dermot and Vincent. For Rachael, HE participation would require financial assistance from her parents which she felt was not reasonable given that she had been supporting herself during her latter years at school:

'It is just the money, [I was] used to the money so much, the thought of going to college and having no money and not being able to go out … you always hear of student life, they've no money and all, I just couldn't'. (Dermot)

So what was the first thing you wanted to do when you left school?

'I don't know make money … yeah get a car I suppose that would have been another thing'. (Vincent)

'… like I was working from the time I was sixteen and even when I thought of going to college full-time, I was like how, like I wouldn't have, I couldn't have, I just wouldn't have asked my mum and dad for money … I was after being earning since I was sixteen, I hadn't asked them for money since then and to suddenly at the age of eighteen to say ok I'm giving up working can I have the money to go to college, I think they would have been shocked themselves'. (Rachael)

8.3.6 Financial Barriers/Support to go to HE

Participants were asked to consider how they would have financially supported themselves had they progressed to HE. Declan was the only respondent who felt that he would have no major financial difficulties as his parents would have supported him. A number of members of the LM group indicated that they would have been eligible for state grant support had they progressed, however this was not considered sufficient to entice them to go to college:

'[I] would not have been eligible for a full grant but would have received a half grant'.

Would that not help?

'No … that is not that much like … when you're down in college you'd have, like if I went to college anyway, I'd want to live near the college, I wouldn't want to live at home … you'd have to pay for accommodation and food and all'.

If you were to be given a much bigger grant would you go [to HE]?

'Oh aye definitely, if there was money, definitely'. (Dermot)

One participant is currently in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance, which helps greatly but only just allows him to make ends meet.

However, the bulk of participants who were aware of their grant eligibility status felt they would not have received financial support had they progressed to HE. As Aideen noted '[I] wasn't entitled to anything', as her father's earnings were outside the threshold for grant support. Similarly, Rachael indicated:

> 'No I don't think so, I don't remember whether, I don't know if it was something to do with me dad's job but I don't think we were [eligible for a grant]'. (Rachael)

A number of individuals felt that the individual assessment of 'mature' students after the age of 23 years was unfair on those who were a year or two younger than the cut-off. As Sarah notes, her 'dad's earnings are too much' to be eligible for a grant and is annoyed that at 22 years of age she receives no support but in a years time she would receive state support as a mature student. However, Sally, who is currently in receipt of a 'small grant, it's like 140 a month' (to support her PLC studies), plans to enrol in HE when she is twenty-three, as a mature student, with three places on the course she is aiming for reserved for mature students.

8.3.7 Friends in HE

Most of the LM respondents had close friends who had progressed to HE. As Aideen observed, her friend has recently completed her HE course; however, she has yet to secure employment in that field:

> '... me best friend [name] went to, she went to DIT she done what do you call that course, Human Resources, HR like and she cannot find a job anywhere, she done four years and she graduated last month'.

When asked to consider their position relative to their friends who have attended HE, Rachael and Sally felt that their friends in HE were likely to have a better financial position than them:

> 'Oh I'd say they'll definitely have different earnings ... you're kind of left behind because you didn't go to college'. (Rachael)

> 'I suppose they're more financially stable than me'. (Sally)

However, a number of respondents felt that those who have spent the last 3 or 4 years in college are likely to lack life skills:

> 'I think they're gonna get a shock when they go in to actually work full-time ... they used to go out every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, which is fair enough for them ... when they used to ask us we'd be like 'no we can't go out tomorrow', we couldn't face work with a hangover, I think they're gonna get that, I think they're just gonna think 'god they weren't actually lying when they said it [work] was stressful'. (Sarah)

Tony and Vincent actually feel that they may have certain advantages over their college-educated peers. In particular, they contend that they have gained important human capital skills, which gives them higher earnings (at least initially) than their HE peers:

> 'I see a lot of differences ... by the time they're finished college, they'll be going to get a job ... and they'll be starting from scratch, where I have got the work already started, I've been working and I'll have my apprenticeship ... I'll hopefully be making a lot more money than some of them'. (Tony)

> 'I probably have a better opportunity ... if you impress at an interview whether you have qualifications or not you might get the job ... it's all about the interview, it is all about your personality and how hard you're going to work at the end of the day. And if they hear that I've been working on a building site for four years, they're going to say oh Jesus this lad is a tough worker'. (Vincent)

8.3.8 Education and Training Experiences Since Leaving School

As noted earlier, over half of those who entered the LM on leaving school did actually pursue some form of education or training subsequently. As with apprenticeship participants discussed in Chapter 7, a number of the male leavers commented on the 'pull of apprenticeships' in a climate where construction sector jobs were plentiful and many of their peers had pursued this pathway.

For many of the participants in the LM group, PLC courses are providing valuable training opportunities. However, Lynda, Mark and Sally all left their respective courses after just a couple of months citing a lack of interest in the course content. However, Aideen has recently completed her PLC course, Sarah is due to complete her course in the coming months, Sally has since taken another PLC course and hopes to progress to HE upon completion and Michael is due to complete his two-year PLC course shortly and also plans to progress to university on completion.

8.3.9 Attitudes towards education (in the future)

Despite somewhat negative reflections on their school days, many of the respondents in the LM group have, if not definite plans, then at least intentions to take further courses in the future. They appear to be more cognisant of the potential value of securing additional training or qualifications now, four years after leaving school (for most of them). Aideen intends on going back to repeat Maths (taking it as an evening course), while Lynda would like to take an accountancy course, which will help her to progress in her job (once her baby is a little older) - probably a night course while remaining in her current job.

Mark may, in the coming years, take a PLC course which would allow him to enter HE, but has no definite plans. Similarly, Michael may take a course in film and tv, possibly a PLC, but has no definite plans. Noel would like to pursue an apprenticeship but fears he may be getting too old:

> 'an apprenticeship that's the only college I'll do now .. [but worries that] I'm getting a bit old now like, well I'm not an old lad or anything I'm only 21 but do you know what I mean'.

Mairead would like to do a private pharmacy technicians course, which she and her boyfriend will pay for (at a cost of several thousand euro).

Declan (who is currently completing his apprenticeship) feels:

> 'there is no real job security or anything like that so I reckon I'm going to go to college when I finish up and hopefully take over my father's business'.

As a result he hopes to take a business course when he completes his apprenticeship. He intends on applying through the CAO and expects to be offered the business course he was offered first time round. If he doesn't get a place he will

> 'wait 'til I'm, is it 24 you can apply as a mature student?'.

He feels he has a different outlook now and is more open to HE now than when he was leaving school:

> 'I couldn't have faced into that when I finished school no way, another four years of it, or something similar anyway, but no I'd be looking forward to doing it now ... when I was 17 if I would have passed at all, I would have scraped though it ... when I do it now, I'll do very well in it now I'd say'. (Declan)

Rachael is keen to take a special needs assistant course (PLC) starting in the next academic year and progress from that to psychology in university:

> 'I suppose I still have the same goals as in I want to make more of myself and I want to have a degree or a diploma behind me and I want to have a job that I'm skilled at, instead of just something that I've kind of picked up along the way' ... but she sees herself in a different field 'but as regards the choices that I've made on my CAO [when in school] when I look back I don't see myself working as any of those jobs now'.

Sally is currently completing her PLC course and

> 'then after that hopefully I'll get into college, I have put [name of college] down as my first choice and then I'm going to apply [names of other HE courses] ... so keep my options open'.

Sarah and Tony plan on completing their current courses and have no plans to pursue anything else at the present.

> 'I keep thinking I'm 22 starting and what will I be 23, 24 leaving and then I go on and do another two years for a four year degree course it's just, the way I look at it and go, I'm not interested'. (Sarah)

> '... finishing off the trade, that's my main priority at the moment you know, get that out of the way ... maybe go back to college, I don't know yet like you know that way'. (Tony)

Dermot and Vincent do not see themselves pursuing any HE or other educational courses owing to a reliance on a full-time income:

> 'It is just the money, used to the money so much, the thought of going to college and having no money and not being able to go out or any, I don't know it is not that good'. (Dermot)

Similarly, Vincent does not see himself engaging in further study in the future:

> 'I couldn't see myself studying, possibly something like maybe go and be a prison officer, I know that involves studying but not day to day studying, not for me no ... the money as well like, you're not going to be getting a wage packet every week ... when you've a car loan and you know bits and pieces'.

Even if he was offered a grant, he doesn't see HE as an option for him:

> 'No .. because I don't think it is enough what they give you a lot of the time, well from what I've heard anyway'. (Vincent)

8.3.10 Reflection on Post-School Pathway

Respondents were asked to reflect on the choices they made on leaving school and whether they were happy with the choices they made or would have made different choices. Both Mark and Rachael regret not going to HE immediately after leaving school, believing that it is more difficult to do so later in life:

> 'It is because a lot more of it [financial support] is provided for you ... grants and stuff that look more favourably on young people'. (Mark)

Rachael also feels it is harder to go back later 'if you get used to having money in your pocket'.

However, others felt it might be better to enter HE when one is older and more likely to make more informed choices and to be genuinely interested in the subject matter:

> '... a lot off them [her classmates] are gone back now, because you can do mature student and all that so you can actually go back. And I think when you go back now you kind of are more into it, you know you'd study more than what you'd do when you're younger because you're mad about going out and all you know for the social life that you're better when you're a little older'. (Aideen)

So do you think lots of people at 17 or 18 make poor choices or poorly informed choices?

> 'I'd say they make poorly informed choices, I think they go with what they feel they want to do, but maybe if they had more information their choices would be different ... I'm in a better position [to make choices now] ... [when you are filling] out the CAO [first time round] the obvious thing is you're just going to pick the first thing that you take an interest in ... whereas now if somebody said to me, 'ok here's a CAO form, fill it out with what you want to do', I think I'd spend much more time on it. I'd realise the importance of what I was actually filling out'. (Rachael)

Furthermore, Declan felt he wasn't in the right frame of mind to go on to college after school:

> 'I just didn't have the head on me for that ... I was too immature at the time', and lots of his friends went to college for the sake of it, for the social element.

Similarly, Mark comments that:

> 'most people they go and they take arts or something just to get into college and they feel around and see what they want to do but technically that is just wasting a year or two years of everyone's time and money'.

Declan goes on to contend that for many young people

> 'There's pressure to be able to get into college straight after school as well of course'. Sally also alludes to such pressure and observes 'because I've chosen to go back ... I think a lot of the younger ones their parents put a little bit of pressure to do something, go to college or do a PLC so I think a lot of it is forced'.

In reflecting on their school and post-school choices, a common theme for the LM group was a certain level of regret at the level of interest they took in school and the extent to which they worked to their abilities. Sarah, for example, wishes that she had studied 'properly' when she was in school:

> '... that's the one thing if I could go back and do it [again] I would properly study, not saying that I did not study but like I wasn't interested ... I was more concerned about going, maybe going out at the weekends seeing my boyfriend kind of that kind of thing ... if I had only known'.

Vincent similarly states '[I would have] worked harder, listened more, especially in the last, well in the last couple of years I did do better but you just missed so much from the years previous [it was difficult to catch up]'. But he accepts responsibility for his behaviour:

> '... it was down to me, you can't really put the blame on other people, if you're not willing to give it a one hundred per cent then you're not going to succeed so, if you only give it fifty, that's all you'll get out of it, that's the way I look at it, it is kind of like what you deserve at the end of the day'.

These respondents are generally cognisant of the consequences of their poor behaviour and consequent poor examination performance for their post-school options. As Sally reflects:

Looking back would you do anything differently?

> 'I suppose I would have listened more in school, achieved the points and put my head down because I know I am capable of it, I didn't think so at the time but ... I would have attended school more often and just probably started education, third-level education, straight after [the] Leaving Cert'.

While for Vincent his decision to take an apprenticeship was partly a result of not working hard while at school and therefore not achieving high grades in the Leaving Certificate. Vincent and his friends agree:

> '...they're going ah Jesus if we'd done better in school, you know if we had put our heads down and listened to the teachers'.

And what do you think stopped you listening and working harder?

> 'Immaturity at the time'.

In a similar vein, Michael comments

> 'I was too young at that stage like, I didn't really see the consequences of not going into school'.

However, as noted earlier many of these young people have gone on to secure some form of post-school education or training and Sally, for example, suggests that making that choice to complete non-compulsory post-school education has provided personal empowerment and motivation:

> 'I just loved being back in education again, back in kind of school, even though I hated it at the same time when I was in school but making the choice to go and do something, kind of motivated me and [I] got high marks in all the exams that I done and that kind of motivated me, make me think well I'm not as stupid as what I thought so maybe I can do it'. (Sally)

In asking the school leavers to offer advice to those facing the Leaving Certificate this year, most advised them to work hard. As Declan states:

> 'Get the head down and do a bit of study and get whatever course you've applied for and then you can decide whether you want to do it or you want to take time off or you want to do something else, you can always come back and do it then later'.

Lynda, Mairead, Mark, Michael and Vincent expressed similar comments. Dermot also advises to have a number of options rather than relying on one. These views contrast somewhat with the advice of those who progressed to HE – many of whom referred to college choice processes in their advice to school leavers (See Chapter 3).

8.3.11 Future Thoughts

Many of the participants talk about the importance of work in their future, for some this reflects a high priority being placed on income (Dermot). For those who took the apprenticeship path, the physically demanding nature of their work is an issue they raise and one which concerns them for the future. Furthermore, economic uncertainty is an issue that has created some unease for them lately:

> '... it is terrible hard to get a job now like and even if you do like it is hard to keep a job then ... you're getting let off all the time now over houses not getting sold and your boss losing contracts'. (Noel)

Tony had difficulty maintaining his apprenticeship as a result of the economic climate:

> 'I'd be well into my apprenticeship at this stage like but due to like the whole work scenario like there is not a lot of work going for apprentices'.

A number of others see a change in career path (Declan, for example, plans to take over his father's business). Furthermore, a number of those who entered apprenticeships do not see that work as long-term: Vincent plans to go into Sales after a few years.

The females in this group seem more optimistic about the future. They also appear to have more definite plans and be more goal oriented. As Sarah states:

> 'I still have the same goals as in I want to make more of myself and I want to have a degree or a diploma behind me and I want to have a job that I'm skilled at'. Sally is also optimistic: '[in 5 years] hopefully [I will be] just finishing my degree, I'll be working a year ... and then maybe go back and specialise in an area'.

In contrast the male respondents appear somewhat more fatalistic about their futures and less goal-oriented:

> 'I actually don't think I had absolutely any expectations, I figured I'd just make it up as I went along and possibly fall into something ... I was very listless and lackadaisical'. (Mark)

Finally, the majority of participants expressed a desire to 'go travelling', usually to Australia for up to a year - Aideen, Declan, Mark and Tony all expressed such intentions. For some, particularly those who had taken apprenticeships in the construction sector, their plans to travel also reflected a downturn in the economy:

> '... because everyone is getting laid off ... a couple of my mates are going to Australia in August ... I might head over to them ... one of the boys was laid off, he asked like nineteen different boys [construction companies] for work and couldn't get any'. (Dermot)

> 'I've seen it [Australia] is the best place now because all I'm into is building and there is not really much building here like, it is either Australia or England because England are crying out for it all, like builders and all that like, it would be easy enough to get a job'. (Noel)

8.3.12 Summary of the experiences of labour market entrants

In total 13 young people out of our sample of 29 entered the labour market full-time on leaving school. Their decision to terminate their education (at least in the short-term) reflected a range of factors and underlying processes. However, as discussed in Chapter Five, central to their experiences was a somewhat negative reflection on their school days and consequently a desire, for some, to get away from formal education. Their negativity tended to surround the teaching methods adopted by their teachers, their classroom environments, the expectations teachers had for them and the advice they received on their post-school options. A number of this group indicated that they were unmotivated about the academic aspects of school, were largely disinterested and lacked any real direction or focus. In reflecting on their school days, a number of the male respondents also felt they were too immature and, hence did not take their school work seriously.

The picture is not wholly negative, however. A number of participants did aspire to HE and went through the CAO application process. Their lack of progression to HE, at that time, reflected either their Leaving Certificate performance (either insufficient points or failing a required subject) or uncertainty over what they should study and whether they were capable of succeeding at HE. In one case, a participant felt he 'did not have the head for it' at the time.

The key processes underlying the choices of these young people also reflected a number of pull factors; namely the pull of full-time employment and income and the ready availability of (construction sector) apprenticeships. Being 'used to have money in your pocket' became an important factor in the decision of a number of these young people to remain in the labour market and not further their education.

However, half of this group of young people have succeeded in progressing to some form of education or training and a number aspire to enter HE in the coming years. It is clear that many of these young people have a different outlook now, four years after leaving school. Some have clear HE aspirations (a number through completing a PLC course and others as mature students) and certainly they seem to have a greater openness to education now than when they were leaving school. They also feel they would make better, more inform ed (course) choices now and would have a greater level of maturity that would enable them to succeed at HE. A number are cognisant of the consequences of their 'poor' behaviour and lack of motivation and interest while at school and actually reflect on that with regret. However, the key issue of engagement in education is central and a number of these young people have succeeded in re-engaging in education. As Declan put it, 'it is no bother to study every hour of the day' (in his IoT component of his apprenticeship programme), as he is interested and engaged in what he is doing now.

8.4 Summary

This chapter focuses on young people who made the transition from second-level education into the labour market, without any experience of HE. In line with the previous chapters in this report, this chapter has used the quantitative data to consider the labour market situation of school leavers, paying particular attention to the two Non-Manual groups. Specifically the labour market outcomes considered have been labour market participation, labour market situation (occupation and industry) and unemployment. The qualitative data is then used to identify the factors underlying their decision not to pursue HE or other education and training options (immediately after leaving school). Among the issues considered are the family background of these young people, their early expectations and labour market goals, the factors influencing their post-school choices, their experiences since leaving school and their reflections on their lives so far.

Overall labour market participation rates among school leavers who completed second-level fell from 47 per cent in 1997/98 to 42 per cent in 2002/04, with a slight upturn to 43 per cent in 2006/07. While in previous years males have had higher levels of entry into the labour market than females, given the rates of progression to apprenticeships among males, there is now little difference in entry into the labour market upon leaving school between males and females (Byrne *et al.*, 2009). Clear socio-economic disparities are evident in labour market entry rates as school leavers from other Non-Manual, manual and unemployed backgrounds are more likely to enter the labour market. Young people from intermediate Non-Manual backgrounds show relatively low levels of entry into the labour market at this stage, reflecting their relatively high rates of entry into post-school education and training opportunities.

Among school leavers in the labour market, those from other Non-Manual and intermediate Non-Manual backgrounds differ in the types of occupations entered into. While other Non-Manual youth are more likely

to enter manual employment, those from intermediate Non-Manual backgrounds enter service sector jobs in greater numbers. In terms of industrial sector the intermediate Non-Manual group are slightly more likely to enter professional services jobs, while the other Non-Manual group enter personal services jobs in greater numbers. However, the main point of distinction between these two groups relates to employment in Industry and Distribution – a larger share of the intermediate Non-Manual group take up jobs in the latter industrial sector, while greater numbers of other Non-Manual leavers enter jobs in Industry (with the exception of the most recent cohort).
In line with overall economic trends, unemployment rates fell over the ten year period (11 per cent of 1997/98 school leavers were in the labour market unemployed one year after leaving school to 9 per cent in 2006/07). Over this time, the gender gap in unemployment rates has disappeared. Unemployment rates do not vary significantly across socio-economic groups, however, those from unemployed backgrounds experience particular difficulty in accessing employment. Furthermore, school leavers from other Non-Manual backgrounds have unemployment rates largely in line with the manual group (11 per cent and 12 per cent respective), while the intermediate Non-Manual group fares slightly better (8 per cent).

The qualitative data then sought to identify the factors underlying their decision not to pursue HE or other education and training options for these Non-Manual groups. It was clear that this group did not have the same encouragement to progress to HE either at home or in school. However, some of the respondents did express an interest in pursuing HE while at second-level and had filled in their CAO forms but were unsuccessful in gaining the points for the courses they selected. Many of the young people we spoke to had almost eliminated themselves out of the HE route because of their own academic self-image or unhappy experiences at school. Others felt that they had not received sufficient career guidance needed to pursue to HE. However, some of this group were more comfortable with the idea of accessing alternative education or training opportunities, such as PLC courses or apprenticeships, rather than HE.

Among the other Non-Manual members of the LM group it is clear that school experience and advice did not leave them either well directed or clear in their post-school plans. While one respondent 'just wanted to get out of school', others left school with no focus or direction. There was a short-term orientation among the group (to take advantage of the booming construction sector or secure a straightforward office job, for example), and there seemed to be little consideration of the longer-term picture. Finally, for one respondent, who had intentions of going to HE, failing honours Irish had serious implications for her chances of realising these ambitions.

CHAPTER 9

Main Findings and Discussion

9.1 Introduction

Examination of class inequality in educational participation and attainment is particularly warranted in the Irish context. Numerous studies have demonstrated that rapidly rising participation and retention in education has been accompanied by remarkable stability in class inequalities in educational attainment (Smyth, 1999; Whelan and Hannan, 1999). These findings are in line with many other European countries (Shavit and Müller, 1998). In addition, however, some commentators maintain that the costs of educational failure are particularly high in Ireland, making the Irish case particularly worthy of study. As Clancy notes (in Clancy et al., 1995)

> 'comparative data from twenty OECD countries reveal that education is a more crucial determinant of employability in Ireland than in other countries ... unemployment in Ireland is disproportionately concentrated among those with the lowest levels of educational attainment'.

The fact that certain groups of young people fare relatively poorly in their levels of participation in (higher) education, has crucial implications for the life chances of these young people and for society more generally – in terms of increased welfare costs, poorer health and higher crime levels (Smyth and McCoy, 2009).
Within this context, this study has set out to examine the experiences of young people from non-manual backgrounds given that established research has identified this group as having low levels of participation in HE relative to young people from other socio-economic groups, and are in fact the only group to see a decline in the rates of participation over time. In particular, the study objectively set out to examine the potential barriers to HE for those from non-manual backgrounds and the processes impacting on their (post-) school choices. The research has highlighted the fact that the non-manual group is not homogenous but must instead be viewed as being made up of two distinct groups – those from an intermediate non-manual background and those from other non-manual backgrounds. It is clear from analysis presented in Chapter 3 that across a range of educational and economic characteristics, occupants of the other non-manual group share many similarities with lower manual groups, while the intermediate non-manual group shares few of the characteristics of these groups.
The following presents a discussion of the overall results and identification of the processes underlying low levels of entry to HE among young people from such non-manual socio-economic backgrounds. The main policy implications of the research are discussed in Section 9.3.

9.2 Discussion

9.2.1 Introduction

This report is based on the findings of a large scale mixed-method study examining the processes underlying relatively low levels of entry into HE among young people from non-manual socio-economic backgrounds.
The methodological framework overcomes many of the criticisms levelled at transitions and access research in the Irish context and internationally. In taking a mixed method approach, what is now regarded as the gold standard in educational research, the research overcomes the traditional sole reliance on quantitative methods in this field. In addition, giving consideration to those who succeed in gaining entry against the odds (rather than just focusing on the barriers to entry) the research unpacks the processes underlying success as well as failure. Finally, the research assesses the validity of traditional social class and socio-economic approaches to examining HE entry, in particular, considering the extent of within class variation in HE access and the extent to which these classifications can be considered to be hierarchically structured.
The HEA has explicitly stated its aims of increasing participation in HE overall and particularly to widen access to

HE for young people from 'non-traditional' backgrounds. This under-represented group has been typically defined as young people from working-class and non-employed backgrounds. This study has fundamentally questioned this traditional definition of under-represented groups in HE. It has found young people from lower white collar backgrounds (the bulk of whom work in lower service sector positions - drivers of buses, waiters/waitresses, hairdressers/barbers, chefs) to have low levels of participation and retention in HE; levels which are certainly no higher than those from lower-blue collar backgrounds. This finding represents an important development in educational research in the Irish context and identifies crucial processes underlying the relatively low levels of educational attainment of a significant sub-section of the population.

Furthermore, the findings throw doubt on the extent to which constructs of socio-economic and social class can be considered strictly hierarchical. This issue has been raised elsewhere. Research in the UK context (Reay 2001) examines the experiences of non-traditional students, which she does not confine to the lower blue collar group, but also to those who have parents employed in the service sector:

> 'they [service sector], rather than the outmoded traditional image of the male industrial labourer, represent the contemporary working classes – lone mothers, benefit recipients and low paid, casualised service workers' (Reid, 1998, quoted in Reay, 2001).

Not only does this research highlight important new findings on the structure and nature of inequality in educational outcomes in the Irish context, it also highlights the limitations of a categorical approach to looking at educational outcomes such as HE entry. As also highlighted by Bernard (2006), HE access policy has been traditionally based on categorical measures of social class/socio-economic group. However, the qualitative interviews with twenty-nine young people from one socio-economic group ('non-manual'), illustrates wide diversity within this group. It is clear that research can no longer continue to focus solely on categorical measures of background, but take account also of variations within as well as across the populations; as Archer et al. comment (2003, quoted in Bernard, 2006)

> 'an approach is required which enables researchers to grapple with the grey borders of modern class identities and inequalities, while not losing sight of the broad patterns of class disadvantage in relation to HE participation'.

9.2.2 Value of Higher Education

The results point to the crucial importance of the value placed on HE for different social groups. It is clear across social groups and even between intermediate and other non-manual groups that families have differential access to various forms of cultural, social and economic capital and resources, which differentially frames the educational choices that different families can or will make. As Archer (2003) writes, middle class parents can pass on cultural and material advantages that privilege or enable their children to succeed within the education system. Working class families experience more economic and physical constraints and lack the same knowledge of the system and social networks that encourage the reproduction of privilege (Archer, 2003; Reay, 2001).

As a result different groups place different 'value' on HE – whether it is 'worth it'. They make such assessments weighing up the potential benefits of HE study, as compared to the increased risks and costs of participation for lower income groups, such as those from other non-manual backgrounds. Financial issues and the pull of ready employment (at that time) played a central role for many of these young people – an issue we return to later.

What clearly emerges is the power of educational beliefs and views to impact on the motivations of potential applicants to HE. Many of those who enter HE report positive orientations towards, and experiences of, education

and learning. They place a value on pursuing further education over earning money and view HE as an opportunity for personal fulfillment and betterment. Among those who don't take the HE path, issues around self-belief and aspirations are clearly apparent, suggesting the potential role of early encouragement about and exposure to the HE process for these young people. Views like HE 'is not for me' or 'I place very little value in it [HE] in itself' were prominent. However, it is vital that these values are not taken as a deficit in aspiration among certain individuals and their families, but rather as reflecting broader processes of societal inequality. As Leathwood and O'Connell (2003) argue, there is a danger in locating lack of aspiration and self-esteem as individual problems or personality deficits, rather than as constructed through poverty, social inequalities and discrimination and the culture and practices of schools and universities themselves.

Indeed, beyond the individual level, the institutional context also plays a role. Young people from lower service and lower manual backgrounds displayed lower levels of retention in HE, suggesting that these groups face greater barriers in terms of integrating into HE. As Reay (2001) has argued, non-traditional students may be disadvantaged by institutional cultures that position them as 'others' in contrast to dominant assumption of student learners as young and middle class.

Finally, there was evidence that these young people felt their parents supported them in whatever they wanted to do and did not push them in a particular direction. This has been referred to as a working class discourse of 'child as expert' in the UK context (Reay and Ball, 1998). As these young people observed in relation to their parents: 'they never put pressure on me', 'once I'm happy like, they are'. These factors operated alongside early educational experiences to leave the lower non-manual group poorly placed in terms of gaining access to HE.

9.2.3 Early Educational Experiences

The discussion must be set in the context of young people's experiences within the educational system from a relatively early age. Analysis presented in this report shows fundamental differences in the second-level experiences of young people from different socio-economic groups, leading to large variations in the proportions reaching eligibility for entry into HE. There was clear evidence that a number of the non-participants in HE from the other non-manual group were alienated and disaffected from school at an early age. Skipping school, poor behaviour and a lack of motivation fed into a negative cycle of interaction with teachers and school. They felt teachers held low expectations for them (being told 'I'd amount to nothing') and were seen as unfair. It should also be highlighted that attending a school with a concentration of disadvantage (DEIS school) was found to have a multiplier effect – with such school leavers doubly impacted in terms of their second-level attainments and progression to HE.

These young people from lower non-manual backgrounds saw HE as an extension of school, and for this reason it was viewed as something to be avoided: 'I'd had enough in school'. Further, they viewed post-school decision-making as an opportunity to take a stand, make a statement, assert the primacy of their own role in deciding on their lives: 'you really don't have a choice going to school but college was your kind of choice'.

However, it would be misleading to argue that difficulties with school emerge at second-level. Research also clearly demonstrates that social differentiation in educational outcomes is evident at a much earlier stage – early in primary level education for example (see Smyth and McCoy, 2009).

As a consequence, many of these young people with negative school experiences now reflect with some regret, for not taking school seriously. They feel they have missed out on opportunities:

> 'if I had just not messed and not done all the stupid things … so pointless … it can leave you with big regrets that you'll never get rid of'.

9.2.4 Information, Awareness and Support

Information was also key, with entrants to HE (from the intermediate non-manual group) much more positive about the early information, and support, they received from school personnel, particularly the guidance counsellor. This is also a prominent issue in the international literature:

> 'certain groups in society lack information about the opportunities that are available' (Thomas, 2001, p.135).

While for many of those who successfully progressed to HE (mostly from intermediate non-manual backgrounds) there was no 'moment of decision' at which point they made that choice. Rather it was 'always there', taken for granted, assumed. The crucial question was where they would go and what they would study. Information was not a crucial factor to that process; indeed for many of these young people parents, siblings, peers and others in their community provided the necessary information and guidance, alongside school supports. That said, all were positive about the guidance they received. However, this was not the case for those from other non-manual backgrounds who did not progress to HE – many of whom had negative constructions of the advice received. Guidance was variously absent, only focused on certain groups of students (such as the 'honours' class), narrowly focused, or directive away from HE. Some felt they would have liked more help in actually evaluating the range of post-school options, rather than just supplying information. There was also evidence that our respondents from the lower service class were much more reliant on what has been termed 'hot' knowledge, accessed through the grapevine, while their more advantaged counterparts relied upon 'cold' knowledge from official sources (Hutchings, 2003).

However, for those from lower non-manual backgrounds, parental experience of HE was not there, while siblings and peers were also not necessarily familiar with the HE process and choices therein. Despite displaying a parental value for education, one could argue that these groups are in need of more information and advice from school personnel to promote entry into HE. Indeed, MacAllum et al. (2007) have argued that while much of the information students seek is readily available via the Internet and other published sources, the research suggests it is less accessible and less comprehensible for 'underserved' than for middle income students. They conclude that students and their families would benefit from additional information and resources and from assistance in interpreting and using information.

The other non-manual group, in particular, were far more reliant on the supports and encouragement available from their school and these supports played a much more significant role in the choices made by these young people. Indeed it is argued elsewhere that the information that is needed by lower social classes is in itself more complex than that needed by their middle class counterparts (Hutchings, 2003). This relates to the greater diversity of pathways into HE for young people from under-represented groups – making the system more complex for those faced with a greater range of choices and possibilities than for their middle class counterparts entering HE through more traditional, well-established and direct entry routes. However, there was clear evidence that young people, particularly those from the lower non-manual backgrounds, felt they had insufficient information about HE. This may seem surprising in a context where the majority of young people progress to HE. Indeed, some indicated that there had been no mention of 'college' or 'third-level' while they were at school, which suggests that this option is not seen as relevant to young people in some school contexts and guidance supports in such schools are focused on areas other than HE. Further, there was clearly confusion over terminology with some young people from the lower service group seeing any form of post-school education as going to 'college'.
The issue of the extent to which students in certain schools are well-informed about HE is an important one and raises questions over the adequacy and comprehensiveness of HEA initiatives targeting DEIS schools – since many of the young people with limited knowledge of HE had attended a DEIS school. But perhaps more importantly, the lack of information on and attention given to HE in these schools raises issues over the expectations that staff have of these pupils.

Where teachers were perceived to be dismissive and non-supportive, these young people in some cases adopted these perspectives, a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts. These young people also spoke of teachers not identifying them as the group likely to progress to further study and hence excluded them from information sessions. They also spoke of mis-information and misdirection, which for some removed their chances of directly progressing to HE.

9.2.5 Financial Issues

Financial issues emerge in various forms impacting on the decisions of young people from the other non-manual group to pursue HE. For some, the financial commitment to study was seen as too great or would entail too much hardship. Many felt that they would not be eligible for financial support (which is supported by grant receipt levels in the School Leavers' Survey analysis), or even where they were eligible they felt it would not have been sufficient. In fact, some were waiting to attend HE as a mature student, when they would become eligible for such support. It is also clear that financial supports and the cost of HE were insufficiently understood among some of these young people. It is interesting to note that research in the UK context has also shown that financial concerns play a major role in the decision-making process of whether or not to enter HE and the 'over-riding negative perception of going to university, for potential entrants, was its cost' (Connor et al., 2001). Further, money matters have been found to variously affect access, participation, persistence and attainment (Callender and Jackson 2005).

In Chapter 6 we note that perceived financial barriers have implications for young people's aspirations. The complexity behind the decision making process warrants more attention, given that the other non-manual group were somewhat more likely to indicate that they were not interested in going to HE or that they wouldn't get the grades necessary for HE than the intermediate non-manual group. The adjustment of behaviour based on financial position is likely to have an influence on how young people view their decision-making process and ultimately on their participation rates at HE. Financial barriers also impact on the transition process. Even among young people achieving eligibility for HE notable differences emerge across groups in their patterns of post-school choices and progression to HE. At this point, in particular, we see a significant fall-off in the pursuit of HE among young people from lower service backgrounds. It appears financial factors play an important role, alongside those relating to interest, with young people seriously considering HE but falling at the final hurdle perhaps due to ineligibility for a grant.

It was also clear, particularly for males from lower non-manual backgrounds, that the pull of the labour market was an important process underlying their non-participation in HE. Across both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, the labour market and apprenticeship route emerged as strong attractions for these young people. While some continued in part-time jobs they had secured while in school, others spoke of the booming construction sector: 'there was a big boom and everybody was talking about trades'. In any case, many became used to earning, having money in their pocket and the sense of independence that accompanied it. This represented an especially powerful incentive to forego college for some.

Research in the international context further highlights the potential role of the labour market as a barrier to widening participation in HE. Adnett and Slack (2007) progress the issue to explore whether the labour market fails to provide sufficient incentives for potential entrants from less advantaged backgrounds to enter HE. They find evidence that some marginal entrants to HE may face rates of return insufficient to provide financial incentives for HE participation. Lower rates of return may be due to higher rates of withdrawal, lower degree classifications, greater likelihood of being overqualified and lower earnings. In relation to the latter, they found that for men the returns to HE are substantially higher for the disadvantaged groups than for advantaged groups. In contrast to men, women were found to have very similar returns to HE across ability, income and social class groups.

9.2.6 Beyond Access

The research has also shown that access is only part of the story – the issue of retention is now widely recognised as a central component within the widening participation agenda. Non-traditional students and those from traditionally under-represented groups (including the other non-manual group), must receive adequate supports throughout HE, rather than simply at the point of entry. There needs to be consistent and thorough data on retention levels, across all institutes of HE, based on clear definitions of retention and a range of outcomes such as examination performance. Thomas (2002) argues that the institutional habitus of a university is key to the retention and success of non-traditional students, as is the importance of universities valuing diversity.

Further the research highlights important inequalities in the nature of access and in the levels of entry to university and honours degree level courses. Lucas (2001) coined the term 'effectively maintained inequality' to describe the qualitative distinctions (course level, sector and field of study) preserving inequalities even as quantitative differences fade. He argues:

> 'as long as a particular level of schooling is not universal, the socio-economically advantaged use their advantages to secure that level of schooling. Once that level of schooling becomes nearly universal, however, the socio-economically advantaged seek out whatever qualitative differences there are at that level and use their advantages to secure quantitatively similar but qualitatively better education' (p.1652).

This also relates to the development of curricular alternatives within second-level education and, in particular, the LCA option (for research on LCA see Banks et al., forthcoming). This research has shown young people from other non-manual and manual backgrounds to have relatively high levels of participation in the LCA programme. This has important implications for the proportions eligible for HE entry, given that LCA completers are not eligible for direct entry. While the LCA programme has to be assessed in terms of the positive role it is seen to play in promoting retention for certain groups, this must be counterbalanced against the diversionary role it may also be playing among groups with traditionally low levels of entry into HE. As Lucas (2001) argues:

> 'students' location in the stratified curriculum has implications for their likelihood of making additional transition, and thus their location in the stratified curriculum is an integral part of the process of educational attainment' (p.1678).

Ultimately, through these processes of 'effectively maintained inequality', 'social background advantages seem to work to effectively and continuously secure for the children of advantage advantaged locations of their own'.

9.2.7 Concluding Remarks: Processes Underlying Their (Non-) Participation in HE

It is clear that the intermediate and other non-manual groups occupy distinct positions, and in some respects polar opposite positions, in terms of educational attainment and access to HE. What has emerged is a previously unknown sub-group, representing nearly 10 per cent of the population, for whom a complex interplay of social, cultural and economic processes have led to low levels of participation in HE. The picture is clearly one of hidden disadvantage, as the merging of intermediate and other non-manual groups in most previous empirical work has concealed a dramatic picture of educational disadvantage among young people from other non-manual backgrounds.

The report commenced with a discussion of two main theoretical perspectives which might allow us to understand and explain processes of educational inequality and disadvantage among non-manual groups. First, cultural approaches emphasise mechanisms related to cultural causation: such as norms, beliefs and sub-cultural values, as they shape preferences, expectations and choices. The findings of this study, in drawing on both quantitative

and qualitative methodologies, clearly point to the enormous value of such 'cultural' explanations in understanding processes of educational disadvantage among the other non-manual group. For many of these young people, negative school experiences and disengagement from the dominant class school culture, interlinked with lower aspirations, led to second-level pathways and transition decisions which were uncertain and constrained. Many failed to achieve eligibility for HE and among those who were eligible the discourse of HE was, for some, alien and foreign and one which had not necessarily been promoted at school. Where they did succeed in progressing to HE, aspirations were lower and higher status courses and colleges were not seen as a realistic option for them.

The second theoretical approach, the rational action perspective, places greater emphasis on the resources and constraints faced by occupants of different social class positions. Distance from social origin and the desire to avoid social demotion mean that patterns of educational attainment across different social groups could be comparable given their differing positions of origin. Again the results of the study lend support to this perspective: young people from other non-manual backgrounds typically come from non-HE origins and the social distance of going to HE (and particularly to a university) is considerably greater than for a young person from a professional background (and also an intermediate non-manual background). For many of these young people, the pull of the booming labour market offered an acceptable post-school pathway. The pressure to pursue HE as a means of avoiding social demotion was less than for other social groups and they also framed the costs and benefits of education differently. Finally, in line with greater distance from social origin and the lower likelihood of success (evident in higher dropout rates for example), this group could be seen as acting rationally in not pursuing the HE option.

Both cultural and rational action perspectives offer valuable insights into the processes explaining both socio-economic patterns in educational attainment and within-class differences. The complex interplay of economic constraints, cultural context and knowledge of the system and early educational experiences, clearly differentially frames the educational choices that different families can and will make. The challenge for policy is to effectively address the diverse and inter-related factors impinging on the educational attainments of this group, which is discussed in the next section.

9.3 Implications for policy

The research highlights important issues for the educational attainment of the non-manual group, representing 20 per cent of the population, and for their access to different forms of HE and their retention and achievement therein. The HE Authority (2008) has set a target of at least 54 per cent entry into HE for all groups by 2020, a considerable jump from the 27 per cent entry rate for the non-manual group in 2004. The research has shown important differences between the intermediate and other non-manual groups, differences which make the other non-manual group in need of considerably greater policy attention than heretofore.

The research points to a number of main areas for policy focus:

1. Measurement and identification of groups with low participation

It is clear that the traditional focus on HE access among traditionally disadvantaged groups such as semi- and unskilled manual and non-employed groups has failed to take account of important differences across the social spectrum and within groups. As Gayle, et al. (2002) note;

> 'policy initiatives aimed at combating the differential levels of entry into HE will have to embrace a more comprehensive conception of differences than is afforded by more restrictive occupational social class analysis' (p.16).

More complex interpretations of class and, importantly, within class, patterns of HE participation are required in both policy fora and future research. The classification used by the Census aims to bring together persons with similar social and economic statuses in terms of their level of skill or educational attainment. However, we have identified that this is blurring important distinction within groups, i.e., by aggregating the whole non-manual group.

2. Data Collection

To guide future data collection exercises and research in this area, a Working Group should be established to explore the measurement of socio-economic position/social background, with a view to identifying a consistent measure across studies. It would be important that this work would also assess the comparability of measures in an international context as with the use of ESeC but without losing direct comparability with Irish measures that are currently being used. The revised system of classification of occupations from Census 1996 onwards is based on the UK Standard Occupational Classification and is meant to adhere to the international occupational classification ISCO Com (88). However, this means that information is lost on variation within socio-economic groups, i.e. the non-manual group.

This research would not have been possible without the invaluable contribution of School Leavers' Survey data over the last decade. The research has illustrated the value of this SLS method in assessing HE access within and across different groups, primarily because second-level school experiences and attainments can be considered alongside transition choices and post-school pathways. The research points to the importance of the continuation of this survey and the need to develop greater linkage between the Irish survey and comparable surveys which are now being undertaken in a large number of European countries.

3. Early Education Experiences and Early Broadening of Horizons

Policy efforts to address the under-representation of young people from lower white collar backgrounds must begin within compulsory education and early in the second-level process, if not before – where young people from lower white collar backgrounds have already fallen behind. Recent research (Smyth and McCoy, 2009) shows wide social differentiation in reading scores among first and fifth class students in primary schools. While this research did not specifically address the relative position of the other non-manual group, it does highlight the importance of early childhood education and primary education in addressing the under-performance of certain groups in society. Previous research has indicated the significant impact of school organisation and process on retention and performance within the second-level system (see Smyth, 1999; Smyth et al., 2006). Thus, schools should be encouraged to use mixed ability grouping, to facilitate access to higher level subjects, and to provide engaging approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom. Furthermore, a positive school climate, with good relations between teachers and students, is key to facilitating young people in reaching their potential.
Funding for programmes targeted at those most at risk at both pre-school and school level must be prioritised. However, it is clear that a majority of young people from other non-manual backgrounds (and even non-employed households) attend schools outside the DEIS programme, raising crucial issues over the extent to which the current second-level and HE policy focus on DEIS schools is adequate to address the under-representation of this group in HE. These issues are particularly important in the current climate which is likely to impact disproportionately on the other non-manual group who are positioned within particularly vulnerable sectors of the economy.

4. Discontinuity between second-level and HE policy

It is clear that policy efforts to raise the achievement of under-performing groups require a coherent and co-ordinated approach at primary, second-level and HE. Furthermore, there is a need for more joined-up provision between education, health and welfare services and other relevant agencies, to ensure a holistic provision and support for young people, particularly from lower white collar backgrounds, at risk of under-achievement.

5. Importance of Information and Awareness early in second-level

There is clearly a need for better information to guide young people in their decisions, clearer route maps and better signposting. These young people also need better information and advice about graduate employment and the kinds of financial returns that can be expected from different education and career routes (Connor, 2001); as well as targeted information to inform the decisions of particular groups of students. This has to take place early in junior cycle – as the DES Guidance Review (2009) and McCoy et al., (2006) note – there is need for increased provision for junior cycle students; to encourage students' earlier consideration of possible career options, it is recommended that some inputs on career topics be provided for second-year and third-year classes.

6. HE selection procedures and Access Programmes

Students and their families within the lower non-manual category would benefit from additional information, assistance with interpreting this information and other supports in negotiating the HE transition process. While alternative pathways (through Access programmes) are welcome, it is important that these routes are known, understood and easily negotiated by the target groups. Personnel working in Access Programmes, in particular, need to ensure that information reaches and is understood by these groups well in advance of the point of decision-making about HE.

The research has also identified significant issues around entry routes into HE and, in particular, the extent to which PLC participants can realistically expect to progress to HE. Given high levels of participation in PLC programmes among young people from other non-manual backgrounds, it is important that PLC providers and the VECs be targeted directly by HE institutions in promoting their participation and that the interface between Further Education and HE should be highlighted and developed.

7. Financial Supports

Other research has identified changes over time in the relative value of grant support, the proportions eligible and the relative living standards of young people reliant on state grants (McCoy et al., forthcoming). These and other financial issues are of particular importance for many young people from non-manual backgrounds, who do not come from high income families and who are particularly vulnerable to the pull of labour market opportunities (although perhaps not in the current climate). Further, any current policy changes regarding the re-introduction of fees or other charges, need to take account of any possible disincentives to participation in HE this is likely to have for young people from lower service backgrounds. Careful monitoring of the impact of any changes in this regard will be important; particularly any impact on the participation rates for the lower non-manual group.

8. Integration into college life

Central to the success of young people from under-represented groups in HE is their integration into college life – policy at both national and institutional level should ensure this issue receives particular focus. Policy efforts need to focus not just on the point of access into HE, but also on integration into college life and ongoing support. Access Officers within HE institutions need to pay particular attention to ensure such full participation among

lower non-manual groups. There is also a need for further research on young people's experiences of HE, their progression within HE and attainment, with particular focus on non-traditional groups. Data on progression from second-level to HE is essential (along the lines of the School Leavers' Survey) in order to monitor change over time in the position of lower non-manual and other groups, particularly in the current downturn.

9. Broader Societal Inequality

Education does not operate in a vacuum since the costs and benefits attached to attending HE are shaped by the overall social and economic structure. Any interventions within the educational system should therefore be underpinned by tax and social welfare measures designed to bring about greater equity in life-chances.

> 'The solution to class inequalities does not lie in making the working class more middle class, but in working at dismantling and sharing out the economic, social and cultural capital which goes with middle-class status' (Reay, 1997, p.23).

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Census 1986 Intermediate Non-manual and Other Non-manual Socio-Economic Groups

Intermediate Non-Manual
Typists and Key-Punch Operators
Book Keepers, Cashiers and Related Workers
Computing Machine Operators
Clerical Workers (n.e.s.)
Clerical Supervisors
Proprietors of Filling Stations or Garages
Publicans, Wine Merchants, Off-Licence Proprietors, etc.
Other Proprietors in Wholesale or Retail Trade
Shop Assistants and Related Workers
Bar Attendants
Working Proprietors in Catering/Lodging Services (n.e.s.)
Garda Sergeants and Lower Ranks
Government Executive Officials
Draughtsmen
Other Ranks

Other Non-Manual
Signalmen and Level Crossing Keepers
Drivers of Buses
Drivers of Other Road Passenger Vehicles
Drivers of Road Goods Vehicles
Other Transport Equipment Operators
Air and Land Transport Controllers
Ticket Checkers, Collectors and Inspectors (Railways)
Bus Conductors
Postmen and Post Office Sorters
Telephone, Telegraph, and Radio Operators
Warehouse and Despatch Clerks
Roundsmen
Street Vendors, Hawkers and Newspaper Sellers
Matrons, Superintendents, Supervisors of Schools, etc.
Waiters and Waitresses
Canteen and Related Workers
Chefs and Cooks
Domestic Servants and Related Workers
Caretakers
Barbers, Hairdressers and Beauty Consultants
Watchmen and Related Workers
Air Hostesses or Stewards
Dental Nurses
Hospital and Ward Orderlies; Hospital Porters and Attendants
Broadcasting Operators; Film Editors; Projectionists
Proprietors in Other Service Industries
Other Service Workers
Photographers and Camera Operators
Sportsmen and Related Workers

Appendix B: Comparing 1986 and 1996 Census Classification of Occupations

Code	Intermediate Non-manual 1986	Code	1996 Non-manual Group (Aggregate)
316	Typists and Key-Punch Operators	459	Secretaries, medical, legal: personal assistants, typists and word processor operators
317	Book Keepers, Cashiers and Related Workers	410	Accounts and wages clerks, book-keepers and other financial clerks
318	Computing Machine Operators	490	Computer operators, data processing operators and other office machine operators
327	Clerical Workers (n.e.s.)	401	Local government clerical officers and assistants
328	Clerical Supervisors	400	Civil Service administrative officers and assistants
332	Proprietors of Filling Stations or Garages	171	Garage managers and proprietors (Managerial and Technical)
333	Publicans, Wine Merchants, Off-Licence Proprietors, etc.	175	Publicans, innkeepers and club managers: Managerial and Technical
334	Other Proprietors in Wholesale or Retail Trade	179	Managers and proprietors of shops (Managerial and Technical)
336	Shop Assistants and Related Workers	720	Sales assistants, check-out operators and petrol pump attendants
337	Bar Attendants	622	Bar Staff (Semi-skilled/non-manual)
346	Working Proprietors in Catering/ Lodging Services (n.e.s.)		Managerial and Technical
357	Garda Sergeants and Lower Ranks	610	Police officers (sergeant and below)
367	Government Executive Officials	132	Civil Service Executive Officers (Lower Professional)
376	Draughtsmen	310	Draughtspersons
420	Other Ranks	600	Soldiers (sergeant and below)
	Other Non-manual 1986		1996 Non-manual Group (Aggregate)
309	Signalmen and Level Crossing Keepers	881	Railway station workers, supervisors and guards (Manual Skilled/Non-manual)
312	Drivers of Buses	873	Bus Conductors and Coach Drivers (Employers and Managers/Manual Skilled/ Own Account Workers)
313	Drivers of Other Road Passenger Vehicles	874	Taxi/Cab Drivers, Chauffers and Couriers (Skilled Manual)
314	Drivers of Road Goods Vehicles	872	Drivers of Road Goods Vehicles (Skilled Manual)
315	Other Transport Equipment Operators	889	Other Transport Equipment Operators (Skilled Manual)

319	Air and Land Transport Controllers	331	Aircraft officers, traffic planners and controllers (Lower Professional/Own Account Workers)
321	Ticket Checkers, Collectors and Inspectors (Railways)	871	Bus and road transport depot inspectors (Skilled Manual)
322	Bus Conductors	873	Bus conductors and coach drivers (Skilled Manual/Own Account Workers)
323	Postmen and Post Office Sorters	940	Postal workers and mail sorters (Semi-skilled Manual)
325	Telephone, Telegraph, and Radio Operators	462	Telephone operators, telegraph operators and other office communication system operators
326	Warehouse and Despatch Clerks	441	Storekeepers, warehousemen/women, despatch and production control clerks (Semi-Skilled/Employer Managers)
342	Roundsmen	731	Roundsmen/women and van salespersons (Employers and Managers)
343	Street Vendors, Hawkers and Newspaper Sellers	732	Market/street traders and scrap dealers
347	Matrons, Superintendents, Supervisors of Schools, etc.	371	Matrons, houseparents, welfare, community and youth workers: Employers and Managers/ Non-manual
348	Waiters and Waitresses	621	Waiters and Waitresses
349	Canteen and Related Workers		
350	Chefs and Cooks	620	Chefs and Cooks (Non-manual/Employers and Managers)
351	Domestic Servants and Related Workers	958, 670	Cleaners and Domestics (Unskilled/Own Account Workers), Housekeepers (Skilled Manual)
353	Caretakers	672, 644	Caretakers, Care Assistants, Attendants (Semi Skilled)
355	Barbers, Hairdressers and Beauty Consultants	660	Hairdressers, barbers and beauticians
358	Watchmen and Related Workers	615, 619	Security guards and related occupations (Non-manual, Semi-skilled)
359	Air Hostesses or Stewards	630	Travel and flight attendants
360	Dental Nurses	346	Medical technicians, dental auxiliaries and dental nurses (Managerial and Technical)
361	Hospital and Ward Orderlies; Hospital Porters and Attendants	951	Hotel porters and kitchen porters (Semi-Skilled)
362	Broadcasting Operators; Film Editors; Projectionists		N/A
363	Proprietors in Other Service Industries		Mangerial and Technical
364	Other Service Workers		Non-manual
401	Photographers and Camera Operators	386	Photographers, camera, sound and video equipment operators
405	Sportsmen and Related Workers	176, 387	Entertainment and Sports Managers, Professional Athletes and sport officials (Own Account Workers/Non-manual)

Appendix C

Descriptive Tables

Table 1: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate (or equivalent)

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Total	80.4	82.3	83.9
Males	75.3	78.5	79.7
Females	85.8	86.0	88.0

Table 2: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate by Parental Socio-Economic Background

Parental Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Farmer/Other Agricultural	85.8	87.3	88.6
Professional	92.3	91.5	93.0
Employer/Manager	89.1	88.7	88.9
Intermediate Non-Manual	84.1	85.7	85.1
Other Non-Manual	72.1	75.2	76.6
Skilled Manual	74.9	78.3	82.1
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	62.1	68.8	74.3
Non-employed	65.3	48.8	57.1

Table 3: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate by Fathers' Socio-Economic Group

Father's Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Farmer/Other Agricultural	87.8	88.7	89.5
Professional	92.4	92.2	92.3
Employer/Manager	90.5	90.1	91.0
Intermediate Non-Manual	85.2	88.6	88.9
Other Non-Manual	76.9	79.5	81.1
Skilled Manual	81.5	82.9	85.0
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	72.8	78.7	80.2
Unemployed	60.8	61.1	61.0

Table 4: Percentage of School Leavers who completed the Leaving Certificate by Region

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Midlands	90.2	85.7	85.8
South West	84.7	85.7	86.2
Mid West	83.6	83.8	83.8
West	84.3	89.1	85.7
South East	82.2	81.8	82.5
Border	80.8	82.2	84.9
Mid East	79.4	80.4	79.5
Dublin	71.5	76.9	82.8

Table 5: Leaving Certificate Programme completed by Gender

	All		Male		Female	
	2002/04	2006/07	2002/04	2006/07	2002/04	2006/07
LC Established	81.4	75.5	81	76.4	81.7	74.9
LC Vocational Programme	13.9	18.9	13.8	17.5	14	20.1
LC Applied	4.7	5.6	5.1	6.4	4.3	5.0

Table 6: Distribution of Programme Pursued by those who completed second-level education by Fathers' Socio-Economic Group

	2002/04			2006/07		
	LCE	LCVP	LCA	LCE	LCVP	LCA
Farmer/Other Agricultural	81.6	13.7	4.6	64.5	28.8	6.7
Professional	91.9	7.3	0.8	82.0	16.7	1.4
Employer/Manager	87.2	10.6	2.2	83.2	15.9	0.9
Intermediate Non-Manual	84.0	13.5	2.5	81.8	14.9	3.3
Other Non-Manual	77.0	17.3	5.8	73.1	17.6	9.2
Skilled Manual	79.2	16.3	4.4	74.4	18.5	7.1
Semi and Unskilled Manual	75.2	15.7	9.0	71.6	20.1	8.3
Non-Employed	72.5	19.0	8.5	72.8	18.4	8.8

Table 7: Percentage of School Leavers who achieved 5+ Honours in Leaving Certificate by Parental Socio-Economic Group

Parental Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Professional	58.0	42.3	48.3	49.5
Employer/Manager	43.0	33.3	32.1	36.1
Farmer/Other Agricultural	37.5	23.3	32.6	31.1
Intermediate Non-manual	40.5	23.2	25.4	29.7
Other Non-manual	30.5	14.3	16.5	20.4
Skilled Manual	29.9	21.8	15.1	22.2
Semi-Unskilled Manual	27.7	10.9	11.8	16.8
Non-employed	27.1	10.9	8.3	15.4
TOTAL	**39.5**	**26.4**	**29.3**	**31.7**

Table 8: Percentage of School Leavers who achieved 5+ Honours in Leaving Certificate by Father's Socio-Economic Group

Father's Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	40.5	29.1	38.1	35.8
Professional	60.8	48.1	53.6	54.1
Employer/Manager	45.1	40.0	37.7	40.9
Intermediate Non-Manual	42.1	26.0	27.4	31.8
Other Non-Manual	34.6	12.4	19.3	22
Skilled Manual	36.0	22.7	22.4	27
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	32.5	17.8	14.4	21.5
Non-employed	30.0	10.9	10.9	17.2
TOTAL	**39.5**	**26.4**	**29.3**	**31.7**

Table 9: Proportion of School Leavers Who Completed LCE and LCVP Who Applied to Enter Higher Education by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)

	Father	Mother	Parental
Farmer/Other Agricultural	85.9	95.7	86.1
Professional	88.8	87.2	87.9
Employer/Manager	79.6	80.0	76.2
Intermediate Non-Manual	84.7	79.7	79.4
Other Non-Manual	74.7	72.7	68.8
Skilled Manual	72.9	75.0	72.0
Semi and Unskilled Manual	74.8	77.3	70.1
Non-employed	67.1	71.9	73.9
TOTAL	**79.0**	**78.5**	**79.3**

Table 10: Reason(s) for Not Applying to Higher Education by Gender (2007)

	Total	Males	Females
Not Interested	57.6	64.9	49
Wouldn't get grades	23.5	19.5	28.4
Wanted to earn	26.6	27.7	25.5
Couldn't afford	15.2	8.7	22.5
Travel/Gap Year	7.2	4.3	10.5
Other Education/Training	15.1	18.9	12.6
Family didn't encourage	1.1	1.1	1
School/teachers didn't encourage	4.9	3.7	6.1
TOTAL	**57.6**	**64.9**	**49**

Table 11: Reasons for Not Applying to Higher Education by Parental Socio-Economic Background (2007)

Parental Socio-Economic Group	Not Interested	Wanted to Earn	Wouldn't get Grades	Other Educ/ Train	Couldn't Afford
Farmer/Other Agricultural	59.9	15.5	12.3	15.5	18.5
Professional/Empl/Manager	56.8	30.1	30.3	18.7	10.6
Intermediate Non-Manual	52.0	18.9	21.8	16.5	25.6
Other Non-Manual	57.6	27.2	28.8	14.7	13.9
Skilled, Semi-Unskilled Manual	64.1	36.5	19.4	13.2	12.3
Non-employed	82.6	25.4	8.0	34.1	8.0
TOTAL	**57.6**	**26.6**	**23.5**	**15.1**	**15.2**

Table 12: Proportion of students who accepted a place on a Higher Education course by Parental Socio-Economic Background (2007)

Parental Socio-Economic Group	
Farmer/Other Agricultural	83.1
Professional	90.5
Employer/Manager	87.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	87.3
Other Non-Manual	84.0
Skilled Manual	91.7
Semi and Unskilled Manual	76.7
Non-employed	92.9
TOTAL	**87.7**

Table 13: Main Reason for Not Accepting Place in Higher Education by Parental Socio-Economic Group (2007)

	Other Educ/ Train	Not Inter-ested	Wanted to Earn/ Couldn't Afford	Time Out/ Repeat LC	Didn't get Preferred Course/ Location	Other
Farmer/Other Agricultural	35.7	14.3	0.0	42.9	7.1	0.0
Professional/Emp/Manager	33.3	17.6	17.6	11.8	15.7	4.0
Intermediate Non-Manual	16.0	16.0	32.0	28.0	4.0	4.0
Other Non-Manual	29.4	29.4	11.8	0.0	23.5	5.9
Skilled/Semi-unskill Manual	37.5	18.8	25.0	6.3	6.3	6.1
TOTAL	**29.8**	**18.5**	**18.5**	**16.7**	**12.9**	**3.6**

Table 14: Participation in Full-Time Higher Education Among school leavers who completed senior cycle by Gender

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Total	45.9	51.0	45.5
Male	43.3	48.3	44.1
Female	48.3	53.4	46.8

Table 15: Participation in Full-Time Higher Education among Senior Cycle Leavers by Parental Socio-Economic Group

Parental Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	47.0	46.5	44.0	45.8
Professional	64.7	62.6	63.4	63.6
Employer/Manager	57.5	53.0	52.7	54.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	46.2	47.9	57.6	50.5
Other Non-Manual	41.7	34.8	31.3	35.9
Skilled Manual	36.2	42.3	48.6	42.4
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	38.2	32.9	37.9	36.4
Non-employed	31.7	28.6	38.1	32.8

Table 16: Participation in Full-time Higher Education among Senior Cycle Leavers by Father's Socio-Economic Group

Father's Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	51.3	60.0	54.6	55.3
Professional	68.4	73.2	70.9	70.8
Employer/Manager	53.3	60.9	60.5	58.2
Intermediate Non-Manual	50.6	57.3	48.9	52.3
Other Non-Manual	37.9	40.9	32.8	37.2
Skilled Manual	43.5	48.5	38.0	43.3
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	32.5	38.5	29.8	33.6
Non-employed	28.1	28.2	30.9	29.1

Table 17: Higher Education Participation Levels by Parental Socio-Economic Background and School Type Attended

Parental Socio-Economic Background	Secondary	Comprehen-sive	Vocational
Farmer/Other Agricultural	62.6	47.1	37.5
Professional	76.1	47	54.4
Employer/Manager	70.9	42.4	36
Intermediate Non-Manual	56.7	36	31.6
Other Non-Manual	36.1	25.7	21.7
Skilled Manual	44.7	21.2	26.3
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	41.1	24.4	21.7
Non-employed	38.5	7.4	9.5

Table 18: Higher Education Participation Rates in DEIS and non-DEIS schools by Parental Socio-Economic Group

Parental Socio-Economic Group	DEIS	non-DEIS
Farmer/Other Agricultural	41	54.1
Professional	58	66.4
Employer/Manager	60.6	52.2
Intermediate Non-Manual	37.5	47.9
Other Non-Manual	22.1	30.6
Skilled Manual	27.7	33.8
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	15.7	34.7
Non-employed	20.8	18

Table 19: Enrolment in University courses among Higher Education entrants by Parental Socio-Economic Background

Parental Socio-Economic Background	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	44.4	44.6	38.5	42.5
Professional	60.4	60.5	57.2	59.3
Employer/Manager	55.2	48.9	51.6	51.9
Intermediate Non-Manual	39.4	41.5	55.8	45.5
Other Non-Manual	35.2	32.1	23.1	30.1
Skilled Manual	33.5	40.6	38.5	37.5
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	37.2	25.3	44.1	35.5
Non-employed	29.8	27.8	0.0	19.2

Table 20: Enrolment in University courses among Higher Education entrants by Father's Socio-Economic Group

Father's Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	47.0	46.5	44.0	45.8
Professional	64.7	62.6	63.4	63.6
Employer/Manager	57.5	53.0	52.7	54.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	46.2	47.9	57.6	50.5
Other Non-Manual	41.7	34.8	31.3	35.9
Skilled Manual	36.2	42.3	48.6	42.4
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	38.2	32.9	37.9	36.4
Non-employed	31.7	28.6	38.1	32.8

Table 21: Percentage of School Leavers in Full-Time Higher Education who will Receive an Honours Degree on Completion of their Course by Parental Socio-Economic Background

Parental Socio-Economic Background	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	62.8	83.1	72.9
Professional	80.6	92.1	86.3
Employer/Manager	72.3	80.1	76.2
Intermediate Non-Manual	67.7	85.5	76.6
Other Non-Manual	62.3	76.3	69.3
Skilled Manual	73.6	66.3	69.9
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	48.9	62.3	55.6
Non-employed	30.0	64.3	47.1

Table 22: Percentage of School Leavers in Full-Time Higher Education who will Receive an Honours Degree on Completion of their Course by Father's Socio-Economic Background

Father's Socio-Economic Background	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	64.4	87.8	76.1
Professional	83.5	90.7	87.1
Employer/Manager	74.9	95.9	85.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	71.1	90.9	81.0
Other Non-Manual	59.5	89.7	74.6
Skilled Manual	72.0	85.2	78.6
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	56.3	82.5	69.4
Non-employed	61.4	80.0	70.7

Table 23: Percentage of Full-Time Higher Education Participants Receiving Grant by Parental Socio-Economic Background

Parental Socio-Economic Background	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	66.2	61.1	54.0	60.4
Professional	24.0	19.9	19.0	21.0
Employer/Manager	33.3	21.6	20.5	25.1
Intermediate Non-Manual	54.6	33.0	34.8	40.8
Other Non-Manual	52.8	54.7	57.3	54.9
Skilled Manual	61.3	53.2	54.9	56.5
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	73.6	67.0	64.2	68.3
Non-employed	73.7	73.7	85.7	77.7

Table 24: Percentage of Full-Time Higher Education Participants Receiving Grant by Father's Socio-Economic Background

Father's Socio-Economic Background	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	56.4	53.6	53.1	54.3
Professional	17.8	14.7	22.8	18.4
Employer/Manager	31.9	17.1	25.7	24.9
Intermediate Non-Manual	45.2	36.6	31.9	37.9
Other Non-Manual	55.0	45.5	41.3	47.2
Skilled Manual	83.7	76.4	80.0	80.0
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	67.7	63.2	50.0	60.3
Non-employed	56.4	53.6	53.1	54.3

Table 25: Percentage of School Leavers Who Ever Participated in Higher Education and Who Left Within the First Two Years by Parental Socio-Economic Group

Parental Socio-Economic Background	2006/07
Farmer/Other Agricultural	12.2
Professional	10.4
Employer/Manager	8.7
Intermediate Non-Manual	13.4
Other Non-Manual	16.7
Skilled Manual	10.1
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	18.3
Non-employed	29.0

Table 26: Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programme among those who Completed Senior Cycle

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Total	22.1	17.0	20.6
Male	15.9	10.7	12.8
Female	27.8	22.7	27.6

Table 27: Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programmes by Parental Socio-Economic Background

Parental Socio-Economic Background	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	13.9	13.9	12.9	13.6
Professional	20.9	20.9	18.8	20.2
Employer/Manager	15.1	15.1	13.9	14.7
Intermediate Non-Manual	18.2	18.2	17.8	18.1
Other Non-Manual	20.5	20.5	26.4	22.5
Skilled Manual	22.9	22.9	21.0	22.3
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	20.3	20.3	19.9	20.2
Non-employed	17.8	17.8	14.0	16.5

Table 28: Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programmes by Father's Socio-Economic Background

Father's Socio-Economic Background	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	15.0	12.3	13.8	13.7
Professional	13.2	8.0	12.4	11.2
Employer/Manager	22.8	13.7	18.3	18.2
Intermediate Non-Manual	26.9	14.8	16.6	19.4
Other Non-Manual	24.1	17.3	28.4	23.3
Skilled Manual	23.6	18.3	20.0	20.6
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	29.8	28.0	26.0	27.9
Non-employed	24.0	22.4	30.1	25.5

Table 29: Regional Participation in Post-Leaving Certificate Programmes among those who Completed Senior Cycle

Region	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Border	21.4	22.8	12.9
Dublin	33.5	21.7	27.6
Mid East	21.8	18.3	19.9
Midlands	10.9	12.6	19.0
Mid West	16.9	15.0	16.8
South East	18.0	23.0	16.1
South West	16.7	8.9	26.6
West	25.5	12.8	18.3

Table 30: Parental Socio-Economic Variation in Participation Rates in Apprenticeships among those who Completed Senior Cycle (Males only)

Parental Socio-Economic Background	2006/07
Farmer/Other Agricultural	12.8
Professional	6.8
Employer/Manager	9.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	14.6
Other Non-Manual	21.2
Skilled Manual	22.9
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	21.8
Non-employed	13

Table 31: Parental Socio-Economic Variation in Participation Rates in State Sponsored Training among those who Completed Senior Cycle

Parental Socio-Economic Background	2006/07
Farmer/Other Agricultural	7.0
Professional	1.6
Employer/Manager	3.4
Intermediate Non-Manual	5.5
Other Non-Manual	7.1
Skilled Manual	7.6
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	4.6
Non-employed	16.2

Table 32: Percentage of School Leavers who completed Second-Level Education who are in the Labour Market, One Year after Leaving School

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
Total	47.0	42.1	42.5
Males	49.9	45.8	42.5
Females	44.3	38.8	42.9

Table 33: Percentage of School Leavers who completed Second-Level Education who are in the Labour Market, One Year after Leaving School by Parental Socio-Economic Background

Parental Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	41.7	35.4	43.9	40.3
Professional	27.8	26.3	28.3	27.5
Employer/Manager	40.7	33.5	39.1	37.8
Intermediate Non-Manual	46.8	43.6	42.7	44.4
Other Non-Manual	62.5	57.6	55.7	58.6
Skilled Manual	58.8	51.0	54.0	54.6
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	65.0	58.9	59.6	61.2
Non-employed	50.4	65.1	44.6	53.4

Table 34: Percentage of School Leavers who completed Second-Level Education who are in the Labour Market, One Year after Leaving School by Father's Socio-Economic Background

Father's Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	38.3	33.2	39.3	36.9
Professional	23.8	22.2	23.9	23.3
Employer/Manager	40.4	28.4	36.4	35.0
Intermediate Non-Manual	42.7	34.0	40.2	38.9
Other Non-Manual	53.2	51.5	54.5	53.0
Skilled Manual	51.5	49.5	47.6	49.5
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	60.3	56.9	54.6	57.2
Non-employed	67.6	55.6	50.0	57.7

Table 35: Percentage of School Leavers in the Labour Market who are Unemployed

	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07
All	11.5	12.5	9.1
Males	8.6	11.6	9.2
Females	14.5	13.5	9.0

Table 36: Percentage of School Leavers who Completed Second-Level and are in the Labour Market, Unemployed, by Parental Socio-Economic Group

Parental Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	11.5	4.9	9.6	8.7
Professional	5.6	7.2	6.8	6.5
Employer/Manager	6.2	4.9	3.2	4.8
Intermediate Non-Manual	10.4	7.5	6.1	8.0
Other Non-Manual	11.7	8.9	12.0	10.9
Skilled Manual	15.7	10.2	9.7	11.9
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	15.7	13.0	10.4	13.0
Non-employed	17.4	7.3	36.4	20.4

Table 37: Percentage of School Leavers who Completed Second-Level and are in the Labour Market, Unemployed, by Father's Socio-Economic Group

Father's Socio-Economic Group	1997/98	2002/04	2006/07	Average
Farmer/Other Agricultural	8.9	6.8	7.4	7.7
Professional	6.5	10.6	5.7	7.6
Employer/Manager	5.8	11.1	4.2	7.0
Intermediate Non-Manual	12.2	6.3	6.2	8.2
Other Non-Manual	7.8	15.0	11.6	11.5
Skilled Manual	8.9	8.6	7.5	8.3
Semi- and Unskilled Manual	13.3	13.4	6.9	11.2
Unemployed	27.5	27.5	29.4	28.1

Table 38: Occupational Distribution of School Leavers in Full-Time Employment by Father's Socio-Economic Group, 1997/98 Cohort

Father's Socio-Economic Group	Managerial/ Professional	Clerical	Service	Agriculture & Fishery	Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	Other Manual
Farmer/Other Agricultural	6.6	10.6	21.4	18.6	37.7	5.1
Higher/Lower Professional	14.9	19.0	32.2	2.5	22.3	9.1
Employer/Manager	9.0	23.0	34.0	0.8	28.9	4.3
Intermediate Non-Manual	10.7	14.9	41.1	2.4	28.6	2.4
Other Non-Manual	6.7	16.3	31.4	2.3	35.8	7.6
Skilled Manual	6.3	15.1	30.8	1.4	40.4	6.0
Semi/Unskilled Manual	2.1	10.0	37.5	1.4	40.4	8.6
Non-employed	3.2	13.3	34.2	2.9	39.9	6.5

Table 39: Occupational Distribution of School Leavers in Full-Time Employment by Father's Socio-Economic Group, 2002/04 Cohort

Father's Socio-Economic Group	Managerial/ Professional	Clerical	Service	Agriculture & Fishery	Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	Other Manual
Farmer/Other Agricultural	6.2	13.4	32.4	7.5	37.5	3.0
Higher/Lower Professional	9.5	16.4	43.6	3.5	22.5	4.5
Employer/Manager	4.9	16.1	39.3	1.7	35.3	2.6
Intermediate Non-Manual	4.6	19.6	50.2	2.4	20.7	2.5
Other Non-Manual	6.5	14.7	41.9	1.3	32.7	2.9
Skilled Manual	5.2	14.2	37.7	0.7	37.8	4.5
Semi/Unskilled Manual	4.2	11.3	41.3	1.9	36.4	4.8
Non-employed	4.1	10.3	43.8	0.7	35.8	5.2

Table 40: Occupational Distribution of School Leavers in Full-Time Employment by Father's Socio-Economic Group, 2006/07 Cohort

Father's Socio-Economic Group	Managerial/ Professional	Clerical	Service	Agriculture & Fishery	Skilled & Semi-Skilled Manual	Other Manual
Farmer/Other Agricultural	6.1	7.8	31.9	6.4	47.9	0.0
Higher/Lower Professional	29.0	13.2	15.9	5.2	36.7	0.0
Employer/Manager	16.7	18.5	28.7	0.0	36.1	0.0
Intermediate Non-Manual	8.3	17.2	42.2	2.0	30.0	0.3
Other Non-Manual	10.0	17.9	31.0	2.4	34.9	3.9
Skilled Manual	8.3	16.2	27.1	1.5	45.1	1.8
Semi/Unskilled Manual	3.2	14.7	29.2	4.3	46.8	1.7
Non-employed	13.8	13.5	33.9	1.7	36.4	0.8

Appendix D

Models from Multivariate Analyses

A1. Introduction

This appendix gives more information on the data and variables used in the report and presents full multivariate models, which provide the basis for selecting and quantifying the results presented in the main report.

The multivariate analyses considered the following:

A2. Multivariate Tables for Second Level Attainment

1. the factors influencing completion of second-level education
2. the factors influencing the transition from junior cycle to senior cycle
3. the factors influencing completion of the LCA or LCVP relative to the LCE (conditional on entry into and completion of senior cycle)
4. the factors influencing attaining at least 2 honours in the Leaving Certificate examination (conditional on entry into and completion of the LCE or LCVP

A3. Multivariate Tables for Participation in Higher Education

5. the factors influencing entry into higher education
6. the factors influencing attendance at a university relative to other institutes of higher education
7. the factors influencing pursuit of an honours degree
8. the factors influencing receipt of a grant

A4.Multivariate Tables for Participation in Other forms of Education and Training

9. the factors influencing entry into higher education
10. the factors influencing attendance at a university relative to other institutes of higher education
11. the factors influencing pursuit of an honours degree
12. the factors influencing receipt of a grant

The multivariate analyses of factors relating the educational attainment employed two types of regression models: logistic regression and multinomial regression. This modelling strategy follows from univariate analysis of young peoples' educational attainment, which confirms clear socio-economic disparities at all levels of education. Each of the analyses present robust standard errors to take into account the clustering of the data: that is, pupils within schools.

A2. Multivariate Tables for Second Level Attainment

Table 1: Logistic Regression Model for the Determinants of Completing Second-Level Education

	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-1.731	0.219	0.000	0.177
Female	1.311	0.254	0.000	3.708
Ref: Male				
Professional	1.038	0.226	0.000	2.824
Employer/Manager	0.626	0.217	0.004	1.871
Farmer	0.655	0.237	0.006	1.925
Intermediate Non-manual	0.491	0.189	0.009	1.634
Other Non-manual	-0.107	0.192	0.577	0.898
Skilled Manual	-0.046	0.207	0.823	0.955
Unemployed	-0.813	0.291	0.005	0.443
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual				
Border	0.063	0.178	0.723	1.065
Mid East	-0.402	0.163	0.013	0.669
Midlands	0.138	0.204	0.499	1.148
Mid West	0.010	0.183	0.958	1.010
South East	0.074	0.182	0.685	1.077
South West	0.020	0.286	0.943	1.021
West	0.196	0.180	0.276	1.217
Ref: Dublin				
Parental Education Unknown	0.716	0.194	0.000	2.046
Junior Certificate	0.891	0.131	0.000	2.437
Leaving Certificate or Equivalent	1.508	0.142	0.000	4.518
Diploma	1.664	0.174	0.000	5.278
Degree	1.674	0.183	0.000	5.332
Ref: Primary				
Secondary	-0.269	0.131	0.040	0.764
Vocational	-0.051	0.149	0.730	0.950
Ref: Community/Comprehensive				
DEIS School	0.492	0.127	0.000	1.636
Ref: Non DEIS				
Female* Professional	-0.779	0.335	0.020	0.459
Female* Employer/Manager	-0.249	0.381	0.514	0.780
Female*Farmer	0.003	0.387	0.994	1.003
Female*Intermediate Non-manual	-0.189	0.299	0.528	0.828
Female*Other Non-manual	0.271	0.313	0.386	1.311
Female*Skilled Manual	0.413	0.348	0.235	1.512
Female*Unemployed	-0.125	0.394	0.750	0.882

3775 students in 611 Schools
Chi-=597.44***
Pseudo R-=.17

Table 2: Logistic Regression Model for the Determinants of Making the Transition from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle

	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-1.492	0.193	0.000	0.225
Female	1.154	0.101	0.000	3.170
Ref: Male				
Higher Lower Professional	0.834	0.200	0.000	2.301
Employer Manager	0.610	0.190	0.001	1.841
Farmer	0.666	0.196	0.001	1.947
Intermediate Non-manual	0.480	0.144	0.001	1.616
Other Non-manual	0.136	0.140	0.333	1.145
Skilled Manual	0.189	0.161	0.241	1.208
Non-employed	-0.828	0.181	0.000	0.437
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual				
Border	0.270	0.189	0.153	1.310
Mid East	-0.228	0.167	0.174	0.796
Midlands	0.106	0.222	0.633	1.112
Mid West	0.271	0.183	0.139	1.312
South East	0.205	0.171	0.233	1.227
South West	0.146	0.250	0.559	1.157
West	0.228	0.192	0.235	1.257
Ref: Dublin	0.826	0.180	0.000	2.284
Parental Education Unknown				
Junior Certificate	0.929	0.122	0.000	2.532
Leaving Certificate	1.537	0.135	0.000	4.651
Diploma	1.691	0.172	0.000	5.422
Degree	1.684	0.201	0.000	5.390
Ref: Primary or Less				
Secondary School	-0.189	0.134	0.159	0.828
Vocational School	0.051	0.144	0.723	1.052
Ref: Community/Comprehensive School				
Non DEIS school	0.532	0.120	0.000	1.702

Ref: DEIS school
3775 pupils in 611 schools
Chi·=510.01***
Pseudo R·=.1676

Table 3: Logistic Regression of the Determinants of Completing LCA or LCVP relative to LCE (Conditional on entry into senior cycle)

	LCA				LCVP			
	Coef.	Robust Std, Err.	P>z	Exp(b)	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-0.193	0.359	0.589	0.824	-1.949	0.384	0.000	0.142
Female	-0.642	0.153	0.000	0.526	0.030	0.148	0.838	1.031
Ref: Male								
Higher Lower Professional	-0.826	0.415	0.047	0.438	0.223	0.323	0.489	1.250
Employer Manager	-1.847	0.580	0.001	0.158	0.080	0.335	0.810	1.084
Farmer	0.322	0.320	0.314	1.380	0.503	0.313	0.108	1.654
Intermediate Non-manual	-0.287	0.308	0.351	0.751	0.125	0.282	0.657	1.133
Other Non-manual	0.025	0.299	0.933	1.025	-0.049	0.304	0.873	0.953
Skilled Manual	0.310	0.335	0.354	1.363	0.383	0.341	0.262	1.467
Non-employed	0.837	0.401	0.037	2.309	0.734	0.441	0.096	2.083
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual								
Border	-0.359	0.312	0.249	0.698	0.953	0.272	0.000	2.593
Mid East	-0.442	0.293	0.132	0.642	0.928	0.292	0.002	2.528
Midlands	-0.595	0.377	0.115	0.552	1.324	0.334	0.000	3.760
Mid West	0.128	0.293	0.662	1.137	1.098	0.293	0.000	2.999
South East	-0.516	0.388	0.184	0.597	1.284	0.319	0.000	3.611
South West	-0.712	0.319	0.026	0.490	0.766	0.358	0.032	2.150
West	-0.270	0.317	0.395	0.764	1.481	0.286	0.000	4.396
Ref: Dublin								
Parental Education Unknown	-0.299	0.351	0.393	0.741	-0.280	0.363	0.440	0.755
Junior Certificate	-0.416	0.232	0.073	0.660	-0.505	0.240	0.035	0.603
Leaving Certificate	-1.095	0.278	0.000	0.335	-0.566	0.253	0.025	0.568
Diploma	-1.091	0.350	0.002	0.336	-0.521	0.287	0.070	0.594
Degree	-1.721	0.445	0.000	0.179	-0.630	0.314	0.045	0.533
Ref: Primary or Less								
Secondary School	-0.523	0.214	0.014	0.593	-0.245	0.213	0.248	0.782
Vocational School	-0.218	0.207	0.291	0.804	0.037	0.212	0.860	1.038
Ref: Community/ Comprehensive School								
Non DEIS school	-0.032	0.203	0.876	0.969	-0.142	0.182	0.435	0.868
Ref: DEIS school								

2256 pupils in 483 schools
Chi·=219.01***
Pseudo R·=.075

Table 4: Logistic Regression of the Determinants of Achieving at Least 2 Honours in the Leaving Certificate Examination (Conditional on Entry into Senior Cycle and Completion of the LCE or LCVP)

	Coef	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-0.987	0.365	0.007	0.373
Female	0.155	0.127	0.222	1.168
Ref: Male				
Higher Lower Professional	0.815	0.267	0.002	2.258
Employer Manager	0.496	0.271	0.068	1.641
Farmer/Other Agricultural	0.748	0.282	0.008	2.113
Intermediate Non-manual	0.331	0.263	0.209	1.392
Other Non-manual	0.197	0.256	0.442	1.218
Skilled Manual	0.105	0.284	0.712	1.111
Non-employed	-0.234	0.429	0.586	0.791
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual				
Border	0.222	0.248	0.372	1.248
Mid East	-0.005	0.243	0.982	0.995
Midlands	0.558	0.302	0.065	1.748
Mid West	0.019	0.255	0.939	1.020
South East	0.306	0.227	0.178	1.358
South West	0.152	0.284	0.593	1.164
West	0.145	0.275	0.597	1.156
Ref: Dublin				
Parental Education Unknown	0.440	0.349	0.208	1.553
Junior Certificate	0.225	0.234	0.335	1.253
Leaving Certificate	0.617	0.236	0.009	1.854
Diploma	1.003	0.255	0.000	2.727
Degree	1.122	0.281	0.000	3.070
Ref: Primary or Less				
Secondary School	0.480	0.151	0.001	1.616
Vocational School	-0.008	0.144	0.954	0.992
Ref: Community/Comprehensive School				
Non DEIS school	0.592	0.146	0.000	1.807

Ref: DEIS school
1803 pupils in 425 schools
Chi·=169.98***
Pseudo R·=.088

A3. Multivariate Tables for Participation in Higher Education

Table 5: Logistic Regression of the factors associated with being in Higher Education at the time of the survey

	Model 1: All who Completed Senior Cycle				Model 2: All who Completed Senior Cycle & Obtained 2+ Honours			
	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-2.700	0.398	0.000	0.067	-0.771	0.581	0.185	0.463
Female	0.227	0.130	0.081	1.255	0.155	0.162	0.336	1.168
Ref: Male								
Higher Lower Professional	0.811	0.287	0.005	2.250	0.579	0.393	0.140	1.785
Employer Manager	0.793	0.297	0.008	2.210	0.361	0.394	0.360	1.435
Farmer	0.741	0.330	0.025	2.099	0.764	0.444	0.085	2.147
Intermediate Non-manual	0.454	0.320	0.156	1.574	0.453	0.398	0.255	1.572
Other Non-manual	-0.021	0.288	0.943	0.980	-0.193	0.414	0.642	0.825
Skilled Manual	0.093	0.352	0.791	1.098	0.427	0.508	0.401	1.532
Non-employed	-0.557	0.383	0.146	0.573	-0.617	0.567	0.276	0.539
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual								
Border	0.654	0.182	0.000	1.924	0.448	0.234	0.055	1.565
Mid East	0.366	0.207	0.077	1.441	0.188	0.294	0.522	1.207
Midlands	0.672	0.237	0.005	1.958	0.385	0.301	0.201	1.469
Mid West	0.530	0.205	0.010	1.699	0.765	0.260	0.003	2.150
South East	0.612	0.210	0.004	1.844	0.819	0.340	0.016	2.268
South West	0.574	0.247	0.020	1.775	0.505	0.236	0.033	1.657
West	0.426	0.193	0.027	1.531	0.255	0.253	0.315	1.290
Ref: Dublin								
Parental Education Unknown	0.372	0.364	0.307	1.450	0.265	0.530	0.617	1.303
Junior Certificate	0.385	0.241	0.110	1.470	-0.056	0.410	0.891	0.946
Leaving Certificate	0.833	0.217	0.000	2.300	0.030	0.365	0.934	1.031
Diploma	0.885	0.242	0.000	2.423	-0.056	0.395	0.887	0.945
Degree	1.363	0.247	0.000	3.907	0.498	0.402	0.216	1.645
Ref: Primary or Less								
Secondary School	0.931	0.129	0.000	2.538	0.834	0.172	0.000	2.302
Vocational School	-0.143	0.136	0.292	0.866	0.107	0.177	0.543	1.113
Ref: Community/ Comprehensive School								
Non DEIS school	0.325	0.123	0.008	1.383	0.121	0.167	0.469	1.129
Ref: DEIS school								
	2267 pupils in 485 schools Chi-=278.38*** Pseudo R-=.1317				1117 pupils in 336 schools Chi-=75.51*** Pseudo R-=.0696			

Table 6: Logistic Regression Model of the factors associated with attending a University versus other Higher Education Institution (Conditional on Entry into Higher Education)

	Model 1: All who Completed Senior Cycle				Model 2: All who Completed Senior Cycle & Obtained 2+ Honours			
	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-1.298	0.571	0.023	0.273	-0.642	0.639	0.315	0.526
Female	0.128	0.141	0.366	1.136	0.094	0.164	0.568	1.098
Ref: Male								
Professional	0.426	0.362	0.239	1.532	0.286	0.450	0.526	1.331
Employer/Manager	0.109	0.375	0.772	1.115	0.150	0.457	0.744	1.161
Farmer/Other Agricultural	0.434	0.369	0.239	1.544	0.191	0.453	0.674	1.210
Intermediate Non-manual	0.362	0.365	0.322	1.436	0.260	0.445	0.559	1.297
Other Non-manual	-0.487	0.399	0.222	0.614	-0.440	0.475	0.355	0.644
Skilled Manual	0.402	0.428	0.348	1.495	0.693	0.536	0.196	1.999
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual/ Non-employed								
Border	-1.130	0.252	0.000	0.323	-1.454	0.313	0.000	0.234
Mid East	-0.207	0.240	0.389	0.813	-0.051	0.289	0.861	0.951
Midlands	0.216	0.285	0.450	1.241	0.283	0.345	0.411	1.328
Mid West	-0.041	0.272	0.879	0.960	-0.091	0.293	0.756	0.913
South East	-0.553	0.333	0.097	0.575	-0.542	0.357	0.129	0.581
South West	0.212	0.218	0.331	1.236	0.241	0.249	0.332	1.272
West	-0.369	0.262	0.159	0.691	-0.369	0.312	0.236	0.691
Ref: Dublin								
Parental Education Unknown	-0.396	0.568	0.485	0.673	-0.647	0.609	0.288	0.524
Junior Certificate	0.088	0.438	0.842	1.092	-0.191	0.473	0.687	0.826
Leaving Certificate	0.596	0.429	0.165	1.815	0.291	0.456	0.523	1.338
Diploma	0.581	0.438	0.185	1.788	0.202	0.474	0.670	1.223
Degree	1.148	0.453	0.011	3.153	0.851	0.496	0.086	2.343
Ref: Primary or Less					sec			
Secondary	0.319	0.165	0.052	1.376	0.343	0.209	0.101	1.409
Vocational	-0.178	0.187	0.341	0.837	-0.230	0.238	0.333	0.794
Ref: Community/Comprehensive								
Non DEIS school	0.333	0.181	0.066	1.395	0.272	0.209	0.193	1.313
Ref: DEIS School								
	1030 pupils in 336 schools Chi·=130.85*** Pseudo R·=.1006				798 pupils in 278 schools Chi·=107.68*** Pseudo R·=.1041			

Table 7: Logistic Regression Model of the Factors Associated with Pursuing an Honours Degree v Sub-Degree (Conditional on Entry to Higher Education)

	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-0.045	0.618	0.942	0.956
Female	0.371	0.186	0.047	1.449
Ref: Male				
Professional	1.065	0.356	0.003	2.902
Employer/Manager	0.627	0.348	0.072	1.872
Farmer/Other Agricultural	0.731	0.359	0.042	2.077
Intermediate Non-manual	0.859	0.311	0.006	2.360
Other Non-manual	0.548	0.385	0.155	1.730
Skilled Manual	0.341	0.413	0.409	1.406
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual/Non-employed				
Border	-0.163	0.275	0.553	0.849
Mid East	0.177	0.309	0.567	1.193
Midlands	0.273	0.412	0.508	1.313
Mid West	0.538	0.361	0.136	1.713
South East	0.361	0.425	0.396	1.435
South West	0.333	0.284	0.240	1.396
West	0.452	0.320	0.157	1.572
Ref: Dublin				
Parental Education Unknown	-0.328	0.614	0.593	0.720
Junior Certificate	-0.062	0.488	0.900	0.940
Leaving Certificate	0.388	0.459	0.397	1.475
Diploma	0.232	0.483	0.631	1.261
Degree	0.877	0.523	0.094	2.405
Ref: Primary or Less				
Secondary	0.006	0.196	0.974	1.006
Vocational	-0.602	0.228	0.008	0.548
Ref: Community/Comprehensive				
Non DEIS school	0.149	0.208	0.473	1.161
Ref: DEIS School				

1030 pupils in 336 schools
Chi·=73.14***
Pseudo R·=.0711

Table 7a: Logistic Regression Model of the factors associated with Pursuing an Honours Degree v Sub-Degree (Conditional on Entry into Higher Education)

	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	0.257	0.340	0.449	1.294
Female	0.406	0.193	0.036	1.500
Ref: Male				
Higher Lower Professional	1.656	0.362	0.000	5.236
Employer/Manager	1.106	0.393	0.005	3.023
Farmer/Other Agri	0.940	0.409	0.021	2.561
Intermediate Non-manual	1.212	0.380	0.001	3.360
Other Non-manual	0.506	0.394	0.200	1.658
Skilled Manual	0.376	0.446	0.399	1.456
Non-employed	0.312	0.687	0.649	1.367
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual				

Table 7b: Logistic Regression Model of the factors associated with Pursuing an Honours Degree v Sub-Degree (Conditional on Entry into Higher Education)

	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	0.482	0.252	0.056	1.619
Female	0.425	0.190	0.025	1.530
Ref: Male				
Professional/Employer/Manager	1.261	0.265	0.000	3.528
Farmer	0.708	0.318	0.026	2.029
Intermediate Non-manual	0.977	0.280	0.000	2.658
Other Non-manual	0.269	0.298	0.367	1.309
Non-employed	0.075	0.636	0.906	1.078
Ref: Skilled, Semi-Unskilled Manual				

Table 8: Logistic Regression Model of the Factors Associated with Receiving a Grant (Conditional on Entry into Higher Education)

	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	1.566	0.588	0.008	4.789
Female	-0.020	0.148	0.890	0.980
Ref: Male				
Professional	-1.402	0.381	0.000	0.246
Employer/Manager	-1.435	0.402	0.000	0.238
Farmer/Other Agricultural	-0.684	0.382	0.073	0.505
Intermediate Non-manual	-0.946	0.340	0.005	0.388
Other Non-manual	-0.253	0.336	0.451	0.776
Skilled Manual	-0.168	0.433	0.697	0.845
Ref: Semi-Unskilled Manual/Non-employed				
Border	0.720	0.264	0.006	2.054
Mid East	-0.352	0.335	0.293	0.703
Midlands	0.675	0.346	0.051	1.965
Mid West	0.560	0.298	0.060	1.750
South East	0.626	0.291	0.032	1.869
South West	0.776	0.273	0.005	2.173
West	1.305	0.279	0.000	3.688
Ref: Dublin				
Parental Education Unknown	-1.515	0.560	0.007	0.220
Junior Certificate	-1.063	0.462	0.021	0.345
Leaving Certificate	-1.301	0.468	0.005	0.272
Diploma	-1.468	0.482	0.002	0.230
Degree	-2.207	0.507	0.000	0.110
Ref: Primary or Less				
Secondary	-0.335	0.182	0.065	0.715
Vocational	-0.021	0.222	0.925	0.979
Ref: Community/Comprehensive				
Non DEIS school	-0.223	0.185	0.228	0.800
Ref: DEIS School				

1030 pupils in 336 schools
Chi·=179.38***
Pseudo R·=.1583

Table 9: Logistic Regression Model of the probability of participating in a PLC course versus not (all those who completed LCE and LCVP)

	Model 1:				Model 2:			
	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	Exp(b)
Constant	-0.731	0.363	0.044	0.481	-0.791	0.387	0.041	0.453
Female	1.216	0.16	0	3.373	1.438	0.156	0	4.213
Ref: Male								
Professional/Employer/ Manager	-0.426	0.222	0.055	0.653	-0.206	0.249	0.408	0.814
Farmer	-0.745	0.24	0.002	0.475	-0.488	0.269	0.069	0.614
Intermediate Non-manual	-0.217	0.197	0.269	0.805	-0.117	0.218	0.593	0.89
Other Non-manual	0.201	0.222	0.366	1.222	0.341	0.254	0.179	1.407
Non-employed	-0.212	0.425	0.618	0.809	-0.38	0.431	0.378	0.684
Ref: Skilled, Semi-Unskilled Manual								
Border	-1.136	0.437	0.009	0.321	-1.132	0.414	0.006	0.323
Mid East	-0.683	0.385	0.076	0.505	-0.659	0.38	0.083	0.518
Midlands	-0.433	0.551	0.432	0.649	-0.022	0.516	0.967	0.979
Mid West	-0.538	0.462	0.244	0.584	-0.312	0.445	0.484	0.732
South East	-0.751	0.453	0.097	0.472	-0.687	0.444	0.122	0.503
South West	-0.136	0.52	0.794	0.873	0.047	0.471	0.92	1.048
West	-0.302	0.555	0.586	0.739	-0.114	0.521	0.827	0.892
Ref: Dublin								
Parental Education Unknown	-0.175	0.369	0.635	0.839	0.08	0.376	0.831	1.083
Junior Certificate	-0.042	0.246	0.864	0.959	0.115	0.27	0.67	1.122
Leaving Certificate	-0.025	0.244	0.918	0.975	0.299	0.274	0.277	1.348
Diploma	0.045	0.314	0.887	1.046	0.536	0.35	0.126	1.709
Degree	-0.355	0.31	0.252	0.701	0.386	0.35	0.269	1.472
Ref: Primary or Less								
Secondary	-3.372	0.376	0	0.034	-3.192	0.364	0	0.041
Vocational	0.969	0.272	0	2.634	1.065	0.27	0	2.902
Ref: Community/ Comprehensive								
Non DEIS school	0.108	0.285	0.703	1.115	0.276	0.284	0.33	1.318
Ref: DEIS School								
LC 5+ passes					-0.368	0.193	0.057	0.692
LC 1 Honour					-0.056	0.252	0.823	0.945
LC 2-5 Honours					-1.008	0.197	0	0.365
LC 5+ Honours					-3.216	0.332	0	0.04
	2047 pupils in 459 schools Chi·=293.57*** Pseudo R·=.3390				2047 pupils in 459 schools Chi·=365.17*** Pseudo R·=.4254			

Table 10: Logistic Regression Model of the factors associated with participating in an Apprenticeship

	Model 1				Model 2			
	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	exp(b)	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	P>z	exp(b)
Constant	-1.848	0.542	0.001	0.157	-2.073	0.669	0.002	0.126
Professional/Employer/Manager	-0.884	0.422	0.036	0.413	-0.656	0.441	0.136	0.519
Farmer	-1.047	0.573	0.068	0.351	-0.862	0.595	0.147	0.422
Intermediate Non-manual	-0.526	0.379	0.165	0.591	-0.475	0.404	0.240	0.622
Other Non-manual	0.086	0.362	0.811	1.090	0.161	0.391	0.680	1.175
Non-employed	-0.971	1.058	0.358	0.379	-0.774	0.998	0.438	0.461
Ref: Skilled, Semi-Unskilled Manual								
Border	0.142	0.501	0.777	1.152	0.085	0.507	0.867	1.088
Mid East	-0.257	0.558	0.645	0.773	-0.245	0.579	0.672	0.783
Mid Lands	1.641	0.474	0.001	5.158	1.847	0.488	0.000	6.339
Mid West	1.097	0.500	0.028	2.995	1.200	0.485	0.013	3.321
South East	-0.039	0.544	0.943	0.962	-0.017	0.540	0.975	0.983
South West	0.465	0.451	0.303	1.592	0.580	0.459	0.207	1.786
West	0.061	0.500	0.904	1.062	0.024	0.504	0.961	1.025
Ref: Dublin								
Parental Education Unknown	-0.758	0.771	0.326	0.469	-0.704	0.794	0.375	0.495
Junior Certificate	0.245	0.500	0.625	1.277	0.272	0.520	0.600	1.313
Leaving Certificate	0.107	0.527	0.840	1.112	0.221	0.543	0.684	1.248
Diploma	0.023	0.535	0.965	1.024	0.136	0.557	0.806	1.146
Degree	-1.221	0.644	0.058	0.295	-0.951	0.674	0.158	0.386
Ref: Primary or Less								
Secondary	-0.227	0.310	0.463	0.797	-0.071	0.307	0.816	0.931
Vocational	0.195	0.296	0.511	1.215	0.183	0.297	0.538	1.201
Ref: Community/Comprehensive								
Non DEIS	0.070	0.276	0.800	1.073	0.181	0.289	0.530	1.199
Ref: DEIS								
LC 5+ passes					0.376	0.342	0.272	1.456
LC 1 Honour					-0.374	0.496	0.451	0.688
LC 2-5 Honours					-0.013	0.330	0.968	0.987
LC 5+ Honours					-2.072	0.585	0.000	0.126
Ref: LC less 5 passes								
	901 pupils in 299 schools Chi·=63.06*** Pseudo R·=.1046				901 pupils in 299 schools Chi·=107.78*** Pseudo R·=.1534			

Table 11: Logistic Regression Model of the factors associated with participating in a State Sponsored Training Programme

	Model 1				Model 2			
	Coef.	**Robust Std. Err.**	**P>z**	**Exp(b)**	**Coef.**	**Robust z**	**P>z**	**Exp(b)**
Constant	-1.585	0.458	0.001	0.205	-1.354	0.452	0.003	0.258
Female	-0.514	0.229	0.025	0.598	-0.449	0.239	0.060	0.639
Ref: Male								
Professional/Employer/Manager	-0.938	0.436	0.031	0.391	-0.794	0.441	0.072	0.452
Farmer	0.279	0.422	0.509	1.322	0.479	0.428	0.263	1.615
Intermediate Non-manual	-0.034	0.380	0.928	0.966	0.025	0.376	0.947	1.025
Other Non-manual	-0.108	0.373	0.772	0.898	-0.096	0.376	0.799	0.909
Non-employed	1.085	0.538	0.044	2.960	1.088	0.527	0.039	2.960
Ref: Skilled, Semi-Unskilled Manual								
Border	-0.280	0.362	0.439	0.756	-0.167	0.361	0.644	0.846
Mid East	-0.747	0.466	0.109	0.474	-0.664	0.460	0.148	0.515
Mid Lands	-0.778	0.628	0.215	0.459	-0.575	0.670	0.390	0.563
Mid West	-0.271	0.373	0.468	0.763	-0.157	0.378	0.677	0.854
South East	-0.391	0.410	0.341	0.677	-0.310	0.420	0.460	0.733
South West	-1.029	0.326	0.002	0.358	-0.970	0.312	0.002	0.379
West	-0.264	0.397	0.506	0.768	-0.174	0.363	0.632	0.840
Ref: Dublin								
Parental Education Unknown	-0.894	0.660	0.175	0.409	-0.873	0.664	0.189	0.418
Junior Certificate	-0.321	0.411	0.435	0.726	-0.299	0.420	0.476	0.741
Leaving Certificate	-0.815	0.372	0.028	0.443	-0.706	0.375	0.060	0.494
Diploma	-0.391	0.438	0.373	0.677	-0.153	0.429	0.722	0.858
Degree	-0.682	0.541	0.207	0.506	-0.244	0.545	0.654	0.783
Ref: Primary or Less								
Secondary	-0.298	0.295	0.314	0.743	-0.086	0.308	0.780	0.918
Vocational	0.601	0.251	0.017	1.824	0.550	0.260	0.035	1.732
Ref: Community/Comprehensive								
Non DEIS	-0.340	0.235	0.148	0.712	-0.197	0.243	0.417	0.821
Ref: DEIS								
LC 5+ passes					-0.385	0.315	0.222	0.681
LC 1 Honour					-0.463	0.398	0.244	0.629
LC 2-5 Honours					-0.935	0.329	0.004	0.392
LC 5+ Honours					-2.933	0.764	0.000	0.053
Ref: LC less 5 passes								
	2048 pupils in 458 schools Chi-=81.48*** Pseudo R-=.0791				2048 pupils in 458 schools Chi-=91.95*** Pseudo R-=.1245			

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