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EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET:
WORK AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG
RECENT COHORTS OF
IRISH SCHOOL LEAVERS

RICHARD BREEN

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among Recent Cohorts of Irish School Leavers*

RICHARD BREEN

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General Summary

This paper looks at the relationship between the post-primary educational system and the world of work. It addresses the question of how, during their first year after leaving school, young people fare in their search for work and in the kinds of jobs they get and how these are related to the educational credentials they possess. In particular, the study focuses on those young people who leave school with a relatively low level of, or no, formal academic qualifications.

The data on which the study is based are made up of three samples of young people who left post-primary school in the years 1978/79, 1979/80 and 1980/81 and who were interviewed approximately one year after leaving school. The samples contain school leavers from all levels of the post-primary system, ranging from those who leave without qualifications to those who possess the Leaving Certificate. In this study we focus on those school leavers who entered the labour market rather than on those who progressed to some form of third-level education. Because of the period covered by the three surveys it is possible to draw contrasts between the early labour market position of school leavers under relatively favourable economic conditions (the 1978/79 cohort) with the position of those who have entered a successively more difficult labour market (the 1979/80 and 1980/81 cohorts).

Each year approximately 60,000 young people leave post-primary school. Of these between 7 and 10 per cent have sat for no public examination, and 30 per cent or a little over have sat for either the Group or Inter Cert or both. The remaining 60 per cent have sat for the Leaving Certificate. Of the total of 60,000 school leavers about a quarter go on to some form of further training or higher education (these are mainly pupils who have sat the Leaving Certificate) and the majority of the rest — some 45,000 — enter the labour market.

In Chapters 3 and 4 of this report we look at the relationship between educational qualifications and the risk of unemployment. Over the three surveys the rate of unemployment among school leavers after one year in the labour market has increased from 9 per cent among the 1978/79 cohort to 23 per cent among the 1980/81 cohort. These high rates of unemployment which are found among school leavers do not spring from frequent job changing by young people settling

into the working environment, but rather are caused by the difficulties experienced by young people in finding a first job. Furthermore, this has become an increasingly important factor in school leaver unemployment. Among the 1978/79 cohort, 61 per cent of those unemployed after one year had never held a job: among the 1980/81 cohort this had increased to 78 per cent. Virtually all the increase in the unemployment rate among school leavers over this period has been caused by the increase in the numbers seeking a first job and not by any growth in the numbers who have lost jobs once they have found them.

The risk of being unemployed (either through not having yet found a first job or through having lost or given up a job) after a year out of school is very strongly related to the level of educational attainment, as is by now well known. So, among the 1980/81 cohort of school leavers, the unemployment rate among those who had left school without any qualifications was 42 per cent compared with a rate of 19 per cent among those who sat for the Leaving Certificate. For those who had reached the Inter Cert only, the rate was 23 per cent and for those who left after Group Cert, 26 per cent.

Because the likelihood of being unemployed is so strongly related to educational level and because educational level is, in turn, strongly related to sex and class origins, the risk of unemployment also varies according to sex and class. So, on average, girls are slightly less likely to be unemployed than boys (because girls are more likely to stay at school to take the Leaving Certificate) while among children of unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers the unemployment rate is, on average, approximately three times greater than among children of professional or executive and managerial backgrounds. If, however, we compare equivalently educationally qualified school leavers of different class backgrounds or sexes, then we find no significant difference in the risks they run of being unemployed. In other words, sex and class differences in the likelihood of being unemployed appear to be due entirely to differential educational participation rates. Here then, the education/labour market link is very clear.

If however, we look at those school leavers who have never had a job after a year in the labour market (in other words, first job seekers) then we find (in Chapter 4) that certain other factors play a part. For example, school leavers who live in areas of the country which have high or rapidly increasing overall levels of unemployment are relatively unlikely to be able to find an initial job even given equivalent educational qualifications to school leavers elsewhere in Ireland. Among males we find that those who come from semi- or unskilled manual origins are likely to experience greater difficulty in getting a first job than are equivalently qualified school leavers from non-manual backgrounds.

In Chapter 5, we look at those school leavers who were at work at the time of the survey. One notable finding is that increasing proportions of unqualified school leavers are actually assisting relatives or employed in family farms or busi-

nesses. Among the 1980/81 school leaver cohort more than 10 per cent of unqualified school leavers who were at work were in this situation.

Perhaps the major finding of Chapter 5 concerns the changes in occupational recruitment that have occurred over the three surveys. Among the 1978/79 school leaver cohort, which entered the labour market under relatively favourable conditions, most female school leavers at work entered either clerical or personal service occupations. Those school leavers with the Leaving Certificate tended more towards the former while the early school leavers tended towards the latter and also, to a lesser extent, to manual work in areas such as clothing and textiles. Males at work were even more clearly segregated by educational level. Early school leavers mainly entered manual or service work and within this group, those with some qualifications (that is, the Group or Inter Cert) were likely to enter skilled work as apprentices, while unqualified school leavers were more likely to be employed in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. Post-Leaving Certificate school leavers were mainly found in occupations classed as managerial/professional or clerical, and to a lesser extent in skilled manual jobs.

Over the three surveys this picture has changed, especially among male school leavers, largely because of the dramatic decline in clerical employment. Among females this decline has chiefly affected those leaving school after the Leaving Certificate but at the same time there has been an increase in the percentage entering service work. Females who leave school before sitting for the Leaving Certificate showed little discernible change in their patterns of occupational entry. Among males, however, the decline in clerical employment opportunities appears, in the 1980/81 cohort, to have led post-Leaving Certificate school leavers to move into those areas previously dominated by early school leavers, particularly manual and service work. What is surprising is that the number of manual jobs (formerly taken largely by early school leavers) has only declined slightly over the period covered by these three surveys. These jobs, however, have been increasingly taken by those who have completed second-level education. This process of "qualification inflation" has mainly affected school drop-outs among whom the consequences have included an increase in the percentages entering unskilled work and agriculture and possibly a postponement of school leaving by other would-be early school leavers. The decline in public sector recruitment has, together with declines in the demand for clerical labour, had major effects, not simply on those who would have anticipated such employment but also, and perhaps even more seriously, on early school leavers. Particularly among boys, the poorer qualified school leavers are being "pushed out" of the kinds of manual occupations they previously entered by the pressure of better qualified school leavers seeking these jobs.

Similarly, over the three surveys the proportion of all apprenticeships taken by early school leavers has declined as a higher proportion of post-Leaving

Certificate school leavers has come to take up the available apprenticeships. A growing percentage of those school leavers who have sat for the Leaving Certificate are now entering apprenticeships.

Female school leavers earn more than males even when their different educational distributions are allowed for, and this is due to the different occupations they enter. Females are unlikely to enter apprenticeships — which depress earnings — and are found in jobs with higher initial pay but less training and poorer career prospects. Education influences earnings (even controlling for sex and occupation) so that early school leavers earn, on average, less than post-Leaving Certificate leavers, though it is not always the case that unqualified school leavers have the lowest earnings.

In Chapter 6 we address the question of what sorts of young people are most likely to leave the educational system with no or very few qualifications. We attempt further to develop a model which would allow the identification of potential early school leavers while they are still at school. If this were feasible — and the results of Chapter 6 suggest it is — then appropriate educational programmes could be targeted at this group.

In Chapter 7 we look at the transition from school to work and the way in which young people go about looking for jobs. We found, for example, that only a very small proportion of unqualified school leavers make use of the National Manpower Service in searching for jobs and there also appears to be less use made of personal contacts in job search among the unemployed than among those who had jobs. The percentages of unqualified school leavers who are offered places on AnCO training courses or the Work Experience Programme during their first year in the labour market are relatively small. There is little evidence in our data that either of these schemes are of much benefit to those who are likely to experience most difficulty in the labour market. School leavers who leave school without qualifications are least likely to be offered places on either AnCO training or the Work Experience Programme while, taking the two sets of programmes together, those with the Leaving Certificate are most likely to be offered places.

In Chapter 8 we summarise the findings of this report and put forward certain policy recommendations. These policy recommendations refer to three areas: first the educational system; secondly the arrangements made for young people in the transition from education to working life; and thirdly, training and work experience programmes. These recommendations are chiefly aimed at improving the position of unqualified school leavers. In many respects the disadvantages suffered by the unqualified are much greater than those of even poorly qualified school leavers. The advantages to be gained by staying on for the Leaving Certificate among those with the Intermediate Certificate are rather less than the advantages to be gained by getting the Intermediate or Group Certifi-

cate in the first place, rather than leaving school without qualifications. Therefore, our primary concern must lie with the unqualified — the very early school leavers or drop-outs.

Furthermore, although the present recession has highlighted the problems of joblessness among school leavers it should not be allowed to obscure certain more fundamental questions concerning education and training and their relationship to the labour market. For example, even among the 1978/79 cohort of school leavers, who entered a relatively favourable labour market, 21 per cent of unqualified school leavers were unemployed one year after leaving school. Such evidence points to the existence of deep-seated problems within the educational system/labour market relationship and directs our attention to the broader issues of the reproduction of class relationships and the inequalities in life chances which these entail.

Chapter 1

SCHOOL LEAVERS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

This paper investigates the relationship between education, jobs and unemployment among post-primary school leavers in their first year after leaving school. Although we deal with school leavers from all levels of the post-primary system, ranging from those who leave with no formal qualifications to those who have the Leaving Certificate, our central concern is with early school leavers. We use the term "early school leavers" to refer to young people who left the post-primary system before sitting for the Leaving Certificate. Naturally, however, they are not a homogenous group and we therefore draw a further distinction between "drop-outs", who leave before sitting for any exam, and those who have a junior cycle qualification (the Group or Intermediate Certificate or both). Those who leave school after taking the Leaving Certificate we refer to as "post-Leaving Certificate leavers" or as having completed the senior cycle.

The overall aim of this paper is to examine the way in which differences in the level of education attained relate to school leavers' labour market position after they have spent approximately one year out of school. Since unemployment is such a salient feature of the early labour market experience of school leavers — and particularly of early school leavers — much of the paper will be concerned with aspects of this problem.

The specific aims of the study are fourfold:

- (i) to examine the labour market position of early school leavers (differentiated according to the level of educational qualifications they possess) relative to those who complete the senior cycle of post-primary education. This involves an analysis of the relative risks of unemployment and of variations in the characteristics of jobs obtained by those young people who terminated their education at various stages of the post-primary system;
- (ii) to examine some factors associated with early school leaving;
- (iii) to examine what factors — apart from education — differentiate between those early school leavers who make a successful transition into work and those who are unsuccessful;
- (iv) to discuss the broad policy implications of (i) to (iii).

The data used in the study are drawn primarily from the National Manpower

Service's (NMS) annual surveys of school leavers taken in 1980, 1981 and 1982. In addition, in Chapter 6, data gathered in 1981 relating to a national sample of lower stream Group Certificate pupils are used to examine factors associated with early school leaving. Both these data sources are discussed fully in Chapter 2.

The use of the three NMS surveys, each covering a different cohort of school leavers (the 1978-79, 1979-80 and 1980-81 cohorts, respectively) allows us not only to examine their labour market position but also to chart the effects of the deepening recession on school leavers' immediate prospects. So, the experiences of the 1978-79 cohort, who were interviewed in May 1980, can be seen to show the transition from school to work as it occurs under relatively favourable economic conditions. Subsequent cohorts have entered a successively more difficult economic climate, and the effects of this gradual deterioration are recorded in the survey results. Indeed, it is possible to see the effects of specific policies which have altered the demand for labour, such as the reduction in public sector recruitment introduced in the summer of 1981 and which, together with other declines in the demand for clerical workers, had, as we shall see in Chapter 5, very pronounced effects.

The NMS samples also have a straightforward interpretation in that they are representative of each year's national outflow cohort from the post-primary sector: thus they allow us to make direct comparisons of, say, third-level entrants with those who enter the labour market direct from school, and to examine differences in the probability of labour market entrants of the different sexes or classes having various levels of educational qualifications. Finally, the NMS samples are a largely underutilised data source. The results of the surveys published annually by the National Manpower Service are very basic and use no more than a small fraction of the data collected. The present report exploits these sources more fully.

Educational Attainment and Labour Market Position

The relationship between educational attainment and labour market position has been extensively investigated by social scientists in studies using methodologies that have been both quantitative (as in the attainment models discussed in Chapter 3) and qualitative (as in the work of Ashton, 1973, 1978; Carter, 1966; and Willis, 1977, in Britain) and much of this research will be drawn upon in the course of this paper. However, sociologists have generally viewed the education/labour market relationship from the perspective of class differentials. Thus, as Smith (1978, p. 14) has pointed out, sociologists have

established conclusively the links between class origins, educational opportunity and (intergenerational) occupational mobility (parentheses added).

A concern with this tripartite relationship can be seen to have at least two foci: first there is the description of the means whereby the individual's life chances and, at the aggregate level, the occupational and class structure of society, are determined to a greater or lesser extent by the pre-existing occupational or class structure. Second is the concern with the degree to which the agency most intimately concerned with the allocation of individuals to jobs and life positions — the educational system — itself exhibits a

pattern of social differentiation ... (which is) ... a reflection of a pre-existent inequality, the causes of which are largely to be found elsewhere in the society (Smith, 1978, p. 22).

In this report we shall look at how educational assets are transformed into labour market advantages, and we shall examine the extent to which variations in such educational assets are themselves generated by already existing class differences and the degree to which, as a result, the educational system acts to change such differences into labour market inequalities, one consequence of which is the high incidence of unemployment among school leavers within the working class (Breen, 1983).

In sociological studies of the transition from school to the labour market the emphasis has been placed on the role of structural rather than personal factors; this approach is the one followed here and is well summarised in the following quotation (Brannen, 1978, p. 114.)

position in the labour market is not primarily perceived as the end product of rational calculation and individual choice. Rather, it is seen as being largely determined by social, structural and cultural factors in the home, school and community ... (which) ... forge particular sets of attitudes towards, and expectations about, work; these, in conjunction with the structure of opportunities in the local labour market will provide the explanation for initial job entry. The emphasis is an occupational allocation rather than occupational choice ...

Outline of the Report

In this report the term "early school leavers" is used to refer to all those who left the Irish post-primary educational system before sitting for the terminal Leaving Certificate exam. Given the relatively high rates of post-primary completion, early school leavers account for roughly two-fifths of each school leaver cohort, and the majority of these are male. The term "drop-outs" is reserved for those who left post-primary school having sat for none of the national examinations.

It is, of course, important to bear in mind the distinctions among early school

leavers. The Group and Intermediate Certificate exams have long been viewed as terminal exams for the majority of young people who are seeking jobs that require relatively low levels of academic accomplishment or which provide specific job training (as with apprenticeships). On the other hand, drop-outs are not ending their education at a recognised terminal point. We should therefore expect the labour market position of this latter group to be considerably poorer even than that of those who possess only the Group or Inter Cert.

As both academic and official discussions of the problem of early school leaving have noted, the lack, or low level, of educational qualifications by early school leavers will make them particularly likely to suffer a high rate of unemployment on leaving school and will tend to assign them to occupations nearer the bottom than the top of the occupational hierarchy (Colledge, 1977, p. 1347; OECD, 1977c, p. 66; OECD, 1977b). In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 we shall investigate in detail such consequences of early school leaving in Ireland: in Chapters 3 and 4 we deal with unemployment and the initial transition into work and in Chapter 5 with the characteristics of jobs taken up by school leavers with different levels of qualification. In Chapter 6 we discuss some factors related to early school leaving and we present a first attempt to develop a predictive model that will allow the identification, at an early stage of their post-primary education, of pupils most at risk of early school leaving. In Chapter 7 we examine the means by which school leavers search for work and the use made of government sponsored training and work experience schemes. In Chapter 8 the findings of the paper are summarised and some broad policy conclusions are drawn.

In the remainder of the present chapter we outline some aspects of the present unemployment problem in Ireland and discuss the position of school leavers in the youth labour market.

Unemployment in Ireland

Unemployment in Ireland has traditionally been characterised by two features — a high overall rate of unemployment, and a high level of long-term unemployment. For example, Walsh (1978, p. 200) presents figures for the average annual nonagricultural unemployment rate between 1954 and 1975; for none of these years was the rate less than 5.6 per cent. Similarly Walsh (1978, p. 173) notes that “in 1973, 38 per cent of unemployed males in urban areas had no employment experience during the previous twelve months”. This high proportion of long-term unemployed is reflected in the length of the average duration of unemployment. Thus, for males joining the Live Register at the end of 1979, the average expected duration of unemployment was 25 weeks, compared with 16–18 weeks in Britain (O’Mahony, 1983, pp. 126–127). During the present economic recession not only has the unemployment rate itself increased, but so

has the proportion of long-term unemployed, as Table 1.1 illustrates.

Table 1.1: *Irish unemployment rate 1972-1983 and percentage of unemployed males on the Live Register for more than one year*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Unemployment rate (%)</i>	<i>Percentage of males unemployed >1 year</i>
1972	5.2	15.8
1973	4.7	20.9
1974	4.6	24.0
1975	6.4	18.6
1976	7.8	20.4
1977	7.6	26.6
1978	7.1	29.0
1979	6.1	32.6
1980	6.0	38.8
1981	8.6	33.5
1982	10.7	35.3
1983	13.8	34.4

Sources: Unemployment Rate:

1972-81, Bacon, Durkan and O'Leary (1982 p. 33, Table 22).

1982-83, Bacon, Durkan and Scott (1983, p. 26).

Percentage Unemployed >1 year:

1972-79, O'Mahony (1983, p. 126, Table 2) (First quarter figure for each year).

1980-83, CSO, Age by Duration Analysis of the Live Register (April figure for each year.)

A third feature of unemployment in Ireland is commonly found in industrialised countries: the distribution of unemployment is skewed such that members of the working class suffer much higher rates than those in the middle class. This can be seen from Table 1.2 which reports 1981 unemployment rates for various occupational groups. Much the highest rate is found among labourers and unskilled workers, while much the lowest rate is found among professional and technical workers.

In addition to variations in the unemployment rate according to occupation, both the risk of unemployment and the duration of unemployment are known to vary according to age, with young people in the labour market being particularly susceptible to unemployment, but relatively unlikely to spend prolonged periods out of work.

Table 1.2: *Unemployment rates according to occupational group, 1981*

	<i>Total in labour force (000s)</i>	<i>Percentage Unemployed</i>
Agricultural Workers	199.1	4.0
Producers, Makers, Repairers	389.8	11.5
Labourers and Unskilled Workers	83.5	30.5
Transport and Communication Workers	95.1	11.3
Clerical Workers	138.2	3.6
Commerce, Insurance and Finance Workers	121.7	6.7
Service Workers	93.0	7.5
Professional and Technical Workers	162.0	2.0
Others	81.2	15.1
Total	1263.6	8.9

Source: Census of Population, 1981. Five per cent Sample Estimates, p. 22.

The Youth Labour Market

The youth labour force is conventionally defined as all those in the labour market aged 24 or less, and it thus includes all school leavers except those who continue in some other form of education or withdraw from the labour force for other reasons. It has a number of features indicative of the particular role played in the labour force by young people, some of which have important policy implications. However, before discussing these features it must be noted that information on the youth labour force and labour market in Ireland is severely deficient,¹ and much of what follows draws heavily upon research undertaken elsewhere in Europe and, to a lesser extent, the USA.

The following features of the youth labour market appear to be common to many western industrialised countries:

(i) changes in the level of youth unemployment depend upon fluctuations in the overall level of unemployment; put more simply, high youth unemployment is found when overall or adult unemployment is high (see, for example, OECD, 1980, pp. 45-53 which reports this finding for a number of OECD countries).

¹A recent OECD report (OECD 1984, p. 23) noted that

review team members were struck by the lack of suitable and up-to-date data upon which to make a calculated judgment about youth unemployment.

(ii) the rate of youth unemployment tends to be higher than that of the general population. Such statistics as are available (shown in Table 1.3) reveal that this is true of Ireland also (see also Sexton, 1983, for some discussion of this) but the youth/adult differentials appear less pronounced here than in some other European countries (see OECD, 1980, p. 17 for some comparisons). However, such cross-national comparison is of little value not only because of the different definitions of unemployment used internationally but also because of the international differences in rates of educational participation, in the age of leaving school, and in the provisions made for the transition between school and work. In the Irish case, the rapid increases in the level of post-primary educational participation in the 1970s also make temporal comparisons difficult to sustain.

Table 1.3: *Youth unemployment rates, mid-April 1971-1982 (percentages) and ratio of youth/total unemployment rates*

Year	Age groups		Ratio	
	15-19	20-24	15-19/Adult	20-24/Adult
1971*	12.5	6.1	1.8	0.9
1975	18.7	10.1	2.0	1.1
1977	17.2	10.4	2.0	1.2
1979	12.5	6.9	2.1	1.2
1981†	19.3	11.0	2.8	1.6
1982†	24.4	13.9	3.2	1.8

*These figures refer to 14-19 year old age group.

†Estimated.

Source: OECD (1984, p. 36, table 13).

It has been generally accepted that outside of recessionary periods youth unemployment is chiefly "frictional" — that is, arising from a high degree of movement between jobs, young people having a greater than average tendency to switch jobs. This explanation has received support from two further findings. First, youth unemployment has been mainly short term, as we should expect if it arises from largely voluntary job changing. In Britain, for example, the probability of long-term unemployment has been found to correlate positively with age (Makeham, 1980a, p. 226; 1980b, p. 43). Second, among young people, unemployment rates decline with age, so that the youngest members of the youth labour force have the highest rates of unemployment. This can be seen in Table 1.3 where the rate for 15-19 year olds is consistently higher than for 20-24 year

olds (see also Colledge, 1977, p. 1345). Given that the rate of job changing is highest during the first years in the labour market and that a higher proportion of younger than older workers will have low levels of qualifications — a condition which appears to give rise to much job changing — the age/unemployment rate association among younger people appears to support the “frictional” explanation of youth unemployment.

However, since the end of the Second World War, youth unemployment has been increasing in many countries, and in most recent times, long-term unemployment within youth labour markets has become more prevalent “typically emerging in the later phases of a recession and disappearing as soon as an upturn begins” (Casson, 1979, p. 29; see also Dean, 1976).

(iii) Changes in youth unemployment rates have greater cyclical amplitude than adult rates (Casson, 1979, p. 1; Lynch and Richardson, 1982, p. 363; Makeham, 1980a, p. 234): that is to say, the youth unemployment rate rises faster than the adult rate in recessions and falls more quickly in periods of economic recovery. The longitudinal data required to test the applicability of this hypothesis to Ireland are not available, but the increasing ratio of youth/adult rates over the 1979-82 period shown in Table 1.3 would suggest that it may be true of Ireland.

Several hypotheses have been advanced to account for the high rate of increase in youth unemployment during recessions. It has been argued, for example, that in recessions firms cease recruiting and therefore, young people who may be seeking a first job or who may be prone to change jobs more frequently than adults, will be the most likely to suffer. The practice of LIFO — last in, first out — employed by firms will also tend to make young workers more likely to lose their jobs (although studies of redundancy in Britain show that they affect mainly older workers: *Department of Employment Gazette* (1978, p. 908) though this in turn may be due to the fact that the Redundancy Payments scheme only applies to workers who have held their job for two years or more). Some studies in Britain (see Casson, 1979, p. 25) have suggested that a relationship may exist between youth unemployment rates and adult female participation rates, such that as the latter increase, so will the former, since employers express a preference for the hiring of mature female re-entrants (after child-bearing) into the labour force rather than young people.

Perhaps one of the most widely researched hypotheses about high levels of youth unemployment attributes it to the changes in the demand for labour caused by the increasing ratio of young people's pay to that of adults. Where this ratio is small, young people will be relatively cheap to hire and will, therefore, all other things being equal, be preferred to more costly adult workers. Increases in this ratio — such as have been recorded in many industrialised countries in the recent past — will erode the advantage enjoyed by young people and conse-

quently their unemployment rate will rise, particularly in recessionary periods.

Empirical findings relating to this hypothesis are equivocal. An OECD review (OECD, 1980, p. 72) concluded that

relative wage developments have indeed partly contributed to youth unemployment in some member countries. However, the tentative nature of this conclusion must be stressed; it awaits further confirmation on the basis of detailed empirical studies.

Unfortunately such detailed studies may not prove wholly enlightening. In the USA, Meyer and Wise (1983) recently concluded that minimum wage legislation had increased youth unemployment. In Britain, however, Makeham (1980b) concluded that relative wage levels had no effects on the youth/adult unemployment ratio, while Lynch and Richardson (1982) arrived at the opposite conclusion. In Ireland, the limited evidence available (Sexton, 1983, pp. 21-23) does not suggest any narrowing of adult/youth wage differentials in recent years.

A recent OECD report on youth unemployment in Ireland commented:

Our report offers no views on the question of youth wage rates and whether or not they have affected youth employment and unemployment because of the complete lack of data in this area. (OECD, 1982c, p. 16)

An additional hypothesis which is less frequently considered would relate the high unemployment rate of young people relative to that of adults to the low average level of educational attainment within the youth labour force. The youth labour force contains a disproportionate number of very poorly qualified or wholly unqualified young people (who will make up virtually all the youngest part of the youth labour force) and a correspondingly small percentage of highly qualified workers (since they will not enter the labour force until the age of 21 or above in the case of third-level graduates). The youth labour force, therefore, will contain a higher proportion of job seekers who, by conventional criteria, are unattractive to employers, than will any other age segment of the labour force. We should, therefore, expect the former group to find jobs both harder to get and, particularly in recessionary periods, harder to keep. However, this argument may apply to Ireland less well than to other European countries, given the recent secular changes in Irish education. These will imply that the 15-24 age group may in fact contain no larger a percentage of unqualified job seekers than would older age cohorts (over the age of approximately 30, given that the changes in education occurred in the late 1960s) who had not benefited from the "free scheme" and free travel to school.

(iv) Young workers have high rates of job change, both as a result of quitting jobs and dismissal for disciplinary reasons, and possibly because of the use of

LIFO (last in, first out) hiring and firing policies. However, it is important to bear in mind distinctions among young workers in regard to job changing. Several studies (discussed in Chapters 3 and 5) have shown that it is among young unskilled workers that job changing is most prevalent and, within this group, a core of "chronic job changers" accounts for a large proportion of total youth unemployment (Casson, 1979, pp. 28-29; Clarke, 1980, p. 10; OECD, 1980, p. 63). Young workers in jobs that offer the prospect of a career — i.e., in apprenticeships or white collar work — appear to be much less prone to switch jobs.

The tendency of certain young workers to change jobs may be attributable to several sets of factors: it may be as Casson (1979, p. 28) suggests that many employers of

young unskilled workers take little interest in their welfare. They appear to be intolerant of their difficulties in adjusting from school to work. The social gulf between young and old makes dismissal for disciplinary reasons and quitting without notice all too common. In most trades relying on young people it is cheaper to hire and fire continually than to screen job applicants carefully and to follow grievance procedures before separation.

Additionally, young people may have what they consider to be good reasons for changing jobs. Ashton and Field (1976, pp. 47-53) for example, have pointed out that, since young people in unskilled employment have no prospect of advancement within a particular job and may find little intrinsic value in it, then job changing within the general area of unskilled work may provide a means of escape from undesirable aspects of such a job. Furthermore, the costs of job mobility — in psychological and financial terms — to the young worker are, under normal circumstances, relatively low (Makeham, 1980b, p. 3).

In summary then, the characteristic depiction of the youth labour force views its members as prone to job changing, particularly those in unskilled occupations and those who are young and have few academic qualifications. This tendency is related to the higher than average levels of unemployment suffered by young people, which are believed to derive from largely frictional causes. More recent evidence, however, indicates that in periods of recession, young workers will become prone to long-term unemployment as well as to higher rates of unemployment, and several hypotheses, outlined above, have been advanced to account for this.

Finally, a recent OECD Report (1977c, p. 63) has noted the tendency for the rate of youth unemployment in the USA to remain higher at the end of a recession than it was at its start; these recessions have a "ratchet" effect, resulting in increases in the underlying long-term level of youth unemployment.

School Leavers in the Labour Market

Thus far we have dealt with the youth labour market in general: in the remainder of this chapter our concern focusses more narrowly on school leavers and their employment prospects.

We have already referred to the cyclical nature of youth unemployment in (iii) above, noting that it tends to be very high in times of recession. At such times, school leavers are, among all young people, particularly susceptible to unemployment for the simple reason that they are attempting to obtain work at a time when jobs are not available. In the normal course of events, vacancies arise for those seeking to enter employment (including school leavers but also others such as married women wishing to return to work) in three ways (Casson, 1979, p. 56): by (a) the development of new jobs; (b) retirements and withdrawals from the workforce; (c) quits and firings. In a recession, all of these sources of job vacancies tend to dry up — new jobs are not created, retiring workers are not replaced, very few workers are quitting their jobs because of the difficulties of finding new ones. Furthermore, those jobs which are becoming available may not all be suitable for school leavers: in fact those vacancies which employers are most likely to want to fill may well require skills and training that school leavers do not possess. Given an oversupply of labour, employers may be more selective than normal, thus giving rise to the phenomenon of “qualification inflation” in which jobs previously open to the poorly qualified may be taken by the highly qualified, with the result that the former are left without jobs and with very poor prospects (this is discussed in detail in Chapter 5).

If the foregoing accurately describes the workings of the school leaver labour market, then we should expect that in a recession the unemployment problem among school leavers will not be frictional: that is to say, it will not arise because of high rates of job turnover during the first months in the labour market but will instead be due to a failure to enter any form of employment. Thus the spells of unemployment will be long-term rather than short-term. It follows, therefore, that if a recession is prolonged the youth labour force will come to contain an increasing proportion of young people who are still first job seekers even after long periods — perhaps of several years — in the labour market.

That unemployment among school leavers is becoming overwhelmingly a problem of a failure to secure a foothold in work is shown by the results of the National Manpower Service's Surveys of School Leavers. Table 1.4 shows the employment status of the sample members in May/June of the year after they left school. This shows, over the three surveys, a decline in the percentage at work at this time, and also a decline in the percentage entering the labour market (all those at work, unemployed or seeking a first job) due to the increasing percentage of students — that is, of school leavers in some form of full-time post-second-level training or education. However, while the

unemployment rate (i.e., those who have had jobs which they subsequently lost or gave up) has only risen slightly (and showed virtually no change between the 1981 and 1982 surveys) the percentage still seeking a first job has risen by over four per cent in each survey. So, while in May/June 1980 first job seekers constituted 61 per cent of the total unemployed among the 1978-79 school leaver cohort, in May/June 1982 they made up 78 per cent of the total unemployed from the 1980-81 cohort. Hence the increase in total unemployment (from 7.2 per cent in the 1980 Survey to 16.8 per cent in 1982) is almost entirely due to the increasing percentages of first job seekers. There is, generally speaking, a seasonal trend to youth unemployment caused by the bunching of school leaving in June of each year. Under normal circumstances total unemployment among school leavers should be highest during the summer, and should decline, subject to seasonal fluctuations, to be at its lowest at the point immediately preceding the entry of the next year's cohort into the labour market. However, given the increase in failures to secure a first job, this pattern of declining total unemployment rates has become more shallow over the 1980-82 period, with a growing residue of first job seekers from the previous cohort being added to those school leavers who each June enter the labour market and are, by definition, themselves first job seekers.

Table 1.4: *Employment status of school leavers at the time of the NMS Survey, 1980-82 (percentages)*

<i>School leaver cohort</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1979-80</i>	<i>1980-81</i>
Year of Survey	1980	1981	1982
<i>Employment Status:</i>			
At Work	69.9	61.0	55.5
Unemployed	2.8	3.8	3.7
Looking for First Job	4.4	8.6	13.1
Student	20.4	24.5	26.1
Engaged in Home Duties	1.8	0.9	0.6
Unable to Work	0.1	0.4	0.2
Other	0.7	0.8	0.8
N	3503	2159	2311

It is well known that for groups whose participation in the labour market is to some extent discretionary, declines in labour demand often lead them to leave the labour market or to postpone their entry into it. For certain categories of school leavers, labour market participation is discretionary: for example, would-

be early school leavers may decide instead to remain at school; those who must leave school may prefer to go on to further education or training rather than look for a job. Given such a discretionary element we would anticipate declining labour market participation rates among school leavers over the three NMS surveys, and this does appear to have occurred in two ways: first, as Table 1.4 shows, the number of school leavers classed as students has increased, and second, as we discuss in Chapter 5 (Table 5.5) the actual number of early school leavers has declined over these three school leaver cohorts.²

The Risks of Unemployment

Although the percentage of school leavers without a job has increased dramatically in each of the NMS surveys, there are, as we shall see in Chapter 3, very great differences in the risks of unemployment carried by different groups. For example, early school leavers — and particularly the very early school leavers who have no qualifications — run far higher risks of unemployment than those who have sat for the Leaving Certificate. Since children of working class parents are more likely to leave school early, unemployment rates among young people from these backgrounds far exceed those of young people from middle class families.

It is this question of the distribution of unemployment and of the risks of unemployment among school leavers with which we shall be concerned. To draw an over-simple distinction: the immediate issue here is not the causes of the high unemployment rate of school leavers but rather the way in which this unemployment is distributed and what accounts for it.

However, it is not only in the risks of unemployment that early school leavers — and hence working class children — are disadvantaged, since differences in educational credentials afford access to different types of jobs. Thus, early school leavers tend to get relatively poor jobs with the poorest jobs going to those individuals who leave the post-primary sector having sat for no public examinations.

The distribution of the risks of unemployment among school leavers, therefore, cannot be viewed in isolation from the more general question of the transition of young people from school to work. Evidence from abroad (e.g., HMSO, 1974) as well as the results of the first NMS survey taken in 1980, indicates that, even outside recessionary periods, disadvantaged groups of school leavers, notably those lacking qualifications, experience difficulty in making this transition. For example, of the 1978-79 cohort of school leavers 7.2 per cent were unem-

²There is no indication of increasing withdrawal from the labour market into the categories "Engaged in Home Duties", "Unable to Work" and "Other" in Table 1.4, as we might have expected.

ployed or seeking a first job in May of 1980. However, among those who left school having sat for no exam, the figure was almost 19 per cent. Given that, in 1980 the overall unemployment rate was lower than at any time since 1974 (Table 1.1), it is evident that, even in times of relative economic prosperity, certain school leavers experience an unemployment problem. Furthermore, of the unqualified and unemployed school leavers in May 1980, half were still seeking a first job — thus the problem of unemployed school leavers cannot be described as due to “frictional” unemployment.

It is important, therefore, to examine not only the effects of the present recession on the labour market experiences of school leavers, but also to retain an awareness of how underlying and more constant processes determine the way in which the recession's effects are distributed.

Chapter 2

DATA AND VARIABLES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the data sets used in this study and the construction of one of the major variables employed in the analysis.

National Manpower Service Survey of School Leavers

The main data set used is the National Manpower Service's Annual Survey of School Leavers. These surveys have been carried out since 1980 and, examined together, they allow one to investigate changes over that period in the labour market position of school leavers from post-primary education.

The surveys are carried out in the early summer of each year: the 1980 and 1981 surveys were carried out in May of those years, the 1982 survey in May and June. The population surveyed consists of all young people in the Republic who left post-primary school during the previous academic year: thus the 1980 survey deals with the 1978-79 cohort of leavers, the 1981 survey with the 1979-80 cohort and the 1982 survey with the 1980-1981 cohort. The sampling, interviewing, coding and punching of the data and the computation of the results subsequently published by the NMS (NMS, n.d.; 1982; 1983a) are carried out by the Survey Unit of The Economic and Social Research Institute.³

The school leavers for each survey are drawn from a random sample of 200 schools stratified by type (Secondary, Vocational, Community/Comprehensive), size, sex mix (boys', girls', coeducational) and region (distinguishing between Dublin/other towns of more than 1500 population/towns of less than 1500). A list of pupils who left school at any time during the appropriate year is obtained from these schools, and pupils are selected for interview from these lists.

The interview schedule itself elicits information on background characteristics of the respondent (parents' occupation and employment status, respondent's age, address, etc.), details of his or her post-primary education (when terminated, which exams sat for, which subjects taken, etc.) and information on his or her labour market or educational experiences in the period since leaving school. In regard to the latter, details are obtained of labour market status at several points after leaving school (August, October and January pre-

³In the 1980 NMS Survey the interviews themselves were not carried out by the ESRI although the subsequent processing of the data (coding, punching, computing) was.

ceding the survey) as well as at the time of the survey. The bulk of the information gathered relates to the respondent's circumstances at the time of the survey; thus probably the major use of the research is to provide a thorough picture of the position of individual school leavers approximately one year after leaving school. From the unemployed, details are obtained regarding the duration of unemployment, the means adopted in searching for work and the type of work sought. From the employed, data are obtained concerning various aspects of their work situation, type of job, job training, length of time in the job, earnings and so forth, as well as data on the methods of job search they utilised. Finally, for those in post-second level education, some information is obtained concerning the institution attended and the type of course being followed.⁴

In the 1980 survey it had been hoped to draw a 10 per cent sample of all leavers (Department of Labour, 1981, p. 3); subsequently a less ambitious target was adopted, and the final sample size was a little over 5 per cent. In the subsequent surveys the sample size was approximately 3½ per cent: thus the 1980 sample is rather larger than that for 1981 or 1982. In all cases, the sample was subsequently weighted to reflect the population distribution of school leavers within each region according to sex, type of school attended and educational level attained (Department of Labour, 1981, p. 5). In addition, for the analyses presented here, some individuals who reported themselves as having left school in a year other than that to which a particular survey referred were omitted.⁵ For each survey the actual and corrected (by weighting and omitting of certain cases) sample sizes are given in Table 2.1.

⁴It should be noted that while the NMS samples are representative of all post-primary school leavers (and thus of entrants to the labour market from the post-primary system) they do not provide coverage of a complete outflow cohort from the education system as a whole, since this would also necessitate surveys of the outflow from the primary level into the labour market (i.e., national school terminal leavers) and from third-level education.

⁵The question of who belongs in a cohort of school leavers for a particular year is not straightforward, particularly when there is disagreement between the school's records and the respondent's reply in regard to when education was terminated. In the analysis of the data, published by the NMS, the schools' lists of leavers have been taken to define the cohort, regardless of when the respondent claimed to have left school. In the present analysis, the same broad procedure has been followed except in cases of very marked disparity. Those respondents who reported leaving school outside the two calendar years spanned by a school year have been excluded from the analysis: thus, for example, we excluded from the 1978-79 cohort anyone who reported leaving school before January 1978 or after December 1979, but we retained respondents who were, according to the school's records, in the 1978-79 cohort but, by their own account, left in the period January-August 1978 or September-December 1979. The material effect of this procedure is slight, given that most school leavers leave at the end of the school year, and the discrepancies between the results reported here and those given in the NMS reports are sufficiently small to be within the margin of sampling error.

Table 2.1: *Sample sizes for NMS surveys 1980-1982*

<i>Survey</i>	<i>School leaver cohort</i>	<i>Cohort size</i>	<i>Sample size</i>		<i>Corrected sample as percentage of population</i>
			<i>Actual</i>	<i>Corrected</i>	
1980	1978-79	64050	3503	3504	5.5
1981	1979-80	64700	2203	2159	3.3
1982	1980-81	61000	2314	2312	3.8

Each year some of the results of the NMS surveys are published (NMS, n.d.; 1982; 1983a). Here the sample results are both weighted and multiplied by the inverse of the appropriate sampling fraction, which has the effect of grossing up the totals to the size of the population. It should be borne in mind that these population totals are not true population statistics but are estimates based on a 5 per cent sample (or less). Thus, while these are the best available estimates, they may magnify quite small sample findings into substantial population figures. In some cases, these findings may not be statistically significant: the danger of such "grossing up" is that it may present as a genuine difference or trend, something which arises only through sampling variability. In the present analysis, then, although the weighted data are used, no attempt is made to gross up the figures to population size, and instead statistical tests of significance are used to assess whether or not a sample finding may be assumed to reflect a pattern true of the population of school leavers as a whole. In those cases where percentages are used without any statistical test, the reader may construct his or her own estimates of their statistical significance by reference to Appendix 1.

Finally, in a number of tables, results for all three surveys have been aggregated to form an average picture of the position of school leavers over the three year period. In such aggregated tables, the data have been weighted so as to give equal weight to each survey regardless of its actual size.⁶ If unweighted data were used then, clearly, the results would depend to a disproportionate degree on the 1980 survey returns. Most of the analyses utilising the NMS survey data, however, will deal with each of the three sampled cohorts separately in order to assess both the relationships between variables within each cohort (and particularly those relationships concerning employment status, work situation and so on) and the degree to which these relationships may have shifted over the three years of the surveys.

⁶All aggregate tables that present "weighted" figures have been weighted in this way.

Survey of Group Cert Pupils

Between January and April of 1981, as part of the survey of 95 post-primary schools conducted for a study of sex differences in post-primary education (subsequently published as ESRI Paper 113, *Schooling and Sex Roles: Sex Differences in Subject Provision and Student Choice in Irish Post-Primary Schools* by D. Hannan, R. Breen, *et al.*, 1983) questionnaires were administered to all those pupils in what the principal identified as "terminal Group Cert classes" (i.e., in which the majority of the pupils were expected to leave after the Group Cert.). Out of the 95 schools in the sample,⁷ 25 had terminal Group Cert classes in which the questionnaire was administered, giving a total of 616 completed questionnaires comprising a national sample of lower stream Group Cert pupils. These questionnaires, which took on average a little under an hour to complete, included a wide range of items dealing with the respondent's experience of schooling, subjects taken, attitudes towards subjects and teachers, home and family circumstances, extra-school activities and educational and occupational aspirations.

In June of 1983 a follow up survey was conducted. The 25 schools in which Group Cert pupils had been interviewed were sent lists of those pupils and asked to indicate whether or not each pupil had sat for the Group Cert; whether or not each pupil had sat for the Inter Cert; and finally, whether or not each pupil was still in the school.⁸ Replies were received from 23 of the schools; a further two schools were excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 21 schools and 529 pupils on whom information was virtually complete. As one might expect, the majority of those schools with terminal Group Cert classes were either Vocational or Community schools, and the majority of pupils were male. Table 2.2 shows the breakdown of pupils according to sex and school type. The totals shown in the final row of that table have been weighted to counteract the over-representation of Community Comprehensive schools in the initial sampling of the 95 schools. This has the effect of reducing the number of cases in the final sample from 529 to 466.

Construction of Variables

The majority of the variables used in the analysis are either self-explanatory or are discussed at the time when they are first used. However, the occupational group categorisation requires some rather more detailed consideration.

⁷Details of the sampling procedures by which the 95 schools were selected are contained in Hannan and Breen, *et al.*, 1983, pp. 23-29.

⁸The pupils interviewed were scheduled to sit for the Group Cert exam in 1981. Assuming they were in second year at this stage, then those remaining to take the Inter Cert would probably have done so in 1982. Thus, those still in school in June 1983 would probably have embarked on the senior cycle course.

Table 2.2: *Distribution of pupils in terminal Group Cert classes, 1981*

		<i>School type and pupil sex</i>					
		<i>Secondary</i>		<i>Vocational</i>		<i>Community Comprehensive</i>	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Schools:	Full Sample	3		14		8	
	Final Group	3		12		6	
	Cert Sample	3		12		6	
Pupils:	Final Group	67		292		13	
	Cert Sample	67		292		13	
	(weighted)	67		292		13	

Although, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, we will primarily be concerned with the effects of educational level on labour market prospects, it is well known that educational achievement in Ireland, as elsewhere, is highly dependent upon the occupational circumstances of the pupil's parents, and indeed this relationship between educational achievement and what is alternatively called class, socio-economic status or group or occupational category, is one of the most extensively researched areas of sociology (and is discussed more fully in the following chapter). In analyses of both the pupil data and the NMS returns, a Hall-Jones categorisation of father's occupation forms the basis of the occupational group classification used. In the case of the pupil data, for those from farm backgrounds information was obtained on size of farm, and on this basis farmers were included in the following Hall-Jones categories: greater than 99 acres, Hall-Jones Category 2; 50-99 acres, Category 4; 30-49 acres, Category 6; under 30 acres, Category 7.

In the NMS surveys, no information on acreage was collected, and thus, rather than assign farmers arbitrarily to one particular category, they were retained as a separate group. In addition, in all the data sets the eight Hall-Jones groups were themselves collapsed into a four category variable as follows (with the corresponding Hall-Jones groups in parentheses):⁹

- (1) Upper or higher non-manual (1,2)
- (2) Lower non-manual (3,4,5)
- (3) Skilled manual (6)
- (4) Semi- and unskilled manual (7,8)

Thus, in the NMS data, five categories of father's occupational group were used (the fifth being farmers) while in the Group Cert pupil data, four categories

⁹A full listing of the occupations included in each of the Hall-Jones categories is given in Oppenheim (1966).

were employed. The higher non-manual group includes professionals, higher administrative workers, executives and managers. The lower non-manual group incorporates all other non-manual workers — for example, routine non-manual workers (clerks, commissionaires, shop assistants) and those in inspectional and supervisory non-manual positions. The skilled manual designation for category three is largely self-explanatory and the fourth category includes all other manual workers.

In studies dealing with the educational effects of family background, the terms socio-economic group, social class, socio-economic status, and so forth, are often used indiscriminately. Although the Hall-Jones categorisation is generally termed a scale of occupational prestige, in this study it will, instead, be used as a set of occupational groupings. The use of the term "class" will be reserved for the manual/non-manual distinctions, grouping Categories 3 and 4 in the (manual) working class, 1 and 2 in the middle class.

Chapter 3

SCHOOL LEAVERS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In this section of the paper we shall examine how the risk of unemployment is related to the level of education attained by school leavers. To do this we shall examine the relationship between employment status and education at the time when the National Manpower Service Surveys were carried out, that is, in May/June of the year following that during which these young people left school. Thus, by this time, most of the sample would have been out of school for approximately a year — and some for much longer — and we should expect that, under normal circumstances, and even allowing for the well-known instability of employment during the period of transition from school to working life, the bulk of the young people interviewed would have obtained a job.

As well as looking at education directly, we shall also deal with two factors — the sex and occupational background of respondents — which, in their turn, have important influences on educational attainment, and through it have a clear effect on the probability of finding a job. Indeed, we shall see that unemployment among school leavers is particularly likely among young people from working class backgrounds, and this comes about largely because they fail to benefit from the educational system to the same extent as young people from middle class backgrounds.

Education and Employment

A large number of studies have shown education to be crucial in determining one's labour market prospects and the likelihood of finding a job. Indeed, sociologists' concern with the workings of the educational system is, at root, based on the belief that inequalities in education generate inequalities in labour market position and life chances generally. Viewed from a societal perspective, the educational system is a crucial agent in the process of social reproduction, determining the distribution of life chances. It has been argued (by Meyer, 1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1978, among others) that educational systems are little more than credentialising agencies, whose primary function is not socialisation nor even the inculcation of useful skills, but rather they are "personnel certifying agencies" (Meyer and Rowan 1978, p. 79) which permit the allocation of indivi-

duals to places in the social structure on the basis of the credentials they confer.

Viewed from a more individualistic perspective, work in the tradition of the "attainment model" (discussed below; see also Heath 1981, pp. 217-223) has explicitly attempted to measure the relationship between years of education completed and, for example, job status, and even to estimate money returns, via employment earnings, to years of education (for example, Psacharopoulos 1977, and for an Irish example, Walsh and Whelan, 1976).

For the individual, education and the initial entry into work are crucial for one's longer term experiences in the labour market. As Carter (1978, p. 93) writes

... the level of job entered on leaving school represents ... a ticket for a life journey — occupationally and socially too, in crucial dimensions of life chances and life styles (for example, housing, place of residence, medical care, education of children, recreation and leisure).

Similarly, a recent OECD report (1977, p. 36) noted that

(i)n France, a recent survey ... had shown that 17 year old(s) ... who lack a suitable initial vocational training have little chance of escaping from the elementary ... tasks in which they are employed.

Turning to studies dealing specifically with young people's employment prospects, education is again perceived as a crucial — if not the most crucial — variable in determining one's chances of getting a job. So, for example, considerable concern has been expressed regarding the very poor employment prospects of school leavers with no qualifications or with very poor qualifications (see, for example, the UK Department of Labour's report *Unqualified, Untrained and Unemployed*, HMSO, 1974). Sinfield (1981, p. 69) summarises much research in his statement that:

Surveys show a much higher rate of unemployment among young people without any qualifications, and a tendency for this unemployment to be both more frequent and longer lasting.

In a recent British survey of 16-19 year olds (Colledge, 1977) it was found that young people without qualifications made up 53 per cent of the total unemployed within this age group, and that 61 per cent of the unqualified young people had been unemployed for more than six months. Furthermore, the importance of qualifications may increase at times of high unemployment. A UK working committee reported that:

most firms agreed ... that in times of high unemployment they ... were more selective with their normal standards. As a result it is likely that the

qualified boy or girl will be more successful than the unqualified (HMSO, 1974, p. 21; see also Colledge, 1977, pp. 1345-1346).

Clearly then, education is a major factor in determining one's prospects of employment or, indeed, of post-second level education. Table 3.1, drawing on the NMS data, illustrates this using a fourfold classification of education as follows:

1. those who left school having sat for the Leaving Certificate;
2. those who left school having sat for the Inter but not the Leaving Certificate;
3. those who left school having sat for the Group Certificate only;
4. those who left school having sat for no public examination.

Table 3.1: *Employment Status according to level of education, 1980-82 weighted aggregate results (percentages)*

	<i>Educational level</i>			
	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Employment Status:				
At work	54.3	76.4	76.6	64.7
Unemployed	1.7	4.0	7.9	10.7
Looking for first job	6.6	10.9	10.4	18.6
Student	35.8	6.9	1.6	1.6
Home Duties	0.8	1.4	1.0	2.5
Ill	0.2	0.1	0.6	1.0
Other	0.7	0.4	1.9	0.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(Totals in this and subsequent tables may not add to exactly 100.0 because of rounding)				
N	4830	1631	672	668

As Table 3.1 shows, the earlier an individual leaves school, the more likely he or she is to be unemployed or still seeking a first job after one year in the labour market. It can be seen that the majority of school leavers have taken the Leaving Certificate, but just under 40 per cent of school leavers leave at an earlier stage — 21 per cent after Inter Cert and 17 per cent before Inter Cert. The bulk of those who go on to other forms of education — chiefly third level — are pupils

who have taken the Leaving Certificate, although a number of post-Inter Cert leavers — mainly females who go on to vocational training (such as secretarial courses) — are recorded here as students. Within each educational category the majority of school leavers enter the labour market, where the higher the educational level attained, the lower is their risk of being unemployed. Thus, among those who leave having sat for no exam, the percentage unemployed or seeking a first job is almost three and a half times greater than among those who sat for the Leaving Certificate. However, turning to the distribution of the total unemployed¹⁰ (including first job seekers) across the four educational levels, we find that 42 per cent of them reached the Leaving Certificate level, 24 per cent the Inter Cert, 13 per cent the Group Cert and 21 per cent sat for no examination. Thus, while the early school leavers, especially the unqualified, have much the highest likelihood of being unemployed, a large share of the unemployed is accounted for by school leavers who reached Leaving Certificate level.

Occupational Background, Sex and Education

There is a considerable body of evidence to show that a pupil's sex and occupational background influence educational achievement. In the case of pupil sex, a recent ESRI report (Hannan and Breen, *et al.*, 1983) has shown that girls tend to remain in post-primary education longer than boys (for example, in the late 1970s over 60 per cent of each female cohort and 50 per cent of each male cohort reached the Leaving Certificate) and this is supported by the findings of the NMS surveys. Again, aggregating all three surveys it can be seen (in Table 3.2) that a higher percentage of boys terminate their education at all stages before the Leaving Certificate. There is a particularly marked difference among Group Cert leavers, but this is largely due to the different distribution of the sexes across school types, girls being under-represented in Vocational schools from which the majority of Group Cert candidates are drawn. As well as sex differences in the level of educational participation, there are, on average, differences in the nature of boys' and girls' education. So, for example, particularly in the Secondary sector, girls' education tends to be less directly orientated to what are seen as the demands of the labour market and is more general in character, while boys' education is more specialised, concentrating on a relatively narrow range of subjects (the Sciences and the Commerce subjects particularly) which are assumed to be of high labour market value. Furthermore, the sexes are differentially distributed over the post-primary school types: 78 per cent of girls are in Secondary schools and only 14 per cent in

¹⁰Unless otherwise indicated, the term "total unemployed" is used to refer to all those in the labour market but without a job — that is both first job seekers and those unemployed through having lost or given up a job.

Table 3.2: *Educational level attained according to sex, 1980-82 weighted aggregate results (percentages)*

	<i>Sex</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Educational Level:		
Leaving Cert	53.1	71.8
Inter Cert	24.6	16.4
Group Cert	12.8	4.2
None	9.4	7.7
	100.0	100.0
N	4060	3743

Vocational schools, whereas, among boys, Vocational schools are more popular accounting for 29 per cent of male pupils, with a further 61 per cent in Secondary schools (*Department of Education Statistical Report, 1981-82*, p. 44). Overall, then, not only are girls likely to leave the post-primary system with higher levels of qualification, but they are also likely to have a different set of subject credentials than boys. We should expect that such differences would be reflected in the labour market in differences between the sexes in their risk of unemployment and in the kinds of work they enter.

That the benefits of education accrue disproportionately to children of the middle classes has been demonstrated in a number of studies. Two areas in which there are differentials according to socio-economic status or parental circumstances are, first, in the type of school attended and, secondly, in the level of educational participation.

Hannan (1968), Kellaghan and Greaney (1970), Greaney (1973), Swan (1978), Rottman and Hannan *et al.* (1982), Hannan and Breen *et al.* (1983) have all shown the tendency for working class pupils to be over-represented in Vocational schools while Secondary schools have a disproportionate share of middle class pupils. Such a distinction is evident in the NMS data as Table 3.3 shows. Using the five-fold categorisation of father's occupation described in Chapter 2, a clear trend is evident of increasing percentages in Secondary schools as one moves from the fourth (unskilled/semi-skilled manual) to the first (higher non-manual) of these occupational categories. The opposite trend can be seen in regard to Vocational schools. Only in the case of children from unskilled and semi-skilled manual backgrounds does the percentage in Vocational education exceed that in Secondary. Farmers' children fall between Categories 2 (lower non-manual) and 3 (skilled manual) in their distribution

Table 3.3: *Type of post-primary school attended according to father's occupational group, 1980-82 weighted aggregate results (percentages)*

	<i>Occupational group</i>				
	<i>Upper non-manual</i>	<i>Lower non-manual</i>	<i>Skilled manual</i>	<i>Semi/unskilled manual</i>	<i>Farmers</i>
School Type:					
Secondary	81.9	66.7	49.3	41.9	55.5
Vocational	8.7	23.1	36.5	47.9	37.7
Community/ Comprehensive	<u>9.5</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>14.2</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>6.8</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	795	2033	1701	1803	1456

across the school types. The composition of the Community/Comprehensive sector comes nearest to mirroring the overall distribution of pupils according to occupational background.

Class disparities in the level of educational participation can be summarised by saying that working class pupils are much more likely than middle class pupils to leave school before completing post-primary education, and this is particularly marked among boys. Hence, as one moves to the higher levels of the educational system, class disparities widen. Clancy (1982), for example, provides evidence of very sharp class differences in the take-up of third-level education which is dominated by pupils from middle class backgrounds to the virtual exclusion of working class pupils. Rudd (1972) — and much the same picture emerges from Hannan (1968) and Greaney (1973) — found that pupils who terminated their education after National school without going on to post-primary school were drawn from the working class and from small farm backgrounds. A similar relative pattern persists today: although the number of National school terminal leavers is very small, early leavers from post-primary schools are drawn predominantly from these same backgrounds. If we examine the distribution of school leavers at each level of education according to occupational origin (classified as above) it can be seen (in Table 3.4) that there is indeed a strong relationship between the two. Over the three years of the NMS survey, 38 per cent of school leavers from semi- and unskilled backgrounds had sat for the Leaving Certificate, whereas, among the upper non-manual group, virtually all children (93 per cent) had got that far. Table 3.4 shows a very clear pattern across the four non-farming groups, such that declining percentages reaching

the Leaving Certificate are found together with increasing percentages of school leavers at all of the lower levels. Again, as with their distribution over the various types of school, those from farm backgrounds fall between the lower non-manual and skilled manual categories in their pattern of educational participation. Finally, we may note that while there is a general trend among all occupational groups for the highest percentage to leave school after the Leaving Cert, the next highest after Inter Cert, and so on, among pupils from semi- or unskilled manual backgrounds, a higher percentage leave school having sat for no exam than leave after the Group Cert.

Table 3.4: *Educational level attained according to father's occupational group, 1980-82 weighted aggregate results (percentages)*

	<i>Occupational group:</i>				
	<i>Upper non-manual</i>	<i>Lower non-manual</i>	<i>Skilled manual</i>	<i>Semi/unskilled manual</i>	<i>Farmers</i>
Educational Level:					
Leaving Cert	93.0	74.5	53.2	37.6	67.5
Inter Cert	5.3	16.7	25.8	28.1	20.5
Group Cert	1.0	4.4	11.1	16.4	6.5
None	0.7	4.4	10.0	17.9	5.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	794	2036	1656	1771	1433

Given the relationship between the level of educational participation and subsequent employment status (Table 3.1) and the relationship between educational participation and both sex (Table 3.2) and occupational background (Table 3.4), we should expect that employment status itself will vary according to sex and occupational background. In other words, employment status depends, to a high degree, on the level of education attained, which, in its turn, depends upon sex and occupational background. These latter variables should then have an effect upon employment status mediated, in whole or part, through the effects of education. Table 3.5 shows how employment status¹¹ varies

¹¹In this and successive tables, a reduced version of employment status is adopted, concentrating only on those young people classified as in the labour market (that is, at work, first job seekers or unemployed) or as being in some form of further education or training. The analysis thus omits those classified as "Engaged in Home Duties", "Ill and Unable to Work" and "Other" in Table 3.1. This results in the loss of 171 cases of which the majority (88 cases) are from the 1980 survey. The NMS Survey counts as unemployed or looking for a first job those currently participating in schemes such as the Work Experience Programme. We have followed that convention in this analysis.

according to sex. Girls are more likely to remain in some form of post-second level education after leaving school, and therefore, are marginally less likely than boys to enter the labour market immediately. However, of those in the labour market, girls are rather more likely to be in work after one year than are boys.

Table 3.5: *Employment status at time of survey according to sex, 1980-82 weighted aggregated figures (percentages)*

Employment Status:	Sex	
	Male	Female
Employed	63.1	63.8
Unemployed*	13.4	11.3
Student	23.5	24.9
	100.0	100.0
N	3991	3810

*including first job seekers.

Table 3.6 shows the employment status/occupational background relationship. Two things are immediately clear from this: first, the *risk* of unemployment is greatest among working class school leavers — so, averaged over the three surveys, 14 per cent of leavers from skilled manual backgrounds and 18 per cent from the semi- and unskilled group compared to only 6 per cent from the higher non-manual group were unemployed. Second, the majority of the unemployed are drawn from the working classes: taken together occupational Categories 3 and 4 account for 57 per cent of the unemployed. In fact, the risk of unemployment in general, for young people, and for adults, is largely class specific. Even at times of high employment, workers in semi- and unskilled occupations are far more likely than any others to spend periods unemployed, because their jobs are less secure (Moylan and Davies, 1980, p. 832; Sinfield, 1981, p. 19). However, such spells of unemployment, although frequent, tend to be short. In a recession, the picture alters. The working classes are again the most vulnerable (though they often receive less publicity than, for example, the redundant executive or the unemployed graduate) but now these spells on the dole are likely to be far longer and their effects — financial, social and psychological — much more severe. That unemployment among school leavers is greatest among the working classes, then, simply means that it mirrors the tendency in the general population.

So far, then, sex and occupational background have been shown to influence educational level which, in its turn, strongly affects employment status and the

Table 3.6: *Employment status according to father's occupational group, 1980-82 weighted aggregate figures (percentages)*

	<i>Occupational group</i>				
	<i>Upper non-manual</i>	<i>Lower non-manual</i>	<i>Skilled manual</i>	<i>Semi/unskilled manual</i>	<i>Farmers</i>
Employment Status:					
Employed	46.2	61.5	69.3	71.0	60.9
Unemployed*	6.2	9.3	14.1	18.1	11.0
Student	47.6	29.2	16.6	10.9	28.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	804	2019	1671	1776	1414

*including first job seekers

risks of unemployment. Now we turn to two questions which require rather more complex analysis:

- (i) having shown that sex and occupational background are related to the probability of unemployment, are the effects of these factors wholly mediated via the educational system or do they also have direct effects, such that, at a given educational level, the probability of unemployment varies according to sex and/or occupational background?
- (ii) how — if at all — has this set of relationships — between employment status, educational level, sex and occupational background — shifted over the three years of the survey? For example, we have already seen, in Table 1.4, that the percentage unemployed has risen markedly between 1980 and 1982. Now we want to address more specific questions, such as the extent to which the relative disadvantages suffered by early school leavers in the likelihood of getting a job have increased or decreased as the recession has deepened.

A Model of Job Attainment

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, the study of social mobility was developed through what became known as “the attainment model”. Here the individual’s attainment in respect of his occupation — measured by the status of that occupation or its income — was explained in terms of variables representing family background, educational effects, and levels of attainment in initial entry into the labour market.

The best known of attainment models is that of Blau and Duncan (1967). Here

the status of the individual's current job was held to depend directly upon the status of his first job, his level of education and his father's occupational status. In turn, first job status depended directly upon the latter two variables, while educational level itself depended upon father's educational level and occupational status. Subsequent research built on this model: thus, Duncan, Haller and Portes (1968) added variables representing educational and occupational aspirations and the influences of significant others in the process of attainment. The Blau and Duncan model took into account neither sex nor race, but these were subsequently included (Duncan, 1968; Treiman and Terrell, 1975; McClendon, 1976). The model has been applied to societies other than the United States; Heath (1981, pp. 217-223) discusses the application of the model to various European societies. Psacharopoulos (1977) is an application of the model to British data, focusing on earnings, while Walsh and Whelan (1976) use a similar "human capital" approach to their analysis of earnings in Ireland (although this is a single equation rather than a multi-equation model).

An assumption implicit in the use of the attainment model was, quite simply, that everyone had an occupation according to which they were given a score on a scale of, for example, occupational status such as the Duncan Socio-Economic Index. This assumption blurred the dichotomy between those who had jobs and those who had not. Common practice involved assigning the latter a score corresponding to their usual employment, or else omitting them from the analysis (as in, for example, McClendon 1976, p. 53). Since the attainment model developed in a period of economic growth and low unemployment rates in western economies, the proportion of subjects in the samples used who were unemployed must have been small, and thus the neglect of unemployment may have been defensible. Given current circumstances, however, to pursue such a course would be much less reasonable. In particular the high levels of youth unemployment in western Europe and elsewhere suggest that those equations of the attainment model dealing with the determinants of first job status might profitably be adjusted to deal with the probability of obtaining a first job. In other words, rather than seeking to account for the gradations of status or income within first job, one might investigate variations in the probability of actually obtaining a job or of being unemployed. This is the course followed in the remainder of this chapter.

The model to be estimated is set out in the form of two equations;

$$\text{Educational level (E)} = f(\text{Sex (S), Occupational background (O)}) \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Employment Status (U)} = f(\text{Educational level (E), Sex (S), Occupational background (O)}) \quad (2)$$

Educational level is operationalised as the four level variable (Leaving Cert;

Inter Cert; Group Cert; None) used throughout this chapter, and Occupational background is the five-level modified Hall-Jones categorisation discussed in Chapter 2. Employment status is the trichotomous At Work/Unemployed (including first job seekers)/Student variable used in Tables 3.5 and 3.6.

The first equation, then, states that the level of education attained is a function of (or depends upon) sex and father's occupational group, while the second specifies employment status one year after leaving school as a function of the educational level attained, sex, and father's occupational group. It will be recalled that in the Blau and Duncan (1967) model, the status of the respondent's first job was taken to depend directly not simply on his education but also on his father's occupational status. Similarly, in this model, the presence of the effects of sex and occupational group in the second equation allow for the possibility that the effects of these variables on employment status will not be wholly captured through their effects on educational level; that is, we allow them to have direct as well as indirect effects on the distribution of cases over the employment-status trichotomy.

Estimation of the Model

Previous attainment models have been estimated using regression techniques and, particularly, path analysis. In this case, however, given that the dependent variables for both equations are nominal, containing four and three categories respectively, regression would be inappropriate. The method used, then, is a form of log-linear analysis, drawing on the work of Goodman (1973a, 1973b; see also Fienberg, 1977, pp. 91-107) who has developed log-linear analogies to path analysis.

The particular method used is a binomial response model, in which the dependent variable is expressed as the logarithm of the odds (the log-odds) of falling into one category relative to falling into any one or several of the other categories.¹² Thus, for example, letting f_{soc} be the frequency in the soe th cell of the three dimensional cross-tabulation of sex x occupational group x educational level, one possible log-odds would be

$$\log \left[\frac{f_{so1}}{f_{so2}} \right]$$

expressing the log-odds of being at educational level 1 relative to being at level 2. Given that there are, in all, four levels, of variable E, it follows that there are a number of possible log-odds that could be formed as a dependent variable. The particular set of log-odds used in this case is

$$\log \left[\frac{\sum_{e=2}^4 f_{soc}}{f_{so1}} \right]$$

¹²An illustration of the use of this model will be found in Moran and Crowley (1978-79).

This ratio expresses the odds of being at educational level 2 or 3 or 4 relative to being at level 1. In other words, it expresses the odds of having left school before sitting for the Leaving Certificate.

Turning to the second equation, here the dependent variable has three levels, and again there is a choice of possible log-odds to use as the dependent variable in the estimation of the equation. Estimation was carried out using the four dimensional sex \times occupational group \times educational level \times employment status cross-tabulations. In this case two ratios were adopted; the first expressing the odds of entering the labour market relative to continuing in some form of post-second-level education:

$$\log \left[\frac{\sum_{u=1}^2 f_{\text{soc}u}}{f_{\text{soc}3}} \right]$$

the second expressing the odds of being unemployed relative to having a job;

$$\log \left[\frac{f_{\text{soc}2}}{f_{\text{soc}1}} \right]$$

Selection of a final model in log-linear analysis often follows a stepwise procedure in which, using the likelihood ratio chi-squared, χ^2_{LR} , one attempts to discover the most parsimonious model. The various selection methods are described in Fienberg (1977, pp. 62-76). In this case, such a procedure was not used since, in an earlier paper (Breen, 1984) the exact form of the best-fitting model for these equations had been established using the 1981 NMS survey data (albeit using a slightly different occupational group categorisation). The same models were used here, fitted separately to the data for all three years. Thus, this acted as a test of the validity of these models. The exact equations were as follows:

$$\log \left[\frac{\sum_{c=2}^4 f_{\text{soc}c}}{f_{\text{soc}1}} \right] = \alpha + \beta^S + \beta^O \quad (1a)$$

$$\log \left[\frac{\sum_{u=1}^2 f_{\text{soc}u}}{f_{\text{soc}3}} \right] = \alpha + \beta^E + \beta^S + \beta^O + \beta^{ES} \quad (2a)$$

$$\log \left[\frac{f_{\text{soc}2}}{f_{\text{soc}1}} \right] = \alpha + \beta^E \quad (2b)$$

Thus in Equation (1a) we see that the log-odds of being an early school leaver

depend upon sex and occupational group, as we might expect. In Equation (2a) we see that the log-odds of entering the labour market rather than continuing on to post-second-level education depend upon the effects of educational level, sex, occupational group and the interaction effect between educational level and sex. It should be noted that this equation was estimated only for those who left school having sat for the Inter Cert or Leaving Cert (i.e., individuals at educational levels 1 and 2). Those who leave school with no qualifications or the Group Cert only, in general will not have the option of a post-second-level educational course, and thus they are excluded from Equation (2a).¹³ Finally in Equation (2b), within any school leaver cohort the log-odds of being unemployed among those who entered the labour market can be seen to depend upon the effects of education.

This finding — that neither sex nor father's occupational group has an effect on the risk of being unemployed once educational attainment is taken into account — may be surprising. Thus, to confirm the validity of (2b) a stepwise procedure was carried out to test all possible effects in this model. The results are given in Table 3.7 which reports the relevant statistics for the stepwise selection method described by Fienberg (1977, pp. 65-68). Within each cohort the three-way interaction (OSE) between father's occupational group, sex and educational level is not statistically significant, nor are the three possible two-way interactions between sex and father's occupational group (OS); occupational group and educational level (OE); and sex and educational level (SE). The main effects, taken together, are significant, and a backwards selection procedure was adopted to test which of the three main effects could be dropped from the model. As Table 3.7 shows, the effect of educational level was highly significant in all three years, but that of father's occupational group was significant in none. Sex appeared to have a significant effect in the 1981 data. However, taking our final model, (2b), which allows only for the effects of educational level, and adding to it all possible other effects involving sex and occupational group, revealed that none of them was significant (as shown at the foot of Table 3.7). In other words, neither the addition of the main effects of sex nor occupational group taken singly or together, nor their interaction (OS) resulted in a statistically significant improvement over (2b). Thus, as hypothesised, only the effect of educational level (E) is significant and (2b) is the best fitting model for each cohort of school leavers.

¹³This is equivalent to saying that all those who leave school with the Group Certificate only or no qualifications will enter the labour market.

A very small number of school leavers without qualifications or who had sat for the Group Cert only did record themselves as being in full-time education: these cases — of which there are 22 (out of 1340 school leavers with the Group Cert or no qualifications) in the three surveys — were dropped from the present analysis.

Table 3.7: *Stepwise selection statistics for effects on log-odds of being unemployed and tests of terms added to final model*

<i>Effects Tested</i>	1980		1981		1982		<i>df</i>
	χ^2_{LR}	<i>p</i>	χ^2_{LR}	<i>p</i>	χ^2_{LR}	<i>p</i>	
All 3 way effects (OSE)	11.6	n.s.	10.8	n.s.	6.3	n.s.	12
All 2 way effects (OS) (OE) (SE)	25.6	n.s.	16.8	n.s.	26.7	n.s.	19
All main effects (O) (S) (E)	41.2	<.05	47.0	<.05	37.1	<.05	8
Tests of main effect terms:							
(O)	2.7	n.s.	5.2	n.s.	4.6	n.s.	4
(S)	0.1	n.s.	4.0	<.05	0.0	n.s.	1
(E)	30.8	<.05	24.8	<.05	26.9	<.05	3
<i>Addition of terms to final model (E)</i>							
(O)	2.7	n.s.	4.7	n.s.	4.6	n.s.	4
(S)	0.1	n.s.	3.6	n.s.	0.0	n.s.	1
(O) (S)	2.8	n.s.	8.7	n.s.	4.6	n.s.	5
(OS)	14.8	n.s.	10.4	n.s.	12.4	n.s.	9

Equations (1a), (2a) and (2b) fitted the data adequately for each year of the survey taken separately. The next stage of the analysis involved the consideration of trends occurring over the three years of the survey.

It is clear, for example, that comparing the 1978-79 cohort and the 1980-81 cohort, the odds of unemployment (given in (2b)) have increased (as we can see from Table 1.4). Thus, if we amalgamate all three surveys, we should want to add, to Equation (2b), an effect of time to allow for this, and the same applies to (1a) and (2a). However, of more interest, is an examination of whether or not the effects of the independent variables, such as educational level in (2b), have themselves changed over time. For example, we might ask whether differences in the odds of unemployment associated with different educational levels have widened or narrowed over the three surveys. In other words, do the effects of a variable such as educational level vary over time or are they relatively constant?

In fact, these effects have been relatively constant for all three equations, (1a), (2a) and (2b). In each case, the effect of time (indexed by the variable C for cohort of school leavers) must be added to the equations to allow for general shifts in the log-odds, but there is no evidence of a statistically significant change in the effects of the other independent variables in the equations over the three cohorts of school leavers. In log-linear terms, the equation modelling the effect of time as additive provides as good a fit to the data as that modelling the effect of

time as interacting with the other independent variables. Table 3.8 shows the goodness of fit statistics for the three equations. Comparing the χ^2_{LR} value for each case with its respective degrees of freedom it will be seen that these equations give rise to estimated values of the dependent variable which do not differ significantly from the actual (observed) values.

Table 3.8: *Goodness of fit of three Equations (1a), (2a), (2b) and the effects included*

Equation	Effects included		χ^2_{LR}	Degrees of freedom
	Main effects	Interaction effects		
(1a)	Sex Occupational Group Cohort		30.63	22
(2a)	Sex Occupational Group Educational Level Cohort	Sex/Educational level	62.38	50
(2b)	Educational Level Cohort		121.4	110
(1a)	log-odds of being early school leaver;			
(2a)	log-odds of entering labour market;			
(2b)	log-odds of being unemployed			

Model Coefficients and Interpretation of Results

So far it has been shown that the effects of the independent variables have been relatively constant through time. In the case of Equation (1a), although there has been an overall decline in early school leaving in the 1980-81 cohort compared with the 1978-79 cohort, the relative risks of early school leaving (as measured by the odds) have remained constant both across the sexes and the occupational groups.

The estimated coefficients for the effects in Equation (1a) are given in Table 3.9. This also shows the standard errors associated with each coefficient. These coefficients may be interpreted as increments or decrements to the log-odds of being an early school leaver, but are otherwise interpretable as dummy variable

Table 3.9: *Logarithmic coefficients expressing the log-odds of being an early school leaver relative to completing second-level education*

	β	Standard error
Intercept (Male/Occupational Group 1 1978-9)	-2.215	(0.145)
Female	-0.882	(0.052)
Occupational Group 2	1.557	(0.151)
Occupational Group 3	2.508	(0.151)
Occupational Group 4	3.179	(0.151)
Occupational Group 5	1.912	(0.154)
School leaver cohort		
1979-80	0.047*	(0.063)
1980-81	-0.154	(0.063)

All coefficients statistically significant ($p < .05$) except *.

coefficients in a normal regression. As is usual, the intercept represents the effects of categories omitted in the construction of the dummy variables, so that in this case the intercept represents males of occupational Group 1 in the initial — 1978-79 — cohort. Their log-odds of being early school leavers are -2.125 and their odds are, therefore,

$$e^{-2.215} = .11$$

This may be interpreted as follows: among this group, for every 100 who left after sitting for the Leaving Cert, eleven left school early. To take another example: for girls of occupational Group 3, in the 1980-81 cohort, the odds of being an early school leaver are

$$\begin{aligned} e^{\alpha + \beta^S + \beta_3^O + \beta_5^C} \\ = e^{-2.215 - 0.882 + 2.508 - 0.154} = .48 \end{aligned}$$

Here there are 48 early school leavers per 100 who leave with the Leaving Cert.

An odds can be turned into a rate or a probability quite easily, thus

$$\text{probability} = \frac{e^{\alpha + \sum \beta_i x_i}}{1 + e^{\alpha + \sum \beta_i x_i}} = \frac{\text{odds}}{1 + \text{odds}}$$

Thus a log-odds of -2.215 is an odds of .11 or a probability of .10; i.e., one in ten of male school leavers in 1978-79 from occupational Group 1 will have left

school early compared with one in three of female school leavers of occupational Group 3 in the 1980-81 cohort.

While we may employ these coefficients to arrive at estimated odds or probabilities of early school leaving for each sex/occupational group/cohort combination, the major usefulness of them lies in assessing the effects of each of these variables. Since dummy variables' effects are measured as deviations from the omitted case, the coefficients for each show the difference between it and the intercept. So, in 1979-80, the log-odds of early school leaving increased by 0.047 over 1978-79, and in 1980-81 they were 0.154 less than in 1978-79. Examining the standard errors, the 1979-80 effect is not statistically significant. Thus, the log-odds of early school leaving, on average, were the same among the 1979-80 cohort as among the previous cohort, but in the 1980-81 cohort the log-odds of early school leaving were significantly lower - in fact $e^{-0.154} = .86$ of their value in the 1978-79 cohort. In other words, early school leavers made up a smaller proportion of the 1980-81 cohort than the previous ones.

That there was indeed such a shift may be seen from the national figures, which are given in Table 3.10. It can be seen that, in the 1979-80 cohort, the number of early school leavers and the number leaving having sat for the Leaving Certificate both increased, and thus the odds of early school leaving remained virtually constant. In the 1980-81 cohort, however, while the number of post-Leaving Cert leavers continued to increase, the number of early school leavers fell sharply causing the marked reduction in the early school leaver/post-Leaving Cert ratio shown there. The actual change in the ratio between the 1979-80 and 1980-81 cohorts was a decline by a factor of .82; and the estimated decline, of .90, can be seen to be reasonably accurate. The reasons for the decline in early school leaving among the 1980-81 cohort will be discussed in Chapter 5;

Table 3.10: *Numbers leaving the educational system after and before Leaving Cert, their ratio, and the actual and estimated changes in that ratio, 1980, 1981, 1982*

Year of Survey	Cohort	Numbers leaving			Change in ratio from previous year		
		Pre-Leaving Cert (1)	Post-Leaving Cert (2)	Confidence intervals for (1) and (2)	Ratio (1/2)	Actual	Estimated*
1980	1978-79	25,300	38,700	±530	.65	—	—
1981	1979-80	25,700	39,000	±675	.66	1.007	1.048
1982	1980-81	21,300	39,600	±603	.54	0.816	0.899

*from Table 3.8.

Source: School Leavers 1980/1981/1982 (National Manpower Service)

the evidence presented there, however, suggests that it may arise because pupils are choosing to remain in school rather than face a very high risk of unemployment.

As we should expect, the sign of the coefficient for females in Equation (1a) is negative, indicating that girls are less likely than boys to leave school before sitting for the Leaving Certificate, and this is equally true of all occupational groups and all three school leaver cohorts. Among the occupational groups there is a clear increase in the odds of being an early school leaver as one moves from Group 1 to Group 4, with Group 5 (those from a farming background) falling between Groups 2 (lower non-manual) and 3 (skilled manual). The odds of being an early school leaver among young people — of either sex — from an unskilled or semi-skilled manual background are 24 times greater than for those from upper non-manual backgrounds, 5 times greater than for those from lower non-manual backgrounds, $3\frac{1}{2}$ times greater than for those from a farm background, and twice as great as for young people from a skilled manual background. These differences in the odds have shown no significant indication of either narrowing or widening over the three cohorts sampled.

The coefficients for Equation (2a) — expressing the log-odds of entering the labour market — are given in Table 3.11. As noted earlier, this equation was estimated only for those who had reached educational levels one or two (i.e., at least Inter Cert). Looking at the trend over time we see a decline in the odds of entering the labour market (and thus an increase in the likelihood of continuing

Table 3.11: *Logarithmic coefficients expressing the log-odds of entering the labour market relative to continuing in post-second-level education*

	β	Standard error
Intercept (Male/Educational level 1/		
Occupational Group 1/1978-79)	-0.077*	(0.085)
Educational level 2:	2.656	(0.170)
Female	0.389	(0.062)
Female/Educational level 2:	-1.570	(0.218)
Occupational Group: 2	0.549	(0.091)
Occupational Group: 3	0.918	(0.103)
Occupational Group: 4	1.121	(0.112)
Occupational Group: 5	0.416	(0.099)
School-leaver cohort: 1979-80	-0.215	(0.074)
School-leaver cohort: 1980-81	-0.217	(0.072)

All coefficients statistically significant ($p < .05$) except *.

in post-second-level education) in the 1979-80 cohort over the previous cohort of leavers. This decrease is of the order of about one-fifth ($e^{-0.215} = .81$). The 1980-81 cohort, however, shows no change from the 1979-80 cohort.

As one might have anticipated, those leaving after the Inter Cert have, when compared with those who have sat for the Leaving Cert, a much higher likelihood of entering the labour market, as the large positive coefficient for educational level 2 demonstrates. Likewise, among those who have sat for the Leaving Certificate, girls are rather more likely to enter the labour market — and so eschew post-second-level education — than boys.¹⁴ However, the situation among those who leave after Inter Cert is reversed. Here, girls are more likely than boys to take up some other form of education and are thus less likely to enter the labour market (though they are still very much more likely to enter the labour market than their female counterparts who have sat for the Leaving Certificate). This reversal of the position of the sexes among post-Inter Cert leavers arises because of the greater propensity of girls to take up places in private vocational training, particularly private secretarial colleges.

These relative effects of sex and educational level are constant not only across all three cohorts, but also across all occupational groups. However, there is also a set of direct effects of the occupational groups influencing the log-odds of entering the labour market. As Table 3.11 shows, these log-odds increase as one moves from the non-manual to the manual groups; thus, taking the two extremes, the odds of entering the labour market for those from unskilled or semi-skilled manual backgrounds are three times greater than for those from the higher non-manual group. It may be noted that those from farm backgrounds are second only to the higher non-manual group in their likelihood of going on to post-second-level education.

These results show that sex and occupational group, while they affect the likelihood of labour market entry through their relationship with educational level, also have direct effects. It has been demonstrated (Breen, 1984) that for the 1979-80 cohort, occupational group is related to examination performance within a given educational level, such that pupils from non-manual backgrounds perform better than those from manual origins. The question therefore arises as to whether these direct effects of sex and occupational background would persist if performance within the Leaving and Intermediate Certificate exams was taken into account. Although the NMS surveys provide no data on performance, respondents are asked whether or not they took each of their exam subjects at the Higher or Ordinary Level and, at Leaving Certificate at least, the

¹⁴It will be noted that the intercept coefficient itself is in this case not statistically significant. This means that males leaving school in 1978-79 having sat for the Leaving Certificate, were approximately equiprobable to enter the labour market or go on to further education.

number of Higher level papers taken is a reliable indicator of overall performance (Breen, 1984). If we analyse the odds of Leaving Certificate leavers entering the labour market (rather than continuing on to third level) in terms of sex, occupational group and performance (indexed by the number of Higher Level papers taken) we find that the effects of sex and occupational group background persist, as Table 3.12 shows. As in Table 3.11, the lower the occupational group the more likely is entry into the labour market and the less likely is a continuation to post-second-level education. Comparing the occupational group coefficients in Tables 3.11 and 3.12 we see that taking performance into account does lessen the direct effects of occupational group origins, and in the case of those of farm backgrounds, controlling for performance shows that they are as likely as those of higher non-manual origins to go on to post-second-level education. However, the direct effects of occupational group are still substantial: comparing the two extremes we see that the odds of entering the labour market for those of unskilled or semi-skilled manual worker origins are two and a half times greater than for those from the higher non-manual category when performance is taken into account, compared with three times greater when we

Table 3.12: *Logarithmic coefficients expressing the log-odds of entering the labour market relative to continuing in post-second-level education, Leaving Certificate school leavers only*

	β	Standard error
Intercept (Male/Occupational Group 1/0)		
Higher Level papers/1978-79)	0.552	(0.106)
Female	0.443	(0.066)
Occupational Group: 2	0.429	(0.098)
Occupational Group: 3	0.681	(0.113)
Occupational Group: 4	0.955	(0.125)
Occupational Group: 5	0.197*	(0.108)
No. of Higher Level Papers 1-2	0.033*	(0.094)
No. of Higher Level Papers 3-4	-0.331	(0.091)
No. of Higher Level Papers 5-6	-1.347	(0.093)
No. of Higher Level Papers ≥ 7	-2.062	(0.156)
School leaver cohort: 1979-80	-0.288	(0.083)
School leaver cohort: 1980-81	-0.299	(0.079)
$\chi^2_{LR} = 198.3$ 138 d.f.		

*not significant at $p < .05$.

do not control for performance. In the case of the sex differentials, however, these actually widen when we allow for performance differences as the greater size of the female coefficient in Table 3.12 than in 3.11 reveals. Therefore, even when performance differences at the Leaving Certificate are taken into account, the effects of occupational group background and of sex persist. Even given equivalent levels of post-primary educational participation and exam performance, working class children are less likely than their middle class counterparts to go on to third-level education. The sex effect indicates that girls reaching Leaving Certificate and performing as well as boys, are nevertheless likely to continue on to post-second-level education. This finding has been reported in previous studies and is discussed in Hannan and Breen (1983, pp. 64-67) together with a discussion of sex segregation in the kind of third-level courses taken. As we might expect, performance in the Leaving Certificate shows a very clear relationship with the likelihood of labour market entry, with higher levels of performance leading to sharply declining odds of entering the labour market. Those who have sat for one or two Higher Level papers are as likely to enter the labour market as those who sat for none (as the non-significant coefficient for this group in Table 3.12 shows) but those with five or six Higher papers are only a quarter as likely, and those with seven or more only one-eighth as likely to enter the labour market as those with no Higher papers.

Finally, in Table 3.13 we see the coefficients for Equation (2b) which has, as its dependent variable, the log-odds of being unemployed (including first job seekers) as against being in employment. Although the odds of unemployment have increased in each successive cohort, within each cohort these odds depend upon the level of education obtained. Occupational group origins and sex have no direct effects on these odds, although they do, of course, have indirect effects through their impact on educational level.

Table 3.13: *Logarithmic coefficients expressing the log-odds of being unemployed relative to being at work at the time of the survey*

	β	Standard error
Intercept (Educational level 1/1978-79)	-2.516	(0.081)
Educational level 2	0.244	(0.093)
Educational level 3	0.439	(0.119)
Educational level 4	1.109	(0.108)
School Leaver Cohort 1979-80	0.607	(0.097)
School Leaver Cohort 1980-81	1.068	(0.091)

Turning to the overall upward shift in the odds in successive cohorts, the rise in 1979-80 over the previous year was marginally greater than between 1980-1 and 1979-80, as indicated by the fact that the coefficient for the 1979-80 cohort is larger than the difference between it and the 1980-81 coefficient.

The odds of unemployment increased 1.8 times in 1979-80 over 1978-79, and a further 1.6 times in 1980-81 over 1979-80.

The effects of educational level are very clear. The odds of unemployment increase the earlier the level at which education terminated. The differences in the odds are approximately equal between levels one and two (an increase in the odds by a factor of 1.28 between level two and level one) and two and three (an increase by a factor of 1.2), but the difference in the odds between levels three and four is much greater: the odds of unemployment for those with no qualifications are almost twice as great as for those who sat for the Group Cert (and three times greater than for those who reached the Leaving Certificate). Hence, although all early school leavers are disadvantaged in the likelihood of getting a job when compared with those who stay on to take the Leaving Cert, those with no qualifications at all are severely disadvantaged, even when compared with early school leavers with minimal educational certification. Put the other way round, the increment (in terms of a reduction in the odds of unemployment) to individuals of remaining in education lessens as one moves to higher levels in the post-primary sector. The greatest gain is for those who take at least one public exam rather than leaving before taking any, since, on the evidence of these data, this halves their odds of unemployment. Although progressing to take subsequent exams will continue to lessen the risk of unemployment, this improvement will be more modest. It is important to stress again that the relative position, as between educational levels, has not shifted over the three surveys, as can be seen in Table 3.14. This shows both the observed and estimated odds of unemployment across the three surveys for each educational level (these figures apply to both sexes and all occupational groups). Taking the two extremes — Leaving Certificate and no qualifications — it can be seen that for all years, the odds of unemployment for the latter (expressed here as the number employed or seeking a first job per 100 at work) are three times those of the former. In general the estimated odds are very close to those observed with the exception of the post-Group Cert leavers, whose odds of unemployment rose very sharply in the 1981 survey and then declined slightly in the third survey.

Since the models we are using are logarithmic, it follows that a constant difference in the odds of unemployment — as between educational levels — means a constant multiplicative difference. If, however, we look at simple additive differences, then the constancy is replaced by a picture of widening differences. For example, in the 1980 survey (1978-79 cohort) for every 100 school leavers with no qualifications in a job, there were 26 without. By 1982 this had increased to 72. Transforming these odds to rates, this represents an increase in the unemployment rate from 20.5 per cent to 41.9 per cent, a growth of over

20 percentage points. At the same time, the unemployment rate for those with the Leaving Cert increased from 7.3 to 19.6 per cent and this represented a growth of 12.3 percentage points. Thus, although the odds of unemployment for these groups differ by a multiplicative constant (and if we use rates, the multiplicative difference declines from 2.8 in the 1980 survey to 2.1 in the 1982 survey), the gap between them, when measured in percentage points, has grown quite considerably, as Figure 3.1 demonstrates.

Table 3.14: *Observed and Estimated Odds of Unemployment** according to educational level, 1980, 1981, 1982 surveys

	<i>Educational level</i>			
	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Observed</i>				
1980	8	10	14	26
1981	15	17	30	45
1982	24	33	28	72
<i>Estimated</i>				
1980	8	10	13	24
1981	15	19	23	45
1982	24	30	36	71

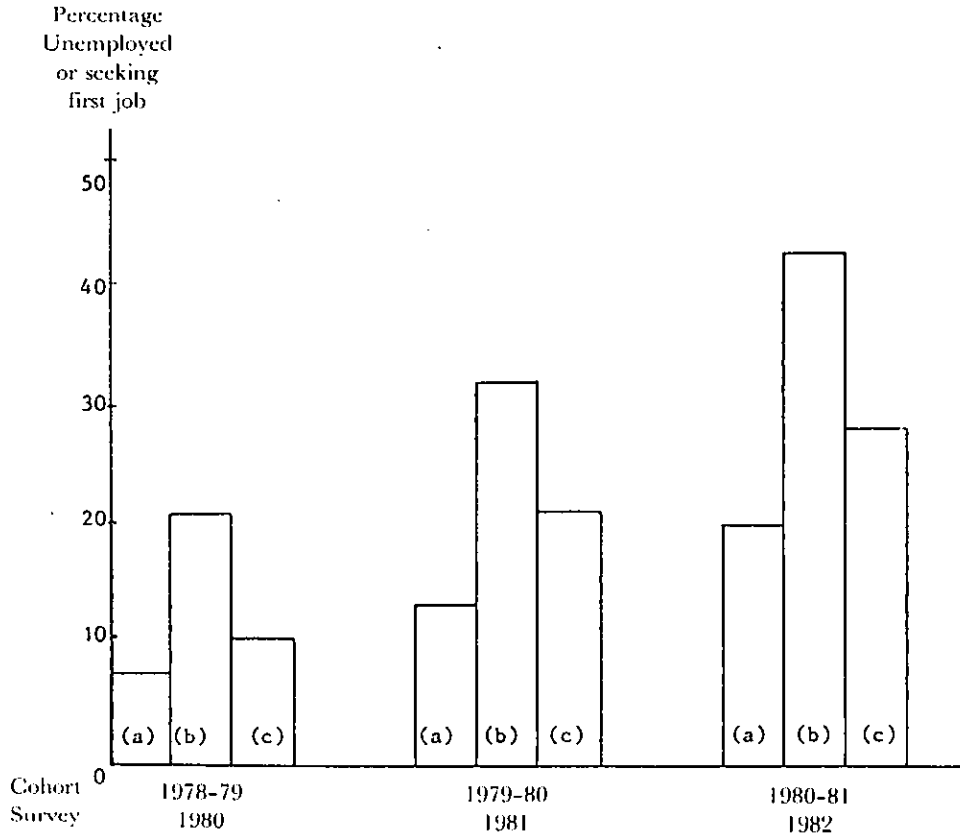
*Measured as the number unemployed or looking for first job per 100 at work.

Within each cohort, Figure 3.1 shows first the unemployment rate for those who left after the Leaving Certificate; second the unemployment rate for those who have no qualifications; and third the unemployment rate for all early school leavers taken together (i.e., all those who left before the Leaving Certificate). In each case, the increase over the three years has been very nearly, if not exactly, linear. The increase for those who took the Leaving Certificate has been between 6 and 7 percentage points per annum; for those without qualifications between 10 and 11 percentage points, and for all early school leavers between 8 and 9 percentage points. The net effect of these different increases has been a widening of the gap in unemployment rates between the three groups shown in Figure 3.1. So, the difference between those who complete senior cycle and those who leave having sat for no exam has grown from 13.2 percentage points in the 1978-79 cohort, to 22.3 points in the 1980-81 cohort.

Educational Assets and Labour Market Advantages

The relationship between occupational background and educational attainment in Ireland has been widely discussed in recent years. In the foregoing

Figure 3.1: *Unemployment Rates for post-Leaving Cert leavers, those with no qualifications and early leavers generally, 1980-82 surveys*



(a) = Post-Leaving Certificate school leavers;

(b) = School leavers who sat for no exam (dropouts);

(c) = All pre-Leaving Certificate school leavers (early school leavers)

sections of the present chapter, an attempt has been made to extend this discussion to include an examination of how educational assets are transformed into labour market advantages.

This set of relationships between family background, education and early labour market experience has been the focus of much sociological research, not only in the attainment studies discussed earlier but also in work more directly orientated to the relationship between the experience of schooling and the type of work taken up (see, for example, Willis, 1977, and Ashton, 1973, 1978; Ashton and Field, 1976). Sociological research has, as Smith (1978) notes "established

conclusively the links between class origins, educational opportunity and occupational mobility" (p. 14).

This is the crucial set of relationships determining the nature of the system of social reproduction in a society. The greater the degree to which educational opportunity depends upon class origins, the greater will be the likelihood that the class structure of society will be maintained in successive generations. It has been argued (by, for example, Rottman and Hannan, 1982, among others) that the Irish educational system is characterised by very pronounced class differences in participation, and the present study supports that conclusion. In the examination of the three cohorts of school leavers from 1978-79, 1979-80 and 1980-81, it was found that both occupational background and sex were strongly associated with the stage at which young people leave school, with those from manual backgrounds being considerably more likely to leave school early than those from non-manual backgrounds. Furthermore, despite a decline in early school leaving among the most recent cohort, the relativities between the occupational groups have reminded much the same over the three years of the survey.

We then considered the transformation of educational credentials into labour market assets. Pupils who complete senior cycle are not only much less likely than early school leavers to enter the labour market (and therefore are more likely to go on to some form of further education) but, when they do look for work, they are much more likely to get it. As we saw in Figure 3.1, among those young people who sat for the Leaving Cert, their unemployment rate has risen from 7 to 20 per cent between the 1980 and 1982 surveys, while for all early school leavers the increase has been from 10 to 28 per cent, and for those who left school having sat for no exam, the rate has risen from 21 to 42 per cent, so that over two-fifths of unqualified school leavers had no job after a year in the labour market.

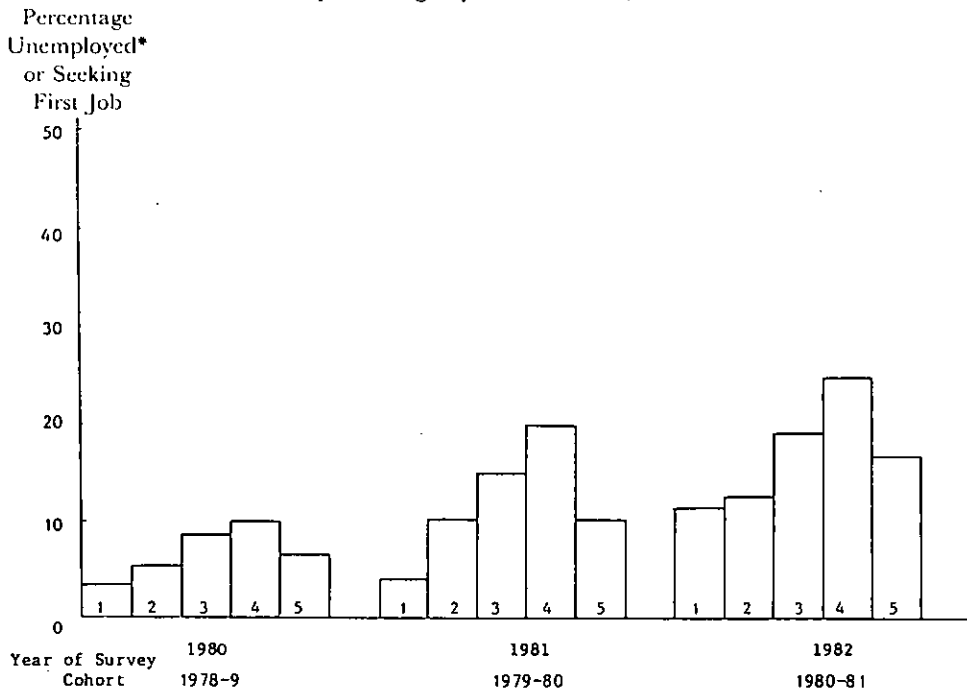
Thus, the level of education, as we should expect, confers clear advantages in the likelihood of getting a job, but is itself highly dependent upon occupational background. This being so, we should expect that the distribution and risks of unemployment would be related to occupational background, and as shown in Table 3.6, this is clearly the case. The trend over time in the percentages unemployed among each occupational group is shown in Figure 3.2. The relative positions of the five groups have remained unchanged over the three surveys, but the increase in percentage points in the rate has, in general, been greatest among those groups whose unemployment rate was highest to begin with. So, for the unskilled and semi-skilled manual group the increase between the 1980 and 1982 surveys was from 9.9 per cent to 24.6 per cent or 14.7 percentage points, while for the upper non-manual group the increase was 7.7 points, from 3.4 to 11.1 per cent. The absolute differences in unemployment

rates are widening over the manual/non-manual divide, so that, although the risk of unemployment is rising generally, that rise has been greatest among those already worst placed.

The Unemployed and First Job Seekers

Thus far in the analysis, a threefold employment status variable has been used, distinguishing those at work, those in some form of post-second-level education, and those unemployed. This latter category, however, has obscured the distinction between, on the one hand, those who have had a job which they have subsequently lost or given up, and, on the other, those who have never had a job — in other words, first job seekers. This is clearly a crucial distinction for, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, the increase in the unemployment rate among school leavers has arisen almost entirely as a consequence of an increase in the proportion of school leavers who, after one year out of school, have not yet found a job.

Figure 3.2: *Percentages unemployed* (including first job seekers) according to father's occupational group, 1980, 1981, 1982*



*measured as

$$\frac{\text{Unemployed} + \text{First Job Seekers}}{\text{Unemployed} + \text{First Job Seekers} + \text{At work} + \text{In post-second-level education}}$$

This is shown in Table 3.15 which records both the percentages unemployed (that is having had a job and lost or given it up) and seeking a first job in the three surveys and the rates for each of these among school leavers entering the labour market. It can be seen that while the unemployment rate increased in the 1981 survey over that of 1980 by 1½ percentage points, there was no change in the following year. However, there has been a very rapid growth in the percentages entering the labour market and finding themselves unable to obtain a first job, rising from 5.7 per cent in May 1980 to 18.1 per cent in May/June of 1982.

In all three surveys, the majority of the total unemployed (that is the unemployed plus first job seekers) were first job seekers, but the preponderance of first job seekers has increased over the three samples. Thus, the percentage of the total unemployed accounted for by first job seekers has risen from 61 per cent in 1980, to 70 per cent in 1981, to 78 per cent in the most recent survey. In other words, the unemployment problem among school leavers is increasingly becoming one of finding an initial foothold in employment rather than any problem of being unable to hold onto jobs once they are found.

Table 3.15: *Percentages of all school leavers unemployed and looking for first job at time of survey, and rates of unemployment and first job seeking, 1980, 1981, 1982*

	Percentage		Rates of	
	Unemployed	Seeking first job	Unemployment*	First job seeking†
Survey:				
1980	2.8	4.4	3.67	5.67
1981	3.8	8.6	5.17	11.80
1982	3.7	13.1	5.14	18.12

*Measured as
$$\left[\frac{\text{Unemployed}}{\text{Unemployed} + \text{First Job Seekers} + \text{At Work}} \right]$$

†measured as
$$\left[\frac{\text{First job seekers}}{\text{Unemployed} + \text{First job Seekers} + \text{At Work}} \right]$$

Table 3.16 shows the unemployment and first job seeking rates according to educational level at the time of the three surveys. It can be seen that the two are closely related: those groups (notably those with low educational levels) having high rates of unemployment also have high rates of first job seeking. However, among the 1978-79 cohort (1980 survey) the ratio of unemployed/first job seeker increases as one moves to lower educational levels, so that among those

who sat for no public examination, the unemployed outnumber first job seekers. This pattern fits well with what we know of differences in the job-changing propensity of school leavers entering the labour market at different levels. While persistent job changing in the initial years in the labour market is a well-known feature of young workers (Carter, 1978, p. 99; Casson, 1979, p. 24) several studies have indicated that this is a more accurate description of low qualified young workers in unskilled or semi-skilled work than it is of those in either skilled occupations (particularly apprenticeships) or in white collar jobs which reward loyalty to the firm with the prospects of a graduated progression up a career ladder (see, for example, Maizels, 1965, p. 81; Ashton 1973, pp. 112-117; Smith, 1978, pp. 12-14). These latter jobs are, of course, generally taken up by those

Table 3.16: *Of those in the labour market, percentage unemployed having lost or given up their job, and percentage looking for first job (FJS) 1980, 81, 82, according to educational level*

		<i>Educational level</i>			
		1	2	3	4
1980	Unemployed	2.3	3.6	5.2	10.8
	FJS	5.0	5.4	7.1	9.7
1981	Unemployed	2.6	4.7	9.0	12.5
	FJS	10.4	10.1	13.9	18.8
1982	Unemployed	3.2	4.9	10.3	10.7
	FJS	16.4	20.1	11.8	30.8

with higher levels of educational credentials. Such differences in the level of commitment arise largely as a result of differences in the nature of jobs taken up; Smith (1978, p. 24) suggests that

stable commitment (to work) only arises for the unskilled when there is a shift in other areas of their lives, such as getting married. For the apprentice the stability comes (in part) ... from the power his union has to impose stability on the employment situation. For the male white collar worker it is a mixture of socialisation and the prospects of a career (parentheses added).

We should anticipate, therefore, higher rates of job turnover (as indicated by the unemployment rate) among those with fewer qualifications, and, as Table 3.16 shows, this is indeed the case.

On the other hand, we should not wish to argue that unemployment among school leavers with few or no educational qualifications is entirely due to a high

quit rate. The NMS survey asks no questions regarding the reason for the loss of the previous job among the unemployed, so it is not possible to determine the relative importance of quits as against firing. However, given that the unskilled and semi-skilled occupations taken up by many early school leavers are located in the secondary sector of the labour market we should expect a higher rate of layoffs, redundancies and firings in general (and thus a higher unemployment rate) among this group.

However, over the three surveys, there has been very little growth in the unemployment rate at any educational level (except for the post-Group Cert leavers) as the failure to acquire a first job has grown in significance.

The increase in the percentage of first job seekers has been greatest among those groups of school leavers who had the highest percentage of first job seekers in 1980. So, comparing the 1982 with the 1980 survey, for those who completed senior cycle the percentage of first job seekers among those in the labour market grew by 11.4 percentage points (from 5.0 to 16.4 per cent) while for those who sat for no exam it grew by 21.1 percentage points (from 9.7 to 30.8 percentage points).

Summary

In this chapter the relationship between educational level and employment status at the time the NMS survey was carried out has been examined for all three school leaver cohorts. It was shown that, while educational level is crucial in determining employment status it is itself dependent upon both the sex and the occupational background of the individual pupil. Total unemployment (i.e., including first job seekers) is highest among those who leave school early with none, or few qualifications, and thus males, because they leave school earlier than females, and young people from manual backgrounds, run the highest risks of unemployment, and, as noted earlier, the majority of the total unemployed are drawn from manual backgrounds. Since these are also the occupational groups most susceptible to unemployment in the adult population, (Breen, 1983; also Table 1.2) it follows that within particular working class areas of Dublin and other cities, there will be above average rates of both youth and adult unemployment, and also that within particular working class families unemployment will afflict both parents and children. Out of the total unemployed in all three surveys, 10.5 per cent also have their father unemployed.

In terms of the risks of unemployment we saw that early school leavers were at a disadvantage when compared with those who complete senior cycle, and that those who leave school having sat for no exams are particularly poorly placed. In Tables 3.9 and 3.10 we saw that the number of early school leavers has declined over the three cohorts, and this may well be as a response to young people's perceptions of the labour market prospects for early school leavers. Finally, it

was shown that the increase in total unemployment among school leavers is primarily due to the growth in numbers failing to acquire a first time job. Here, as in the overall unemployment rates, the differences (measured in percentage points) in the rates of first job seeking between early school leavers and those who leave after taking the Leaving Certificate, have increased over the three years of the surveys. As a result, as Figure 3.2 demonstrates, occupational group differences, particularly between the manual and non-manual classes, far from narrowing, have widened as unemployment among school leavers has increased.

Chapter 4

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS AND FIRST JOB SEEKERS

In this chapter we shall concentrate on some issues arising from our previous analyses. It was shown in Chapter 3 that a large and increasing percentage of school leavers who were unemployed at the time of the survey were in fact first job seekers who had spent up to a year (and in some cases possibly longer) in the labour market without acquiring a job. Thus, in this chapter, we shall look more closely at first job seekers among the early school leavers and we shall attempt to determine what factors distinguish them from those school leavers who have entered the world of work — in other words, those who have a job or who had held a job but were unemployed at the time of the survey. In carrying out this analysis we shall introduce some additional explanatory variables to see if they have effects over and above those of education in determining whether or not a school leaver succeeds in making an entry into employment within the first year after leaving school.

Non-Educational Factors Influencing Job Attainment

Perhaps the major reason for the interest of sociologists in the educational system is the role it plays in the allocation of individuals to positions in the labour market. Labour market position, in turn, comprises a major influence on the life chances of the individual and forms part of the basis for the degree and structure of inequality in society. Thus, in the present study, we have focused on the labour market disadvantages suffered by early school leavers — which are particularly acute among those who leave school without qualifications — and on the factors associated with early school leaving.

However, while sociologists have not sought to challenge the pre-eminent position of education in determining labour market prospects, they have shown that other factors also play a part. So, for example, regional variations in the demand for labour may give rise to a situation in which a certain set of educational credentials is worth less, in terms of labour market prospects, in one area than in another. Similarly, studies have demonstrated that the returns to education in terms of income may vary according to the sector of the economy in which the individual is employed (for example, Bibb and Form, 1977). There is

also evidence that employers, in seeking school leavers to fill vacancies, attach considerable weight to non-educational factors. For example, a 1974 British report discussing recruitment to low level manual occupations, noted that

it is likely that the qualified boy or girl will be more successful than the unqualified (in obtaining a job), but most employers emphasised that personality, alertness, and other personal qualities were more important to them than "paper qualifications". (HMSO, 1974, p. 21; parentheses added)

Similarly, Colledge (1977, p. 1347) pointed out that

Willingness and attitude to work were the main criteria by which employers judged recruits, although those applying for skilled manual jobs are expected to have a good basic standard of education.

In our earlier analysis of the NMS survey results, we saw (in Chapter 3) that among early school leavers — that is, those who left without sitting for the Leaving Certificate exam — there was considerable variance at each educational level in labour market status at the time of the survey. Put more simply, at all levels of educational attainment there were individuals in jobs, individuals unemployed, and individuals still trying to get a first job. One question we shall address here, then, is "what accounts for these differences within a particular educational level?" That is, why, for example, do some school leavers with no qualifications get jobs while others fail to?

It is clear that several different sorts of factors will have a bearing on this question. For example, there may be important regional variations in the demand for labour so that those early school leavers who get jobs do so because they happen to be in areas where there is a high level of demand for young workers. In addition, individuals possess different traits and qualities which may give them an advantage in job competition. For example, some school leavers may have taken AnCO or NMS courses or school pre-employment courses which make them more attractive to employers. There are also the variations in the ways young people go about looking for a job: it might be, for example, that some school leavers are unemployed because, despite demand for their labour, they are not seeking work in the right way or, conversely, that those who have obtained jobs had access to labour market information not generally available. Finally, there is the process of recruitment and, specifically, the question of the factors that guide employers in their choice of which young people to employ. Personal attributes — such as educational credentials — are not in themselves assets except in labour markets in which employers recognise them and use them as a criterion for recruitment. Education is a widely used criterion, but other attributes — such as participation in training courses — may well not be realisable unless

employers take account of them in deciding who to hire. Conversely, personal appearance, accent, home address and so forth, which are not usually thought of as "human capital" traits, may be of considerable importance in those labour markets in which employers set store by such things.

In other words, variations in the demand for the labour of particular categories of school leaver will obviously be crucial in distinguishing between those who get jobs and those who do not. However, in those cases where jobs are available, the particular qualities or assets of individuals which confer advantages in the competition for jobs will depend upon what employers are looking for and what criteria they adopt in recruiting young workers.

In attempting, then, to answer the question of "who comes to hold jobs... and how?" (Granovetter, 1981, p. 14) we should, ideally, examine a very wide range of possible factors. However, in attempting to answer this question using the NMS survey data we must bear in mind that the data contain information on job seekers only, and even then, this is incomplete. The surveys provide information about methods of job search undertaken, aspects of the personal history and background of the respondents as well as information about attributes that may make young people attractive (or otherwise) to employers, but obviously, they carry no information about personal appearance, health, keenness, and other particularistic qualities that employers appear to value. Secondly, the surveys provide no direct information on labour demand or on employers' recruitment practices and principles, and indeed, such information about the workings of the Irish labour market as a whole is not available.

What follows cannot, then, for reasons already outlined, pretend to be an exhaustive analysis of non-educational factors influencing employment status: rather our aim is to test some simple hypotheses relating to the way in which a restricted set of variables influence whether or not young people had acquired a first job by the time of the NMS survey. Given that the main focus of this report is early school leavers the analyses that follow include only young people who had left school before sitting for the Leaving Certificate. Likewise, since our interest lies in the employment status of those in the labour market, students and those unavailable for work are also excluded.

The outline of the chapter, then, is as follows. We begin by discussing what factors, aside from educational attainment, we should expect to influence the likelihood of having obtained a job by the time of the survey. We then test these hypotheses in the form of a logistic regression model and discuss the findings.

Non-Educational Factors Related to Employment Status

(a) Farm Workers

One important distinction to be drawn among school leavers in the labour market is between those whose parents are themselves employees or seeking em-

ployment and those whose parents run a farm or business. This latter group may have a greater likelihood of being in employment as a result, either as a paid employee or as an "assisting relative". There may in such cases be a demand for labour specific to the individual, so that he or she has access to an area of the labour market where he or she is not in competition for the job with other school leavers. In fact, the percentage of school leavers at work in family concerns or as assisting relatives¹⁵ has shown a very clear increase over the three surveys from 3½ per cent in 1980 to almost 9 per cent in 1982. This is probably due, in large part, to the increasing share of school leavers remaining on the family farm (as discussed in Chapter 5), and we should therefore expect the percentages to be highest among those who leave school having sat for no examination, since this group contains a high proportion of young people in agricultural work. That this is the case is evident from Table 4.1, where we see that the lower the educational level, the larger the percentage of those at work employed on family farms or as assisting relatives. Although these figures must be interpreted with caution, two explanatory hypotheses suggest themselves. It may be that some early school leavers are terminating their education in part because of the availability of this kind of work. On the other hand, and perhaps more plausibly, it may be that early school leavers leave the educational system with the intention of getting a job, and that when they are unsuccessful, they are absorbed into family farms or businesses. To determine which of those possible accounts is correct would require data on the aspirations of the students at the time they left schools. Nevertheless, it is clear that a considerable number of those early school leavers who find work are doing so not in the "open" labour market but rather within family concerns.

Table 4.1: *Percentage of early school leavers at work on family farms or as assisting relatives, according to educational level, weighted aggregate figures 1980-82*

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>Percentage of all those at work who are employed on family farms, etc.</i>
Inter Cert	5.1
Group Cert	7.2
None	9.0

(b) Regional Variations in Labour Demand

Given regional variations in the availability of work for the labour force as a whole, one way of modelling some aspects of variation in the demand for school

¹⁵Such school leavers were defined as those (i) whose fathers were classed as farmers and who themselves are employed in agriculture; or (ii) who class themselves as "assisting relatives".

leavers' labour is simply to look at the relationship between area of residence and employment status at the time of the survey. Area of residence was operationalised as an eight-category variable, each category corresponding to a planning region. In all three surveys there was a clear relationship between planning region and employment status, with the north-west region having, in all the surveys, the highest percentage not at work (i.e., unemployed or seeking a first job) as Table 4.2 shows. The north-east region has the next highest percentage not at work. More significantly, these are also the two regions with the highest percentage of first job seekers. According to the most recent regional unemployment rate statistics (from the 1981 Census) these two regions had the highest overall rates of unemployment (14.9 and 10.0 per cent, respectively; CPI, 1983, Table 22, p. 24). In the 1982 NMS survey the other two regions where less than 70 per cent of early school leavers in the labour market were at work were the mid-west, which also had a high percentage of first job seekers, and south east. Although these regions had relatively low overall unemployment rates in April 1981, according to the 1981 Census, they were the two regions which experienced the highest rates of growth in the numbers on the Live Register (for the total labour force) between April 1981 and April 1982 (22.3 per cent and 21.7 per cent increases, respectively). In other words, unemployment among school

Table 4.2: *Employment status of early school leavers at time of survey according to region (percentages)*

Cohort	1978-9			1979-80			1980-81		
	1980			1981			1982		
Year of Survey	<i>Employment Status</i>								
Region	A	U	F	A	U	F	A	U	F*
East	89.2	7.8	3.0	81.1	8.1	10.8	77.0	7.0	15.9
North East	84.3	2.6	13.1	77.2	10.4	12.4	63.8	1.8	34.4
North West	76.7	3.9	19.4	67.9	5.7	26.4	55.9	6.1	38.0
Midland	96.0	2.5	1.5	80.8	0.0	19.2	75.1	7.1	17.7
West	85.8	5.3	8.9	79.3	2.1	18.6	77.7	7.9	14.4
Mid-West	91.5	2.6	5.9	81.9	10.9	7.3	65.9	7.8	26.3
South West	92.9	3.3	3.8	77.2	7.8	15.0	72.3	4.4	23.3
South East	84.7	3.6	11.6	76.8	10.6	12.6	68.1	17.2	14.7
N	1223	69	87	620	61	104	544	57	151

*A = At Work. U = Unemployed. F = First job seeker. χ^2 for each year significant at $\alpha = .001$.

leavers appears to be responsive to broader labour market trends; the highest rates of unemployment among school leavers occur in regions of high and/or rapidly increasing unemployment and it is, broadly speaking, in these same regions that school leavers experience most difficulty in acquiring a first job.

Of course, it must be remembered when interpreting these findings, that bivariate relationships, such as that between region and employment status, may arise for a variety of reasons. In the present case, for example, the percentage employed in farming is obviously highly correlated with region, as are educational levels (as shown in Chapter 6). Thus, it may be that the relationship between region and employment status would shift dramatically if we took into account, say, regional differences in the prevalence of early school leaving. The aim, then, of the present discussion, is to introduce our explanatory variables and explain their rationale; later we shall move to a multivariate analysis that controls for the mutual influences of these explanatory variables on each other while assessing their independent effects on the likelihood of having acquired a job.

(c) Duration of Time Spent in the Labour Market

The majority of early school leavers leave school at the end of a particular school year, though some leave during the course of the year. This might be expected to influence the employment status of the sample at the time of the interview in at least two ways. First, those who leave school before June will, by the time of the interview, have spent much more than the average length of time in the labour market and will have had, accordingly, more time in which to acquire a job. Second, by leaving during the school year rather than at its end, young people may be favourably placed to acquire jobs because of the relative lack of competition for jobs from their peers who will be at school until June. Indeed, it may be that they leave during the year specifically because they have a job to go to.

Both these possible effects suggest that the likelihood of being a first job seeker will be lower the longer the individual has spent in the labour market. They may also indicate that the percentage unemployed (i.e., including first job seekers) will be lower among those who have been out of school a long time. The NMS data generally provide support for the former suggestion in so far as, in both the 1980 and 1982 surveys, taking all pre-Leaving Cert leavers together, first job seekers had, on average, been out of school for a shorter period than had the unemployed or those at work. On the other hand, these data provide little evidence in support of the latter hypothesis. Furthermore, if we simply dichotomise school leavers into those who left school during the academic year and those who left at the end of the year, we find that, again taking all early school leavers as a group, those who leave during the year are significantly more likely to be at work at the

time of the survey than those who leave at the year's end. Additionally, among those who have no job, the percentage still seeking a first job is lower in this group than among those who left at the end of the year. As one might expect, the correlation between the length of time spent in the labour market and the dummy variable indicating whether or not the individual left school at the end of or during the year, is very high (.85). Thus, it is not possible to determine whether the better labour market position of those who have been out of school longer is an effect of the length of labour market exposure or of their having left during the year.

(d) Pre-employment and School Secretarial Courses

Many Vocational and Community schools offer pre-employment courses to those pupils who, having sat for one of the national exams, intend to enter the labour market rather than stay at school. Such courses tend to offer instruction in basic literacy and numeracy and in vocational/manual skills. These programmes are followed mainly by boys, girls being more likely to enter the school's secretarial courses.

Since very early school leavers terminate their education having sat for no public examination, they generally do not have the opportunity of taking pre-employment or secretarial courses. For post-Group and Intermediate Certificate school leavers, however, we should expect such courses to confer advantages on them in the labour market, particularly for girls who have acquired specific marketable skills (i.e., typing and shorthand). These advantages should have made them more likely to have acquired a job by the time of the survey.

Table 4.3 does not provide support for this hypothesis. For males, the percentage of first job seekers was greater among those who took pre-employment courses. For females the pattern was as expected with lower percentages of first job seekers among those who had taken pre-employment or secretarial courses (except in 1981).¹⁶ However, for neither sex are these differences statistically significant. One possible explanation for these findings is that those pupils — and particularly males — who stay at school to take these courses do so because they have been unable to find work. Thus, the clientele for such courses may consist of a large proportion of individuals who are relatively unattractive to employers. It may be, therefore, that the most that could be hoped for from participation in such programmes would be an improvement in these individuals' chances of getting a job to make them the same as other school leavers, rather than confer on them a positive advantage.

(c) School Type

The type of school a young person attends may influence his or her job prospects even when we allow for variations in educational achievement. For

¹⁶This same pattern holds for the unemployed as a whole (i.e., the unemployed and first job seekers).

Table 4.3: Percentages of first job seekers among pupils leaving after Group or Inter Cert, broken down according to whether they took pre-employment course or not, 1980, 1981, 1982

<i>Took pre-employment or secretarial course:</i>	<i>Male</i>				<i>Female</i>			
	<i>Inter No</i>	<i>Cert Yes</i>	<i>Group No</i>	<i>Cert Yes</i>	<i>Inter No</i>	<i>Cert Yes</i>	<i>Group No</i>	<i>Cert Yes</i>
1980	5.1	12.3	5.5	20.9	6.2	2.1	11.4	7.5
1981	11.7	9.4	14.8	37.6	7.1	9.1	5.9	0.0
1982	18.8	26.5	11.7	11.3	25.6	14.3	14.8	5.0

example, the three types of school — Vocational, Community and Secondary — each have different sorts of pupil intake and many studies have shown (see Chapter 3) that Vocational schools have a disproportionately high intake of working class pupils and of low ability pupils, while Secondary schools have a predominantly middle class pupil body. Furthermore, girls are under-represented in the former, over-represented in the latter.

One consequence of this distribution of pupils according to class and sex is that Vocational (and also Community) schools have much higher proportions of early school leavers than Secondary schools. We might anticipate that this would influence the labour market prospects of such school leavers, in so far as schools where there are regular numbers of early school leavers might be expected to make better provision for them — in terms of helping them find jobs — than will schools where early school leaving is a rare event. If this is so, then we should anticipate a lower percentage of first job seekers among early school leavers from Vocational and Community schools than among those from Secondary schools. In addition it might be expected that a specifically vocational education would, in the competition for manual jobs, give Vocational school leavers an advantage over Secondary school leavers.

Table 4.4 does not bear out these expectations. In most cases there is no significant difference in the percentages of first job seekers among leavers from the different kinds of schools (nor are there significant differences in the total unemployment rates). Significant differences do occur among Inter Cert leavers in 1981 and 1982: however, while in 1982 the pattern is as hypothesised, with Secondary school leavers having a higher percentage of first job seekers than those from Vocational or Community schools, in 1981 the pattern was the opposite of this. Such a change between the 1981 and 1982 surveys may have arisen as vocational qualifications came to be more highly regarded by employers as the over-supply of

Table 4.4: *Percentage of first job seekers according to educational level and type of school attended, 1980, 1981, 1982*

Cohort Year of Survey	1978-79 1980			1979-80 1981			1980-81 1982		
	Educational Level								
	IC	GC	None	IC	GC	None	IC	GC	None
Secondary	6.4	0.0	9.0	6.8	10.5	13.8	27.6	30.4	35.2
Vocational	4.6	7.8	9.4	12.3	16.4	19.3	14.5	8.9	27.5
Community/ Comprehensive	5.8	11.5	16.1	13.4	4.0	23.1	17.2	10.9	30.1
Total N	698	267	258	405	166	209	387	204	160

labour relative to demand increased, or it may be that Vocational and Community schools' greater experience of early school leaving, and possibly the greater priority attached by these schools to placing early school leavers, had itself become more important in a worsening labour market. The relatively poor position of post-Group Cert leavers from Secondary schools in 1980-81 is based on very few cases, and undue attention should not be attached to it.

(f) Father's Employment Status

In Chapter 3 of this report we found that father's occupational group had no direct effect on the risk of unemployment among school leavers (though it does influence educational level.) It may be, however, that father's employment status does have such a direct effect. In this case, father's employment status was dichotomised into those at work and those who, for whatever reason, were not at work (unemployed, retired, disabled, etc.). As Table 4.5 shows, this does indeed enjoy a significant bivariate relationship with the respondent's current employment status, with unemployment rates statistically significantly higher among those whose father was not at work.

Other studies (for example, Colledge, 1977, pp. 1345-1346; Sinfield, 1981, p. 69) have noted the existence of a group of families of which more than one member is unemployed. Such data suggest that there may be a certain sub-population for whom the level of disadvantage suffered is much higher than among the general population. Given that adult unemployment disproportionately affects the working class, then, if the relationship between father's employment status and school leavers' unemployment persists even when the effects of class are taken account of, this will constitute clear evidence of the existence of a very deprived group within the working class.

Table 4.5: *Percentage unemployed (having lost or given up a job) and percentage seeking first job among early school leavers according to father's employment status*

Year of Survey	1980		1981		1982	
	U	FJS	U	FJS	U	FJS
At Work	5.1	5.5	6.1	12.0	6.3	17.3
Not at work	7.6	7.8	11.6	16.1	12.8	26.0
N	1244		774		749	

Differences within each year are statistically significant at $p \leq .05$.

U = Unemployed

FJS = First job seeker.

So far, then, we have considered the influence of a set of variables on employment status at the time of the survey by using simple bivariate measures; now we move to a multivariate analysis which will allow us to answer some of the questions raised by the simpler analysis and to discover whether or not relationships that were evident at the bivariate level persist when the inter-relatedness of the independent variables is taken into account.

The present analysis differs from that of Chapter 3. There we were attempting to predict the current (at the time of the survey) employment status of school leavers, dichotomising them into those currently in work and those unemployed (including first job seekers). In the present chapter our focus has shifted: we now ask, what distinguishes those who have never had a job by the time of the survey (who make up the majority of the currently unemployed) from those who currently have or have had a job?

Again, our analysis is confined to early (i.e., pre-Leaving Certificate) school leavers, and we exclude all those who are currently at work on family farms or in family businesses, since, as discussed under (a) above, the labour market position of this group is in many ways unlike that of the majority of the sample. The analysis was also carried out using only the most recent (1982) of the NMS surveys. It was undertaken separately for males and females, thus allowing for the possibility (as occurred in some of the analyses in Chapter 3) of the same variables having different effects among men than among women.

The variables used in the analysis are listed in Table 4.6. Given that the chief purpose of the analysis is to look at the independent effects of the factors considered earlier on the risk of being a first job seeker at the time of the survey, those variables listed in Table 4.6 under (a) and (b) are entered into the analysis chiefly as controls. Our major interest centres on the effects of region and of those variables listed

under (d), although age is also included primarily as a control variable. The overall aim of the analysis, then, is to see what effect variables in groups (c) and (d) have on the likelihood of being a first job seeker when we take into account educational level, sex, occupational background¹⁷ and age.

The method used for the analysis is logistic regression.¹⁸ This is very similar to Ordinary Least Squares regression except that the dependent variable is a dichotomy (in this case 1 = first job seeker) and the estimated coefficients tell us how much a particular variable increases or decreases the likelihood that an individual will have failed to find a first job by the time of the survey.

The results of the analysis are given in Table 4.7 which shows the coefficient estimates for each sex and the t-ratios. Since most of the independent variables are dummies their effect is assessed in terms of a deviation from the intercept value which, in this case, represents male or female school leavers who left a Community or Comprehensive school after the Intermediate Certificate, who reside in the eastern region, who did not take a pre-employment course and whose father is not currently at work. For any individual characterised by scores on the variables used, his or her probability of being a first job seeker (P_f) is given by

$$1 - (1 + \exp(\alpha + \sum \beta_i x_i + \gamma \text{ Age} + \delta \text{ Duration}))^{-1} = P_f$$

where the x_i are the sixteen dummy variables in groups (a) to (d) in Table 4.6. Thus, for a male with all the characteristics listed above (i.e., to whom only the intercept value, -1.869 applies) who is aged 16 and has been in the labour market for 12 months, P_f is given by

$$1 - (1 + (\exp - 1.869 - 0.019 \times 16 - 0.102 \times 12))^{-1} = .032$$

¹⁷In this analysis the omitted category in the dummy variables indicating father's occupational group is made up of all non-manual workers (i.e., Categories 1 and 2) rather than higher non-manual because of the very small number of early school leavers from higher non-manual backgrounds.

¹⁸This technique was also used in Hannan and Breen (1983, Chapter 9) to examine the factors influencing the probability of choosing particular Leaving Certificate subjects. OLS is unsatisfactory in cases where the dependent variable is a dichotomy, first because the values of that variable when estimated using OLS will often exceed the 0-1 bounds, and second, because the error term is heteroscedastic (Hanushek and Jackson, 1977, pp. 187-189, 200-204). The logistic regression was estimated using the SHAZAM program; the method reports a χ^2 test (the null hypothesis being that all the coefficients are not significantly different from zero) and t-values of the estimated parameters.

Table 4.6: *Independent variables in logistic regression*

<i>Variable Label</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>(a) Educational Level Variables:</i>	
Group Cert	(1 if subject left after Group; 0 otherwise)
No exam	(1 if subject left before sitting for any exam; 0 otherwise)
The omitted category for these dummy variables is post-Inter Cert leavers.	
<i>(b) Father's Occupational Group Variables</i>	
Skilled manual	(1 if subject comes from skilled manual background; 0 otherwise)
Unskilled manual	(1 if subject comes from semi or unskilled manual background; 0 otherwise)
Farmer	(1 if subject comes from farming background; 0 otherwise)
The omitted category for these dummy variables comprises all non-manual workers.	
<i>(c) Region Variables</i>	
North East	(1 if subject lives in North-East region; 0 otherwise)
North West	(1 if subject lives in North-West region; 0 otherwise)
Midlands	(1 if subject lives in Midlands region; 0 otherwise)
West	(1 if subject lives in Western region; 0 otherwise)
Mid-West	(1 if subject lives in Mid-West region; 0 otherwise)
South West	(1 if subject lives in South-West region; 0 otherwise)
South East	(1 if subject lives in South-East region; 0 otherwise)
The omitted category for these dummy variables is the Eastern region.	
<i>(d) Other Variables</i>	
Age	Age in Years
Father's employment status	(1 if father currently at work; 0 if not)
Secondary	(1 if attended Secondary school; 0 if not)
Vocational	(1 if attended Vocational school; 0 if not)
Omitted category is Community/Comprehensive Schools.	
Duration	Time (in months) since leaving school
Pre-employment course	(1 if took course; 0 if not)

In other words, such a school leaver has a probability of .032 (i.e., roughly one in 33) of being a first job seeker rather than having entered work by the time of the survey.¹⁹

Those coefficient values which are statistically significant are underlined in Table 4.7. Positive coefficients increase the probability of being a first job seeker, negative coefficients decrease it. It can be seen that the Group Cert coefficient in both cases, is negative but not statistically significant. In Table 3.16 we showed that the percentage of first job seekers was lower among the post-Group than the post-Inter Cert leavers in 1982, but in the present analysis controlling for the regional and other variables included here, this difference is not significant. On the other hand, the positive coefficient for No Exam is significant for males, indicating that even controlling for variables such as age and region, those boys who leave school without having sat for any exam were still more likely to be seeking a first job at the time of the survey. A similar picture — but this time for both sexes — emerges if we examine the simple bivariate relationship between being a first job seeker and the level of education attained. For each of the surveys the only significant difference lies between those who sat for any examination — Leaving, Intermediate or Group — and those who sat for none, with the latter being significantly more likely to be still seeking a first job.

Such a finding contrasts with our analysis in Chapter 3 where we saw that the risk of being unemployed (including first job seekers) varied among those who had sat for the different examinations. This suggests, then, that while school leavers who sat for the Intermediate or Group Certificate were not significantly less likely to enter employment at some point during their first year in the labour market than those who sat for the Leaving Certificate, they were more likely subsequently to lose that job. While there is a high proportion of first job seekers within each educational level, this problem appears to be particularly acute among unqualified school leavers, who find it very difficult to make an initial entry into work.

For males, those of unskilled or semi-skilled manual backgrounds experience more difficulty in entering work even when we control for other factors. Thus, although for both sexes, father's occupational group does not influence the likelihood of being unemployed at the time of the survey, it does have an effect, among males, on the risk of failing to acquire a first job. This may arise because father's occupational group influences a pupil's performance within any educa-

¹⁹For girls, the intercept value is much greater than for boys, suggesting that girls will, overall, be less likely to have acquired a first job by the time of the survey. However, both the boys' and girls' intercept values are not statistically significantly different from zero; thus, no great weight should be attached to this. At the bivariate level, of those early school leavers who entered the labour market, 18.4 per cent of boys and 23.6 per cent of girls were first job seekers at the time of the survey, but this is not a statistically significant difference.

Table 4.7: *Logistic regression coefficients, 1982 Survey (dependent variable 0 = at work or unemployed, 1 = first job seeker)*

	Boys		Girls	
	β	<i>t</i> -ratios	β	<i>t</i> -ratios
(a) Group Cert	-0.074	-0.21	-0.808	-1.22
No Exam	<u>1.015</u>	2.40	0.221	0.51
(b) Skilled manual	0.767	1.57	-0.581	-1.02
Semi/unskilled manual	<u>1.195</u>	2.57	-0.843	-1.73
Farmer	1.055	1.90	-0.925	-1.31
(c) North East	<u>1.099</u>	2.09	-0.033	-0.04
North West	<u>1.728</u>	3.45	0.518	0.40
Midlands	-0.476	-0.76	0.855	1.17
West	-0.225	-0.37	-0.083	-0.10
Mid West	0.236	0.47	<u>1.183</u>	2.10
South West	-0.300	-0.64	<u>1.118</u>	-1.98
South East	-0.848	-1.42	0.605	0.99
(d) Age	-0.019	-0.12	-0.194	-0.97
Pre-employment Course	0.857	1.41	-0.284	-0.48
Duration	-0.102	-1.01	-0.169	-1.33
Secondary	<u>1.644</u>	3.10	0.240	0.42
Vocational	0.444	0.89	-0.201	-0.33
Father's Employment Status	-0.051	-0.16	<u>-0.951</u>	-2.42
Intercept	-1.869	-0.63	4.967	1.26
χ^2 (18 df)	63.70		31.38	
N	427		228	

tional level, and thus translates into differences in educational attainment (i.e., exam performance) not measured in the NMS survey, which differences are used by employers in selecting applicants to fill job vacancies. Alternatively it may arise because of direct discrimination against lower working class males in the labour market: origins in this class may be viewed unfavourably by potential employers. The NMS data however, do not allow us to test these hypotheses.

Residing in the north east, or north west among males, or the south west or mid west planning regions among females is associated with a significant increase in the probability of being a first job seeker. Referring back to Table 4.2

we can see that these are the four regions with by far the highest percentage of first job seekers.

Finally, turning to the variables in group (d) the positive coefficient for the variable "Secondary" among boys suggests that having attended a Secondary school is associated with an increased risk of being a first job seeker at the time of the survey. Among girls, the significant coefficient for father's employment status indicates that those whose father is not at work run a higher risk of being a first job seeker. This result is further evidence of the tendency for a group of the young unemployed to come from families already deficient in income earners. What is particularly striking, however, is that this variable's effect persists among girls even when father's occupational category and respondent's educational level are taken into account, given that it is strongly related to both of these (see Table 6.3 for the relationship with respondent's educational level). Table 4.8 shows the relationship between father's occupational category and father's employment status. Unsurprisingly, working class fathers run the highest risk of unemployment (almost 16 per cent of semi- and unskilled manual workers were unemployed at the time of the 1982 survey against none of the higher non-manual group) and the bulk of the adult unemployed are drawn from this class (87 per cent from occupational groups three and four).²⁰ This rela-

Table 4.8: *Relationship between father's occupational group and father's employment status, 1982 (percentages)*

	<i>Occupational group</i>				
	<i>Higher non-manual</i>	<i>Lower non-manual</i>	<i>Skilled manual</i>	<i>Semi and unskilled manual</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
<i>Father's Employment Status:</i>					
At Work	90.5	83.5	72.5	65.9	84.5
Unemployed	0.0	1.9	8.5	15.5	0.9
Deceased	6.0	7.8	6.2	6.3	8.8
Other	3.5	6.8	12.8	12.3	5.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	205	617	409	495	564

²⁰It should be borne in mind, however, that these surveys do not provide a representative sample of fathers or of the adult male workforce. The situation is directly analogous to that referred to by Duncan (1966) in his discussion of social mobility samples; viz. a representative sample of sons (or, in our case of sons and daughters) cannot also be a representative sample of fathers.

tionship, together with the results of the logistic regression, lends strong support to the hypothesis we advanced earlier — namely of the existence of families within the working class who suffer higher than average (for that class) levels of deprivation.

None of the other variables in group (d) is statistically significant for either sex. Thus, neither age nor duration of time spent in the labour market nor participation in a pre-employment course influence whether or not the respondent will be a first job seeker at the time of the survey.

This analysis gives rise to the question of why certain variables appear to be important in determining the likelihood of finding a first job among one sex but not the other. In the case of the different significant regional effects in Table 4.7 we can suggest that these reflect possible sex differences in the demand for labour in different areas of the country. For males, difficulty in obtaining a first job is related to leaving school without qualifications and to coming from a lower working class background, while for females it is related to having a father who is not at work. One possible explanation of these differences is that father's occupational status is an indicator of a more disadvantaged social position than are either school leaving or working class origins. Thus, female school leavers who cannot get a first job may be drawn from a very disadvantaged sector of the community, whereas males in a similar position are drawn more broadly from the lower working class. Another hypothesis would suggest that young people whose father is not in employment will be cut off, to some extent, from those social networks which are important in acquiring labour market information and thus jobs, and that this has more serious consequences for female than for male early school leavers.

Lastly, while the type of school attended has no influence on a girl's likelihood of finding a first job, among boys early school leavers from Secondary schools appear to experience more difficulty. Our earlier examination of the bivariate relationship between employment status and school type (Table 4.4) showed that this effect of Secondary schooling was present only in the 1982 survey and therefore it should be treated cautiously. It does suggest, however, that for males the vocational type of education found in Vocational and Community/Comprehensive schools does confer some degree of labour market advantage. That this effect does not appear among females may reflect the fact that girls' education (e.g., the subjects taught) shows less difference across the school types than does boys'.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter we examined some variables that we believed might help to account for the probability of an individual's not having found a first job by the time the NMS surveys were carried out. We found that early school leavers least

likely to have found a job after a year in the labour market

- (i) live in the north west, north east, south east or mid-west planning regions (or, more generally, we can say that they will reside in regions which have a greater than average unemployment problem);
- (ii) will, if male, come from a lower working class background, and have attended a Secondary school;
- (iii) will, if female, have a father who is retired, unemployed, disabled or otherwise unable to work.

In addition, of course, those with the greatest risk of failing to get a first job will have left school with no qualifications. Taken together, these variables go some way toward defining a group who are highly likely to remain without a job for at least a year after leaving school.

Perhaps the major contrast between these results and those of Chapter 3, is the finding that the probability of being a first job seeker is significantly influenced by family background factors (i.e., class origins and father's employment status), even when educational level, and indeed other influences, are taken into account. Thus, not only do these factors influence educational attainment (see Chapters 3 and 6) but they also have direct effects on labour market prospects.

We also noted that over the three surveys an increasing percentage of employed early school leavers were working on family farms or as assisting relatives. It seems clear that this is due to an increase in the numbers of such school leavers who were staying on the home farm rather than entering the non-agricultural labour force, which they might be expected to do in tighter labour market conditions. This may, therefore, be part of the wider trend towards the postponement of labour force entry discussed in the next chapter. It follows, of course, that if the demand for labour in these areas is not genuine, in that places that otherwise would not be available are being found for unemployed young people on family farms, then unemployment is simply being replaced by under-employment.

Chapter 5

SCHOOL LEAVERS AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

In the previous chapters we examined the relationship between educational level and employment status to determine the degree to which early school leavers are disadvantaged relative to those who leave after the Leaving Certificate in the risks they run of unemployment. We also looked at the way in which, through occupational group differentials in educational participation, a disproportionate share of unemployment fell on young people of working class origins.

In the present chapter we concentrate on those members of the NMS samples who were at work at the time of the surveys. We shall examine certain characteristics of the jobs held by school leavers with different levels of educational attainment. Thus, at the end of this chapter we shall be in a position to add to our findings regarding the effects of education on the risk of unemployment, evidence about the disadvantages (if such there are) of early school leaving in terms of the quality of employment entered by young people.

The Transition from Education to Employment

Much of the literature dealing with the relationship between education and work and the transition from school to working life has, as noted previously, concentrated on the manner in which variations in educational attainment influence the type of job held, particularly its status and income. Thus, for example, David Ashton's work (1973, 1978, Ashton and Field, 1976, Ashton, Maguire and Garland, 1982) has indicated very clear links between the individual's position in the various streams and sectors of the English educational system and the kind of work — white collar, skilled or unskilled — that he or she subsequently enters.

Although high levels of job changing by young entrants into the labour market have been noted by many authors, nevertheless, the individual's initial entry into work and his or her first few years at work have a "special importance in forming and substantiating orientations to work" (Carter, 1978, p. 93) and to a large extent determine the course of one's career. For example, children with no formal qualifications are, in general, restricted "to a band of jobs at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy — mostly of a manual order" (Carter,

1978, p. 97) and it is among such young people that job changing has been shown to be most prevalent. As Ashton and Field (1976, p. 47) note, such young people have no prospects of advancement within these unskilled/manual occupations, and thus they find little intrinsic value in any particular job and there is correspondingly little tying them to a particular job. Job changing may, therefore, be quite a rational exercise in that it allows such young workers to escape from the undesirable aspects of a specific job — boredom, low pay, poor working conditions, etc. (Ashton and Field, 1976, pp. 48-53, 101-102). On the other hand, these unskilled jobs are located in what Doeringer and Piore (1971) term the secondary labour market (see also Gordon, 1972; Kreckel, 1980). Although segmented labour market theory is in many respects vague and poorly defined, (see, for example, Cain, 1976 and Hodson and Kaufman, 1982) secondary labour markets are taken to offer jobs with little or no promotion prospects, “low wages, no training, poor working conditions, arbitrary management and job insecurity” (Ashton, Maguire and Garland, 1982, p. 1). School leavers whose initial work experiences are in this secondary sector are, it is argued, unlikely to be able to make the transition into the primary sector (which offers good conditions, job stability, training, etc.) in part because of their lack of educational certification but also because the job orientations and behaviour (such as frequent job changing) and attitudes to work engendered by, and reinforced in, secondary labour markets will make these workers unattractive to employers in the primary sector who seek “disciplined and loyal workers” (Ashton *et al.*, 1982, p. 1; see Bosanquet and Doeringer, 1973; Brannen, 1978, pp. 127-128; Cain, 1976, pp. 1222-1223).

Thus, the position of school leavers in their initial entry into work will have long-term ramifications for their life chances. Education will, of course, be very important in this process (though other “supply side” factors, as well as aspects of the demand structure, such as local variation in labour markets, will also play a part) and we should expect that early school leavers will be found in jobs characteristic of the secondary labour market to a greater extent than those who complete senior cycle. Studies of school leavers in Britain, for example, have noted that those without qualifications are found, on average, in jobs in smaller firms with inferior working conditions and an absence of provision for training, whereas those with higher educational qualifications enter larger firms and reap the benefits of better conditions and training opportunities (Maizels, 1965; 1970). Finally, as was noted in Chapter 3, not only is entry into the secondary sector associated with a high propensity to quit, but the firms in this sector are more likely to be exposed to the vicissitudes of the market. Thus, young workers in this sector, we may suggest, are more likely than those in the primary sector to find themselves made redundant and young job seekers are correspondingly likely to find jobs difficult to obtain within this sector.

While in the present instance we lack the data — particularly relating to characteristics of employers — that would make it possible to subject segmented labour theory to empirical test, nevertheless, we do have information regarding the jobs held by members of our samples, and in the following sections we shall examine variations, according to educational level, in job type; in the availability of training; in whether or not the job is permanent or temporary; in the length of time the job has been held and, finally in earnings. Before turning to these issues, however, we first examine the segregation of the labour market and the broad patterns of outflow from education into employment.

Labour Market Segregation

In many industrialised countries the youth (i.e., under 25 years old) labour market is distinctively different from the adult labour market, but in both areas there is frequently a sharp distinction in the kinds of jobs entered by men and women. In Appendix 2 Tables A2.1 and A2.2 show the distribution of workers aged 15 to 24 and of all workers across the industrial and occupational groupings in Ireland. These figures, taken from the 1983 Labour Force Survey, show clearly that young people are over-represented in building construction (males only), manufacturing industry and in clerical work (for example in commerce, insurance, finance and business) and under-represented in agriculture and professional occupations. However, these age distinctions are less sharp than the very pronounced sex segregations of occupations in both the youth and overall labour force (see also Hannan and Breen, 1983, pp. 67-79). In particular, females in the labour force are heavily concentrated in a narrow range of industries and occupations. For example, of all females in manufacturing occupations ("producers, makers and repairers") — who account for 10 per cent of the females at work — two-fifths are employed as leather, textile or clothing workers. Likewise, while over a fifth of all females at work fall into the industrial group "commerce, insurance, finance and business services", 60 per cent of females in this group (or 14 per cent of total female workers) are classed as employed in retail distribution. In general, females in the labour market tend, to a far higher degree than males, to be in occupations offering either no career or a very short career (e.g., clerical positions with two or three grades) and which have average wages below those of the closest comparable male occupations (Blackwell, 1983).

However, while the school leaver labour market also shows a clear sex segregation, as we shall see, in several respects girls, in their early years in the labour market, are at something of an advantage, at least in terms of initial earnings and, as shown in Chapter 3, in the risk of unemployment.

Table 5.1 shows the percentage distribution of male and female school leavers in different types of job at the time of the NMS Surveys (the construction of this

variable and the full definitions of the job types are given in Appendix 3). In the 1980 and 1981 surveys there is a very clear pattern of female concentration in clerical work, accounting for over half the female school leavers at work, and, to a lesser extent, service employment (which is relatively low status work, comprising "personal services" — catering, hairdressing, hotel work — "security services" — including the defence forces — and selling occupations, rather than professional services). Of those females in manual work, the majority are in the clothing sector and in the miscellaneous, largely unskilled occupations (packing, transport, etc.). Male school leavers are more likely to be found in manual work of all kinds (though a smaller percentage of them enter such work in the clothing sector) but they are found in substantial numbers in clerical and service occupations.

Table 5.1: *Percentage distribution of employed males and females, NMS Surveys 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Year of Survey Cohort</i>	<i>1980 1978-79</i>	<i>1981 1979-80</i>	<i>1982 1980-81</i>	
<i>Males</i>				
Clerical/Managerial	24.0	21.9	14.5	
Services	14.5	15.8	14.0	
Agriculture	6.9	9.0	10.3	
Manual Production	30.4	32.4	29.4	
Building work, of which	13.5	13.6	16.6	
Skilled		11.0	9.0	12.5
Unskilled		2.5	4.6	4.1
Miscellaneous unskilled manual	10.6	7.2	15.1	
<i>Females</i>				
Clerical/Managerial	62.8	63.8	55.1	
Services	23.2	22.2	31.5	
Agriculture	0.6	1.1	0.3	
Manual production	8.5	7.8	7.7	
Building work, of which	0.2	0.2	0.3	
Skilled		0.2	0.0	0.3
Unskilled		0.0	0.2	0.0
Miscellaneous unskilled manual	4.8	4.9	4.8	

Over the three surveys there has been a decline in the numbers of school leavers at work as well as a shift in the distribution of those in work across the occupational categories. The former trend can be seen clearly in Table 5.2

which is based on figures taken from the NMS surveys and published by the National Manpower Service. Table 5.2 shows the estimated number of school leavers at work in each cohort distributed across a simplified occupational categorisation. The final two columns of the table show the number in each category expressed as a percentage of the number in that category in the 1980 survey. Thus we see that, overall, among males the number at work declined by 20 per cent (about 4300 in the total cohort) between the first and last surveys.

Table 5.2: *Numbers of school leavers at work in four broad occupational groups, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1979-80</i>	<i>1980-81</i>		
<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>		
	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>b/a</i>	<i>c/a</i>
<i>Males</i>					
Clerical/Managerial	5308	4362	2566	0.82	0.48
Personal Services	3039	3156	2206	1.03	0.73
Agriculture	1477	1789	1813	1.21	1.23
Manual work	<u>11578</u>	<u>10794</u>	<u>10516</u>	<u>0.93</u>	<u>0.91</u>
All	21402	20101	17101	0.94	0.80
<i>Females</i>					
Clerical/Managerial	14231	12483	8690	0.88	0.61
Personal Services	4451	3952	4468	0.89	1.00
Agriculture	86	209	61	2.43	0.71
Manual work	<u>2632</u>	<u>2299</u>	<u>2096</u>	<u>0.87</u>	<u>0.80</u>
All	21400	18943	15315	0.89	0.72

Source: Estimated from NMS n.d., 1982, 1983a.

Among both sexes the percentage decline in the numbers employed has been greatest in the clerical/managerial occupations, and, perhaps surprisingly, least in the area of manual work: in fact, among males, the numbers entering manual work remained virtually unchanged between the 1981 and 1982 surveys. The declines in the percentages entering clerical and managerial employment would appear to be attributable to the decline in labour demand in the public service, following the 1981 recruitment restrictions, and among the large corporate employers such as banks, building societies and insurance companies. In the case of the public service and certain other of the above employers, the decrease in demand is all the more marked when set against the very high levels of recruitment into these occupations in the late 1970s and 1980.

The percentage distribution of those in work across the occupational groups has shifted because of the unequal rates of change in the numbers entering each group. The major change here came in the 1982 survey; indeed between the 1980 and 1981 surveys this distribution remained almost the same, as Table 5.1 shows. For females, the rates of decline in the numbers entering each occupation between 1980 and 1981 were remarkably constant, as the fourth column in Table 5.2 demonstrates (the exception is agriculture which accounts for a very small percentage of female school leavers at work).

Turning to Table 5.1, between the 1980 and 1981 results on the one hand, and the 1982 returns on the other, among both males and females the percentage decline has been most marked in the numbers entering clerical/managerial occupations as we might expect. The compensating increases have been in agriculture, building work and miscellaneous unskilled work among males, and in the services among females.

Education and Occupation among Male School Leavers

Having described the sex segregation of the school leaver labour market and also some overall shifts over the three surveys, we turn now to a discussion of the relationship between educational level and occupation. Table 5.3 shows the outflow of males according to educational level attained, into the occupational groupings employed earlier.

In the 1980 survey (1978-79 cohort) almost half of post-Leaving Cert leavers entered clerical/managerial occupations, but by the 1982 survey this had declined to under 30 per cent. At each educational level the percentage entering this occupational area has declined, as a result of the falling demand for labour by the public service, banks and so on. However, the decline has been largest and most significant not among early school leavers but among those who complete senior cycle, since these occupations were primarily taken by post-Leaving Cert leavers. The compensating increases for the latter group have taken the form of higher percentages entering all forms of manual work — production, building and miscellaneous — the services and, to some extent, agriculture.

Turning now to the early school leavers, their outflow patterns are rather different. As noted, the decline in clerical employment has left them largely unaffected, but there have been significant declines in the percentages entering manual work in production and the services, compensated, to some extent, by increases in the percentage entering agricultural occupations. This latter trend may be due to young people who might otherwise have entered the non-agricultural labour market remaining on the family farm. In the case of those who leave without any qualifications, a quarter of those in employment in 1982 were in this position. Finally, there has been an overall increase in the percentage of males entering miscellaneous, generally unskilled, manual occupations (as Table 5.1

Table 5.3: *Percentage distribution of employed male school leavers according to educational level, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Educational level: Year of Survey:</i>	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>			<i>Intermediate Cert.</i>			<i>Group Certificate</i>			<i>None</i>		
	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
Clerical/Managerial	48.2	45.8	29.5	6.3	8.1	2.5	4.6	0.6	2.7	6.5	8.7	3.5
Services	12.4	14.2	16.9	18.4	19.0	13.1	10.9	15.4	11.3	16.1	13.0	6.9
Agriculture	4.0	6.8	5.6	7.8	5.9	10.8	8.0	15.1	15.0	14.9	16.1	24.5
Manual Work in Production etc.	20.5	22.8	25.6	38.6	44.8	30.9	42.7	33.0	38.3	28.7	30.0	25.2
Building Work of which:	7.1	6.9	10.2	18.7	16.7	25.4	21.4	22.6	20.1	12.1	15.4	10.3
Skilled	<u>5.4</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>6.6</u>	<u>16.2</u>	<u>11.5</u>	<u>23.1</u>	<u>18.2</u>	<u>15.5</u>	<u>13.1</u>	<u>7.7</u>	<u>9.9</u>	<u>2.8</u>
Unskilled	<u>1.7</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>5.2</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>7.1</u>	<u>7.0</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>5.5</u>	<u>7.5</u>
Miscellaneous												
Other Manual (unskilled)	7.7	3.4	12.2	10.2	5.1	17.4	12.4	13.3	12.5	21.6	16.6	29.7
N =	520	262	293	395	218	199	178	98	123	120	87	49

showed), and this has applied to those leaving at all levels, with the exception of post-Group Cert school leavers.

One clear pattern that emerges from Table 5.3 is the following: certain of those areas in which the percentage of post-Leaving Certificate leavers has increased most — the services and manual work in production — have also seen a decline in the percentages of early school leavers entering them. Furthermore, even in areas that show a general increase, such as miscellaneous manual work, the greater size of the post-Leaving Cert cohort will ensure that these occupations will have come to be composed of a smaller percentage of early school leavers. Some of these trends are shown in Table 5.4 which illustrates the changing composition of certain occupational groupings.

The composition of all five of the occupational areas shown in Table 5.4 has come to include a greater percentage of post-Leaving Certificate school leavers, and this has led to a proportionate decline in the percentage of early school leavers. This process is most evident in the services (and to some extent, manual production) where the increasing share of jobs going to those who complete second level has been at the expense of all early school leavers — both those with no qualifications and those who sat for a junior cycle exam. In the service occupations, in 1980, early school leavers had over 63 per cent of the jobs: by 1982 this had fallen to just under 47 per cent. Likewise in manual production the decline has been from 71 per cent to 62 per cent. In building and other manual work, the increases in post-Leaving Certificate representation have been less pronounced but, as Table 5.4 shows, have occurred almost entirely at the expense of those who leave school without any qualifications. Clerical work, even though it has declined in overall importance, has become even more heavily dominated by post-Leaving Cert leavers in the 1982 survey than in the 1980 survey. Of course, given that post-Leaving Cert leavers made up a higher percentage of the total entering the labour market in 1982 than previously (as Table 5.4 shows) we should expect their representation to increase in each occupation. However, in the services, clerical work, manual production and building, their increase has been disproportionately — and statistically significantly — greater than this.²¹

These trends suggest that the process which has been termed “qualification inflation” (Jenkins and Troyna, 1983) has been taking place over the past couple of years among males in the school leaver labour market. Sociologists, among others, have argued that, at times of high youth unemployment, qualifications — and particularly school credentials — will tend to diminish in absolute

²¹Although post-Leaving Cert leavers have come to make up a much greater proportion of the school leaver cohort (see Table 3.10), they have not increased their proportion of the school leaver labour force to the same degree because of the increase (in the 1981 and 1982 surveys) in the percentage continuing on to post-second level education.

Table 5.4: *Percentage composition of selected occupations (males only) according to educational level, 1980, 1981, 1982*

		<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Inter/Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Clerical	1980	86.0	11.3	2.7
	1981	81.6	17.7	0.7
	1982	92.1	5.6	2.3
Services	1980	36.7	52.3	11.0
	1981	35.5	53.7	10.8
	1982	53.2	43.2	3.7
Manual (Production etc.)	1980	28.8	62.0	9.2
	1981	27.6	60.3	12.1
	1982	37.8	55.6	6.6
Building	1980	22.7	68.7	8.6
	1981	20.0	64.4	15.6
	1982	27.0	68.4	4.5
Other Manual	1980	31.2	48.5	20.3
	1981	18.9	50.7	30.4
	1982	35.6	49.8	14.6
Total* Labour Force	1980	41.5	47.1	11.4
	1981	37.9	46.8	15.4
	1982	42.8	47.9	9.2

*i.e., employed + unemployed + first job seekers

(though not necessarily relative) labour market value, as those with high levels of certification become obliged to "trade down" and accept jobs for which, previously, lower levels of, or indeed no, qualifications were required. At least two problems can be seen to arise from qualification inflation among school leavers. First, those with high levels of certification will be required to take jobs at a lower level than they might have anticipated; such a situation, Ashton (1973, 1978, Ashton and Field, 1976) has argued, is one in which genuine difficulties may be experienced in the transition into work as the individual attempts to reconcile his or her position with the expectations and self images arising from the home and the experience of schooling. Second — and from our point of view of more concern — the chance arises of those with low levels of, or no, qualifications

being squeezed out of jobs altogether. Thus, an OECD report noted that

While those who obtain educational qualifications are finding their value has depreciated, the position of those who are left aside in the scramble for ... credential(s) ... is becoming desperate (OECD, 1977a, p. 79).

In the Irish case, we have noted several trends among male school leavers that would indicate the presence of qualification inflation. First we saw that the demand for labour in traditional areas of post-Leaving Cert employment has fallen, and school leavers from this level have been moving in greater numbers into service and manual occupations. Second we saw that in areas such as the services and manual work in production, which had formerly accepted large percentages of early school leavers (and particularly those without qualifications), an increasing share of the jobs here were, in the 1980-81 cohort, being taken by post-Leaving Cert school leavers. Thus, although early school leavers were not affected to any extent by the declines in clerical employment, they do appear to have moved out of the services and production industries and into, for example, building work (in the case of post-Inter Cert leavers) and miscellaneous unskilled manual work, and this may well have occurred as they were squeezed out of the former areas by better qualified school leavers "trading down" their Leaving Cert qualifications. Third, the percentages entering agricultural occupations have increased, particularly among early school leavers, suggesting that young people from farm backgrounds are postponing their entry into the non-agricultural labour market. Lastly, the numbers leaving school at the different educational levels have altered. A distinction must be made between largely compulsory post-Leaving Cert school leaving (always allowing, of course, for the possibility of re-taking the final year or remaining at school for secretarial or pre-employment programmes) and discretionary early school leaving. In a period of high school leaver unemployment and qualification inflation, it is to be expected that the numbers of early school leavers would decline as pupils chose both to defer their entry into a depressed labour market and to acquire higher levels of certification. Table 5.5 shows that this has indeed been occurring. Among males the numbers of post-Leaving Cert school leavers have grown steadily, while between the 1979-80 and 1980-81 cohorts there was a sharp decline in early school leaving. Since the school population "at risk" of early school leaving showed no substantial change over this period, one plausible explanation is that school leaving is being deferred, reflecting a realistic assessment of their labour market prospects by would-be early school leavers.

An examination of Tables 5.3 to 5.5 will show that the effects of the trends enumerated above are seen most clearly among those with no qualifications (and it should be recalled that this group has also registered the highest levels of, and increases in, unemployment). They have shown in 1980-81 the greatest deferral

of school leaving (when compared with the previous cohort), the greatest increases in the percentage employed in agriculture, and the greatest shifts out of the services and into unskilled manual work.

Table 5.5: *Total annual number of post-primary school leavers according to educational level, 1978-79, to 1980-81*

	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Inter/Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Males:</i>			
1978-79	16250	12700	2950
1979-80	17000	12300	4100
1980-81	17300	11600	2300
<i>Females:</i>			
1978-79	22450	7600	2050
1979-80	22000	6600	2700
1980-81	22300	5200	2300

Source: NMS n.d.; 1982; 1983a.

These estimates of the outflow from each level are subject to sampling fluctuation: taking the largest sampling error for each educational level, the Leaving Certificate figures are accurate to within ± 500 ; Inter and Group Cert to within ± 450 and no qualifications to within ± 350 .

Education and Occupation among Female School Leavers

As noted above, the major change in the occupational distribution of female school leavers has been the decline in clerical employment and the increase in services. Table 5.6 shows these shifts broken down according to educational level. As one might expect, given the lower likelihood of girls leaving school before taking the Leaving Certificate, the sample numbers in some of these educational categories are very small, particularly among the Group Cert and no qualification school leavers: hence the figures for individual occupations for these groups should be treated with caution.

The overall trends for females are most evident among the post-Leaving Certificate school leavers, where, between the 1980 and 1982 surveys the percentage entering managerial/clerical work fell by 15 points and that entering the services increased by 13 points. A similar — though less marked — shift can be seen among post-Inter Cert leavers. Among girls there is little evidence that the qualification inflation pushing those with higher levels of certification out of clerical and into lower status service work, has a marked effect on early school leavers as was the case among boys. Although, as Table 5.5 shows, the numbers

Table 5.6: *Percentage distribution of employed female school leavers according to educational level, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Educational level: Year of Survey:</i>	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>			<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>			<i>Group Certificate</i>			<i>None</i>		
	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
Clerical/Managerial	79.7	81.5	64.9	39.7	39.7	34.1	33.5	23.0	39.2	8.3	4.1	13.3
Services	14.1	13.6	27.3	40.5	38.4	42.0	34.9	39.8	42.0	41.0	41.6	43.9
Agriculture	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.9	0.0	2.0	6.8	2.8
Manual Work in Production etc.	2.3	2.6	4.7	11.4	12.8	11.4	27.8	16.2	13.6	37.5	34.2	24.4
Building Work of which:	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0
Skilled	<u>0.2</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.5</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Unskilled	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Miscellaneous Other Manual (unskilled)	3.2	2.3	2.5	7.5	9.0	10.7	3.7	12.2	5.2	11.2	12.1	15.7
N =	696	428	440	236	126	91	56	28	36	86	55	44

of female early school leavers declined in the 1980-81 cohort, no doubt for much the same reasons as the decline among males, there is nothing in Table 5.6 to suggest that those who do leave early are being pushed out of particular occupational groups to make way for those with better qualifications. The trends among Group Cert and no qualification leavers shown by Table 5.6 do not, given their weakness and given the smallness of the samples, provide evidence to indicate any major shifts in the outflow into the various occupational groups, except for the significant decline in the percentage of those who sat for no exam entering manual work in production.

In summary then, among female school leavers the decline in labour demand in clerical employment has led to a fall in the percentages entering this form of work, but there has been an increase in the percentage entering service occupations. Given that the great majority of employed female school leavers have remained at school until after the Leaving Certificate (and this majority has shown a significant increase from 65 per cent in 1980 to 72 per cent in the 1982 survey) these trends are most clearly reflected among this group. Among female early school leavers, although the percentages in work have declined, as have the numbers of early school leavers, the distribution of those in jobs across the various occupations has not shown any evidence of a significant change (with the one exception noted).

Job Characteristics and Educational Level

A re-examination of Tables 5.3 and 5.6 will show that, overall, early school leavers, and particularly those without qualifications, tend to enter occupations of lower status and with lower levels of skill than those who complete the senior cycle. Among female school leavers, as Table 5.6 illustrates, the percentage entering manual work of all types increases the lower the educational level. However, these increases tend to be in areas such as clothing production and in unskilled work — rather than in the more highly skilled areas of manufacturing. Among males in manual work it is particularly noticeable that among those without qualifications a much higher percentage are in clothing as opposed to other manufacturing, or in unskilled building and miscellaneous unskilled work than is the case for those with educational qualifications and particularly those who sat for the Leaving Certificate.

Table 5.7 shows more clearly the situation in this respect among males in manual work (including building) by giving their distribution across the skilled/semi-skilled/unskilled trichotomy. It can be seen that the major distinction lies between those who have sat for an examination and those who have not. Among those who leave school having sat for the Inter or Group Cert, around 70 per cent of those who are in jobs after a year are found in manual occupations, and of these the great majority enter occupations classified as skilled (in the Hall-

Jones categorisation). Among post-Leaving Certificate school leavers, just under 40 per cent of those with jobs are in manual work, and again the majority are in skilled occupations. In contrast, of those with no qualifications who are in manual work, 60 per cent are in either unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

Table 5.7: *Of those males in manual occupations at the time of the surveys their percentage distribution in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled work according to educational level, 1980-82, weighted aggregate figures*

	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Skilled	59.2	74.1	65.0	39.5
Semi-skilled	27.2	13.7	20.6	32.0
Unskilled	13.5	12.2	14.4	28.5
N	409	560	291	161

Thus it is among those with junior cycle qualifications that one is most likely to find skilled manual workers, and this pattern is reflected in the responses to enquiries regarding young people's training. Table 5.8 shows the distribution of both male and female school leavers for the three surveys (excluding those not in jobs) according to whether they were receiving training or not (virtually no females were receiving apprenticeship training). The highest percentages receiving apprenticeship training were found among Group and Inter Cert leavers, and the highest percentage receiving no training was found among those without qualifications. Since this latter group are heavily concentrated in the services (females) and in manual work (males) these figures suggest that those without qualifications, even when they can get work, are likely to find themselves in low status jobs that provide very poor prospects for the acquisition of skills or for career advancement. Furthermore, the allocation of apprenticeships among leavers from the different levels of the system has shown a clear tendency to shift towards post-Leaving Cert leavers. In 1980, 27 per cent of school leaver apprentices (out of a total of 449 in the sample) had the Leaving Certificate; by 1982 this had increased by almost a third to 35 per cent (out of 240 in the 1982 sample) while for those with no qualifications the percentage had fallen from 8 to 5 per cent. The percentage of apprentices with the Group Cert remained roughly constant at around 20 per cent, and the percentage with the Inter Cert declined from 45 to 39.

This increase in the percentage of apprenticeships being held by those with the Leaving Certificate is disproportionate to the increase in the numbers

entering the labour market with this level of qualification. Furthermore, although in all three surveys, post-Leaving Certificate leavers who obtain an apprenticeship are significantly more likely to have taken at least one of the technical subjects (Technical Drawing, Engineering Workshop and Building Construction) at Leaving Certificate than those without an apprenticeship, neither the mean number of technical subjects taken at this level nor the proportion of male post-Leaving Cert entrants to the labour market with at least one technical subject have shown any significant increase over the three surveys.²²

Table 5.8: *Of those school leavers in employment at the time of the surveys percentages receiving training according to educational level, 1980-82, weighted aggregate figures*

	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Apprenticeship training	11.9	34.1	34.4	17.1
Other training	24.7	13.2	14.4	15.8
None	63.4	52.7	51.2	67.1

Table 5.9 shows that those who are in employment but who have left school without qualifications are significantly more likely than any other group to be in part-time rather than full-time work. Again, for those with any form of qualification there is no substantive difference in the percentages in full and part-time work. Part-time employment is likely to be both less stable and also to offer fewer long-term prospects than full-time work. More importantly, while the percentage in part-time employment has increased over the three surveys, from 2.3 to 3.8 per cent of those currently at work, this increase has been much greater among those who leave school having sat for no examination — from 5.8 per cent in the 1980 survey to 4.9 per cent in 1981 and 9.7 per cent in 1982.

There is, however, no evidence to suggest that, among those at work at the time of the surveys, educational level has any effect on the average length of time the job has been held as Table 5.10 shows. Here it can be seen that the median length of time, in months, in the present job is much the same for young people leaving school at any educational level.

²²The mean number of technical subjects at Leaving Certificate rose from .14 in the 1980 survey to .17 in 1982, a non-significant difference, while the proportion of male post-Leaving Cert entrants to the labour market with one or more technical subjects increased from 20.7 to 24.1 per cent over the same period, again a non-significant increase.

Table 5.9: *Percentages of employed school leavers in full and part-time work, according to educational level; 1980-82 weighted aggregate figures*

	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Full Time	97.5	96.6	97.3	93.4
Part-time	2.5	3.4	2.7	6.6

χ^2 significant at $p \leq .001$

Table 5.10: *Median length of time (in months) of present employment according to educational level attained 1980-82*

<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>Educational Level</i>				<i>Overall</i>
	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>	
1980	7	8	8	8	7
1981	7	9	8	9	8
1982	7	9	8	9	8

Earnings and Education

The relationship between earnings and education has been the focus of considerable study by sociologists and economists and the relationship has been modelled with varying degrees of complexity. In this section our aim is to present a relatively simple earnings/education model to address two questions:

1. what is the relationship between education level and earnings?
2. does the sex of the individual have effects on earnings independent of educational level?

The analysis was confined to those in the sample who were at work and who had worked normal hours during the previous week. The dependent variable was the respondent's hourly earnings in the previous week.

The bivariate relationship between educational level and hourly earnings is relatively straightforward as can be seen in Table 5.11, which expresses the mean hourly earnings for each educational level as well as the overall mean earnings. So, in all three surveys, post-Leaving Cert leavers earned above the mean, while all the rest earned below, with hourly earnings declining with lower levels of education, except in the 1982 survey where post-Group Cert leavers appeared to fare worst. An examination of the overall means shows that earnings

have risen over the three-year period from a mean of 97 pence per hour in 1980 to £1.25 in 1982. There appears to have been a slight widening of the gap in earnings between the highest and lowest groups according to educational level, from 35 pence in 1980 to 46 pence in 1982, but over the same period the disadvantages so clearly suffered by those without qualifications in 1980 appear to have lessened. In fact, Table 5.11 suggests that there may be a trend towards a widening of the gap in earnings between those with the Leaving Certificate and those with the Inter Cert, and a corresponding narrowing of the differentials between all those who leave before sitting for the Leaving Certificate.

Table 5.11: *Mean hourly earnings according to educational level, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Cohort</i> <i>Year of survey</i>	<i>Mean Hourly Earnings (£)</i>		
	<i>1978-79</i> <i>1980</i>	<i>1979-80</i> <i>1981</i>	<i>1980-81</i> <i>1982</i>
Leaving Certificate	1.11	1.28	1.41
Intermediate Certificate	0.83	0.93	1.05
Group Certificate	0.77	0.91	0.95
None	0.76	0.90	1.01
Overall Mean:	0.97	1.11	1.25

Table 5.12 shows the relationship between sex and earnings. It can be seen that, contrary to what one might have expected, and to the position in the adult labour force, girls have higher hourly earnings than boys. Over the three surveys the ratio of male/female hourly earnings has remained much the same with boys earning just over four-fifths as much as girls.

Table 5.12: *Mean hourly earnings according to sex, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Year of survey</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
<i>Cohort</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1979-80</i>	<i>1980-81</i>
Earnings/Hour			
Male	0.89	1.03	1.12
Female	1.04	1.20	1.38
Ratio (Male/Female Earnings per Hour)	0.86	0.86	0.81

What is more significant, however, than the mere fact of the sex difference in hourly earnings, is that a sex difference persists even when the effects of educational level are controlled for. Table 5.13 shows the regression of the logarithm of earnings per hour on sex and educational level, and it can be seen that the coefficient for sex is, in all three samples, statistically significant. This indicates that the sex difference in earnings is only due partially to the greater propensity of girls to acquire higher levels of post-primary qualification. We can hypothesise that the persistence of the difference, even when we allow for the latter, derives from the different occupational distributions of male and female school leavers. A greater proportion of male school leavers enter occupations with initially low rates of pay: a substantial number of such jobs, however, offer training (such as apprenticeships), so that at the end of the training period, income increases quite sharply, and the initial male/female earnings differential is reversed. Furthermore, as noted above (see also Hannan and Breen, 1983, p. 69) many of the occupations entered by girls although offering initially high rates of pay have rather short career ladders, so that the possibility of a steadily and appreciably increasing income is correspondingly lessened.²³

Table 5.13: *Regression results of logged hourly earnings on educational level and sex, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1979-80</i>	<i>1980-81</i>
<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
Intercept (Males/Leaving Cert.)	* -0.015	* 0.133	* 0.169
Inter Cert.	-0.286	-0.320	-0.258
Group Cert.	-0.329	-0.313	-0.362
No exam	-0.399	-0.334	-0.322
Female	0.108	0.068	0.163
R ²	0.19	0.14	0.17
\bar{R}^2	0.19	0.14	0.16
N	1839	938	981

*All coefficients are significant at .05 level.

Table 5.14 shows the mean hourly income for young people employed in the occupations distinguished earlier in the 1982 survey (the relative earnings in the different occupations are substantially the same in the 1980 and 1981 surveys). If

²³Furthermore, if we examined the earnings of the cohorts leaving third level and entering the labour market, then we would find that they earned somewhat higher salaries and were predominantly male.

we compare this with the final column of Table 5.1 we see that over half of the females are at work in the highest paid occupations — managerial/clerical — as against only 14.5 per cent of males. Although those in agricultural occupations have the lowest incomes (and a much higher percentage of males than of females is found in agriculture), those occupations that offer training for relatively well-paid skilled jobs — in manual production and skilled building work — pay quite poorly, having hourly rates much lower than for unskilled workers. A large percentage of male school leavers are found in these occupations.

Table 5.14: *Mean hourly income of young people in seven occupational categories, 1982 NMS Survey*

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Mean Hourly Earnings (£)</i>
Clerical/Managerial	1.53
Services	1.11
Agriculture	0.79
Manual Production	1.07
Skilled Building	0.91
Unskilled Building	1.31
Other Unskilled Manual	1.25

If the sex distribution across these occupations does indeed account for the sex differences in earnings, then an analysis including the effects on income of being in the different occupations ought to yield a non-significant coefficient for sex. In Table 5.15 we present the results of an analysis of variance in which the dependent variable is logged hourly earnings and the coefficients report the simultaneous effects of educational level, sex, occupation and a further variable distinguishing those receiving apprenticeship training from the rest. These effects are expressed as deviations around the overall grand mean.

As Table 5.15 shows, in both the 1980 and 1982 surveys, the hypothesis regarding the effect of sex on earnings (i.e., that it is due to the different occupational distributions of males and females) is supported, in that the coefficient for being female is non-significant. In the 1981 survey where the coefficient is statistically significant, its direction is negative, indicating that when occupational and educational differences are allowed for, girls were earning *less* than boys. In all three years' results the effect of being in apprenticeship training is remarkably constant, reducing earnings per week by a factor of approximately $e^{-0.21}$ or to about four-fifths of those not in apprenticeships. As noted earlier, it is males who constitute the vast majority of apprentices. Finally, the effects of

educational differences persist even controlling for occupation and apprenticeship training, indicating that within a particular occupation, on average, variations in education will still give rise to variations in income.²⁴

Table 5.15: *Effects of educational level, sex, apprenticeship and occupation on logged hourly earnings, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1979-80</i>	<i>1980-81</i>
<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
Grand Mean	-0.11	0.02	0.13
Leaving Cert	0.09	0.08	0.08
Inter Cert	-0.07	-0.11	-0.07
Group Cert	-0.10	-0.03	-0.22
No Exam	-0.19	-0.13	-0.14
Female	0.00*	-0.05	0.02*
Male	0.00*	0.05	-0.03*
Apprenticeship	-0.21	-0.21	-0.21
No Apprenticeship	0.06	0.06	0.05
Occupations:			
Clerical/Managerial	0.11	0.14	0.13
Services	-0.14	-0.11	-0.14
Agriculture	-0.45	-0.81	-0.61
Manual Production	-0.05*	-0.05*	-0.01*
Skilled Building	-0.06*	-0.13	-0.03*
Unskilled Building	-0.05*	0.03*	0.13
Other Unskilled Manual	0.10*	-0.00*	0.05*
R ²	0.33	0.32	0.31
N	1838	936	981

*Not significant at .05 level.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter our concern has been with aspects of the occupations entered by early school leavers and the way in which these differ from those entered by young people who complete the senior cycle of post-primary education.

²⁴The data also suggest that the percentage of school leavers in poorly paid jobs has increased after 1980, as one might expect if jobs are scarce and job seekers cannot afford to be so particular about job conditions. In the 1980 survey, 3.3 per cent of those in full-time work received an hourly payment more than two standard deviations below the average; in the 1981 and 1982 surveys this had increased to 6.3 and 6.4 per cent, respectively.

In examining the occupational distribution of school leavers we found that, particularly among males, early school leavers are, overall, more likely to be employed in manual work, and within this manual work they have shown a tendency to become increasingly employed in unskilled occupations. This latter is, we suggested, due to "qualification inflation", through which early school leavers have been pushed out of areas such as the Services and manufacturing industry by those post-Leaving Certificate leavers who, finding a decline in the demand for clerical employment, have moved increasingly into these areas. Those who have suffered most in this process have been those who leave school having sat for no examinations. This shift in the occupational distribution of school leavers according to their educational level has also been associated with a decline in the number of early school leavers and increases in the percentages in agricultural work.

In addition to this, a re-examination of Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4 will show that, among males, those occupations in which early school leavers made up the majority of workers — that is, in manual work — in the 1980 survey subsequently showed the lowest rate of decline of any occupations (except agriculture) in the numbers entering them in the later surveys. Thus, although the increase in the rate of unemployment among early school leavers may be due in part to the decline in the number of manual jobs, of far more importance appears to be the fact that what jobs exist in this area were, by 1982, being taken by much greater percentages of post-Leaving Cert school leavers. In other words, the kinds of jobs that early school leavers were taking up in 1980 were still available in only relatively slightly reduced numbers in 1982; however, by this time they were being taken by very many more post-Leaving Cert school leavers.

Those post-Leaving Certificate leavers who enter manual employment tend, as we might expect, to have performed more poorly in the Leaving Certificate than those who enter non-manual jobs. Table 5.16 shows that, in all three surveys, the percentage of post-Leaving Certificate leavers in manual work is greater the fewer higher level papers taken. This is true for both males and females, and it can be seen that among males in particular, comparing the 1982 results with those for 1980 and 1981, there has been a clear increase in the percentages entering manual jobs at all levels of performance.

Among females there is no comparable trend of qualification inflation, though the distribution of school leavers across the occupational categories has altered over the three surveys. Additionally, there is a clear pattern among girls such that, for example, the percentage entering manual work increases the lower the educational level, and those without any qualifications tend to be found in areas of employment such as clothing and unskilled work to a much greater extent than other school leavers.

We then addressed the question of training. We noted that, while the majority

of male early school leavers enter manual work, among the post-Group and post-Inter Cert leavers a high proportion enter skilled jobs, and this is reflected in the percentages recorded as undergoing apprenticeship training. On the other hand, among those in manual work who sat for no exam, a much smaller proportion is in receipt of apprenticeship training. Indeed the percentage of all (male and female) school leavers who sat for no exam who are in apprenticeships is only slightly greater than the comparable percentage among those who left after Leaving Cert, but whereas over 60 per cent of the former enter manual work, less than 40 per cent of the latter do so. We also noted that those school leavers who sat for no exam tend to a greater extent than any others to be found in part-time rather than full-time work, and this tendency has increased over the three surveys.

Table 5.16: *Of those at work, the percentage in manual occupations according to the number of Higher Level papers taken (post-Leaving Certificate School leavers only)*

<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>Males</i>			<i>Females</i>		
	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
No. of Higher Level papers:						
0	57.0	50.3	67.5	13.8	11.6	20.5
1	52.7	49.2	57.2	8.4	10.9	12.0
2	43.6	46.6	59.8	6.3	12.1	12.4
3	36.0	30.3	48.0	8.6	6.0	11.0
4	21.9	26.8	27.9	8.2	5.7	6.3
5	19.0	21.9	34.1	5.5	9.6	8.0
6 or more	13.6	18.8	31.3	3.1	3.7	8.1
Number in manual occupations	237	112	173	68	43	62

Finally, we looked at earnings. Early school leavers earned less than those who completed post-primary education, according to each of the three NMS surveys, with those who sat for no exam or for the Group Cert only having the lowest hourly earnings. Girls earn rather more than boys, but the results of our analysis of variance (Table 5.15) suggest that this is attributable to differences in the occupations entered by males and females, the latter being more likely to enter occupations with higher initial levels of pay, but with less opportunity for train-

ing — and particularly for entry into apprenticeships — and, therefore, presumably with fewer prospects of career advancement.²⁵

As we might expect, early school leavers are at a disadvantaged position in the labour market. One of the clearest examples of this is provided by the qualification inflation among males, where a decline in clerical employment has had the ultimate knock-on effect of pushing the early school leavers (very few of whom entered clerical jobs) into poorer jobs. The greatest disadvantages are suffered by those who leave school having sat for no exams, particularly among males of this group. They are, on average, the most poorly paid, and while very likely to enter manual work are the least likely to receive any form of training within that employment.

²⁵In Appendix 4 an attempt is made to assess the strength of the relationship between educational level and most of the features of work discussed here (earnings; full/part-time work; training, and occupation) taken simultaneously rather than individually.

Chapter 6

CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

In the preceding three chapters we have been concerned with the labour market position of early school leavers at the time the NMS surveys were conducted, when the majority of the respondents had been in the labour market for just less than a year. In the present chapter we shall draw back from our concern with the labour market to look more closely at the early school leavers themselves, with the intention, first, of examining some variables that we believe will prove to be related to the likelihood of early school leaving; and, second of developing a model that will allow us to predict which post-primary pupils, with what sorts of characteristics, will be most likely to leave school early. To do this we shall use data from the NMS surveys and also from the survey of Group Certificate pupils undertaken in 1981 as part of an earlier project (Hannan and Breen, 1983).

The Extent of Early School Leaving

Following the introduction of the free education scheme in 1967, the pre-existing growth in teenage educational participation rates accelerated, so that between 1965 and 1975 the rate for 15 year olds increased from roughly 50 per cent to over 80 per cent. The years following 1967 saw the decline of the phenomenon of "national school terminal leaving"²⁶ as ever greater percentages of each cohort, rather than terminating their education at the end of primary schooling, progressed to second-level schools.²⁷ The percentage of each cohort sitting for the Leaving Certificate has also increased in the recent past:

(b) by the mid-1960s about one-fifth of the cohort went on to do the Leaving Certificate, with slightly more boys going on to complete the senior cycle.

But by the late 1960s the position had reversed. A very rapid increase in

²⁶In the early 1960s about 30 per cent of primary leavers terminated their education (Investment in Education, 1966, p. 169); by 1966-67 this had fallen to 15 per cent and the next year to 13 per cent (Rudd, 1972, p. 62).

²⁷The phenomenon has not disappeared entirely however: data collected by J. Sexton and B. Whelan indicate that in 1980 and 1981 approximately 3 per cent of entrants to the youth labour market (that is, about 1,700 young people) had received no post-primary education.

participation rates occurred for both sexes after the introduction of the "Free Scheme" in 1967, the rate of increase being much faster for girls. This comparative advantage had become even more marked, however, by 1981 when two-thirds of the female cohort but only half of the male cohort went on to do the Leaving Certificate. (Hannan and Breen, 1983, p. 54)

It follows, then, that roughly a third of each female cohort and half of each male cohort entering post-primary education will not remain at school to take the Leaving Certificate. Estimates (Hannan and Breen, 1983, p. 58) reproduced in Figure 6.1 for the cohort aged 13 in 1974/75, suggest that, at this age, virtually all boys and girls are in school. This figure decreases steadily with age, so that by age 16, 62 per cent of boys and 74 per cent of girls are still in school. Finally by age 18, 21 per cent of boys and 31 per cent of girls are left in school, the majority of the remainder being either in third level or other forms of full-time training or in the labour market. It can be seen that the decline is relatively slight initially but becomes pronounced between the ages of 14 and 15. Most of the loss of pupils at this stage, however, is drawn from Vocational Schools. These figures also indicate the existence of a significant amount of school leaving before the minimum school leaving age of 15.

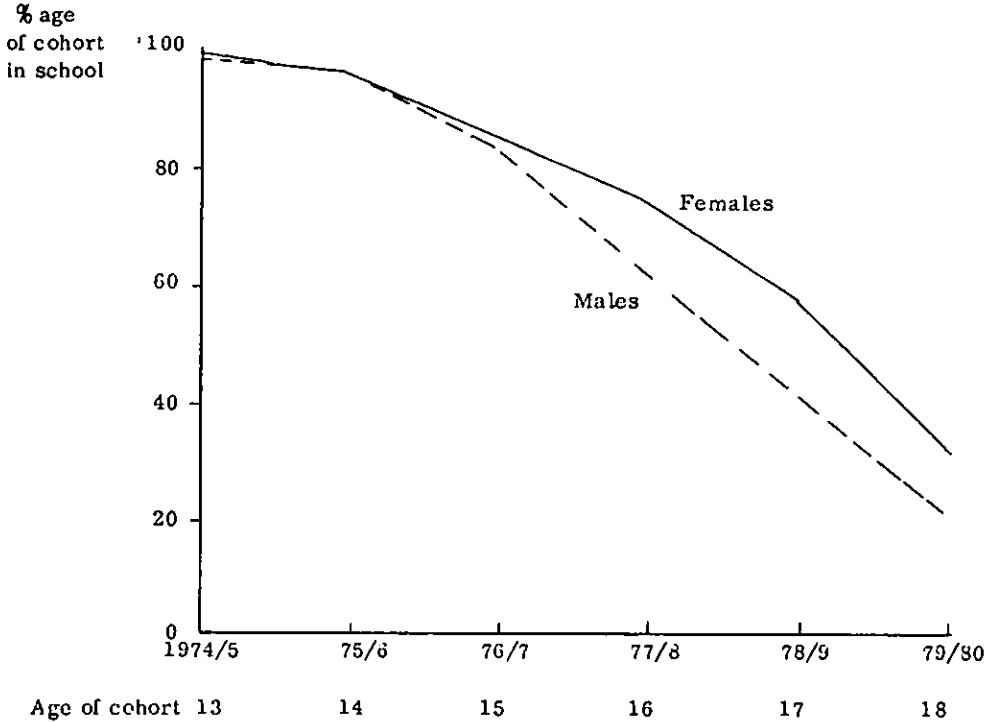
If we turn now from an examination of age cohorts to cohorts of school leavers, then, of those cohorts sampled for the NMS surveys, roughly half of the male school leavers and 30 per cent of the female school leavers in 1978/79 and 1979/80 and 45 per cent of males and 25 per cent of females in 1980/81 left before sitting for the Leaving Certificate (see Table 5.5). In total the number of school leavers who had sat for no examination ranged between 6,800 (or 10½ per cent of the cohort) in 1979/80 and 4,600 (7½ per cent) in 1980/81. Given that the size of the annual school leaver cohort lies between 60,000 and 65,000, the total of all pre-Leaving Certificate school leavers in any such cohort will be between 21,000 and 26,000.

Factors Related to Early School Leaving

Research in Ireland into factors associated with early school leaving has concentrated on those pupils who do not progress beyond primary level. Three studies in particular — Greaney (1973), Hannan (1968) and Rudd (1972) — have attempted to indicate distinguishing characteristics of National school terminal leavers.

Analysing a national sample of one thousand National school terminal leavers of the 1968/69 school leaver cohort, Rudd (1972) found that several variables distinguished these from the primary leavers who went on to second-level education. All the terminal leavers came from working class or small farm backgrounds. However, a very high proportion (over 60 per cent) were drawn from

Figure 6.1: *Percentage of late 1970s post-primary cohort in school between ages of 13 and 18*



Source: Hannan and Breen 1983, p. 58, Table 3.6.

homes where the father was not in a steady job. These included cases in which the father was dead, absent, unemployed, disabled and so on. The terminal leavers also tended to come from larger families and to be relatively low in birth order. They also had poorer than average attendance records at National school.

Many of these same factors proved important in Hannan's (1968) study of school leavers in the area of Cavan town. Family background, level of school attendance, sex, performance in the Primary Certificate exam and distance from a post-primary school all acted to distinguish between those who terminated their education after National school and those who continued in education.

Greaney's (1973) study, based on a sample of 500 primary leavers, compared characteristics of three groups — National school terminal leavers, Vocational school entrants, and Secondary school entrants. As in the Rudd and Hannan studies it was found that the former had very poor attendance records at primary

school and that they were drawn overwhelmingly from the working class, with 78 per cent of National school terminal leavers coming from semi- or unskilled manual backgrounds. In addition he found that the terminal leavers performed most poorly of all on tests of verbal reasoning ability. Finally, Greaney (1973, p. 98) argued that "pull" factors might also contribute to variations in early school leaving.

(t)he drop-out in a particular area may well be related to employment opportunities in that area. In the present study, the number of terminal leavers was greater among urban children than among rural children. This is not surprising since the demand for cheap unskilled labour is likely to be far greater in commercial urban areas than in rural areas.

Early School Leavers from Post Primary Schools

Given the decline in the percentages of pupils not progressing to second-level schools (but see footnote 27), the focus of concern regarding early school leaving has shifted chiefly to those who withdraw from post-primary education with no qualifications (drop-outs in our terminology) and, to a lesser extent, those with a low level of qualifications. Given such an upward (though not uniform) shift in the overall levels of educational participation in the wake of the Free Scheme, we should expect that the current drop-outs and early leavers from post-primary schools will be, in many respects, similar to the National school terminal leavers discussed by Greaney (1973), Hannan (1968) and Rudd (1972), while also being, of course, somewhat older.

Table 6.1 shows the average age at the time of school leaving of the NMS surveys' respondents. Level of education attained and age are closely related, as we should expect, with those with no qualifications being, on average, just over 15 years old on leaving school, those with the Group and Inter Cert just over 16, and those who had sat for the Leaving Certificate, on average, just short of 18. There is some variation around these averages, as the standard deviations — also shown in Table 6.1 — reveal. In particular there are quite large variations in the age of leaving of those who sat for no exam. In the 1980 and 1982 samples the standard deviation was greater than one year. This implies that a number of unqualified school leavers are as old, if not older, than school leavers with the Group, Inter or even the Leaving Certificate. For example, in the 1982 survey, almost 24 per cent of those who sat for no exam were 16 or older on leaving school: comparable figures for the other surveys are 14 per cent (1981) and 26 per cent (1980). Perhaps more importantly a large proportion of such unqualified school leavers (32 per cent in 1982, 40 and 42 per cent in 1981 and 1980, respectively) were, according to their own report, under the minimum school leaving age of 15 when they terminated their education.

Table 6.1: *Mean age in years at time of school leaving according to educational level, 1980, 1981, 1982 (Standard deviations in parentheses)*

	<i>Educational level</i>			
	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Survey:				
1980	17.79 (0.87)	16.55 (1.09)	16.14 (1.10)	15.33 (1.17)
1981	17.77 (0.64)	16.38 (0.86)	15.92 (0.93)	15.14 (0.75)
1982	17.76 (0.70)	16.41 (0.83)	16.23 (0.88)	15.43 (1.08)

When we turn to an examination of what other factors, aside from age, serve to distinguish between individuals who leave school having attained different levels of education, then the NMS survey data provided us with relatively little information: nevertheless such information as is present allows us to obtain some insight into some of the correlates — if not the causes — of early school leaving.²⁸

We have already seen (in Tables 3.2 and 3.4) that sex and father's occupational group are closely related to the level of education attained by the respondent. Girls are less likely than boys to leave school before sitting for the Leaving Certificate, while working class children are more likely to leave school early than those from the middle class. We should also expect that, given that early school leavers from any cohort tend, according to the estimates of Hannan and Breen (1983, p. 57), to be drawn mainly from Vocational schools, that this would be evident from the NMS surveys, and indeed, this is so, as Table 6.2 shows. Furthermore, given that the Group Certificate exam is offered in very few Secondary schools, the bulk of post-Group Cert leavers will come from Vocational schools. Table 6.2 shows that the percentage of school leavers of all levels

²⁸We must bear in mind that a sample of an outflow cohort such as the NMS surveys, is not an ideal data set for drawing comparisons between early school leavers and those who go on to sit for the Leaving Certificate. This is because in such an outflow sample the decision to remain at school on the part of those who go on to the Leaving Certificate will have been taken at a different time from the decision of early school leavers not to do so. Thus, to the extent that the pattern of leaving or staying at school changes with successive age cohorts, the factors important in distinguishing between leavers and stayers may also change. However, the period with which we are dealing is sufficiently short to allow us to presume that the bias introduced into the results obtained here will not be great.

from Community/Comprehensive schools is roughly in proportion to these schools' share of the total leaver cohort (shown in the first column of Tables 6.2) averaged over the three surveys. Against this, Secondary schools contribute a disproportionate share of post-Leaving Certificate leavers, and have relatively few early school leavers²⁹ while the position is reversed for Vocational schools, which contribute disproportionately large percentages of early school leavers and very few post-Leaving Certificate leavers. If we examine the percentage of school leavers from each school type who have sat for no examination we find that this figure is very low for Secondary schools — about 4 per cent — higher for Community/Comprehensive schools — just over 10 per cent — and highest of all for Vocational schools (just over 16 per cent).

Table 6.2: *School type according to level of education attained, weighted aggregate results 1980-82, percentages*

<i>School Type</i>	<i>All Levels</i>	<i>Level of education</i>			
		<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>
Secondary	56.9	71.7	44.9	11.0	26.2
Vocational	32.9	19.6	41.6	78.2	62.2
Community	10.2	8.7	13.6	10.9	11.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.1	100.0
N		4779	1631	670	666

Such differences between school types, however, are at least in part due to differences in school pupil intake. It is well known, for example, that Vocational schools receive a predominantly working class, male intake, while Secondary schools serve a much more middle class clientele and this sector contains a much higher proportion of female pupils (see Hannan and Breen, 1983, pp. 88-92 and also Table 3.3 of the present report). Given the relationship, on the one hand, between educational level, sex and father's occupational group, and on the other, between father's occupational group, sex and school type, we should expect higher rates of early school leaving from Vocational schools. Neverthe-

²⁹These figures, however, relate only to those who left the post-primary educational system: thus they take no account of transfers between school types. It may be, for example, that some early school leavers began in Secondary schools, transferred to a Vocational school and then dropped out of the system. Such a situation would lead to a low rate of early dropping out for the former school type and an inflated rate for Vocational schools.

less, even if we control for the effects of sex and father's occupational group, the relationship between school type and level of education persists. That is to say, a working class school leaver is more likely to have left school early if he or she attended a Vocational school rather than a Secondary school. In this sense, then, we can speak of a direct school effect on the likelihood of early leaving, but we should interpret this effect cautiously. In particular we cannot conclude on this basis that the schooling process in Vocational schools is somehow inferior to that in Secondary schools, because of the difficulties of controlling for the fact that the samples of pupils in each school type are self-selected. The differences in class composition between the school types may themselves act to produce different educational contexts making early leaving more acceptable and more "natural" for a pupil in an environment that is primarily working class (i.e., a Vocational school) rather than middle class.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the aims and purposes of Secondary and Vocational education are different, despite some convergence in recent years. Secondary schools are still predominantly orientated towards providing academic courses of study leading to the Leaving Certificate and, in the main, non-manual employment³⁰ and third-level education. Vocational schooling, however, terminating often at the Group or Intermediate Certificate, is viewed as a preparation for manual employment.

Rudd (1972) in her study, noted that it was not simply working class children who were most likely to be National school terminal leavers, but rather those working class children whose father had no steady job. While the NMS surveys provide no data on the respondent's father's employment status at the time the respondent left school, it does provide information on father's employment status at the time of the survey. Using this as a proxy measure of the former we see, in Table 6.3, that it is very closely related to the respondent's educational level. In all three surveys the lower the educational level the lower the percentage of school leavers with a father at work. So, for example, among school leavers who have sat for no exam, in only about half of the cases is their father at work. There are no significant differences in the percentages of fathers retired or deceased, as we might expect, but both the percentages unemployed and not available for work (through reasons of illness for example) are greater the lower the respondent's educational level.

There are several possible reasons for this relationship. Father's employment status may be an indicator of the stability of the young person's domestic environment which in turn will influence attitudes towards and expectations of schooling. On the other hand, there is also a clear relationship between employ-

³⁰Although, as we saw, post-Leaving Certificate leavers are increasingly moving into manual employment.

Table 6.3: *Father's employment status at time of survey according to respondent's educational level (percentages) 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Employment Status</i>	<i>Educational level</i>											
	<i>1980</i>				<i>1981</i>				<i>1982</i>			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
At work	77.3	68.9	67.4	54.4	82.7	79.5	73.9	54.3	83.0	77.0	67.8	51.4
Unemployed	1.4	4.8	6.8	15.7	2.1	5.6	9.2	23.2	2.3	6.1	15.0	22.3
Retired	5.3	4.3	5.3	3.9	4.7	4.1	4.8	3.9	4.2	4.8	2.1	5.5
Deceased	7.2	8.8	9.3	7.7	7.1	5.3	6.3	6.2	3.0	5.3	6.8	8.5
Not available for work:	8.8	13.3	11.3	18.2	3.5	5.5	5.7	12.5	7.5	6.7	8.3	12.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.1	99.9	100.1	100.0	99.9	99.9	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0
N	2011	759	282	279	1304	446	181	214	1500	426	208	168

Educational Level: 1 Leaving Cert to 4 None

ment status and occupational group, with unemployment most likely to occur in the working class (see Table 4.8). This being so, we might ask the question in regard to father's employment status that we asked in relation to variations in school type: namely, to what degree is the observed effect of this variable on educational attainment simply a proxy for occupational group? If, in fact, we examine the relationship between father's employment status and level of education for each occupational group taken separately, then we find that the relationship between the former two variables persists in all cases except among the higher non-manual group. This relationship, however, has a particular form. For any occupational group, excluding the higher non-manual, the proportion of school leavers whose father is not at work at the time of the survey is roughly constant across all educational levels, except among those who leave having sat for no exam, where the proportion is much higher. In other words, when we control for father's occupational group, the relationship between father's employment status and educational level is most evident in a comparison of school drop-outs with the rest. Controlling for occupational group, fathers who are unemployed, disabled and so forth are chiefly associated with those who leave school having sat for no exam.

The importance of this relationship is shown in Table 6.4, which gives the percentage of those leaving without having sat for any exam whose father is not at work, distinguished by father's occupational level (excluding higher non-manual). Among children of working class (occupational groups 3 and 4) origins, roughly half of all those who leave having sat for no exam do not have a father at work.

Table 6.4: *Of those leaving school having sat for no exam the percentage whose father is not at work, according to father's occupational group, 1980-82 weighted aggregate figures*

	Occupational group			
	2	3	4	5
Percentage with father not at work	34.3	51.7	49.3	38.8
N	90	153	309	77

Regional variations in the level of education attained are shown in Table 6.5. Such regional differences as there are in the level of early school leaving may, to some degree, be due to variations in the demand for young people's labour, but clearly, other factors — particularly cultural variations — will also contribute.

In terms of the percentage completing senior cycle, the regions fall into three groups — those with a low percentage (the eastern parts of the country, that is the east, north east and south east, and the north west), those with a medium percentage (the midlands, the mid-west and south west) and finally, the western region, which has a very high percentage of post-Leaving Certificate school leavers. A grouping on the basis of the percentage of leavers who sat for no exam would be almost identical with this, with the highest percentages being found in those areas where the percentage of post-Leaving Certificate leavers is lowest. There seems, in other words, to be a reasonably clear regional pattern, with levels of educational attainment being lowest along the eastern seaboard and in the north west, and highest in the western areas.

Table 6.5: *Percentage of school leavers at each level of education according to region in which their school is located, 1980-82 weighted aggregate figures*

<i>Region</i>	<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	<i>Group Certificate</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>N</i>
East	59.8	21.4	9.2	9.6	100.0	2990
North East	57.5	26.9	7.4	8.3	100.1	465
North West	60.1	20.0	9.7	10.2	100.0	437
Midlands	64.7	17.7	10.0	7.6	100.0	596
West	71.4	16.3	5.9	6.4	100.0	642
Mid-West	64.9	20.3	7.1	7.7	100.0	703
South West	64.9	20.9	7.3	6.9	100.0	1105
South East	58.8	20.3	11.0	9.9	100.0	867

Discriminant Analysis

So far we have looked at the relationship between educational level attained and the following factors — sex, father's occupational group, the type of school attended, father's employment status and region. The question we now seek to answer is: taking all these variables simultaneously, how well do they distinguish or discriminate between school leavers at the four levels of education identified? To answer this question we used Discriminant Analysis (this technique is briefly described in Appendix 5).

The dependent variable in the analysis was level of education, coded 1 to 4, and the independent variables were:

- a dummy variable for sex (1 = female);
- four dummy variables for the lower non-manual, skilled manual, semi/skilled manual and farmer occupational groups (the omitted category being higher non-manual);

a dummy variable for father's employment status (1 = at work);
 seven dummy variables for the north east, north west, mid-west, midland,
 west, south east and south west regions (the omitted category being the
 east);
 two dummy variables for Vocational and Secondary schools (the omitted
 category being Community/Comprehensive schools).

These 15 variables then, correspond to the factors dealt with so far in this
 chapter.

For all three years the discriminant analysis gave similar results; the 1982
 sample results (shown in Table 6.6) will be discussed here; the results for 1980
 and 1981 are shown in Table 6.7.

Table 6.6: *Standardised coefficients for explanatory variables and scores of the
 categories of the dependent variable, first discriminant function, 1982 data*

	<i>Scores for educational level</i>	<i>Explanatory variable</i>	<i>Standardised coefficients</i>
Level:			
1	-0.469	Female	-0.340
2	0.533	<i>Father's Occupational Group:</i>	
3	1.457	Lower non-manual	0.136
4	1.062	Skilled manual	0.376
		Semi/unskilled manual	0.689
		Farmer	0.295
		<i>Region:</i>	
		NE	-0.101
		NW	-0.070
		Mid	-0.120
		West	-0.154
		Midwest	-0.047
		SW	-0.179
		SE	-0.038
		<i>School Type</i>	
		Secondary	-0.272
		Vocational	0.475
		Father's employment status	-0.175

Canonical correlation = .565; N = 2281

Table 6.7: *Standardised coefficients for explanatory variables and scores of the categories of the dependent variable, first discriminant function, 1980 and 1981*

	Scores for		Explanatory variables	Standardised	Coefficients
	1980	1981		1980	1981
1	-0.490	-0.479	Female	-0.304	-0.389
2	0.439	0.385	<i>Father's Occupational Group:</i>		
3	1.304	1.277	Lower non-manual	0.283	0.207
4	1.005	1.068	Skilled manual	0.548	0.460
			Semi/unskilled manual	0.747	0.708
			Farmer	0.240	0.313
			<i>Region:</i>		
			NE	0.014	-0.081
			NW	-0.085	-0.069
			Mid	-0.108	-0.157
			West	-0.172	-0.164
			MidWest	-0.058	-0.199
			SW	-0.048	-0.201
			SE	-0.011	-0.134
			<i>School Type:</i>		
			Secondary	-0.385	-0.560
			Vocational	0.371	0.133
			Father's Employment Status	-0.110	-0.131
			Canonical Correlation	0.542	0.544
			N	3117	2119
			Percent of Explained Variance		
			Accounted for	91.1	89.9

Of the three discriminant functions produced by the analysis the first accounted for over 91 per cent of the explained variance and gave rise to a canonical correlation between the independent and dependent variables of .56, indicating that the independent variables accounted for roughly 32 per cent of the variance in educational level. The other two functions (which are orthogonal to the first and to each other) added a further 3 and 1 per cent, respectively, of variance explained. Taken together these functions lead a correct classification of 57 per cent of the respondents into the four educational levels as Table 6.8 illustrates (the comparable figures for 1980 and 1981 are 52 and 56 per cent). The best rate of prediction occurred for those who complete senior cycle (thus, 67.7 per cent of actual post-Leaving Certificate leavers were predicted correctly) and the next for post-Group Cert leavers. This latter, however, is probably accounted for by the use of a variable representing Vocational schools as one of the independent variables. As we noted earlier, virtually all post-Group Cert

leavers come from Vocational schools. The least distinct group is post-Inter Cert leavers, who, on the basis of the variables used here, are as likely to be predicted to be post-Group or post-Leaving Cert leavers as they are to be correctly predicted.

Table 6.8: *Percentage of cases correctly classified by discriminant analysis according to educational level, 1982 data*

<i>Leaving cert.</i>	<i>Predicted educational level</i>			<i>Overall</i>
	<i>Inter cert.</i>	<i>Group cert.</i>	<i>None</i>	
67.7	29.5	52.0	35.1	57.0

Turning to the coefficients assigned to each set of variables by the first function, we find (Table 6.6) that the educational levels are scored not monotonically as we might expect, but in the order Leaving Cert-Inter Cert-None-Group Cert. The reason for the interchange of position between the Group Cert and None levels again appears to be the presence of the Vocational school variable among the independent variables leading to this group being particularly well defined on the independent variables. The standardised coefficients for these variables, also shown in Table 6.6, indicate their relative importance. The largest of these coefficients relate to sex, occupational group and school type. Thus, females are more likely than males to remain at school until after the Leaving Cert, whereas pupils of working class origins (sons and daughters of skilled, semi- and unskilled manual workers) are much less likely to do so than are pupils of the middle classes. However, even controlling for these effects, Vocational school pupils are significantly more likely than pupils in other schools to leave early. The regional variables have much smaller standardised coefficients indicating that such regional variation as exists in the propensity to remain at school is largely dependent upon the distribution of the other variables in the analysis. Taking all the three years' results together, however, there does appear to be a clear tendency for pupils in the western region (and to a lesser degree the south west) to remain at school longer than pupils in the east thus confirming our earlier analysis of the educational level/region relationship. Finally, the effect of father's employment status is rather less than that of occupational group, which is as we might expect, given that father's employment status depends upon occupational group.

This set of variables then, allows us to discriminate moderately well between those in a cohort of school leavers who have terminated their education at different points. The analysis also allowed us to demonstrate that, while sex and

father's occupational group are important in distinguishing among early school leavers and between them and post-Leaving Cert leavers, other variables — particularly school type — are also of importance.

The analyses carried out in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 showed that, although early school leavers as a group are at a disadvantage in the labour market when compared with those who leave after the Leaving Certificate, the most severely disadvantaged are the drop-outs who leave school having sat for no exam. Before concluding the discriminant analyses, then, we present the results of an investigation into how well the same set of variables distinguishes this group from all other school leavers. To do this we defined, as the dependent variable, two educational levels — those who sat for no exam and all other school leavers — and drew a 50 per cent sample of the 1982 survey respondents on whom to carry out a separate discriminant analysis to determine which subset of the variables used best distinguished between the two groups. The results of this are shown in Table 6.9 which shows the variables selected by this method and their standardised coefficients. The results gave rise to an overall correct classification of 72 per cent of the cases; 71.7 per cent of the unqualified school leavers and 72.5 per cent of the rest were correctly assigned.

Table 6.9: *Standardised coefficients for explanatory variables and scores of the categories of the dependent variable, stepwise discriminant analysis 1982 (50% sample)*

	<i>Scores for educational level</i>	<i>Explanatory variables</i>	<i>Standardised coefficients</i>
No Exam	-0.079	<i>Father's Occupational Group:</i>	
All Others	1.065	Skilled Manual	0.259
		Semi/Unskilled Manual	0.431
		<i>Region:</i>	
		North West	0.228
		Mid-West	0.203
		South East	0.139
		<i>School Type:</i>	
		Vocational	0.525
		Father's Employment Status	-0.494
		Canonical Correlation	0.278
		N	1174

The most important discriminating variables proved to be father's occupational group and school type, with school drop-outs being particularly likely to come from working class (and particularly semi- or unskilled manual) back-

grounds and Vocational schools. Sex did not appear as a discriminating variable and we must presume that this was because its influence was, in this case, mediated via school type, in the sex difference in the likelihood of attending a Vocational school. On the other hand, in this analysis, father's employment status did prove to be very important, as its large coefficient reveals, and indeed, it was the best single discriminator between the two groups. In other words, while father's employment status was not a particularly good discriminator between the four levels of education when the effects of all the other variables were taken into account, it is, under similar circumstances, a very good discriminating variable between drop-outs and the rest. This is as we should have expected given our earlier discussion of this relationship (see Table 6.4). Finally, three of the regions had significant positive coefficients (indicating that drop-outs were more likely to be drawn from them): these were the north west, mid-west and south east.

To test the validity of the results obtained, the discriminant coefficients were used to calculate scores for the entire 1982 NMS sample and each respondent was classified into one of the two educational levels on this basis. This gave rise to a 72.4 per cent success rate, with 65.5 per cent of drop-outs being correctly assigned indicating the validity of the discriminant function as a classificatory device.

Post-Group Certificate School Leavers

The preceding analyses have been concerned with demonstrating the effects of variables which discriminate between members of a cohort of school leavers in the level of education obtained. In this section of Chapter 6 we shall examine some variables that discriminate among members of a particular age cohort as to whether they leave school or continue to higher levels of post-primary educational attainment. The overall aim of the analysis will be to provide an equation predictive of pupils' future intentions — that is, in this case, whether they stay on at school or leave. Ideally the equation provided should then be useful in identifying which pupils, among an age cohort, have the highest likelihood of leaving school at some particular point. If such an equation could be developed, and if it proved successful in such predictions, it would clearly be an important aid to policy and educational practice in so far as it would allow the identification of pupils likely to leave school early which in turn would permit specific programmes to be directed at such pupils.

The kind of data required for such analysis are only available for post-Group Cert leavers. As discussed in Chapter 2, these data constitute a sample of pupils in the lowest streams of the Group Certificate classes in 21 schools who were interviewed in the period February-March 1981 and who subsequently sat for the exam in June of that year. Later information was gathered from these 21

schools as to whether or not each pupil had then gone on to take the Intermediate Certificate.

Using this information we classified the sample into two groups — those who had taken the Intermediate Certificate and those who had not, all of whom had, by July 1981, left school and thus constituted a group of post-Group Certificate school leavers. The analyses presented in the remainder of this chapter are directed towards finding a combination of those characteristics of the sample when they were interviewed in early 1981 which best predicts their eventual allocation in one or other of those groups.

Selection of Predictor Variables

The selection of predictor variables was carried out largely in accordance with previous findings, but was limited by the type of data available, limitations arising from the fact that the data were not expressly collected for this purpose. For example, no information on the pupils' attendance levels or performance in tests of ability was collected, both of which one would expect to be good predictors of school leaving. Ten predictor variables or sets of variables were utilised: these were

- (i) pupil's sex;
- (ii) pupil's age;
- (iii) father's occupational group (higher non-manual, lower non-manual, skilled manual, semi/unskilled manual);
- (iv) type of school attended (Secondary, Vocational or Community/Comprehensive);
- (v) location of school (urban or rural);
- (vi) the type of job aspired to (lower non-manual, skilled manual, semi/unskilled manual);
- (vii) pupil's post-Group Cert intentions (whether to stay at school or leave);
- (viii) the size of family from which the pupil came and his/her birth order;
- (ix) parents' educational levels;
- (x) three measures of the pupil's attitudes.
 - (a) educational self-image;
 - (b) relationship with teachers (the degree to which they are perceived as helpful and approachable);
 - (c) attitude towards school subjects (the degree of satisfaction with the subjects the pupil is taking).

The three attitudes scales are discussed more fully in Appendix 6 where their construction is described. As noted in Chapter 2, among this sample, farmers are not retained as a separate occupational group but are placed in the other occupational groups on the basis of their acreage farmed. Only three occupa-

tional groups are used in (vi) because of the small numbers of pupils aspiring to higher non-manual jobs.

Previous analysis of the NMS data and the findings of earlier research by Greaney (1973), Hannan (1968) and Rudd (1972) would suggest that pupils who left after the Group Cert rather than staying to sit for Inter Cert would tend to be male, relatively old, from working class origins (particularly unskilled manual), from Vocational schools, from inner city and urban areas generally rather than from rural areas and would intend to leave after the Group Cert to take up manual jobs. In addition, Rudd's (1972) research suggests that they would be later children from relatively large families. Finally we should expect low levels of parental education and that the post-Group Cert leavers would have a low educational self image, a poor relationship with their teachers and little satisfaction with the subjects they were taking.

The extent to which these expectations were borne out in the analysis may be judged from Table 6.10, showing the bivariate relationship between whether or not the pupil left after the Group Cert, and the ten sets of variables listed. It can be seen that there was no significant relationship for family size, birth order or parental education, and these were omitted from subsequent analyses. Likewise none of the attitudinal variables showed a significant relationship with the dependent variable, and all three attitudinal variables were left out of subsequent analyses. Nevertheless, the differences in mean family size and birth order, although not significant, were in the predicted direction, i.e., those who left after the Group Certificate had, on average, more siblings and were of a higher birth order.

If we turn to those explanatory variables showing a significant relationship with the dependent variables, then the direction of their effect is in all cases as predicted. That group which does not continue to the Inter Cert contains higher proportions of males, of pupils with fathers in manual work, of Vocational and Community/Comprehensive pupils, of pupils in urban schools and of pupils aspiring to manual jobs than does the group of Inter Cert takers. In addition, the former are, on average, older, and a higher proportion of them expressed the intention of leaving school after the Group Certificate.

The strength of these bivariate relationships suggests that this set of variables will form the basis for an equation which will be highly predictive of pupils' post-Group Certificate intentions. However, some consideration of these variables also suggests that they are not mutually independent: for example, the type of school attended depends upon sex and father's occupational group, and the kind of job aspired to is probably related to whether or not the pupil intends to leave school after the Group Certificate. To take this interdependence into account, and also to determine how well the set of variables taken together acts to discriminate between a post-Group Cert leaver and those who go on to Inter Cert, a

Table 6.10: Relationships between predictor variables and post-Group Certificate outcomes, Group Cert sample 1981

	<i>Left after Group Cert</i>	<i>Sat for Inter Cert</i>	<i>F. ratio</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>
Total:	244	217			
<i>Predictor Variables</i>					
(i) % age female	15.1	33.6	—	20.79	1*
(ii) mean age (yrs)	14.81	14.59	7.72	—	—*
(iii) % age with fathers in: skilled manual occup'ns.	30.9	26.0	—	8.27	3*
semi/unskilled manual occupations	37.5	29.6	—		
(iv) % age in Vocational or Community/Comprehensive Schools	93.0	71.4	—	50.11	2*
(v) % age in schools in urban areas	60.4	39.4	—	24.09	2*
(vi) % age aspiring to jobs in non-manual area	24.4	46.4	—		
skilled manual area	64.0	47.7	—	19.10	3*
semi/Unskilled manual area	11.6	5.9	—		
(vii) % age intending to leave after Group Cert	86.3	39.9	—	91.34	1*
(viii) Mean no. of brothers and sisters	5.23	4.83	2.31	—	—
Mean birth order	3.86	3.69	0.50	—	—
(ix) % age of fathers with only primary education	54.00	46.00	—	4.74	7
% age of mothers with only primary education	52.4	47.6	—	8.00	7
(x) Mean score on educational self image	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	—	—
Mean score on attitude towards teachers	-0.07	0.09	3.83	—	—
Mean score on attitude towards subjects	0.02	-0.04	0.67	—	—

*Significant at $p \leq .05$.

Multivariate analysis is necessary.

All the variables showing statistically significant bivariate relationships in Table 6.10 were entered into a discriminant analysis with the aim of predicting post-Group Cert school leaving. The coefficients for the variables and other details of the analysis are given in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: *Standardised coefficients for discriminant analysis distinguishing post-Group Cert leavers from those who remained to take Inter Cert*

<i>Dependent variable scores</i>	<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Standardised coefficients</i>
Left after Group Cert	-0.58 <i>Job Aspired to:</i>	
Took Inter Cert	0.63 Skilled Manual	0.03
	Semi/Unskilled Manual	-0.13
	<i>Father's Occupational Group:</i>	
	Lower non-manual	-0.18
	Skilled manual	-0.14
	Semi/Unskilled manual	-0.31
	<i>School Type:</i>	
	Secondary	0.26
	<i>School Location:</i>	
	Urban	-0.12
	<i>Sex:</i>	
	Female	-0.08
	<i>Post Group Intentions</i>	
	Intends to stay for Inter	0.85
	Age:	-0.07

Canonical Correlation: .52 Variance explained: 27%

Overall percentage of correctly classified cases: 74.5%

N: 446 (unweighted) 397 (weighted)

The square of the canonical correlation, given in Table 6.11 shows how much of the variance in the dependent variable (whether the pupil left after the Group Cert or not) is explained by the independent variables — in this case 27 per cent. A better measure of the adequacy of the explanatory variables, given that the aim of the analysis is the prediction of what the individual pupils did, is the percentage of correctly classified cases. Overall, 74.5 per cent were correctly classified or predicted. However, if we concern ourselves solely with predicting school leaving, then the estimated equation correctly classifies 85 per cent of post-Group Cert leavers. In other words, using the results obtained here, we would have identified, in the early months of their Group Cert year, all but 15 per cent of those who would eventually be post-Group Cert leavers. The corollary of this, however, is that we would have incorrectly predicted that 37 per cent of those who went on to take the Inter Cert would leave before this.

Examining the coefficients of the variables used in this equation (in Table

6.11) the strongest effects are associated with father's occupational group, school type and the pupil's own intentions. This latter is an accurate predictor and is the single best discriminating variable. Having a father in a semi- or unskilled occupation strongly influences pupils towards leaving school after the Group Certificate, while attendance at a Secondary school (bearing in mind that we are confining the analysis to Secondary schools which offer the Group Cert) acts in the opposite direction. The kind of job aspired to has relatively minor direct effects (although aspiring to unskilled work is characteristic of post-Group school leavers even when controlling for the other variables) but may well have substantial indirect effects via its influence on pupils' school leaving intentions. Finally, the effects of sex, the location of the school and the pupil's age are all very slight when school type, occupational group origins and pupil's own aspirations and intentions are taken into consideration.

Summary and Conclusions

Despite the increasing levels of educational participation over the last 15 years, there are still substantial numbers of pupils who do not complete the full post-primary course. Among each year's cohort of second-level school leavers, these early school leavers number between 21,000 and 26,000, of which roughly 5,000 will not have sat for any national exam. There also appear to be a substantial number of young people who leave school before the minimum age of 15.

In examining those studies of National school terminal leavers carried out in the late 1960s we identified several factors associated with this. We argued that given the overall upward shift in the level of educational participation, pupils who nowadays are early leavers from the post-primary system will share many of the characteristics of previous National school terminal leavers. Subsequent analysis of the NMS data and of the Group Cert pupil survey confirmed that this was the case.

In the NMS data, sex, father's occupational group and the type of school attended were all found to be related to variations in the level of education attained among the cohorts of school leavers. In addition, father's employment status was found to be strongly linked to the risk of dropping out of school: of this group — who leave having sat for no examination (and who are overwhelmingly drawn from the working class) — approximately half did not have a father at work. We also examined regional variations in educational attainment and identified a broad pattern of high rates of early school leaving and low rates of second-level completion along the eastern seaboard and in the north west, and conversely of low rates of early school leaving and high completion rates in the western parts of the country. In a discriminant analysis we found that the most important of these variables in distinguishing between school leavers at the four

levels of education used were sex, father's occupational group and school type. When, however, we confined our comparison to that between drop-outs and the rest, we found that father's occupational group, school type and father's employment status were the most important discriminating variables.

In the second section of this chapter we analysed data from the Group Certificate sample of pupils with a view to predicting, on the basis of information obtained in the early months of the year in which they sat for this exam, whether or not each of the respondents would leave school after the Group Cert. Ten groups of variables were initially used in the analysis: this was later reduced to seven. Bivariate analyses showed that the characteristics of post-Group Cert leavers were much the same as those we had identified for all early school leavers, using the NMS data. However, the additional data available on the Group Cert sample allowed us also to show that, when compared with pupils who went on to take the Inter Cert, post-Group Cert leavers were rather older, were drawn from urban rather than rural areas, and more frequently aspired to manual rather than non-manual jobs. In a multivariate analysis, however, we again found that father's occupational group and school type were the most important predictors of whether or not a pupil would be a post-Group Cert school leaver, together with the pupil's own intentions about whether he or she would leave after the Group Cert. In this discriminant analysis we were able to identify accurately 85 per cent of those who subsequently left school without sitting for the Inter Cert.

The importance of predictive equations, in general, lies in the possibility of their use in identifying pupils who are at risk of early school leaving and particularly of dropping out without qualifications. If such an identification could be accomplished then appropriate educational programmes could be administered to such young people. Clearly the equation developed in the present chapter is essentially an illustration of possibilities rather than a definitive policy instrument. However, if we accept that the early identification of potential early school leavers is desirable, the development of such instruments is an essential step towards achieving this. Such development might best take place through an examination of where the data used in the present chapter are deficient. First, the sample of Group Cert pupils was drawn entirely from the lowest streams of the schools surveyed. Thus the accuracy of our estimates for predicting post-Group Cert leaving may be diminished according to the percentage of post-Group leavers who come from the higher streams of Group Cert classes. Second, the analysis was carried out only among post-Group Cert leavers: ideally one should like to develop similar predictive models for those who leave at other levels of educational attainment, and particularly for those who leave without qualifications. Finally, potential early school leavers should be identified as early in their educational careers as possible. Thus, rather than, as here, basing predictions on data collected three to six months prior to the Group Cert, we

should like to use information about pupils gathered at the time they enter post-primary school or within a very short time after that.³¹ In the final chapter of this report we will turn to a consideration of how such predictive models might be developed along these lines and we shall discuss some of the uses which might be made of them.

³¹For example, Greaney and Kellaghan (1984, pp. 116-123) note that in their sample those who left post-primary school before completing the junior cycle had distinctive primary school records, having spent longer in primary school, had poorer attendance records and performed more poorly in their academic work than those who completed the junior cycle.

Chapter 7

THE SEARCH FOR WORK AND STATE SCHEMES FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUNG PEOPLE

The way in which school leavers go about looking for jobs will, we anticipate, show important variations according to the level of education they have acquired, if only because the different kinds of jobs sought by those with different educational qualifications will probably require different search strategies. Variations in methods of job search may also be related to the degree of success school leavers have in finding jobs. In this chapter we look at what methods early school leavers adopt in the search for jobs and we also discuss the role of State schemes to assist young people who are out of work.

Methods of Job Search

There is a very large body of literature dealing with the question of job search and how individuals obtain information about job vacancies (see for example, Granovetter, 1974; NBER, 1966). Here, however, we shall confine ourselves to examining the replies of school leavers to the survey questions concerning methods of job search, and we shall examine whether or not those at work utilised different methods from those who are unemployed or looking for their first job and if, among early school leavers, the methods of job search adopted varied according to educational level.

The NMS survey asks respondents about the degree to which they utilised six methods of job search: these are

- (i) registering with the National Manpower Service
- (ii) registering with a private employment agency
- (iii) placing advertisements in newspapers, etc.
- (iv) investigating job offers
- (v) personal contacts
- (vi) other methods

Of these six methods, only three — (i), (iv) and (v) — were used to any appreciable extent, as Table 7.1 shows. Those who left school without having sat for an exam made less use of methods (i) — registering with the NMS — and (iv) — investigating job offers — than those who left after the Group or Inter Cert. In the 1980 and 1981 surveys they made more use of personal contacts, but in 1982

Table 7.1: Percentages using various methods of job search according to educational level 1980, 1981, 1982

Cohort Survey	1978-79 1980			1979-80 1981			1980-81 1982		
	Educational level								
Method of Job Search	IC	GC	None	IC	GC	None	IC	GC	None
Registered with NMS	40.3	38.9	18.6	38.2	47.5	17.0	42.5	43.3	27.5
Registered with Private Agency	3.2	1.8	0.3	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.4	2.2	0.0
Placed Adverts in Papers	5.6	4.3	4.9	5.2	11.7	3.6	1.7	3.8	5.6
Investigated Job Offers	49.0	49.4	43.6	46.7	31.8	30.9	46.2	51.7	38.0
Personal Contacts	40.1	50.9	52.7	51.8	58.8	61.0	60.1	63.8	53.4
Other	9.1	4.6	8.0	9.5	6.7	15.4	14.1	16.8	17.3

they made less use of this method also than did those who had sat for an exam.

That so few very early school drop-outs (among whom unemployment is highest) register with the NMS, which is the major job placement agency in the State, must give cause for concern. Such under-registration is a common phenomenon: for example, a British report (CRC, 1974) claimed that as many as over 40 per cent of unemployed young people could be unregistered with the employment services. Under-registration has two main aspects: first is the failure of the unemployed to register as unemployed, and the second is the failure of the unemployed to register with job placement agencies — in this case the NMS. The survey data available to us allow us to record the extent of the second type of under-registration but not the first. However, it is reasonable to assume that if a large percentage of very early school leavers do not register with the NMS — and so exclude themselves from assistance in finding jobs — then they also do not register as unemployed, particularly since they are unlikely to receive unemployment assistance.³² For example, according to the 1982 survey (the only one of the three surveys in which the question was asked) only 17 respondents (4.3 per cent) were receiving Unemployment Benefit and 23 (6.0 per cent) were receiving Unemployment Assistance, out of a total of 389 who were unemployed or looking for a first job and were not currently on an AnCO course or the Work Experience Programme.

Table 7.2 shows the percentage of school leavers, broken down according to employment status, who made use of the three main methods of job search. A clear pattern is evident here, with NMS registration and the investigation of job offers being most used by the unemployed and first job seekers and personal contacts most used by those at work. Like several other of the tables in this chapter, 7.2 should be interpreted with caution: in particular it is not always possible unequivocally to state whether employment status is an effect of the methods of job search used or vice versa. For example, those at work may be less likely to register with the NMS because many of them may have obtained a job relatively soon after leaving school, so that NMS registration is a course followed only when initial efforts to secure work fail. As another example, consider the finding that fewer of the total unemployed than of those at work use personal contacts in job search. At first sight this suggests that to some extent those who have jobs may have had access to personal links through which jobs could be obtained and, conversely, that the currently unemployed are so, in part, because they lack access to personal contacts that would put them in contact with job vacancies. However it is also very likely that personal contacts will appear more salient to those who have jobs for the simple reason that school leavers may not actively use

³²There is a system of automatic cross-registration in Ireland for those under 25: that is, claimants for unemployment benefit or assistance are automatically registered as job seekers with the National Manpower Service.

Table 7.2: Percentages of early school leavers using or having used the most common types of job search methods, according to employment status, 1980, 1981, 1982

School Leaver Cohort Year of Survey	1978-79 1980			1979-80 1981			1980-81 1982		
	<i>Employment status</i>								
	<i>A</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>F</i>
Method of Job Search:									
Registered with NMS	35.5	44.9	47.2	31.2	40.2	54.5	32.7	65.1	59.6
Investigating Job Offers	51.4	55.7	40.7*	36.7	58.4	44.6	41.5	65.6	55.3
Personal Contacts	46.4	35.0	35.0	59.7	50.2	45.4	65.1	40.7	53.6

Percentages significantly different across employment status except*

A = At work; U = Unemployed; F = First Job Seekers

personal contacts (e.g., by telephoning relations and friends) as part of their job search, but their relations and friends will know that the individual has left school and will provide information on job vacancies and even look for jobs on his or her behalf. In this sense, then, those who are looking for a job may not be conscious of using personal contacts, but the employed who got their job through such contacts will be well aware of the fact. Thus, the reported difference between the employed and unemployed in the use made of personal contacts may well reflect such a situation rather than, or as well as, any differences in the availability of such contacts.

Given the relationship between the use of job search methods and, on the one hand, educational level and, on the other, employment status, it follows that certain groups will make very little use of certain methods. For example, the total unemployed among very early school leavers (i.e., who sat for no examination) make very little use of the NMS: the percentages registering with the service over the three surveys were 34.0, 16.9 and 40.1, all considerably lower than the percentage for the total unemployed as a whole.

The foregoing discussion obviously raises the question of whether or not variations in job search strategies are systematically related to the risk of remaining a first job seeker and thus should have been entered into our earlier logistic regression of Chapter 4. The problem, however, as noted above is one of disentangling cause from effect: these difficulties preclude any meaningful interpretation of such results as might be obtained from including job search variables in that regression. On the other hand, this is not to say that the use made, for example, of personal contacts is unimportant in determining one's likelihood of employment. On the contrary, we should strongly expect that those who do not use personal contacts (perhaps because they do not have access to these contacts due to their father being out of work through unemployment or ill health) will indeed be at a disadvantage. It is well known that personal contacts are of prime importance in securing the kinds of jobs mainly sought by early school leavers (that is, manual jobs). For example, an OECD report (1977c, p. 33) claimed that

during periods when demand for jobs exceeds supply it is particularly advantageous to have ready access to information and good personal contacts — ingenuity in searching for a job is as important as having qualifications, or even more so.

If the relatively low level of use of personal contacts by the unemployed and first job seekers is accounted for by their not having access to such contacts then, taken together with the low use of the NMS by unemployed school drop-outs, it points to the existence of a group who not only lack school qualifications but also have very few job search processes open to them.

The State's Response to Youth Unemployment

The Youth Employment Agency (YEA) is the State body with responsibility for manpower policy in the youth labour market. Its role is to co-ordinate existing schemes and services in this area, to extend them, and, generally, it appears, to formulate a coherent policy integrating education, training and working life in the youth labour market. It acts as the funding agency for a number of other bodies providing a range of programmes in this area, the bulk of which have arisen as responses to the unprecedentedly high level of youth unemployment. These other bodies — such as the National Manpower Service (NMS), The Industrial Training Authority (AnCO), the national body for coordinating the education, recruitment and training of personnel for the hotel, catering and tourism industry (CERT), Council for Development in Agriculture (ACOT) and the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) — administer various training, temporary employment and work experience programmes for young people. In addition the YEA funds job creation schemes by local organisations and voluntary groups.

The kinds of programmes available to unemployed young people can be grouped under three headings as follows (Atkinson and Rees, 1982, p. 5):

- (a) subsidies to private sector employers;
- (b) training programmes;
- (c) direct job creation measures.

The NMS surveys carry information relating to two programmes available to young people; these are AnCO training schemes and the Work Experience Programme. Our discussion will therefore focus on these two.

The Work Experience Programme (WEP) falls under (a). The aim of the programme is to give people experience of the working environment, and takes the form of a six month period (which can be extended) in employment, funded by the NMS. In 1982 over 10,000 young people participated in the WEP. Despite criticisms of the quality of the work experience available in some areas of the WEP (Rees, *et al.*, 1980) the scheme does appear to have a high success rate in so far as the most recent figures available from the National Manpower Service show that in 1981, 77 per cent of participants found a permanent job on completion of the WEP, though it is accepted that this figure has declined in more recent years. Nevertheless, if participation in the programme does indeed improve one's chances of employment, then the programme may, potentially, be an important instrument in the redressing of inequalities in educational attainment, since the improvement in one's chances of a job can only occur at the expense of a diminution in someone else's, given that the scheme creates no extra jobs.

Training programmes for young people are run by CERT and ACOT as well as by AnCO. Under this heading would also fall the VEC pre-employment and

secretarial courses. AnCO training courses — which include apprenticeships — take by far the biggest proportion of the YEA budget. In 1981, 80 per cent of AnCO trainees were under 25, and 7 out of 10 trainees found a job on completion of their course (AnCO Annual Report, 1981, p. 8). The major AnCO schemes for unemployed young people involve training courses in specific areas and the Community Youth Training Projects (CYTP) which attempt to combine training with work experience in local projects. The number of young people participating in these various schemes has increased dramatically over the past three years, as Table 7.3 shows. The WEP, AnCO training and the Temporary Employment schemes have all at least doubled in their average participation level between 1981 and 1983.

Table 7.3: *Average participation by young people in training programmes*

	1981	1982	1983 (1)
Work Experience Programmes	2,600	4,300	5,300
AnCO Training Programmes	4,100	6,300	8,300
Temporary Employment Schemes	400	1,300	1,700
CERT Training Programmes	900	1,200	1,300
Total	8,000	13,100	16,600

(1) Estimates for 1983 from YEA.

Source: National Planning Board 1984, p. 289.

More recent data suggest that the reported success rates of the WEP and AnCO training have been overstated. Figures reported by the Minister for Labour (Dail Debates 1st December 1983, pp. 976-980) show that, of those young people participating in the WEP in the year ending 31 October 1983, 59 per cent were known to have jobs, 3 per cent went on to further education and the remainder had either left the course before completion (some of whom may have acquired jobs) or were unemployed or information was lacking regarding them. The Minister for Labour also reported that, for the same period, 44 per cent of non-sponsored participants at AnCO Training Centres and 64 per cent in AnCO External training had acquired jobs within four months of completing training.³³

³³The Minister for Labour's figures also suggest a relatively low rate of placement of AnCO "off the job" apprentices completing their first year. Figures for the year to 31 October 1983 show that 555 were not placed: given that the usual inflow cohort is between 1,500 and 1,900, this figure of 555 represents between 30 and 37 per cent of the total.

Table 7.4: *Numbers Participating in AnCO Courses, 1982-1983*

<i>Course Category</i>	<i>1982</i>		<i>1983</i>	
	<i>Nos. taking courses</i>	<i>Per cent placed</i>	<i>Nos. taking courses</i>	<i>Per cent placed</i>
Main Courses (1-40 wks duration)	7,125	63	9,230	61
Apprentice Courses (34-49 wks duration)*	2,041	76	2,733	65
Basic Training (4-18 wks duration)	2,811	21	4,314	23
Community Workshops (12 months)	828	37	1403	30
Travelling People workshops (6 months)	299		360	
Community Youth Training Programme (average 20 wks)	3,290	38	4,916	26
Total in Training Centres	16,394		23,005	
Total in External Training	8,334	53	11,282	45
Total in Training	24,728		34,287	

*excludes employer sponsored apprentices

Source: As Table 7.3.

Data from AnCO (Table 7.4) published by the National Planning Board (1984, p. 289) show that placement rates varied widely between the different forms of AnCO training, with very low placement rates for the CYTP and Basic Training which generally cater for more poorly qualified school leavers.

A further reason for approaching the reported success rates of the WEP and AnCO with caution, is the failure of those figures to take into account the quality of the participants on these courses and programmes. For example, if AnCO only admits to its programmes the most highly motivated and qualified among the unemployed, then its success rate would appear less impressive (since such young people would be the most likely to get jobs anyway) than if its intake were made up of near unemployables. In fact, there have been criticisms that AnCO is too selective in its admissions and favours Leaving Cert holders above other school leavers (YEA, 1983, p. 9). Certainly the allocation of apprenticeships has, as we have seen, been shifting increasingly towards post-Leaving Cert school leavers. The arguments regarding over selectivity for AnCO non-apprenticeship training courses — or indeed for WEP — are difficult to assess using the NMS survey data. However, Table 7.5 shows the percentage of school leavers in the labour market at the time of the survey who had been offered a place on an

AnCO programme and on the Work Experience Programme according to educational level (the results refer only to 1981 and 1982; the question was not asked in the 1980 survey). In both years, school drop-outs received a much lower percentage of offers than other school leavers (except for AnCO places in 1982), though, comparing 1982 with 1981, there was a sharp drop in the percentage of post-Group Cert leavers offered places on either scheme. Post-Inter and post-Leaving Cert school leavers received by far the largest percentage of offers of places, and for both years and for both schemes the majority of places were taken by post-Leaving Cert school leavers. This is due in part, no doubt, to the fact that WEP was designed primarily for the 18-20 year olds. Additionally, however, Rees *et al* (1980, p. 124) have claimed that the actual practices of recruitment for schemes such as WEP tend to screen out the hard to place — that is, those who give an impression of poor work motivation, the “unqualified, unskilled . . . who may have been unemployed for a considerable length of time, may be educationally subnormal, may have social problems, and may have a criminal record” (Rees, *et al.*, 1980, p. 125).³⁴ Of course, one might argue (as do Rees *et al*) that the “hard to place” is precisely the group that would benefit most from these schemes.

Table 7.5: Percentages of school leavers in the labour market at the time of the survey who had been offered a place on AnCO and Work Experience Programme, according to educational level, 1981, 1982

	<i>Leaving Cert</i>	<i>Inter Cert</i>	<i>Group Cert</i>	<i>None</i>
1981 AnCO	9.5	11.0	10.9	3.9
1981 WEP	13.9	12.7	17.5	2.7
1982 AnCO	10.9	14.9	5.2	8.0
1982 WEP	14.7	13.0	8.3	4.5
Total in 1981	800	405	166	209
Labour Market 1982	919	387	204	160

Although Table 7.5 must be interpreted cautiously (especially since we lack information about the extent to which unqualified or poorly qualified school leavers actually apply for AnCO courses or the WEP) it does show that certain categories of early school leavers — particularly very early school leavers —

³⁴In addition, participants for certain schemes are drawn from the Live Register, hence, since many early school leavers are probably not on the Register, they are excluded from such schemes. Recruitment via the NMS, given the suggestions for NMS registration of early school leavers by schools, contained in Chapter 8 of this report, might be preferable.

receive little help from the WEP or, in 1981, AnCO. It also shows that a disproportionate share of places is offered to those who leave school with the Leaving Certificate: that is, not only is the State providing these school leavers with a senior cycle education, it is also offering them vocational training. Those who have received fewer of the benefits of education are also receiving little in the way of post-school training.

Summary

In this chapter we examined the methods used by pre-Leaving Certificate school leavers in searching for jobs. Particularly noticeable were, first, that unqualified school drop-outs made very little use of the National Manpower Service (in fact well under half of early school leavers at any level of educational attainment used the service) and, second, that a greater percentage of those at work than of those not currently at work made use of personal contacts (although for all early school leavers these were the most frequently used avenues of job search). We noted that this latter finding had to be treated cautiously; however, there is little doubt that those who lack access to networks of personal contacts (and it seems likely this will be true of those whose father is not present in the household or not at work) will be at a disadvantage in the search for jobs.

Finally, we looked at the use made of WEP and AnCO training and found that, in general, drop-outs were poorly served by these programmes. On both schemes, places were more frequently offered to better qualified school leavers thus lending support to some of the criticisms made by Rees *et al.* (1980).³⁵ In the following chapter we shall deal with WEP and AnCO training in broader perspective and draw out some of the implications and possible remedies for the problems identified in this chapter.

³⁵We also cast some doubt on the very high rates of success claimed by WEP and AnCO. This perhaps raises the question of why the NMS survey data were not used to test the effectiveness of these schemes. The reasons are twofold; first, relatively few interviewees had participated in the programmes and, secondly, of those that had, the great majority had either completed the programmes within the last few months or were still participating. It is clearly unrealistic to attempt to gauge the effect of programmes among those who have only just finished them, or indeed, are still on them.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter of the paper we shall review the major findings of earlier chapters and discuss the broad trends in social class and educational differentials in the risks of unemployment over the three surveys. We shall then present some outlines of the policies which the findings of this report suggest.

Summary of Main Findings

A complete summary of findings is presented at the end of each chapter. Here we briefly recapitulate on some of the main results obtained.

1. School Leaver Unemployment

1.1 The unemployment problem experienced by school leavers — and particularly early school leavers — in their first year in the labour market is due only in minor part to frictional causes (arising from job changing) and is, rather, due primarily to the difficulties experienced by school leavers in obtaining a first job. In May/June of 1982, first job seekers made up almost four-fifths of the total unemployed among the 1980-81 school leaver cohort.

1.2 The risk of being unemployed at a point approximately a year after leaving school is strongly related to the level of education attained, which in turn depends upon sex and parental occupational group. Boys are more likely than girls, and working class pupils are more likely than middle class pupils, to leave school early, that is, with a junior cycle qualification only or no school qualifications. Indeed, the odds that young people from semi- and unskilled manual origins will have left school early are 24 times greater than those for young people from the higher non-manual group.

1.3 Working class school leavers are more likely than those from the middle classes to enter the labour market (rather than go on to third level) and although some of this difference is due to variation in educational attainment, there nevertheless appear to be direct effects of sex and class on the likelihood of entering the labour market.

Among post-Inter Cert leavers, girls are more likely than boys to be classed as still in full-time education in the NMS surveys because of their greater

enrolment in private vocational courses. Among post-Leaving Cert leavers, boys are far more likely than girls to continue in full-time education. Young people from farm backgrounds have a disproportionately high likelihood of taking up post-second level education.

1.4 Level of education attained is very strongly related to the risk of unemployment. For example, the odds of being unemployed at the time of the survey for someone leaving school not having sat for any public examination are three times those for a post-Leaving Cert school leaver. Although all early school leavers are at a disadvantage when compared with those who complete second level, by far the most disadvantaged are those who leave school without any qualifications. The decline in the risk of unemployment brought about by staying on for the Group Cert (or, where this is not taught, the Inter Cert) rather than leaving before this, is much greater than are the benefits of, say, staying on for the Leaving Cert rather than terminating one's education after the Inter.

1.5 Over the three NMS surveys the level of unemployment has increased dramatically, and the absolute percentage point differences in the unemployment rates between educational levels and fathers' occupational groups, have widened.

1.6 An increasing percentage of employed early school leavers are actually assisting relatives or employed in family businesses. For example, by the 1982 survey, over 10 per cent of unqualified school drop-outs at work were employed in this way.

1.7 In investigating factors influencing the risk of not having found a first job by the time of the survey among early school leavers in 1980-81, we found that the following characteristics were associated with a significant increase in this risk:

- (a) living in a region of high or rapidly increasing overall levels of unemployment;
- (b) having left school without sitting for any public exam (if male);
- (c) coming from unskilled or semi-skilled manual origins (if male);
- (d) having a father who is not currently at work (if female).

2. School Leavers' Employment

2.1 In discussing the findings of Chapter 5, in which we dealt with the kinds of occupations entered by school leavers, we identified some important temporal trends. In the 1980 survey — which can be taken to represent the position of a school leaver cohort under relatively favourable economic conditions — most female school leavers at work entered either clerical or personal service occupations. Post-Leaving Cert leavers tended more towards the former, early school leavers towards the latter and also, to a lesser extent, manual work in areas such as clothing and textiles. However, given the distinctively high rates of female

post-primary participation, with about 70 per cent of each age cohort taking the Leaving Cert, the annual number of female early school leavers — and especially of drop-outs and post-Group Cert leavers — is quite small. Males at work were even more clearly segregated by educational level. Early school leavers mainly entered manual or service work, and, within this group, those with some qualifications (i.e., Group or Inter Cert) were very likely to enter skilled work as apprentices, while unqualified leavers were more likely to be employed in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. Post-Leaving Cert leavers were mainly found in managerial, professional, or clerical areas and, to a lesser extent, in skilled manual work in production and manufacturing.

2.2 Over the three surveys this picture has changed — especially among male school leavers — largely because of the dramatic decline in clerical employment. Among females this decline chiefly affected post-Leaving Cert leavers, but at the same time there was an increase in the percentage (and, in 1982, an increase in the numbers) entering service work. Female early school leavers showed little discernible change in their patterns of occupational entry. Among males, however, the decline in clerical employment opportunities appears, in the 1982 survey, to have led post-leaving Cert leavers to move into those areas previously dominated by early school leavers, particularly manual and service work. What is somewhat surprising is that the number of manual jobs — formerly taken largely by early school leavers — has only declined slightly over the 1980-82 period. These jobs, however, have been increasingly taken by those who completed second-level education. This process of “qualification inflation” has mainly affected drop-outs, among whom the consequences have included an increase in the percentages entering unskilled manual work and agriculture and possibly a postponement of school leaving by other would-be early school leavers, accounting for the decline in early leaving among the 1980-81 cohort. The decline in public sector recruitment has, together with other declines in the demand for clerical labour, had major effects not simply on those who would have anticipated such employment, but also, and perhaps even more seriously, on early school leavers.

2.3 Similarly over the three surveys the proportion of all apprenticeships taken by early school leavers has declined as a higher proportion of post-Leaving Certificate leavers have come to take up the available apprenticeships. If this increase were proportional to the increase in the percentage of Leaving Certificate leavers in the cohorts entering the labour market, this would give little cause for concern; but in fact the increase in the percentage of apprenticeships going to those with the Leaving Cert has been more rapid than the latter, so that a growing percentage of those school leavers who sat for the Leaving Certificate are entering apprenticeships, as shown in Chapter 5.

2.4 The percentage in part-time rather than full-time work does not differ

among any of those who have some form of school qualification, but the percentage is much higher among those who leave school before sitting for any exam, and this trend has become more marked over the three surveys.

2.5 Female school leavers earn more than males, even when their different educational distributions are controlled for, and this is due to the different occupations they enter. Females are unlikely to enter apprenticeships — which depress earnings — and are found in jobs with higher initial pay but less training and poorer career prospects.

Education influences earnings (even controlling for sex and occupation) so that early school leavers earn, on average, less than post-Leaving Cert leavers, though it is not always the case that unqualified school leavers have the lowest earnings.

There is also evidence of a slight but significant increase (in 1981 and 1982 over 1980) in the percentage of low paid school leavers.

3. Factors influencing Early School Leaving

3.1 Of each annual cohort of school leavers approximately 40 per cent (or between 21 and 26 thousand) are early school leavers. Between 7 and 10 per cent of each leaver cohort have sat for no public examination. A small, but nevertheless significant, percentage of the total cohort (an average of 5 per cent over the three surveys) are younger than the minimum school leaving age at the time of leaving, and enter the labour market without any qualifications.

3.2 Sex, father's occupational group and the type of school attended are all related to variations within each school leaver cohort in the level of educational attainment.

3.3 As well as father's occupational group and the type of school attended, father's employment status is strongly related to leaving school before sitting for any exam. Approximately half of such school drop-outs did not have a father at work at the time of the survey. Thus, father's employment status influences the probability of unemployment not only directly (see 1.7) but also indirectly through the effects it has on the likelihood of very early school leaving.

3.4 At the bivariate level there are clear regional effects on the level of educational attainment. We identified three broad areas of different levels of such attainment: an area of low rates of second-level completion and high drop-out rates (the eastern seaboard and the north west); an area of very high second-level completion and low drop-out rates (the western region); and an area falling between these two extremes (the south west, mid-west and Midland regions).

3.5 Post Group-Cert leavers from lower stream Group Cert classes within an age cohort could be predicted very well by using some easily measured variables — such as pupils' own intentions and ambitions, father's occupational group and school type — thus suggesting that it may be possible to produce similar predictive models for all categories of early school leavers.

4. Job search and Access to Government Sponsored Training

4.1 Only a very small proportion of unqualified school leavers made use of the National Manpower Service in searching for jobs. There was also appreciably less use made of personal contacts among the unemployed than among those who had jobs (though we stressed the need for caution in interpreting this finding).

4.2 The percentage of young people who leave school without any qualifications and who are offered places on an AnCO training course or the Work Experience Programme is relatively small when compared with those who leave school with some qualifications. There is little evidence in the NMS data that either of these schemes is of benefit to those who are likely to experience most difficulty in the labour market. This finding is supported by evidence from the most recent NMS Survey (1983). The percentages of those in the labour market at the time of the survey who had been offered places on WEP or AnCO courses are shown in Table 8.1. In both cases those who leave school without qualifications are least likely to be offered places, while, taking the two sets of programmes together, those with the Leaving Certificate are most fully catered for. School leavers having sat for a junior cycle exam are somewhat less well provided for, but nevertheless are in a much better position than the unqualified school leavers.

Table 8.1: *Percentage of school leavers in the labour market at the time of the survey who had been offered places on AnCO and the Work Experience Programme, according to educational level, 1983*

	<i>Leaving Cert</i>	<i>Inter Cert</i>	<i>Group Cert</i>	<i>None</i>
AnCO	16.4	18.9	21.5	7.5
WEP	25.6	16.4	15.0	9.0
Total in Labour Market*	746	363	139	161

Source: Special tabulation of 1983 NMS Survey, provisional results.

*At work + unemployed + first job seekers.

Class Relativities and the Occupational Structure

The relationship between occupational or class background, educational attainment and early labour market position has been our central interest in this paper. We have stressed at several points the significance of first job status for subsequent labour market standing. Despite the well-known instability of early employment histories, initial employment level is often crucial in determining

subsequent career patterns. Indeed, initial labour market position probably underestimates the eventual degree of inequality within a cohort of labour market entrants given that those entering unskilled manual occupations are unlikely to experience intra-generational (i.e., career) mobility, whereas those who enter many areas of non-manual employment or even skilled manual work have a higher probability of experiencing upward occupational mobility during their lifetime.

The degree to which an entrant to the labour market "inherits" his or her father's or mother's occupational level depends not only upon what "human capital" he or she possesses, but also on the available job opportunities. Thus, the recent experience of western industrialised countries has been that economic growth generates employment opportunities in white collar areas at the expense of unskilled and agricultural labour. Thus the occupational distribution tends to shift upward. In Ireland this has been exemplified by the expansion of non-manual work in the public sector and in professional and technical areas, and a decline in employment in agriculture and traditional manufacturing (notably clothing and textiles) and in unskilled work. Conversely, when economic expansion gives way to recession, the occupational structure will contract (that is, the number of opportunities will fall) and its distribution may stagnate or, within particular segments of the labour market, it may even shift downward as has occurred in the school leaver occupational structure according to the 1982 NMS Survey.

However, while changes in the occupational structure may lead to inter-generational mobility, in that such changes decrease the expected level of occupational inheritance, changes in the relative positions of the different occupational groups or classes cannot be inferred from shifts in absolute mobility. Thus, if everyone is upwardly mobile, those groups or individuals who move up less than others will, in relative terms, be downwardly mobile. Applying this argument to the school leaver labour market, we have seen how it has shifted over the 1980-82 period: what, we might ask, has happened to the relative position of school leavers from different classes and different educational levels?

One would anticipate that, as unemployment rises, the first to be affected would be those groups whose employment prospects are, relatively speaking, poor at the best of times — in the present instance, drop-outs from school — but that, as unemployment increases further, its affliction should be more widespread, coming to affect even those groups — such as post-Leaving Cert school leavers — who are normally well placed in the labour market. Indeed, as a recent OECD report (1977c) noted, while recessions draw attention to the position of disadvantaged groups, who escape notice in better times, "these groups may, in fact, bear a heavier share of total youth unemployment when

economic activity is vigorous than when it slows down" (OECD, 1977c, p. 66).

Although, as we saw in Chapter 3, the NMS surveys do reveal a marked increase in unemployment among post-Leaving Cert leavers over the 1980-82 period, the relative risks of unemployment among school leavers at different levels have, in fact, shown no narrowing. If we use the odds of unemployment as a measure (that is, how many school leavers at a given educational level were unemployed per one at work), as in our log-linear models, we must conclude that there have been no changes in relative risks, with very early school leavers in all three surveys having an odds roughly three times greater than post-Leaving Cert leavers. If, however, we take the absolute differences in percentages unemployed, then we would conclude that the differences have actually widened as between these educational levels.

On the other hand, if we examine the composition of the unemployed among each school leaver cohort — as shown in Table 8.2 — then there is clear evidence of a shift in the balance away from early school leavers and towards second-level completers, such that, whereas in the 1980 survey the unemployed were 61 per cent early school leavers and 39 per cent post-Leaving Cert leavers, by the 1982 survey the percentages were more nearly equal. One can see that the contribution of drop-outs has fallen from just under a quarter of the total in 1981 to roughly a sixth in 1982. However, such shifts are related to the different numbers leaving the post-primary system at various points. Because post-Leaving Cert leavers are by far the largest of all the four groups, a constant increase — say of one per cent — in the unemployment rate in all four educational levels will inevitably shift the composition of the unemployed as a group towards the post-Leaving Cert leavers. This has been exacerbated by the changes in the outflow patterns at the different educational levels discussed in Chapter 5, such that

Table 8.2: *Percentage composition of the unemployed at the time of the survey among school leavers according to educational level attained, 1980, 1981, 1982*

<i>Cohort of School Leavers</i>	<i>1978-79</i>	<i>1979-80</i>	<i>1980-81</i>
<i>Year of Survey</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>
Educational Level			
Leaving Cert	39.0	38.9	46.4
Inter Cert	25.9	22.4	24.9
Group Cert	13.6	14.3	11.6
None	21.6	24.4	17.1
Total	100.1	100.1	100.1
N	246	268	389

post-Leaving Cert leavers made up a greater share of the cohort in 1980-81 than previously.

In other words, educational level inequalities in the risk of unemployment have not declined, but the unemployed school leavers have come to be made up of an increasing percentage of post-Leaving Cert leavers. A not dissimilar picture is evident in the examination of unemployment according to occupational background. As noted in Chapter 3, the percentage point differences between these groups have widened over the three surveys, though the differences in the odds of unemployment have remained relatively constant. In this case, however, the composition of the unemployed according to class has shown virtually no change. In the 1981 survey, for example, 26 per cent came from non-manual backgrounds (25 per cent in 1982), 55 per cent from manual backgrounds (51 per cent in 1982) and 19 per cent from farm backgrounds (24 per cent in 1982).

We can summarise the previous few paragraphs as follows. When occupational structures shift, the degree of occupational inheritance will decrease. For example, according to the 1982 survey results, fewer sons of non-manual fathers were entering non-manual occupations and therefore a greater percentage were crossing the line into manual work than in previous surveys. However, such an absolute change may leave relative positions unaltered or may, indeed, worsen them for some groups. The results of the NMS surveys show that the downward trend in the school leaver labour market (in the sense of an occupational shift away from managerial/professional/clerical work and towards personal services and manual work as well as in the sense of an increasing level of unemployment) has been associated with, on the most conservative interpretation of our results, no change in the relative positions according to class and educational attainment, and, on a less conservative interpretation, a worsening of the relative position of early school leavers — and particularly unqualified school leavers — and working class school leavers.

It may be, however that this initial broadening of differences in labour market position between educational levels and classes (which is what the first three NMS surveys reveal) will be followed by something of a narrowing of these differentials as the effects of the recession become more widespread. For example, in the longer term, if the prospect of unemployment encourages would-be early school leavers to remain at school to take the Leaving Certificate, the net result will be an increase in the proportion of each school leaver cohort made up of young people who have completed second level and thus we should anticipate that Leaving Cert leavers would find jobs harder to get.

The published results of the 1983 NMS survey (NMS, 1983b) show some narrowing of unemployment levels between educational groups, as Table 8.3 shows. The percentage point difference between post-Leaving Cert and no exam school leavers is approximately 12 per cent, compared with 22 per cent in the

1982 survey. However, these figures should also be viewed in the light of the kinds of jobs acquired by young people. There is evidence of the continuation of the process of qualification inflation among males (see NMS, 1983b, Table 9) with a very high proportion (almost 38 per cent) of those male school leavers at work who had sat for no exam now entering agricultural employment. If we exclude them from the figures, then we arrive at a non-agricultural unemployment rate given as the last row of Table 8.3, where we see that the differences between those who sat for an exam and those who sat for none remain striking.

Table 8.3: *Employment status at time of survey according to educational level, 1983 (percentages)*

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>No exam</i>	<i>Group/ Inter Cert</i>	<i>Leaving Cert</i>
At work	47.4	57.2	36.3
Unemployed	9.9	8.3	2.4
First job seekers	35.2	28.7	18.9
Students	0.7	2.4	39.3
Not in Labour Force	6.9	3.3	3.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	5,500	16,600	39,900
Unemployment Rate*	48.8	42.6	37.1
Non-agricultural Unemployment Rate*	55.0	39.3	37.0

*including first job seekers.

Source: NMS 1983b (unemployment rates estimated from this source).

Policy Recommendations Arising from the Present Study

Early school leavers have been the focus of this study, and, accordingly, the broad policy recommendations advanced here will relate to their position. Policies aimed at this group can be justified on the basis that they make up a large proportion of the unemployed among school leavers, and that they are in the poorest labour market position on leaving school. Furthermore, if and when an upturn in employment does come about, it seems highly probable that those with poor or no qualifications, particularly if they have had no experience of work and have been unemployed for a long time, will be the last to find a way into employment.

The data we have used in this study relate to what economists call the supply side of the labour market, rather than to demand, and accordingly the policy

recommendations advanced also relate to supply side issues. Such a focus may be criticised not only on the grounds that the youth unemployment problem is caused by the lack of sufficient demand for labour and not through any deficiencies in its supply, but also on the grounds that measures such as work experience courses and special training programmes foster

the belief that our problems lie with the supply of, rather than the demand for, labour, and thus reinforce the tendency to "blame the victim" for his own unemployment. (Hill, 1980, p. 120).

However, as we have argued throughout this paper (and particularly in Chapter 1) the "problem" of school leaver unemployment is not simply its high level, but the way in which it is distributed, and it is in the examination of the latter that the data used here are of chief value. Thus the policy recommendations we can advance here will specifically address this question.

These policy recommendations are being advanced, of course, at a time of considerable uncertainty as to whether or not the demand for labour in the future will be sufficient to provide employment to all who want it. The level of job creation needed to achieve approximately full employment is daunting. Projections by the ESRI (Conniffe and Kennedy, 1984, p. 325) suggest that over the present decade approximately 20,000 jobs per year will need to be created in the non-agricultural sector simply to prevent unemployment from rising above its current level. Within the labour force the pattern of rapid growth in the youth labour force will shift to one of greater increase in the 25-44 age group as the large cohorts currently in the younger age groups grow older, but the problems of unemployment among school leavers are unlikely to ease as a result, given that, until the end of the decade, the annual outflow from the post-primary system will exceed 60,000. Even an expansion of third-level education would ease the situation for early school leavers only indirectly — that is, through the freeing of jobs that might, had there been no growth in third level, have been taken by school leavers with the Leaving Certificate.

Several commentators have recently suggested that the necessary job creation targets, both here and in other countries, will not be met. The reasoning behind this claim is that, even given an upturn in the world economy and the growth of industrial output, the impact of micro technology will mean that new industry will not lead to new jobs; on the contrary, new industry will be capital intensive with only a limited demand for labour. It is often argued that, this being the case, the education and training of young people should not (or not only) concentrate on preparing them for employment, but should incorporate what is sometimes termed "education for leisure".

The present report rejects this view on three grounds. First, the assumption that future industrial investment will not create jobs may be true if we confine

ourselves to direct job creation, but the development of a high level of what the Telesis report (NESC Report 64, 1982, pp. 44-63) calls "complex factor cost businesses" should lead to a considerable degree of indirect job creation in the non-traded sector even within the constraints set by the balance of payments. Second, as Matthews (1983 p. 4) has pointed out, rapid technological change, far from being a new phenomenon, has been a characteristic of the past two decades, for much of which period many European countries experienced labour shortages. The example of the USA is also instructive: here rapid technological development has occurred simultaneously with a net annual increase of two per cent in the working population. Third, the "education for leisure" policy is not sustainable when examined closely. For example, to maintain a sizeable non-working adult population would require very large expenditure by the State if the non-working population were not to be kept at a standard of living far below that of those in work (for example, it would certainly be necessary to sustain them at a level much above the present rate of long-term unemployment assistance). This would only be possible given substantial economic growth, in which case it would seem more reasonable to channel such expenditure towards employment creation in public services,³⁶ and, indeed, the recent study of employment policy by the ESRI concluded that growth in the public sector will be "essential if Ireland is ever to increase employment in line with the labour force" (Conniffé and Kennedy, 1984, p. 271).

The present schemes designed for unemployed young people are largely temporary expedients which have arisen as a response to a particularly high level of youth unemployment, but which make little attempt to address the more fundamental questions involved in the transition from school into the labour force. From the point of view of the present study we can identify two failings. First, there is an absence of any consideration of the distribution of unemployment, of how this is related to educational outcomes and how this distribution may be a particular manifestation of the processes of social reproduction in Irish society. Second is the failure to consider how such inequalities in educational attainment and labour market position may have altered under present circumstances and what consequences this might have for policy. To give an example; the NMS results show that an increasingly large percentage of apprenticeship training places are being taken by post-Leaving Certificate school leavers. Such data as are available from AnCO (shown in Table 8.4) on the educational levels of apprenticeships in 1981, 1982 and 1983 also show that the percentage in the category "Other", which is made up largely of young people with the Leaving

³⁶ In fact, all policies aimed at increasing leisure time — such as job sharing and early retirement — rather than increasing the amount of available work, are likely to be very costly, as Timbrell's (1980, p. 25) estimates for the UK indicate.

Certificate or a higher qualification, has increased by half, while the percentage with a junior cycle qualification has fallen.³⁷ The figures indicate that many apprentices can now be considered to be doubly subsidised by the State — once in their acquisition of a senior-cycle education and again in their apprenticeship training — at the expense of other groups of school leavers with, say, Inter or Group Cert qualifications, who might previously have acquired an apprenticeship but now cannot.

Analysis in this paper has concentrated on two sets of relationships — that between social class or occupational background and educational attainment — and between the latter and labour market position. The policy outlines that follow deal with each of these in turn.

(i) The Role of the Educational System

The strong relationship between social class and educational attainment has led sociologists and others to argue that the system acts as a “barrier to social mobility” (Rottman and O’Connell, 1982, p. 75). Against this view it might be argued that, in fact, schools are only partly responsible for the marked correlation between class and educational attainment and that the poor aggregate educational performance of working class — and particularly lower working class pupils — arises because of deficiencies in their home background and environment. Their parents are considered to be uninterested in education and make no attempt to encourage their children in their schooling. This does indeed appear to be so; as Hannan (1968, p. 345) noted:

The social class label summarises a multiplicity of factors besides occupational background or earning power. The educational level of the parents; their linguistic and mathematical skills; the physical facilities in the home ... the values and attitudes of parents in regard to the education of their children; all of these are also highly correlated with social class. The economic barrier then is only one of a series of factors which cause this variation.

Two points might be made in regard to this argument, first, one ought not to minimise the degree of financial or other material difficulties that may be faced by working class pupils. We have already seen, for example, that in the 1980-81 cohort 50 per cent of school drop-outs (the great majority of whom were from the

³⁷One difficulty in interpreting these figures, however, is that they relate to all apprentices and not to the particular year’s inflow. Thus, increased percentages in the category “other” could arise either through differential loss of apprentices of each educational level, or through shifts in the educational level of the intake, or both. There is little reason to doubt, however, that these figures reveal that an increasing share of apprenticeships are being taken by those with high levels of educational qualifications.

Table 8.4: *Percentages of all AnCO apprentices with various levels of educational qualification; 1981 to 1983*

	<i>Group or Inter Cert</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Exemptions</i>	<i>N</i>
1981	77.2	16.5	6.3	18,340
1982	76.4	17.2	6.5	17,711
1983	70.0	24.4	5.5	18,848

Source: Data supplied by AnCO.

working class) had no father in full-time work, compared with only 17 per cent of post-Leaving Cert leavers.

Secondly, the view which ascribes educational success or failure solely to the (class related) cultural background of children omits to consider the active role of the educational system in defining and contributing to success and failure. The former point of view has been heavily criticised by sociologists (Keddie, 1973; Young, 1971) as advancing "the myth of cultural deprivation" to explain working class educational failures. These authors would argue that much of the content of education has little necessary relevance to the skills needed in adult life, and that what the educational system attempts to inculcate and the way in which it goes about it is determined by the existing distribution of power in society.

In any given social formation, the pedagogic agency which power relations between the groups or classes ... put into the dominant position ... is the one which most fully, though always indirectly, corresponds to the objective interests ... of the dominant groups or classes, both by its mode of imposition and by its delimitation of what ... it imposes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p. 7).

Given the large differences in the cultural and material background of pupils, the question arises of how far the Irish educational system should be neutral with respect to these, or how far it should attempt to compensate for them. In fact, there are good grounds on which to argue that, far from compensating for them, or even being neutral, the Irish educational system confers added advantages on the already privileged. This arises first because of the allocation of resources within the system, which has been extensively discussed by Tussing (1978, 1981). In Ireland the higher the level of education, the greater the expenditure per pupil. Since the higher the level the more class selective the system becomes (i.e., the more middle class it becomes), the working class receives, on average, dispropo-

portionately low rates of per pupil expenditure. This situation constitutes a regressive allocation of public funds and bolsters the position and prospects of middle class pupils.

Furthermore, an acceptance of the arguments of Bourdieu and Young and those who follow them would suggest that the middle classes, broadly speaking, are further favoured by the Irish educational system in so far as what counts as educational content and practice is a body of, in Bourdieu's term, "arbitrary" knowledge and procedures, at the acquisition and mastering of which middle class pupils will be more successful than those of the working class.

The arguments of Young and Bourdieu have been advanced as a rival hypothesis to the "cultural deprivation" approach entailed, for example, in the quotation from Hannan (1968) above. However, it may be more useful to try to draw elements from both approaches in an attempt to account for the relationship between social class and educational outcomes. For example, Bourdieu appears to go too far in regarding educational content and practice as wholly arbitrary. On the other hand, the work of Young and Bourdieu does direct attention to areas in which the cultural deprivation hypothesis is deficient. For example, this hypothesis fails to view cultural deprivation as being itself the product of class relationships brought about, in large part, by the role played by the educational system in social reproduction. In addition, as we have already noted, Bourdieu and Young's arguments draw attention to the active role played by the educational system — through the organisation of schools, their selectivity, their ways of categorising pupils, the differences in their curricula, as well as their pedagogic practice — in transmuting, to a greater or lesser degree, class differences into educational differences.

The writings of Bourdieu should then, even if we do not fully subscribe to his thesis, force us to examine what is defined as educational content and pedagogic practice. This would suggest that, taken together with Tussing's (1981) discussion, any moves towards greater equality of labour market opportunity will require not simply a re-ordering of the finances of the educational system but also some measure of curricular reform and some change in the organisation and functioning of the educational system and of some sectors within it.³⁸

The recently published "Programme for Action in Education 1984/87" gives some hope that both of these issues will be dealt with, through the setting up of the Curriculum and Examinations Board on a statutory basis and through suggestions that National schools receive priority in the allocation of available

³⁸ In what follows we confine ourselves to discussing financial and curricular reform. The question of organisational and institutional change in the educational system is beyond the scope of this paper, not least because no research has been carried out in Ireland on the question of how the structure of the educational system and the organisation and practices of schools influence pupil outcomes.

resources. In general the plan is to be welcomed and particularly, from the present perspective, the proposal that special emphasis be given to pupils who are likely to drop out before they complete compulsory education or who terminate their education at the end of the compulsory period.

In what follows we shall not discuss the proposals contained in the programme in any detail. Rather we shall outline certain areas that have either not been dealt with in the programme or which we consider, based on the results presented in earlier chapters, should be given particular emphasis.

The Financing of Education

Given that State expenditure on education seems likely to fall in real terms over the coming few years, it is crucial that the decisions regarding where savings can be made do not further the regressive nature of current expenditure. In this we echo Tussing's (1978, p. 173) call for a "major national debate on educational priorities". The present budgetary constraints on education could, paradoxically, prove advantageous in the long term if they force a reconsideration of how the available funds might be allocated with maximum efficiency and with a concern for equity. To achieve this, however, requires greater public awareness of the present patterns of educational expenditure and widespread participation in the debate about how the limited funds should be distributed.

It is difficult under the present — or indeed any — circumstances to justify high levels of spending on class selective third-level education while substantial inequalities and disadvantages remain at the primary (and indeed pre-school) level. The commitment in the Programme for Action in Education to accord priority in funding to National schools would seem to suggest that, if the education budget is not to grow greatly, there must be a reallocation of funds away from third level³⁹ and, possibly the senior cycle of second level, to the primary sector.

A general principle to be followed in the financing of education might be that schools should receive a level of financial support varying according to the nature of their intake. For example, recent evidence (Hannan and Breen, p. 91, Table 4.4) indicates that the intake of Vocational schools (and to a lesser degree, Community/Comprehensive schools) contains a much higher proportion of pupils seriously deficient in numeracy or literacy skills. The same doubtless applies in a comparison of, say, inner city or working class area primary schools

³⁹The allocation of funds away from third level, however, does not lessen the necessity of reallocating funds within third level to distribute the benefits in a more equitable manner. This would involve, for example, setting the levels of course fees charged to individuals to reflect two things: first the true cost of the courses and the differences in life time income likely to accrue from them; and, second, the financial circumstances of the student's parents (or the student him/herself in the case of "mature" students).

with those in more prosperous middle class districts. The existence of such differences would argue for differential, compensatory, allocation of resources and funds. This could be done by varying the level of financial subvention to schools according to their intake, or, perhaps more usefully, by giving schools with a low quality intake preferential access to specific resources (such as remedial teachers) and priority in the allocation of additional facilities including buildings. The Programme for Action in Education has advocated such a scheme within the primary sector, but it would seem crucial to extend it to the post-primary sector also.

Parent School Liaison

Those young people who leave school before sitting for any exam put themselves at a very considerable disadvantage both in the likelihood of obtaining a job and in regard to the kind of job they can expect to acquire. Thus it becomes important to retain pupils in school at least until they have sat for one examination.

The reasons for early school leaving may be financial or cultural or both. On the one hand, remaining in school above the minimum school leaving age may, in times of economic growth, entail a degree of income forgone. However, since many young people, by leaving school before the Leaving Certificate are placing themselves at high risk of failing to gain employment, the current strength of this argument must be in doubt. In fact, much early school leaving probably derives from an absence of any parental motivation of young people. As Greaney (1973, p. 95) concluded in his study:

it is more likely that the parents of a dropout fail either by word or by example to impress upon their children the importance of pursuing a post-primary education, since they themselves ... place little value on formal education.

The low value placed on formal education may well derive from an absence of knowledge about the school and education itself. Reporting the results of a parent/school liaison study in the Liberties area of Dublin, the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) noted that

it was assumed that parents knew what the school was offering their children and, once given the opportunity, would be anxious to help the school achieve the aims of its programmes. In practice, the contacts made with the home revealed a more fundamental need: the first function of Home/School Liaison should be an educational function for parents ... (CDU, 1982b, p. 21).

At both primary and junior cycle level, then, we would argue for increased

liaison between parents and schools in working class areas, and the development of school-based projects in which parents could be encouraged to participate. The aims would be as described in the CDU pilot project:

to educate parents as to the possibilities offered by the school to the students, and to help parents make wise decisions for their children's schooling; to help the school develop programmes which have the support and encouragement of parents. (CDU, 1982a, pp. 31-32)

Identifying Potential Early School Leavers

In Chapter 6 we dealt with the question of the importance of identifying, at an early stage in their post-primary careers, potential early school leavers, and we made some attempts to develop a model predictive of post-Group Cert leaving. Clearly if would-be early leavers — and particularly drop-outs — could be identified when they enter post-primary school, special programmes of education and guidance (as discussed below) to try to postpone leaving or to prepare such pupils adequately for school leaving — could be applied to them (and greater efforts could be applied to liaison with the parents of this group).

We recommend, therefore, the further development of predictive instruments with which to identify potential early school leavers, using easily obtained information on the pupil and his or her background as well as data from the child's primary career, given that, for example, primary attendance rates appear to be strongly related to the likelihood of early school leaving. Some attempts along these lines have been made by the CDU in their Ballyfermot Primary/Post-Primary liaison project (CDU, 1982b).

Curriculum and Syllabus Change

We would argue that, while curricular and syllabi changes are required for a variety of reasons (see Hannan and Breen, 1983, pp. 304, 310-311), revisions are most needed in the area of provision for working class and low achieving pupils. Thus, the primary aim of curricular or syllabus reform should be the development of programmes for potential early school leavers. The Curriculum Development Unit of the Dublin VEC in its "Early School Leavers Project" advanced a number of suggestions about the kinds of school programme that should be offered to potential early school leavers, as follows:

it is recommended that each programme should incorporate three basic elements: communication studies; personal, social and vocational development and practical skills ... (they should) ... be activity based and ... should incorporate ... work exploration and outdoor education (CDU, 1982a, p. 39).

Emphasis placed on the acquisition of such skills may be of more benefit to such pupils than following one of the present set of prescribed Group or Inter Cert courses. However, it seems particularly crucial that, if special syllabi or curricula are developed for disadvantaged pupils, corresponding valid certification should also be developed as an indication to employers (and to pupils themselves) of their educational achievement. This could be accomplished through the broadening of the range of Group and Inter Cert subjects to encompass areas that are closer to the experience and interests of many working class pupils, or by changes to the syllabi within existing subjects or by shifts in the boundaries that define subject areas. In addition, consideration might be given to introducing more flexible forms of assessment — on bases other than written or practical exams — in these areas.

(ii) The Transition from School to Work

One problem among early school leavers — and particularly of unqualified school leavers — which prevents them obtaining a job, may be their apparent lack of personal contacts in job search (but see the discussion in Chapter 7). This lack of personal contacts probably derives from the location of many drop-outs in isolated social networks or ones which have been disrupted by, for example, the absence of a working father in the household. It would seem reasonable to suggest that this deficiency should be corrected or compensated for, as far as possible, through the State's employment agency, the NMS. However, we have also seen that a minority of early school leavers make use of the NMS. These findings lead us to suggest that closer liaison is needed between schools' career guidance teachers and the local NMS placement officer and local employers. While many schools do seek out vacancies in local employment for their students, it would be advantageous if this were formalised, so that it became an accepted part of the career guidance teacher's job to keep an up-to-date listing of local job vacancies. This could be done by each school individually, but it would, perhaps, be most efficiently done via the local NMS office collating the information and sending it out to schools.

Secondly, early school leavers who do not go into a job immediately on leaving school are likely to be, to all intents and purposes, lost to the NMS (nor are they likely to sign on as unemployed). If the NMS is to provide any service to such young people it is essential that a system is established whereby all the names and addresses of early school leavers who are not known to have gone straight into a job should be passed on by the school to the NMS. The NMS placement officer would then make contact with these young people; that is, the NMS would operate an "outreach" system to make contact with jobless early school leavers (for details of "outreach work" see Roberts, Noble and Duggan,

1982). In other words, for early school leavers, NMS registration would occur virtually as a matter of course.⁴⁰

According to results provided in Hannan and Breen (1983, pp. 299-303) the career guidance teacher tends on average to be most involved with pupils in the senior cycle. This may be, of course, because most school leavers leave after the senior cycle and not before, but we recommend that, where this is not already the case, potential early school leavers (identified as suggested in Chapter 6) should receive at least as much of the career guidance teacher's time, in both career guidance and educating them for the world of work, as senior cycle pupils.

In addition, career guidance teachers should be provided with more information relating to the actual and forecast state of the local and national job market. One step in this direction would be to make the AnCO training and apprenticeship data available to schools (see Hannan and Breen, 1983, p. 323 for more details of this suggestion) in the same way as the annual results of the NMS survey are already distributed to schools.

All these suggestions so far made in this section regarding the NMS and the role of the career guidance teacher are aimed at maximising the efficiency with which job seekers are made aware of job vacancies. While we believe that it is important that this should be done, we cannot claim that its effects in lowering the rate of unemployment among young people will be substantial, since the unemployment problem arises from an absence of labour demand rather than from inefficiency in communicating this demand to workers. However, the policies advanced here would, it is hoped, improve the position of young job seekers who are currently out of touch with information regarding the labour market. In this way their relative position may be expected to improve.

We have made the point on several occasions that upward mobility from unskilled manual work is very difficult. Thus, early school leavers who do not obtain an apprenticeship are, currently, destined to remain in low-level occupations for life. One way of affording them the prospect of upward mobility is through what is sometimes called "second chance" education. We suggest, therefore, that the feasibility of instituting such a scheme — which would involve a return to some form of education at, say, the age of 18 or 20 or later for those who have left school without useful qualifications — should be investigated.

Training and Work Experience

In Chapter 7 we discussed some of the training and work experience schemes available to young people, and we saw that during school leavers' first year in the

⁴⁰We note, however, the existence of certain measures aimed at increasing the liaison between the NMS, local employers and schools, such as the Schools/Industry Links Pilot schemes and the fact that one of the functions of NMS placement officers is to visit schools in their locality.

labour market, these programmes appear to cater for the better qualified school leavers. A number of other criticisms have been made of the existing range of training and work experience programmes. As Rees *et al.* (1980, pp. 51, 70, 119) note, the Temporary Youth Employment scheme (TYE; now the Grant Scheme for Youth Employment), the Environmental Improvement Scheme (EIS) and the Community Youth Training Programme (CYTP) are all designed for, and taken up by, boys rather than girls. The WEP, on the other hand, has an enrolment sex ratio of males to females of 40:60. However, this latter scheme is designed primarily for older leavers (aged 18 to 20); thus, although there are proportionately fewer female than male early school leavers, there appears to be very little available for female early school leavers in the area of training and work experience. Two AnCO reports (McGennis and Murphy, 1978; Murphy 1981, p. 38) have noted that a much higher percentage of male than of female applicants to AnCO are accepted for training.

A second criticism relates to the low level of training obtained by participants in these schemes.

With the exception of CYTP, little emphasis is placed on actual training in the schemes' objectives; the emphasis is very much on work experience. Indeed in two of the schemes (EIS and TYE) the nature of the work undertaken — largely pick and shovel — involves very little even semi-skilled work (Rees *et al.* 1980, p. 132).

In addition to such specific criticisms of these programmes, there are some more fundamental questions concerning their rationale and what they might be expected to achieve that should be dealt with. As Hill (1980, p. 117) has pointed out

... is it not strange that while a few years ago school leavers... had no difficulty in getting jobs, many of them are now deemed to need "work experience" before they can be regarded as employable?

School leavers who are today led to believe that work experience or specific training is needed to help them to get jobs are no differently qualified than their counterparts of four and five years ago who may have obtained jobs in the Civil Service, or with large corporate employers, or been accepted for apprenticeship training. Rather the changes have occurred in the demand for labour; with fewer jobs available employers can afford to be more discriminating. Thus, the evidence of qualification inflation presented in Chapter 5 would suggest that many young people are currently entering jobs for which, a few years ago, they would have been considered over qualified. Correspondingly, employers can now stipulate work experience as necessary to job seekers whereas five years ago work experience may not have been required for the same job. However, if the

balance of labour supply and demand were to shift in the direction of an increased demand for labour, this process would, in all likelihood, reverse itself.

The current requirements of employers in terms of work experience — which would doubtless disappear given an increase in the demand for labour — may, however, obscure some more permanent features of the labour market. Evidence from Britain, and the more limited evidence here, would strongly suggest that young people without qualifications are likely to enter unskilled, unstable forms of employment even at the best of times, and to experience, even in favourable labour market conditions, a disproportionately high incidence of unemployment throughout their working lives. Thus, while the poor employment prospects of qualified school leavers are due to the currently weak demand for labour, the employment prospects of the unqualified are likely to be poor even when the demand for labour is relatively strong. We can see this, for example, by looking at the 1980 NMS results. Even here, where labour demand was still quite strong, unqualified school leavers had a 21 per cent rate of unemployment.

In other words, a concern with the present need of job seekers with all levels of qualifications to have work experience should not be allowed to obscure the more fundamental and constant problems of the unqualified and poorly qualified.

The general policy conclusions that follow from this suggest a shift in emphasis away from work experience schemes *per se* and “training” of the type criticised by Rees *et al.* (1980), both of which may have short-term labour market value, towards training in skills that are likely to have long-term labour market value and which are not generally provided within the educational system. The most obvious example would be training in the area of computer-based technology. The above argument also suggests the need for an increase in the level of resources allocated to training aimed at the unqualified (or, in the absence of increased resources, some — though not a complete — shift of resources away from training for those with educational qualifications). At present, as the NMS data (Tables 7.5 and 8.1) show, both AnCO and the Work Experience Programme offer a disproportionately high percentage of places to school leavers with some form of qualification and offer a very low percentage to unqualified leavers. Although AnCO provides courses specifically for unqualified and poorly motivated school leavers, there is little or no evidence in the NMS data that they are reaching a substantial proportion of drop-outs during their initial experience of the labour market. While these programmes appear to be of value, they are very limited in size. For example, AnCO community workshops at present provide about 700 places at any one time.⁴¹

The suggestion being advanced here would involve, assuming an unchanged budget, allocation of resources towards schemes of the community workshop and basic training type (but subject to the recommendations regarding

adequate evaluation set out in (iv)d below) and away from WEP and AnCO courses that cater for better qualified school leavers.⁴² As a more modest alternative, consideration might be given to the allocating of places on AnCO training programmes, WEP and where feasible, other training, work experience and temporary employment schemes, according to quotas based on educational attainment. This would prevent the possible saturation of such schemes by already highly qualified but unemployed young people. For such a quota system to be workable, training schemes themselves would have to be flexible and to permit entry at different levels of competence. This would involve having courses of varying length, so that, for example, post-Leaving Cert entrants might be placed directly on a specific training programme, whereas early school leavers might enter a pre-training induction programme aimed at "topping up" their existing abilities to meet the standards required for the training course proper. To some extent such induction programmes already exist in the form of AnCO pre-training courses.

Such a concentration on unqualified school leavers could be expected to have a short-term impact in improving their immediate chances of getting a job, but, more importantly, a longer-term effect on their labour market position.⁴³ However, a realistic assessment of the likely return to such schemes requires that we bear in mind that these programmes at best redistribute the relative chances of getting a job rather than create new jobs. Hill (1980, pp. 118-119) has pointed out that the advantages conferred on disadvantaged young people by such programmes are likely to bring about only a marginal improvement in their position; that is, to push them ahead of those only slightly less disadvantaged. It may be, therefore, that the net effect of such programmes in terms of reducing

⁴¹The recent proposals of the Youth Employment Agency (1984) for a "Social Guarantee for Young People" are an attempt to meet this problem. Under these proposals, all young people who leave school at or before the end of the junior cycle and who are unable to find work within a certain period, will be guaranteed the offer of a place on a youth training scheme.

⁴²For such a strategy to be successful, however, unqualified school leavers must be willing to join the available programmes. The suggestions made under (ii) above go some way to meeting this difficulty.

On a more general level, the proposal set out here points towards a reorganisation of the transition from school to work which would establish the conventional senior cycle of second-level education and vocational training as alternative pathways that might be taken up at the conclusion of junior cycle, each leading to different types of job. A similar type of proposal has been advanced by the National Youth Council (n.d. pp. 49-50). However, even within such a system it would be necessary to retain specific provision for those who dropped out of school before completing junior cycle.

⁴³Indeed, only in this way, by arguing that intervention within the youth labour market can have long-term effects on the labour market position of otherwise underprivileged individuals and groups can one justify the allocation of a high level of State resources to the young employed rather than, say, to the long-term adult unemployed.

labour market inequalities may well be quite small.⁴⁴ The more general point to be drawn from this is that once young people have left the educational system it is extremely difficult to bring about anything more than marginal changes in the class distribution of life chances through the use of measures aimed at the supply of labour.

Data Series and Further Research

Successful intervention in an area such as the youth labour market requires good information about that area. In many respects in Ireland the necessary information is lacking, and, even where collected, is not sufficiently widely disseminated. We suggest that information in the following areas be made available as a matter of urgency.

(a) All State run and State sponsored schemes for work experience and training should, at the minimum, provide information on the educational qualifications and sex of participants. At the moment the educational qualifications of WEP and AnCO participants are not published.

(b) Such schemes should provide detailed information on the types of employment (if any) obtained by participants following completion of such schemes or within a short time afterwards. Such information is available (but not published) in respect of the WEP. It is available also in some AnCO research reports (Doyle, 1981; Murphy, 1981) but not for AnCO non-apprenticeship trainees as a whole.

(c) AnCO should publish, as part of its apprenticeship statistics, data showing the sex and educational levels attained among cohorts entering apprenticeships.

(d) There should be proper evaluations made of the effectiveness of all training and work experience courses in improving young people's job prospects. One way of doing this would be via the quasi-experimental research suggested in Chapter 7. That is, by comparing the unemployment rates of a cohort of participants at a point — say six months — after completion of such programmes with the unemployment rate for a matched (in terms of sex, educational attainment, location, etc.) sample of non-participants.⁴⁵

The absence of any competent large-scale evaluation studies of this type is all the more remarkable when set against the costs of WEP and AnCO training to

⁴⁴However, even a small reduction in class based labour market inequalities is preferable to a situation in which the benefits of training and work experience programmes accrue to the already best placed among the unemployed.

⁴⁵One problem with such evaluations is to define what constitutes the success of a programme, particularly if it has long-term goals. It has been argued, for example, that placement of participants in jobs is not an adequate measure of the success of AnCO training (O'Reilly, 1976). On the other hand, other AnCO studies (notably Doyle, 1981) have taken rates of job placement as an evaluative measure (though without, it must be noted, addressing the crucial question of how many of the sample would have obtained jobs even without training).

the Exchequer.⁴⁶ One study, published by AnCO, however, does allow us to make some assessment of the short-term benefits of training. Murphy (1981, p. 52) reports that, of those members of an Inner City of Dublin sample (most of whom were under 25) who had received and completed AnCO training, ten out of 47 (21 per cent) were unemployed at the time of the survey, compared with 22 out of 61 (36 per cent) among those who, although they had applied for training, had not yet taken up AnCO courses. This difference is statistically significant ($p = .045$ on a one tailed test). However, of a sample of 67 non-applicants (all of whom were under 21), 31 per cent were unemployed. This is not a significantly greater unemployment rate than among those trained by AnCO ($p = .156$). In other words, those who had received training were not significantly less likely to be unemployed at the time of the survey, than those who had never applied. Of course, such comparisons are not satisfactory as a test of the effectiveness of AnCO training in obtaining a job largely because no attempt was made in the study to control for differences in exogenous factors such as education, previous employment status and age, which have a bearing on the likelihood of getting a job. However, it was noted that applicants to AnCO tended to be older and to have higher levels of education than non-applicants (Murphy 1981, p. 98) — which would have given them an advantage in acquiring a job — while applicants tended to have poorer employment records than non-applicants (which may have offset this advantage). Thus caution is needed in drawing conclusions from these data about the effectiveness of training: however, these results underline the necessity for the evaluation of these programmes. This necessity is further reinforced by Murphy's (1981, p. 64, 99) finding that "jobs got after training appeared to be largely of an unskilled nature and did not vary significantly from the jobs of those applicants who had not received any training". This suggests that the skills provided by AnCO training — in this instance at least — were not of labour market value as skills.

(e) The NMS School Leaver Survey is an invaluable resource in allowing us to examine how educational accomplishments relate to early labour market experiences as well as shedding light on the workings of the youth labour market. We believe that consideration should be given to the possibility of extending the survey to encompass the outflow into the labour market from the primary and third levels of the education system.⁴⁷ In addition, it would be extremely

⁴⁶The National Planning Board (1984, p. 291) notes that the 1983 annual non-capital cost (estimated) of an AnCO training place for the unemployed is £6,288, or six times the equivalent cost of a year of second-level education (though the cost per trainee is less than £6,288 because AnCO training courses are typically of less than a year's duration). It must be borne in mind, however, that half of the cost of all youth training is borne by the European Social Fund.

⁴⁷Data on the third-level outflow are published separately by the Higher Education Authority. It would seem sensible, however, to institute an expanded NMS survey to cover leavers from all levels of the educational system.

valuable if one or more cohorts of school leavers could be re-interviewed after, say, a further year or two years in the labour market, thus providing information on a cohort's labour market experiences over a rather longer period.

Concluding Remarks

The comments of Makeham (1980b, p. 65) on British youth unemployment, hold equally well for Ireland:

Those conditions which produce high overall unemployment, produce high youth unemployment ... if significant changes in youth unemployment are to be made, policies which affect the whole economy ... are essential.

The "solution" to the problem of the level of school leaver unemployment lies in finding a solution to the overall level of unemployment in the economy. This cannot come about through programmes aimed specifically at the unemployed or at one section of the labour market. Thus, for example, we would argue that job creating initiatives within the youth labour market are unlikely to have a major impact even on the level of youth unemployment. It would be unrealistic to hope that schemes such as Community and Youth Enterprise and the Youth Self Employment Programme could solve the youth unemployment problem. Rather, the issue of unemployment needs to be tackled by general economic policies that are orientated towards, and will lead, directly or otherwise, to the creation of jobs.

Nevertheless, there is also an obvious need for policy initiatives within the youth labour market, not only to provide for a more organised and well thought out framework for the transition from education to the labour market, but also to ameliorate inequalities within the youth labour market through the targeting of schemes at disadvantaged groups and through the formulation of broader policies relating to education and training. However, as we have argued throughout this paper, and as our recommendations have indicated, the fundamental problem of early labour market inequalities, as currently reflected in the distribution of unemployment among school leavers and in differences in the kinds of jobs they enter, lies in the educational system and the close relationship between educational attainment and family circumstances. New initiatives are needed in this area just as urgently as in the fields of job creation or youth training programmes.

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Appendix 1

STANDARD ERRORS AND CONFIDENCE INTERVALS

In the text, standard errors of percentages and proportions are not reported, though it is indicated whether differences of percentages are statistically significant (at the α level of .05) or not. Standard errors may be calculated in the following way:

For a random sample, the estimated standard error of a proportion, p , (given by $\hat{\sigma}_p$) is

$$\hat{\sigma}_p = \sqrt{p(1 - p)/N}$$

where N is the total sample size on which the proportion is based. When comparing two proportions, p_1 and p_2 , taken from two groups of sizes N_1 and N_2 , the estimated standard error of the difference in proportions (given by $\hat{\sigma}_{p_1-p_2}$) is

$$\hat{\sigma}_{p_1-p_2} = \sqrt{\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})} \sqrt{(N_1 + N_2/N_1N_2)}$$

where \hat{p} is $(N_1p_1 + N_2p_2/N_1 + N_2)$

The 95 per cent confidence interval for p and \hat{p} are given by, respectively,

$$p \pm 1.96 \hat{\sigma}_p$$

and

$$\hat{p} \pm 1.96 \hat{\sigma}_{p_1-p_2}$$

These formulae are accurate for proper random samples. In practice, samples are seldom truly random, and the standard errors are multiplied by a correction factor (>1) to allow for this. In the case of the NMS surveys, three factors of the sample are relevant:

1. the sample is made up of a random selection of schools and a quasi-random selection of pupils within schools: thus departures from randomness on this count are likely to be slight;
2. the sample results have been weighted to be representative of the population of school leavers; this will increase the standard errors but only marginally since the unweighted and weighted results differ only slightly;
3. the sample of schools is stratified by type, region, size and sex mix. This

has the effect of reducing the standard errors to below what would apply to a random sample.

Assuming (3) to offset the very minor effects of (1) and (2), therefore, we may reliably take the random sample standard errors to be accurate.

Appendix 2

LABOUR FORCE SURVEY DATA

Table A2.1: *Percentages of males and females at work classified by broad industrial group, 1983*

<i>Industrial Grouping:</i>	<i>All workers</i>		<i>Aged 15-24</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	21.5	6.3	11.7	1.1
Building and Construction	10.6	0.9	13.4	1.0
Other Production Industries	23.8	17.1	27.3	22.6
Commerce, Insurance, Finance and Business Services	16.9	23.1	22.4	27.7
Transport, Communications, Storage	7.3	3.8	6.0	4.2
Professional Services	9.2	30.6	7.1	22.2
Public Administration and Defence	6.6	6.1	7.2	7.6
Others	4.0	12.0	5.0	13.5
N (000s)	779.1	346.2	154.3	132.2

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1983, p. 23.

Table A2.2: *Percentages of males and females at work classified by broad occupational group, 1983*

<i>Occupational Grouping:</i>	<i>All workers</i>		<i>Aged 15-24</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Agricultural workers	21.8	6.1	11.9	0.9
Producers, Makers and Repairers	26.8	10.3	38.2	14.8
Labourers and unskilled (n.e.s.)	4.9	0.3	6.2	0.3
Transport and Communication	9.0	3.1	7.5	3.1
Clerical workers	4.7	28.2	8.4	38.2
Commerce, insurance and finance workers	10.3	12.6	11.8	13.5
Service workers	5.0	13.7	4.5	12.8
Professional and technical workers	11.2	23.8	7.5	15.4
Others	6.4	1.8	4.1	1.1
N (000s)	779.1	346.2	154.3	132.2

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1983, p. 28

Appendix 3

THE GROUPING OF SCHOOL LEAVERS' OCCUPATIONS

The six group (with one distinction among building workers yielding seven groups) occupational categorisation used in Chapter 4 and subsequently is a slightly modified version of that used by the National Manpower Service in their reports of the initial survey results (NMS n.d.; 1982; 1983a). The latter utilise a sixfold grouping as follows:

1. Managerial/Professional — engineers, nurses, executives, managers and other professionals;
2. Clerical workers;
3. Service Occupations — salespeople, security services, catering and other personal services;
4. Agricultural workers;
5. Skilled and Semi-Skilled Manual — this is a very diverse category, including all other forms of employment except for those under (6) below. It ranges from packers to clothing workers, and includes both skilled and unskilled building workers;
6. Other — those employed in transport and those in the MANCO classification's "Miscellaneous Occupations".

In the present study the seven group classification is as follows:

- (i) Managerial/Professional and Clerical — as (1) and (2) above;
- (ii) Services — as (3) above;
- (iii) Agricultural — as (4) above;
- (iv) Manual work in production includes all those involved in manufacturing, processing, repairing and related occupations;
- (v) Building work — construction, mining and related occupations plus painters and woodworkers;
- (vi) Miscellaneous other manual — as (6) above but also including packers.

Appendix 4

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

In this Appendix we use a more complex statistical technique to address the question of how well differences in educational level account for differences in the types of employment entered in terms of (a) occupation; (b) whether in full or part-time work; (c) income; (d) training, treating all these aspects simultaneously.

The method used was canonical correlation, relating the individual's scores on dummy variables representing the educational levels, to his or her scores on

- (i) logged earnings per hour;
- (ii) a dummy variable representing full-time as against part-time work;
- (iii) dummy variables for apprenticeship training and other on-the-job training;
- (iv) dummy variables representing the various occupational groupings.

The aim of the analysis was to measure how much of the variance in this latter (quality of employment) group of variables was accounted for by the educational level variables.

The analysis was carried out separately for each survey and in each case gave rise to three significant canonical variates, the first of which accounted for the vast majority of the variance explained (86 per cent in 1980, 81 and 80 per cent, respectively, in 1981 and 1982). The canonical correlations associated with these variates were as follows: .587 in 1980; .585 in 1981; and .496 in 1982. Squaring these gives the variance accounted for: .344; .342 and .246.

Thus educational level accounts for 34 per cent of the variance in the type or quality of employment taken up in the 1980 and 1981 surveys, and 25 per cent in 1982. Thus it can be seen that educational level is an important — and indeed is probably the major — determinant of employment quality.

Appendix 5

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

Given a set of observations for a sample of N cases, each of which may be classified into only one of k groups (y_1 to y_k) and given, for each observation, a series of scores on j other variables (x_1 to x_j) discriminant analysis attempts to form a set of $k-1$ linear functions of these j variables that best discriminates between the membership of the k groups. In other words, these linear discriminant functions permit the classification of each observation into an estimated category, \hat{y} , on the basis of that observation's scores on the j independent variables. The success of the discriminant analysis can be measured by comparing the y_k with the \hat{y}_k , i.e., by the degree of successful classification. The method, as used here, is useful for two purposes;

1. to discover the degree to which certain variables act to discriminate between members of the k groups in a situation in which other independent variables are controlled for;
2. to use as an instrument with which to predict group membership (y) using \hat{y} , when y is unknown.

Appendix 6

CONSTRUCTION OF GROUP CERT PUPILS' ATTITUDE SCALES

Although occupational group of origin is a good predictor of the likelihood of early school leaving, there is, of course, variance within these groups; for example, not all children of, say, unskilled or semi-skilled manual origins leave school early. In Chapter 6 an attempt is made to explore this within-category variance to determine what factors apart from occupational group of origin explain early school leaving. In this undertaking scales developed to assess pupils' attitudes towards the process of schooling are used, and the construction of these scales is discussed below.

(i) Attitude towards teachers (TEACHATT). This scale measures the degree to which teachers are perceived as helpful and approachable; in other words it attempts to show how good a relationship the pupil believes exists between him or herself and his or her teachers.

In the Group Cert sample four items were included in the construction of the scale, each of which comprised a Likert scale running from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Factor analysis was used to determine the weighting to be given to each item. These items are shown in Table A6.1. The reliability of the constructed scale (measured by α) was .73.

(ii) Degree of satisfaction with school subjects (SUBSATT). In the Group Cert sample five items, again using Likert scoring ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree) were used in constructing this scale which measures the degree of perceived satisfaction with the subjects the pupil is taking. Details of these items are presented in Table A6.1. The reliability of the scale was .70.

(iii) Educational self-image (ESIMAGE). This scale measures the pupil's perception of how well he or she believes him or herself to be performing academically at school. Six items were used in the scale's construction, all of them measured on Likert scales. Details of these items are given in Table A6.1. As with the previous scales, the reliability was high: .73.

In developing these three measures it was anticipated that post-Group Cert school leavers would have scores that were significantly different from those who remained in the educational system. In particular, it was assumed that early school leavers would score low on all three measures — that is, that they would

perceive teachers as relatively unapproachable and unhelpful, they would be relatively dissatisfied with their subjects and they would have relatively low educational self-images.

Table A6.1: *Details of scale construction for Group Cert sample*

<i>Scale</i>		Items included
TEACHATT:	C368	"Most teachers are too busy when you ask them for advice"
	C369	"I wish I had been told more about my subjects when I came to the school first"
	C371	"Teachers are always ready to help you with advice on what you should do"
	C373	"Most teachers are hard to talk to"
SUBSATT:	C366	"Most of the subjects I am doing have turned out to be interesting"
	C367	"I didn't know what I was letting myself in for with some of my subjects"
	C370	"I seem to be getting on well with the subjects I am doing"
	C372	"If I could start again I would like to do different subjects"
	C374	"I think that the subjects which I am doing will help me in later life"
ESIMAGE	C421	"How would you place yourself in your present class?*"
	C422	"I'm hardly ever able to do what my teachers expect me to do"
	C423	"In my lessons I usually do more than the teachers expect of me"
	C426	"I'm usually well ahead of the class in my work"
	C427	"I feel that I can really do well in any subject I set my mind to"
	C442	"How well do you expect to do in the Group Cert?"†

*ranging from 1 (near the top of the class) to 6 (A good bit below average for the class)

†ranging from 1 (very well) to 4 (badly)

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