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Contents

Editorial

Just before Christmas, on 19th December, the Province was shocked to hear of the sudden death, in London, of our Provincial, Brian Moore. Brian had passed his sixtieth birthday just the mid-summer before. In tribute, we publish three of the homilies given around the time of his death, a poetic tribute from a letter to the province from Eamon Devlin, and the obituary notice published in *The Irish Times*.

Besides these, there is also the regrettably late obituary for Fr Diarmuid O Hegarty. I am very grateful to Mark Noonan who kindly filled the lacuna with a very thoughtful memorial (assisted by Richard McCullen). It should be noted that, in death, as in life, Diarmuid's patronymic seems to pose problems. I have followed Tom Davitt's observation (in Colloque 58) that 'he always insisted that there should not be an apostrophe in his surname'. I have, however, allowed those who knew an 'apostrophied' Diarmuid to continue to use it!

The bulk of this edition is taken up by the thesis work of Seán Farrell. It earned Seán a most well-deserved 'first' in his MA and makes for thought-provoking reading.

The memories of Sr Agnes Goodwin and Fr Michael Dunne, while very different in style, record other, more homely, aspects of our history. Sr Agnes wrote this piece in response to a request I gave her during a retreat I led in Provincial House, Mill Hill, in the late '90s. Having misplaced it, I was glad to find it again just this last year. Memories, like Agnes' and Michael's, reveal something of the lived history of Vincentian life in these islands.

Finally, we end this editorial with prayers and good wishes to our new Provincial, Eamon Devlin, who, as he takes up the burdens of office, also celebrates his silver jubilee of priesthood.

Inequality in the Irish Educational System: A Comparative Study of Early School Leaving in Dublin with the National School Retention Rates cohorts 1996-2004

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This is, in essence, the text of Seán's thesis, presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Masters of Arts in Social Justice and Public Policy in All Hallows College and awarded by Dublin City University.

Introduction & Setting the Scene

1.1 Introduction

'A child's mind is like an oyster, but unlike the pearl divers of Polynesia, the teacher can only open the shell with a blade called the imagination.' (RTÉ, 2009) These words attributed to the late teacher and writer Brian McMahon paint a poetic image of the value we place on education. Sadly over three thousand young people leave school every year without completing the post primary junior cycle and one in three children from disadvantaged communities have poor reading skills, which restrict their participating in education and Irish society. (Eivers, et al., 2004, p. 19)

I have worked for over twenty years with socio-economic disadvantaged communities and witnessed firsthand the consequences of young people leaving school with no qualifications. This motivated me to explore the issue of early school leaving. This dissertation will explore the problem of early school leaving and its association with socio-economic background. It will examine the Irish education system from an equality framework and compare its performance with its European neighbours and countries of the OECD. It will examine the Dublin region and compare it nationally to see in what way location and particularly Dublin may contribute to early school leaving.

1.2 Defining Early School Leaving

The definition of early school leaving can be problematic since it requires an understanding of what is meant by School and Early. Within the Irish context 'school' is understood to refer to 'the state-aided post

primary sector only and does not take account of important educational pathways outside the system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training.' (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2011)

'Early' on the other hand has a variety of meanings. It can simply refer to the age of the young person or their level of educational attainment when leaving school. For example it may refer to those who left school without completing their primary education or those who completed primary schooling but didn't transfer to a post primary school. It can also be taken to mean students who entered the post-primary junior cycle but who left without sitting the Junior Certificate or those who sat the Junior Certificate but didn't sit the leaving certification examination.

The European Union (EU) definition of early school leavers refers to both age and level of educational attainment. The EU defines early school leavers as 'persons between the ages of 18-24 whose highest educational attainment is lower-secondary or below and who have not received education either formal or non-formal four weeks prior to the EU Labour Force survey (Eurostat, 2011).

Early school leaving within the OECD refers to the percentage of the population in each country between the ages of 25-64 who have left school without completing the post primary cycle.

For the purpose of this dissertation the European definition of early school leaving is used when comparing the Irish early school leavers with other European countries. The OECD definition is used when comparing Ireland and the EU with the OECD. The use of EU average EU 19 and EU 27 is explained by expansion of the EU from nineteen to twenty seven counties.

In general early school leavers refer to young people who leave school without completing the leaving certificate examination. The research carried out in this dissertation focuses on students who left school without completing the junior certificate as there is substantial evidence that young people who leave school without finishing the junior cycle are at a relatively greater disadvantage than those who leave after the junior certificate but before the leaving certificate. (Byrne, et al, 2008)

1.3 The Challenge of Early School Leaving

'Education today is continuously challenged by the reality of the kind of society in which we live and must try to educate.' (Dunne, 1995) This thesis argues that persistent early school leaving presents a significant challenge, to education and our society. Among commentators there is a general agreement that the phenomenon of early school leaving is a worldwide issue and is the focus of research in the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Europe. A report by the OECD

(2010) shows Ireland with an early school leaver's rate of thirty one per cent. This is similar to the OECD and EU19 average of twenty nine and twenty eight per cent respectively.

However there is a significant difference in the experience of early school leavers between the European countries for example, in both Norway and Finland it is twenty per cent, while Portugal and some of the southern European countries have rates of over seventy per cent.' (OECD, 2010, p. 34)) Among the European countries Ireland's rate of eleven per cent is similar to Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden and compares favourably with an EU 27 average of fourteen per cent. (DES, 2011)

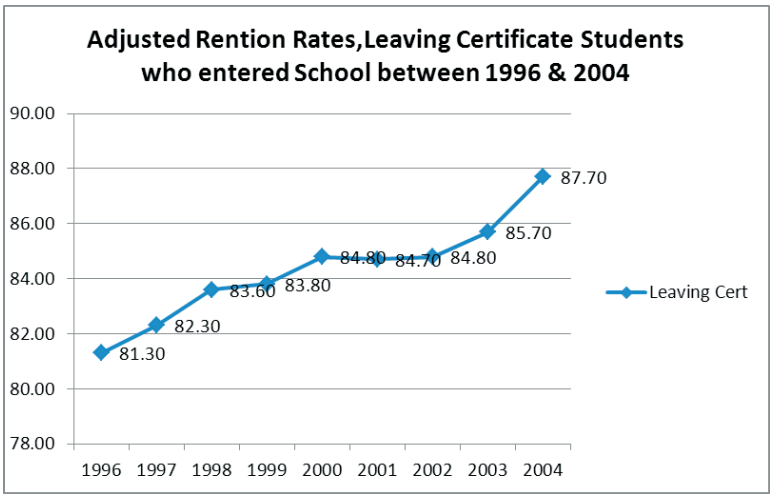
1.4 Context

Following the war of independence, the cornerstone of Ireland's economic policy was the use of tariffs to protect both agriculture and Ireland's small indigenous enterprise against the threat of foreign imports. This policy was founded on a vision of self-sufficiency, a people living off the land and small cottage industries. As a policy it failed; being overly dependent on agriculture and with little indigenous enterprise, it resulted in low levels of educational attainment, high unemployment and soaring levels of emigration. In 1958 a policy paper entitled 'Economic Development' prepared the way for a new economic policy that set Ireland on course to become what it is today, an open and mixed economy seeking to attract foreign direct investment. Another document 'Investment in Education' paved the way for the introduction of free education for post primary students. These two events highlight the link between politics, economic and social policies. Ireland's investment of 4.9 per cent of GDP annually on education is similar to the EU average, however relative to OECD and EU countries Ireland's investment in primary education is considerably lower. (Healy et al, 2011, p.176-178)

The impact of these policies was significant, the economy grew and today even in the midst of a deep recession, the Irish economy compares favourably with other European countries. Ireland's GDP per capita expressed in purchasing power standards is twenty five per cent above the EU average. Only Luxembourg and the Netherlands are higher. Denmark and Austria are tied with Ireland. (Eurostat, 2011)

On the education front young people today stay longer in school. Over one third of Irish people between the ages of 25-64 have attained a third level qualification compared with one fifth in 2000. Compared with Europe, Ireland is ranked joint first with Cyprus for the highest number of people between the ages of 25-34 achieving third level attainment. (CSO, 2010)

Since 1980 the number of young people leaving school without a qualification has fallen significantly. In 1980, nine per cent left school with no qualification and thirty one per cent left after the junior cycle. (Byrne et al, 2008, p. 8) Figures published (Figure 1:4.1) in May of this year show that after the substantial gains over the immediate years succeeding the introduction of free education, the progress has been more modest since the 1990's. (DES, 2011)



Source: DES 2011 figure 1.4.1

There is evidence to show however, that the benefits accrued from the shift in policies have not been to everyone's advantage. The distribution of the benefits has favoured some groups more than others. For example, the top ten per cent of Irish households receive 25.83 per cent of the total disposable income, while the bottom decile receives 2.9 per cent. (Healy, et al, 2011 p. 69) One in seven of the population (14.1%) and one in five children (18.6%) are living in poverty. One in eight (13.4%) are unemployed and 5.5 per cent live in consistent poverty. (CSO, 2010)

On the educational front there is extensive evidence to show that benefits accrued from the shift in economic and social policy favoured some groups more than others. For example Table 1:4.1

shows the disparity that exists between the educational attainment level of people and the social class that people are classified as belonging to. Eighty four per cent of people classified as professional workers have obtained a third level qualification compared with six per cent having obtained an educational attainment level of lower secondary or lower. In contrast sixty eight per cent of persons classified as unskilled have obtained an educational attainment level of lower secondary or lower compare to six percent having a third level qualification. Figure 1:4.2 and 1:4.3 look at educational outcomes by parent's socio-economic position. Figure 1:4.2 taken from the School Leavers Survey show that 'school leavers from unemployment background are more likely to leave with no qualification (12 per cent) while the percentage of those from the farming, professional employer/manager, intermediate non-manual or manual background who do so is 2 percent or lower. (Byrne et al, 2008) Figure 1:4.3 is taken from the survey *Who Goes to College* shows that among third level colleges the children of the farming and professional groups are over represented, while the children of non-manual and semi-skilled workers are the least likely to go on to higher education.' (O'Connell, et al, 2006)

School retention in Ireland has seen some improvement; records show that over the last ten years the gap between male and female retention rates in favour of females has narrowed from over eleven per cent to four per cent. Similar improvements are recorded between vocational and secondary schools, with the gap in favour of secondary schools closing from eighteen per cent to eight per cent. However the increases are mostly due to pupils not leaving in the final year of senior cycle in 2009 and 2010 and this is likely to be associated with changed labour market conditions due to the recession. (DES, 2011)

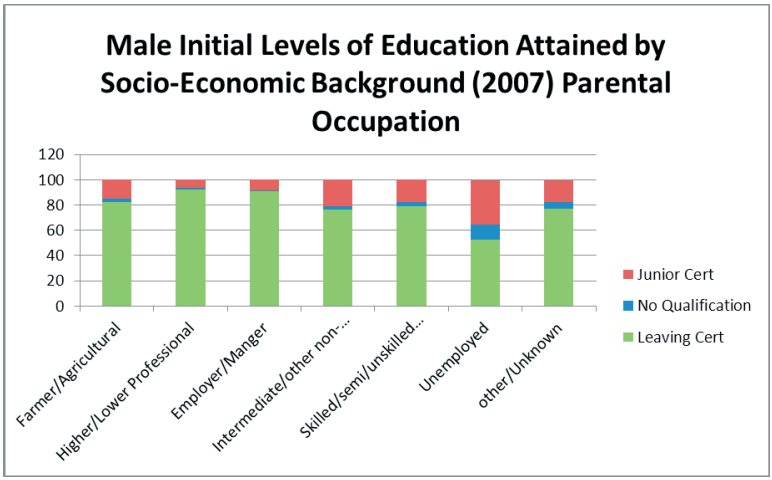
While welcoming the improvement that has occurred, significant inequality in the retention figures exist; for example the rate of 70.3 per cent for young male in DEIS schools compare to 86.3 per cent for Non-DEIS schools. Research carried out for this dissertation shows that over 3000 young people leave post primary school every year without any qualification and it's estimated that between 800 and 1000 children do not transfer from primary to post primary each year.

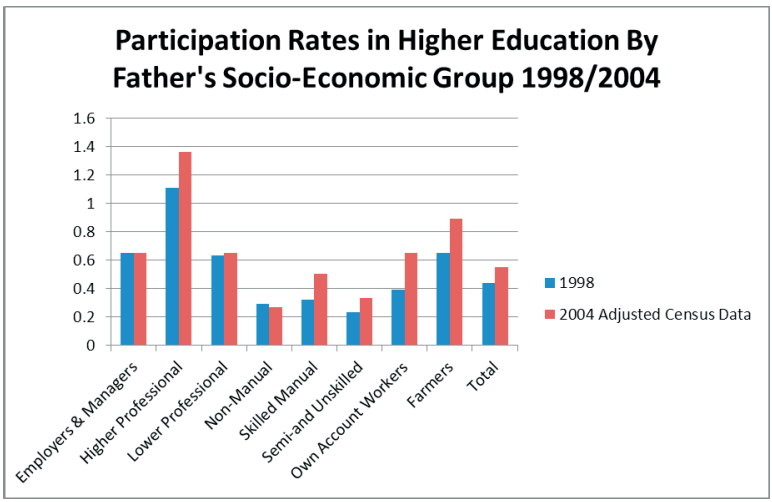
This inequality in the distribution of the benefits accrued from the shift in the economic and educational policies poses a question, as to the relationship between differences in family and socio-economic background and the difference in student performance. Among the OECD countries Finland, Norway and Iceland are considered to be some of the more equitable systems with a below average impact of socio-economic background on performance and below-average under-

Percentage of Persons aged 15 years and over, classified by socio-economic group and highest level of Educational attainment 2006 Census							
Social Class	**Primary**	**Lower Secondary**	**Upper Secondary**	**3rd level non-degree**	**3rd level degree or higher**	**not stated**	**Total**
Professional workers	2	4	9	11	73	1	100
Managerial &Technical	10	12	24	17	36	1	100
Non-Manual	10	20	41	15	13	1	100
Skilled- Manual	20	30	36	7	5	2	100
Semi-Skilled	23	28	33	7	7	2	100
Unskilled	40	29	22	3	3	3	100
All others gainfully occupied and unknown	34	19	18	4	6	19	100

Source: CSO 2006 Census table 1:4 1

lying inequality. Ireland sits alongside Greece, Spain Lithuania and Latvia with an above average income inequality and below-average strength of the relationship between performance and socio-economic background. (OECD, 2010, p. 32)





Source: O' Connell et al, 2006. figure 1.4.3

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented early school leavers as a challenge to both education and society. It presented the difficulties of defining what is meant by early school leaving. It has outlined the scene both in Ireland, our European neighbours and counties of the OECD. It has set the Irish context of early school leaving referring to two major shifts in public policy Economic Development and Investment in Education. It has acknowledged the benefits which have accrued from the shift in policies while also highlighting the disparity in the distribution of those benefits. It has shown that the inequality that exists within society is also present within the educational system and has identified the challenge to educators of delivering education to its pupils in ways which can overcome those inequalities.

Literature Review

2.1 Causes of Early School leaving

This chapter contains a brief account of the extensive volume of literature that exists on the issue of early school leaving. A distinction is drawn between the causes and consequences of early school leaving although I acknowledge that distinguishing cause and its effect based on this research is difficult.

At the beginning of this millennium the ERC published the findings of its study on early school leaving. (Eivers, et al 2000) This study was commissioned by DES with the brief to identify the characteristics of early school leavers among disadvantaged primary and post primary school pupils and develop a template for the tracking of potential early school leavers. Eivers acknowledges that any attempt to draw up a list of characteristics could only be possible if they were grounded in previous research.

The focus of earlier research centred on the search to discover why there was a persistent inequality in school completion levels. A common theme was the association between early school leaving and aspects of socio-economic disadvantage. These aspects may be classified under three categories; individual characteristics, the environment and characteristics of the school. (Natriello 1994 and Rumberger, 1995 cited in Eivers, et al 2000). This chapter will provide an overview of the empirical and theoretical literature following the structure of these themes and the consequences of early school leaving.

2.2 Individual / Family characteristics

Much of the earlier research focused on the influence of family on the educational development of the individual student for example, research

carried out in the United States found that children from highly motivated families were less likely to drop out of school whereas children dealing with cumulative family stress, lower high school achievement and drug taking were more likely to leave school early.(Garnier, Stein, and Jacobs, 1997 cited in Byrne & Smyth 2010) Within the Irish context there is also evidence that substance abuse among early school leavers is significantly higher than among school-attending students. However, this is not explained by their experience in school but is 'primarily the result of factors underlying early school-leaving'. (NACD, 2010, p. 15) It is precisely the discovery of these underlying factors which dominates the thinking and imagination of researchers.

There is extensive research to show that the individual characteristics associated with early school leavers begin to manifest in primary school, although misbehaviour tends to be more pronounced in post primary school. Half of the early school-leavers interviewed did not misbehave in primary school. (Eivers et al 2000) Among the characteristics associated with early school leaving is that the gender is more likely to be male, with a history of misbehaviour, truancy and academic struggle. The theme of academic struggle permeates much of the research for it shows 'that those with low levels of attainment in literacy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and to leave the education system without qualifications.' (DEIS, 2005, p. 35) Early school leavers are more likely to come from low socio-economic status families and be the children of early school leavers. They are more likely to be members of lone parent families, or large families with older siblings who are school leavers. For example in a survey comparing students who remained on in school and those who left school early the early school leavers were shown to be more likely to have an unemployed father, less likely to know the level of education attained by their parents and more likely to have parents who left school without taking any state examinations (Eivers, et al 2000)

2.3 Parental Involvement

Rumberger held the view that there was an overemphasis in some research on family status and structure to the determent of parental involvement and supervision in the work of education. (1995 cited in Eivers, et al 2000) International research has shown that parental and community involvement is pivotal to reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on children's educational development. For example, an OECD study found that 'parental involvement, especially in areas of socio-economic deprivation, does not just benefit the children and school – it is a crucial aspect of lifelong learning.' (DEIS, 2005, p. 40)

2.4 Creditable Witnesses

Boldt, Fagan and Walsh are listed among the many researchers who voiced their criticism of the over emphasis on the individual characteristics and family process. They express a reluctance to apportion blame to families or individual students as it implies in some way that they 'are deficient and thereby responsible for their failure to complete school.' (Smyth, 2005 p. 117) Smyth attempts to reframe the problem suggesting that students are 'creditable witnesses of how school is helping or hindering them.' (Smyth, 2005 p. 127) This understanding of students being creditable witnesses has popular support among researchers given the increase in the volume of qualitative research which has focused on the experience of students who leave school early. For example, Byrne & Smyth (2010) look at the process leading to the decision to leave school early and compare them with those students who stay on in school. (See also Boldt, 1994, 1997, Fagan, 1995, Walsh, 1996)

This call to shift the focus away from blaming the individual or their families is shared by a number of researchers who examined societal structures or environmental issues as contributing factors on early school leaving. In the years following the Second World War the question of social class and its relationship with educational attainment became a focus of research. For example Bowles and Gintis two American economists argued 'that class background is the most important factor influencing levels of attainment. (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) They argued that the introduction of free education was an illusion based on the myth of meritocracy. The children of the wealthy and powerful tend to obtain higher qualifications irrespective of their ability.

They based their argument on the understanding that IQ accounts for only a small part of educational attainment. Based on their own research they came to the conclusion that a person's IQ develops the longer one stays in the education system and as the children of wealthy and powerful stay in the system longer, they achieve higher educational attainment. Bowles and Gintis' argument challenges the view that those who obtain high education attainment achieve their status on merit while those with the lowest have only themselves to blame.

Another perspective on this theme is taken up by the OECD in its PISA survey. Reporting on the findings of PISA 2009 OECD observed that 'a weak relationship between the family and socio-economic background of students and performance is an indication of an equitable distribution of educational opportunities.' (OECD, 2010, p. 30) This is a view shared by the Social Justice Ireland and Barnardos, based on their research they conclude that 'early school leaving is a particularly serious manifestation of wider inequality in education, which is embedded in and caused by structures in the system itself.' (Healy, et al

2011, p. 176) This issue will be the focus of the research carried out for the purpose of this dissertation.

2.5 Status Attainment Theory

Byrne and Smyth in their literature review refer to the Status Attainment theory. This theory was based on earlier insights (Hyman 1953, Kahl, 1953 Riessman 1953) which suggested that class difference expressed itself in working class families according less priority to a college education and that this contributed to the reproduction of inequality. (Byrne & Smith, 2010) This theory is rooted in Blau and Duncan's work; Education and Occupation Attainment which looks at the issues of social mobility or stratification. In this work they developed a model which enabled them to predict the educational attainment of a child based on two variables; the father's education and father's occupation.

Sewell develops this further with the linking of socio-economic status and cognitive ability to educational and occupation attainment by means of the intervening of significant others and educational and occupational aspiration. Aspects of this model can be seen in the ESRI and HEA surveys. For example, the school leavers' survey tracks the relationship between the father's education and occupation and the children's educational attainment.

Social Status theory is part of the wider held belief among liberation theorists who speak of internalized oppression suggesting that low expectations by family, peers and teachers are internalized by the student and undermine the pupil's motivation and results in poor academic achievement. This theory has been criticised for failing to take into account the way in which educational outcomes are shaped by broader social structures rather than individual socialization processes. (Byrne & Smyth, 2010) However it continues to form part of the international literature on early school leaving and there is extensive research to suggests that low expectation by family, communities and teachers impacts on the educational attainment on the pupil examples of which can be found in (Good, 1987, Cotton, 1989, Archer & Weir, 2005)

2.6 Environmental Characteristics

There is extensive research to show that socio-economic disadvantage impacts negatively on educational attainment of students from disadvantaged communities. For example, research into children's vocabulary shows that children from different socio-economic backgrounds begin to diverge early on and that when children enter school the impact of socio-economic background on both cognitive skills and behaviour is already well established. (OECD, 2010) (Smyth 2005)

There is also evidence to support the view that in the Irish context, the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and pupil achievements is quantitatively and qualitatively different in rural and urban areas [at primary level] (Weir et al 2009). This issue of social disadvantage and its negative impact on educational attainment has dominated much of the national and international literature of early school leaving.

2.7 Educational Disadvantage

In an Irish context the 1998 Education Act defines educational disadvantage as 'the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education' [Section 32 (9)] It is Kellaghan's (2001) view that this legal definition offers little guidance for educational intervention to address disadvantage as the act does not spell out what is meant by impediments.

It is his view that much of the focus of literature on educational disadvantage has been on the characteristics associated with early school leaving for example, having a home language that differs from that used in school, lone parent families, poorly educated mothers and low-income households. It is his understanding that not enough attention is given to the nature of the problems which children from disadvantaged communities experience going to school. This lack of precision in defining the problem limits the effectiveness of our intervention procedures to enable children to derive appropriate benefit from education.

This view is supported by the review of the initiatives undertaken over the years which suggests they were one-dimensional for example pre-schooling as a way of supporting cognitive and language development and parental involvement as a way of dealing with discontinuities between school and home. (Archer & Weir 2004, p. 5) Critics of the one dimensional approach as a means to combating educational disadvantage observe that 'typically, children from disadvantaged backgrounds were found to benefit from initiatives when compared with non-participating children with similar backgrounds, but very substantial gaps remained between their performance and that of children with non-disadvantaged backgrounds.' (CMRS, 1992, cited in Archer & Weir, 2004, p. 5)

Kellaghan defines educational disadvantage 'in terms of discontinuities between the competencies and dispositions which children bring to school and the competencies and dispositions valued in schools.' He suggests that insufficient attention is given to this gap between what Bourdieu (1973) refers to as the mismatch between cultures of home and school. This mismatch is brought about by factors in the child's environment which Kellaghan conceptualizes as economic, cultural and social capital. Capital is the accumulation of resources which we

can call upon to support our values and norms. Economic capital refers to financial and material, cultural capital refers to people's educational attainment and social is understood as the relationships and networks which give us credit, information and support.

Children coming from socio-economic disadvantaged communities experience educational disadvantage, when the receiving school fails to reciprocate the values and cultural norms of the children's families and communities. Kellaghan suggests that middle-class children are more likely to feel at home in school, as the cultural norms of the school are more aligned with those associated with advantaged communities.

2.8 Economic, Social and Cultural Capital

A closer look at what is meant by economic, social and cultural capital can be illustrated by looking at the work of O'Brien in a survey undertaken to look at the process of managing the transition from primary to post primary school. In a survey carried out among 25 mothers from different socio-economic backgrounds it was observed that they shared a common desire to send their children to the best schools. However their understanding of the best school was shaped by their access to economic, social and cultural capital.

Without exception the mothers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds sent their children to the local school due to their limited financial constraints and taking into account the cost of transport, books and their limited knowledge of the education system. Most of these parents had low levels of education and closed social networks. On the other hand mothers from advantaged communities were highly educated and the choice of school provided the opportunity to research the best school for their children which included the possibilities of fee paying schools. They also benefitted from familiarity with social networks and in general knowledge, of the education system. (O'Brien, 2009)

This work on transition from primary to post primary is important because 'difficulties during the transfer from primary to post primary school can contribute to later educational failure.'(JCES, 2010, P.62) For example in the prison Adult Literacy Survey it was noted 'that among the prisoners one third of the sample had never attended a school higher than primary level. (Morgan, 2003) A number of the prisoners when interviewed referred to the fact that they had disengaged from the educational system while in primary school.

Kellaghan suggests that a closer examination by those who design and implement educational policy of the impact on the child's development which arises from access or barriers to economic, social and cultural capital might result in children from socio-economically disadvantaged communities deriving more benefit from school.

2.9 School Characteristics

Having reviewed the literature on individual and environmental characteristics and their association with early school leaving the focus is now directed to the question of what association if any, is there with the characteristics of the school and early school leaving. A number of researchers (Blodt 1994,1997, Fagan, 1995 Walsh 1996, Eivers, et al 2000) have suggested that the contribution of the individual student, their families and their communities to early-school leaving, has been overstated to the detraction of the characteristics of the school. Since the 1970's researchers have focused their attention onto the characteristics of school, having neglected this role in earlier research. (Byrne & Smyth 2010) A number of works focus on the influence of school organisation and process on school retention (Byrne & Smyth 2010). A number of the influences for consideration are the socio-economic composition of the school, ability grouping, school type, and school ethos.

2.10 Socio-Economic Composition

Research by the ERC found strong evidence for the proposition that the disadvantage associated with poverty and social exclusion assumes a multiplier effect when large numbers of pupils in a school are from a similar background. (DEIS, 2005) The issue of the 'social context' and the impact of poverty in the city as opposed to the rural context having a greater impact on early school leaving in the Dublin region occupies a central place in the research carried out for this dissertation.

2.11 Ability Grouping/School Type

Within the Irish literature review a number of researchers recorded personal interviews with early school-leavers as part of a longitudinal qualitative research programme. Among their findings they provided evidence of students who 'indicated that school and teachers' characteristics were the main factors in their decision to drop out of school. (Boldt, 1994) Others highlighted student's perceived lack of encouragement, the quality of their relationships with teachers and peers and strict disciplinary policies as influencing their decision. Byrne and Smyth suggested that early school leaving has more to do with the push from negative experiences of, or dissatisfaction with school than the pull of the labour market. (Byrne & Smith 2010) They note this to be particularly true for young men who are more frequently allocated to low ability classes and interact negatively with their teachers. (Byrne & Smith, 2010)

The question of work as a pull factor appears to be open-ended. An American study by D'Amico (1984) suggests that students working more than 20 hours per week were most likely to drop put from school. However, a later study by McNeal (1997) found that those not working

at all or those working excessively were more likely to drop out from school. In the Irish context three out of four students engage to some degree in work during school term. The findings of research carried for the Dublin Employment Pact found the main motivation was the eagerness of young people for independence. (Morgan M, 2000)

The practice of ability grouping or streaming is a practice which impacts negatively with early school leavers as it reinforces social class difference, particularly in boys and is more prevalent in disadvantaged schools and in effect places a ceiling on students' potential. (Smyth, et al, 2004) The practice of ability grouping holds hidden risks for teachers who may succumb to the sustained expectation effect. This theory suggests that over time teachers expect pupils to maintain previously developed behaviour patterns and assume them to be permanent. (Good, 1987)

The issues of reinforcing social difference coupled with low expectations are worthy of consideration with regard to the effect of school sectors or types on school retention. The evidence supplied from the second level school retention reports published by DES continuously show that a higher portion of early school leavers come from the Vocational, Community and Comprehensive school sectors. Alternatives to streaming are needed, (Smyth, et al, 2004) however mixed ability grouping requires a variety of teaching methods, classroom management techniques and support to maximise teaching and learning experience. (JCES, 2010)

2.12 School Climate or School Ethos

Among the early contributors to the issue of school climate and ethos as a factor influencing the decision to leave school were Boldt 1994, 1997, 1998; Fagan, 1995; and Walsh 1996. All of these studies used qualitative research and each of them recall testimonies of students feeling that teachers were uninterested in them. More recently Byrne and Smyth have added to this debate by reporting the findings of their research that the decision by a student to leave school early, is a process which begins with feelings of academic struggle that manifests itself early in the education system and for some as early as primary school. (Byrne & Smyth, 2010)

This is supported by research which shows that those with low levels of attainment in literacy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and leave the educational system without qualifications. (DEIS, 2005) Students who struggle often develop negative attitudes expressed in not doing homework, being late for school, being absent from school and aggressive behaviour in response to their academic struggle and or the school/teacher response. (Byrne & Smyth, 2010)

This process of disengagement raises issues not just for the teacher/student relationship, but also for the school governance, disciplinary and curricula structures. Smyth argues these call for a reworking of relationships in schooling. Citing Margonis he suggests it is a call to 'move from a position of 'student resistance towards one of educative engagement. (Smyth J., 2005) For example reporting on their longitudinal study of Junior Cycle students Smyth observed the importance of the informal school climate and the nature of the student teacher relationship. (JCES, 2010) Smyth argues that more research is need into 'how some schools and communities are able to produce conditions that permit young adolescents to flourish in their leaning.' (2005)

2.13 Consequences of Early School Leaving

The decision for the individual student to leave school early sets them on a dangerous pathway. It is a pathway packed with many hidden hazards, each possessing the potential to impact negatively on their health, further educational prospects, employment, income, and relationships. These hazards are not confined to the individual students but impact also on their families, communities and the State.

2.14 Health

The Institute of Public Health (based on good research) reports that those who leave school early are more likely to die younger and are at an increased risk of poor health. For example, the U.S. National Longitudinal Mortality Study reported that the difference in life expectancy between highest and lowest level of education attainment was six years for white males and five years for white females. Similarly, a survey across twenty two European countries reported that people with low levels of education were more likely to report poor health and functionality. (Higgins, et al, 2008)

2.15 Poverty

The link between living in poverty and a person's educational attainment is clearly demonstrated in the reporting of the findings of research of SILC 2009. For example, a household in Ireland which is headed by a person with an educational attainment of primary or below has a one in five (21.3%) chance of living in poverty rising to one in eight (13.4%) for those with upper secondary and one in twenty five (4%) for those with a third level degree or higher and one in three (33.2%) if unemployed. (CSO, 2010)

2.16 Employment Prospects

The employment prospects of the early school leaver can be gleaned from the research of the QNHS which reported that the relationship between unemployment rates and level of education was particularly evident for men with a twenty three per cent unemployment rate for men with lower secondary level of education or below compared with an unemployment rate of seven to ten per cent for men with a third level qualification. (CSO, 2010)

2.17 Education / Crime

Access to further education is often restricted for those who leave school early. This has been established as a barrier to further education. However, the HEA continues to address this issue through the access programme.

The association of low levels of education attainment and crime has been the subject of the study into adult literacy among prisoners. The report observed that while there is a link between anti-social behaviour and education disadvantage it is not a causal link, but there is evidence to suggest that low literacy levels restrict a range of life choices and thus become a pre-disposing factor in criminal activity. For example, out of a sample of 800 prisoners only sixteen per cent had completed secondary school and sixty three per cent had played truant regularly while in school. (Morgan, 2003)

Barnardos reported that children who do not learn to read or write are more likely to leave school early, be unemployed or in low skilled jobs, have poorer emotional and physical health and more likely to end up in poverty and in our prisons. (Barnardos, 2009)

Having drawn attention to the consequences of leaving school early for individuals their families and communities it's important to point out the consequences for the State. For example, a UK study showed that the cost to the State was between £1.73BN and £2.05BN every year.

2.18 Conclusion

The review of the literature suggests that any attempt to find a single cause for early school leaving is fraught with difficulties. School leavers are not a homogenous group; the reason for leaving can be as individual as the young person making the choice; however the findings of the research suggests some common themes running through the literature. The literature uncovers the complexity of the issue and the identification of individual, environmental and school characteristics help to widen the search for understanding. The recognition of different philosophical frameworks serves to underline the necessity to recognise one's own philosophical preference and openness to the richness of diverse perspectives, if one is to identify the precise nature of the problem.

The literature also draws attention to the urgency of finding solutions to the questions proposed by early school leaving. Many of the commentators not only draw attention to the persistence of the problem but also to the consequences to the individual, their families, communities and to the State. There appears to be an agreement that early school leaving is associated with socio-economic disadvantage and that any attempt to address early school leaving requires addressing the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and school completion. There is evidence that much has been achieved and an expectation that more is possible to lessen the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on early school leaving.

An important strand emerging from the literature appears to point in the direction of issues pertaining to the characteristic of the school such as governance, disciplinary and curricula structures and their influence on the young person's decision to leave school early. There are examples of students speaking of feelings of struggle with their academic work, falling behind and the lack of appropriate support. This can be attributed to researchers who have given voice to students who spoke of feeling unwanted by teachers or schools being uninterested in them. There was also the call from among researchers for more focus on the need to rework the relationships between schools and communities to foster ways in which young people may be enriched in their learning.

Theories on Justice

3.1 Introduction

Among the themes in the previous chapter was the observation that the strong link between socio-economic disadvantage and low levels of school completion was an indicator of inequality in the education system. This chapter will now address the issue of inequality and look at two theories of justice.

Drafting the Nation Plan for equity of access to higher education, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) observed that international research shows that 'the most equitable education systems tend to achieve the best educational outcomes'. (HEA, 2008, p. 15) Persistent inequality in school completion levels raises questions about the equitable distribution of educational outcomes. This chapter will expound on two theories of justice which address the issue of distributive justice and examine their implications for the Irish educational system. The two theories for consideration are John Rawls' Theory of Justice and Baker and his co-theorists Equality: From Theory to Action.

3.2 Justice as Fairness

Rawls argues that justice is fairness which is an intuitive conviction of how people ought to relate to one another. On the other hand principles of justice are what people living in society agree to. Plato refers to this as refraining from gaining advantage for oneself by seizing what belongs to another be it property, the repayment of a debt, anything which denies giving the other what is their due. However, the previous chapter has shown strong evidence to support the view that the presence of advantage and disadvantage is problematic to achieve equality of outcomes in education.

3.3 The Original Position and the Veil of Ignorance

To illustrate the idea that the principles of justice are agreed to in an initial position that is 'fair' Rawls suggests a few ground rules for the exercise. In this hypothetical situation no one is allowed to dominate the choice or to have an unfair advantage. They are to create a veil of ignorance which requires that those choosing know neither what position they will hold in society nor what their own particular goals or life-plans might be. Neither do they know what society or generation they belong to. However they do know that their society will be subject to the circumstance of justice – there will be conflict and cooperation. They also have a working knowledge of economic theory, social organisation and human psychology. They are offered a range of principles for the distribution of rights and duties and of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation.

3.4 Unanimous Agreement

Rawls argues that social justice is about 'how the greater benefits produced by collaboration are distributed.' (Rawls, 1971, p. 4) It's about people, who come together for a common purpose, who understand the rules governing their social interaction and for the most part abide by them. This requires people to cooperate with one another to advance the good of those taking part and an acknowledgement that there is the potential for conflicts of interests.

To avoid possible conflict of interest at a further date, Rawls suggests that the work of social justice is about establishing a basic structure to ensure the fair distribution of rights and duties for the benefit of all. These structures cover all aspects of social life embracing the political, economic, cultural and social spheres. Rawls is mindful that these institutions 'define our rights and duties and influence life prospects and what one can expect to be and how well they can hope to do it' (Rawls, 1971). For example, the children of parents from the profes-

sional classes expect to go to college and have a similar occupation and lifestyle to their parents.

Rawls' argues that justice requires a set of principles to guide its work of ensuring a fair distribution of the benefits of cooperation among all its citizens. The principles of justice are the fruits of the deliberations of the unanimous agreement of those gathered in the hypothetical veil of ignorance. Rawls describes these as the principles that 'rational persons concerned to further their own interests (would) accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association? (Rawls, 1971, p. 11)

3.5 Two Principles of Justice

Rawls argues that, in the hypothetical veil of ignorance or what he refers to as the 'original position', the people gathered would unanimously agree on two principles of justice.

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both;
    a) To the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society; and
    b) Attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

The basic principles agreed by the hypothetical society makes an argument for the existence of divisions within society, separating out basic rights which he defines as political liberties from economic and social rights. The basic rights he considered were as follows; the right to vote, eligibility for public office, freedom of speech, assembly, liberty of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of the person, the right to personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest. The first principle of social justice secures the equal liberties of citizenship; however the second principle supports the establishment of social and economic inequalities.

This division is not without controversy. However, Rawls has included within the principles a ranking and the first principle has priority over the second. The first principle which is the establishment of basic rights of citizenship is considered even by his critics to be an important contribution to the work of justice; for example, Sen in his critique acknowledges that 'Rawls puts liberty on an absolute pedestal that towers indisputably over all other considerations.' (Sen, 2009, p. 59)

Rawls proposal that this first principle be given priority over the second secures that personal rights cannot be violated even by the provision of better economic or social conditions, for example exchanging ones right to vote for a parcel of land. The second principle which deals with the distribution of wealth and income is known as the difference principle. Here Rawls argues that there need not be equality, however there is an important caveat attached, inequality is permitted but it must be to everyone's advantage and in particular to the least advantaged members of society.

The second part of the caveat established the principle of fair equality of opportunity which means that people should have an equal chance to advance in society. It also requires that people should not be advantaged or disadvantaged by their social background. For example Rawls argues that the coupling of the fair equality of opportunity principle and the difference principle requires that those who have been favoured by nature may only gain advantage in terms that improves the situation of those who lose out. This suggests that the least advantaged are the benchmark by which we judge the success or failure of our educational policies. For example, the existence of inequality of outcomes in education is only permitted if it improves the situation of the least advantaged students.

3.6 Influence of Rawls

Rawls' influence on modern philosophy is without question! Among his major contributions is his approach to justice as fairness. He argues that the foundation of justice demands a spirit of impartiality. He argues that divesting ourselves of all self interest it is reasonable to presume that rational people can come to a unanimous agreement on the principles of justice. The bases of his argument is that all participants in the veil of ignorance faced with the possibility of being the least advantaged person would refuse to act in any way that would disadvantage themselves further.

Rawls's principle of fair equality of opportunity establishes that for an educational system to be considered equitable it must lessen the impact of socio-economic background on educational outcomes. (OECD, 2009)

3.7 Critique

Critics of Rawls such as Sen argue that his system is built on the premise of a unanimous choice of principles, on the basis of which is built the basic structure of society. Sen expresses considerable scepticism about this 'highly specific claim about the unique choice in the original position of one particular set of principles. (Sen, 2009, p. 56) He argues that it is possible to have 'genuinely plural, and sometimes

conflicting, general concerns that bear on our understanding of justice.' (Sen, 2009, p. 57) I would argue that it is the process of agreeing to a set of principles that is the strength of Rawls's theory. It is possible to argue impartially for different principles but the agreement is the floor on which one stands in Rawls's House of Justice. It is the act of agreeing to a set of principles that ensure that no one person is advantaged or disadvantaged which makes it credible. Questions could be asked as to what one means by unanimous and is their space for the voice of dissent within Rawls's House of Justice.

One can only imagine what it was like to be an observer of the discussion that took place in the hypothetical original position, but one can imagine that there were many alternatives put forward. Some no doubt were ruled out because they failed the demands of impartiality; others however, because they were seen to be more or less favourable to the different voices. Nevertheless, no one left the room, though some may have been tempted, whilst others expressed their reservations, but in the end a formula was produced that was reasonable to all concerned. We are not told how long it took only that agreement was reached and all consented.

3.8 From Theory to Action

The choice of the framework from theory to action may appear initially as a strange choice given that it occupies a similar place within the egalitarianism school of philosophy. The choice was made based on an understanding that in presenting their critique of Rawls's theories they offer a challenge to rethink what Rawls is offering and to consider the merits of their alternative approach to justice.

In Equality; Theory to Action Baker and his co-theorists argue that the principles of liberal equality built on the foundation of justice as fairness are not strong enough to challenge 'the entrenched inequalities of the contemporary world.' (Baker, 2009) In presenting their argument they offer an alternative model: Equality of Condition. Naming Rawls the paradigm case of Liberal Egalitarianism alongside Dwokrin and Wlazer they argue', that there is a natural path from basic equality to the beliefs of liberal egalitarianism and from those beliefs to equality ofcondition.'(Baker, et al, 2009)

3.9 Basic Equality

Baker, and his co-theorists argue that 'many of the arguments put forward by liberal egalitarians are rooted in the idea of basic equality' with its demand that every person is entitled to a minimum of concern and respect. They recognise that living in a world where human life is often subjected to degrading and humiliating acts of human trafficking

and a commitment to provide for peoples' basic needs is not trivial. Nevertheless they argue that this concern and respect does not extend to any significant challenge being offered to the widespread inequality in people's living conditions or the infringement of their civil rights or their lack of educational and economic opportunities. (Baker, et al, 2009)

3.10 Liberal Egalitarianism

Baker and his co-theorists challenge what they describe as some of the basic assumptions of liberal egalitarianism. For example that there will always be major inequalities between people in their status, resources, work and power. They argue that liberal egalitarians see their role 'as managing these inequalities, by strengthening the minimum to which everyone is entitled and using equality of opportunity to regulate the competition for advantage.' (Baker, et al, 2009, p. 25)

They support the view that among the varied theorists of liberal egalitarianism there are diverse degrees of thought as to how to manage these inequalities. They singled out as the most ambitious of these, Rawls's principle of difference which argues that 'the social and economic inequality are to be arranged so that they work to the greatest benefit of the disadvantaged (Rawls, 1971, p. 302) and his principle of fair equality of opportunity.

The view that liberal egalitarians see their role 'as managing inequalities' (Baker et al, 2009) is often presented as the Achilles heel of egalitarianism. Rawls' response to the argument is that the principles of justice are ranked in order of priority. They first secure basic rights such as the right to vote, freedom of speech and freedom of conscience and these rights are non-negotiable. It's never permitted to trade these rights for socio-economic rights. Having first secured these basic rights, only then is it possible (not to advocate for but) to permit inequality in socio-economic rights and these are only permitted, if it is to the advantage of all but particularly to the least advantaged.

Only on the understanding that existing inequality is for the good of all does Rawls introduce the concept of fair equality of opportunity, as a means to securing more socio-economic rights. It is mistaken to read fair equality of opportunity, as if it were the first principle and the panacea for inequality. It is a fair criticism to suggest that too often the emphasis on fair equality of opportunity masks the absence of serious analysis as to whether or not existing inequalities are to the benefit of all and in particular the least advantaged. For example Lynch argues that 'difference in economic capital allows those who are better resourced to buy advantage in education… thereby reinforcing cycles of relative privilege and class advantage' (Lynch, 2005, p. 138)

3.11 Equality of Condition

Equality of Condition is based on the assumption, that the existing structures of society create and reproduce the inequality that liberal egalitarians see as inevitable. Among the social structures identified by Baker and his co-theorists are capitalism as a market based economy under private ownership, patriarchy that privileges men over women and racism that divides people into races and privilege some over others. Those who advocate for equality of conditions are concerned for the rights and advantages of groups, as well as individuals. Their focus is on how people are connected, particularly through power relations and emphasises the influence of social factors on people's choices and actions. For example, the issue of equality of opportunity in education, is not merely that parents of individual students have access to the school of their choice, but the conditions which influence the choice.

Working from the assumption that institutions create and reproduce inequality, equality of conditions seek answers as to how institutions facilitate inequality. They argue that there are four core social contexts in which inequality may be generated: economic relations, power relations, socio-cultural relations, and affective relations. (Lynch, 2005, p. 134) Any one of these relations or a combination of them can create inequality. For example 'the inability to avail of educational opportunities on the same basis as other more economically advantaged students is itself an outcome of the unequal economic conditions between classes in the wider society. (Lynch, 2005) Similarly schools can generate inequality by their failure to respect difference due to religion, ethnicity, sexuality or ability.

3.12 Conclusion

Advocates of equality of condition are primarily concerned with how society is organised. The theory is based on the assumption that basic structures of society such as economic, political, cultural and social are organised to meet the needs of the dominant culture, while ignoring the needs of the minority groupings within society. Examples of the dominant culture are the preference for the private ownership of the means of production while ignoring the benefits that may accrue from cooperatives or state sponsored agencies. Other examples are institutions which give greater priority to the needs of men over those of women, (for example the under representation of women in politics) and institutions that fail to allocate rights and duties to the legitimate needs of ethnic grouping (e.g. immigrants and members of the travelling community) or to adapt to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Among those who advocate for equality of condition, the issue that is perhaps of most concern is their belief in the dominance of liberal

egalitarianism among policy makers and political parties. They are curious as to the reluctance of liberal egalitarianism to 'ignore the structured nature of inequality.'(Baker, et al 2009, p. 42)

There appears to be a presumption among policy makers that equality of opportunity legitimises inequality in socio-economic rights. However it is mistaken to read fair equality of opportunity, as if it were the first principle of justice and the panacea for inequality.

I would argue that it is a fair criticism to suggest that too often the emphasis on fair equality of opportunity masks the absence of serious analysis as to whether or not existing inequalities are to the benefit of all and in particular the least advantaged. However to suggest that Rawls theory of justice ignores the obligation to critique structures of society which are unjust does not do credit to his argument that any laws and institutions which are unjust no matter how efficient and well arranged must be reformed or abolished. (Rawls, 1971, p. 3)

Again, I would argue that both of these theories of justice have their own unique contribution to make to addressing inequality particularly on educational policy. The strength of Rawls's theory lies in his insistence on establishing the condition of fairness (as advocated in the veil of ignorance) coupled with the centrality of human rights and stressing the importance of securing a unanimous agreement. On the other hand of those who advocate for equality of conditions their strength lies in emphasising the structured nature of inequality, by revealing the ways that society organises institutions (particularly education) to fit the needs of the dominate culture and their insistence on recognising and resourcing the needs of the minority groupings.

Methodology & Research Findings

4.1 Research Question

Having worked for over twenty years with socio-economic disadvantaged communities and having witnessed firsthand the consequences of leaving school with no qualifications, motivated me to explore the issue of early school leaving. In 2008 DES reported on the retention rates for the 1999 cohort. These are the students who entered post primary school at the start of the 1999-2000 school year and who sat their Leaving Certificate no later than 2005. DES reported Dublin City having recorded the lowest school retention rate. This raised the question as to whether Dublin recording the lowest retention rate was confined to this particular cohort or was it an indicator that Dublin as a location was a significant variable in contributing to the level of school retention.

4.2 Methodology

The methodology chosen for this research is secondary quantitative research. The ERC with the approval of the DES supplied limited access to the database of the 1999 cohort. It does not include students entering privately funded educational institutions who intended to sit the State examination, (no adjustments have been made to take into account students who may have transferred to schools outside the State-aided system, emigrated or who may have died) but students who transfer from one State school to another are included and recorded in their school of origin. The information contained on the data base is supplied by the schools.

The database protects the anonymity of the particular school, but provides information on 59,571 pupils enrolled in 707 State-aided post-primary schools across the country. It records the size of each school, the county of location, the number of students who entered the 1999 cohort and the number of students who sat their Junior Certificate in 2002. It provides additional analysis on the gender split of the pupils, the school type, (i.e. Vocational, Community college, comprehensive or secondary). It provides information on the percentage of medical card holders in each school and records the overall performances score (OPS), English and Maths scores for 2002. Of the 707 schools, 695 had complete records, the remaining 12 were incomplete and for the purpose of the research were excluded from analysis. The retention figure refers to the difference between the numbers of students who entered the junior cycle of post primary and the numbers of students who sat the Junior Certificate. To monitor the relationship between location and poverty information from the ERC data base was compared to the survey on income and living conditions (SILC).

The SILC project is a European Union initiative in which each national government is asked to measure the percentage of the population who are at risk of poverty. Ireland has defined those at risk of poverty as people whose 'income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living that is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally.'(NAPS, 1997)

The household survey is carried out annually by the CSO. It collects information which covers a broad range of issues relating to income and living conditions of households and individuals. People are considered to be at risk of poverty if their disposable income is less than 60 per cent of the national median income. Included in the survey is the percentage of people living in each region that are at risk of poverty.

The survey data covers the period 2003-2009. However, the annual report did not provide the eight regional rates until the 2007 report. The

earliest figures available relating to regions was from SILC 2007. The figures for 2007-2009 were examined to see what if any difference these might make to the analysis. While there was some difference in the actual rate of poverty from year to year, the proportion of people at risk of poverty living in the region showed little variation. It would be preferable to have the 2002 figures but there is potential for further research using this model.

The purpose of this research was to explore early school leaving and in particular the Junior Certificate's retention rates of the 1999 cohort, with a view to examining the retention rates of schools in Dublin and comparing them with the national school retention rates. The origins of the particular interest in Dublin emanates from the fact that, in the 1999 school cohort, Dublin City recorded the lowest school retention rate in the country. At the time of beginning the research the 1999 cohort was the latest information available. However, in May 2011 new figures have been released including up to the 2004 cohort of students who intend sitting their State examinations no later than 2010 and these have been incorporated into the research.

The aim of the research is to explore the question as to whether location and, in particular Dublin, might be a significant variable in contributing to the level of school retention. The decision to focus on students who left school without completing the Junior Certificate examination is based on existing research which shows that young people who leave school without finishing the junior cycle are at a relatively greater disadvantage than those who leave after the Junior Certificate but before the Leaving Certificate.

4.3 Preliminary Research

The question of location and cities versus other locations being a significant variable in school retention has been the subject of some earlier research by the ERC. The ERC gave me access to this research which addresses the question as to 'whether or not the retention rates of schools in Dublin differs significantly from retention rates in other parts of the country, once the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students and the school sector is considered.' (Gilleece, 2011, p. 1) This research informed the decision as to whether or not to pursue further the question of location and in particular Dublin as a contributing factor in early school leaving.

As the database contains information on the percentage of Junior Certificate students with a medical card in each school, the county in which they are located and the school sector, it was possible to demonstrate the impact of the medical card on the retention rate between school, sector and county.

The research shows that, when taken on its own, location is not found to be significantly associated with retention, but when a two or three way classification was used it was shown to have a negative association. There were two possible ways of classifications; one may draw a comparison of retention rates between city schools versus other schools or Dublin schools versus all other locations.

A linear regression was carried out to see what impact if any the percentage of students with medical cards might have. They took three levels low, average and medium and plotted them against school in Dublin, the city and outside the city. As expected 'the percent medical card has a significant negative association with retention rates.' (Gilleece, 2011, p. 4)

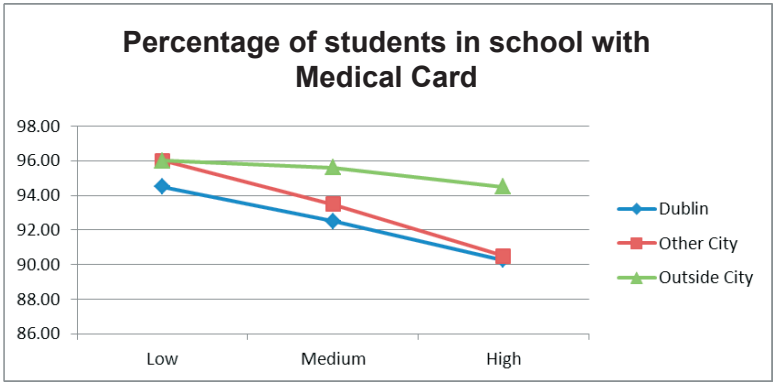


Figure 4.3 1 Source Gilleece, 2011

Figure 4.3.1 demonstrates a progressive negative impact of medical cards on retention rates in schools Dublin, other city and outside cities (rural though it may contain towns), and the gap between Dublin and other locations doubled as the percentage of medical cards increased. The core findings of the research is the discovery 'that higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation have a stronger negative effect on actual rates of early school leaving in city schools than in schools located outside the city.' (Gilleece, 2011, p. 8)

This supports earlier findings contained in the report of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills (JCES) which shows that socioeconomic deprivation impacts negatively on schools located in urban areas. (JCES, 2010)

Table 4:3.1 and figure 4:3.2 show that regardless of fee waiver which is equivalent to the medical card, schools in rural areas have the

same expected level of school retention. In the case of both urban and suburban schools there is a steady decline in expected retention rates as the rate of fee waiver increases. (JCES, 2010)

These findings are of particular interest to the research into Dublin as the evidence suggests that while the difference in retention between Dublin and the rest of the country cannot be attributed solely to location

Socio-economic impact on Schools			
Location	Fee waiver		
	Low	Average	High
Rural	1.632	1.792	1.952
Suburban	5.799	0.000	-5.799
Urban	1.035	-4.231	-9.497

Table 4:3.1 *Source: JCES, 2010*

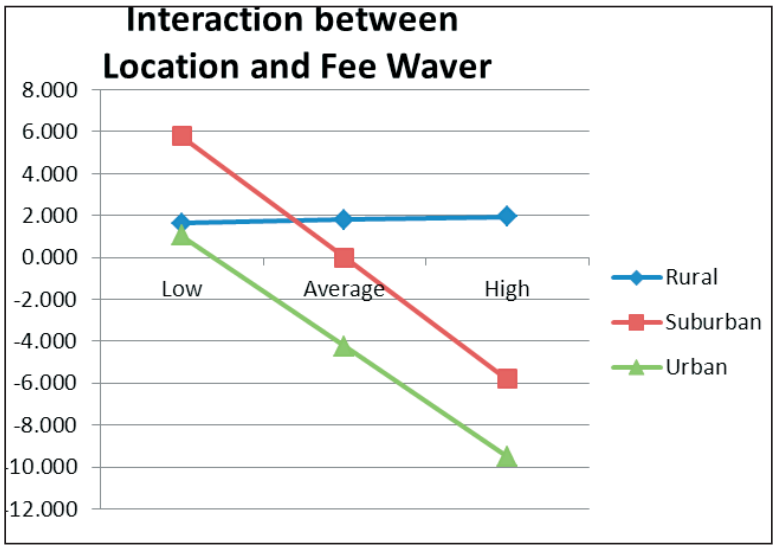


Figure 4.3.2 *Source: JCES, 2010*

there is evidence to suggest that the impact of socio-economic deprivation on city schools is far greater than on those outside Dublin. A further question raised by the ERC research is whether or not Dublin ought to be distinguished from other cities. This is the question the following research attempts to explore.

4.4 Cities versus other Locations

Drawing on the reports of the DES School Retention Rates, it was possible to track the patterns of school retention rates over a timeline and across the regions. The regions chosen correspond to the eight regional authorities established by the Local Government Act, 1991.

The Department of Education and Skills has published five reports on retention rates in second-level schools. In 2011 they provided data which allows us to see how the retention rates compare over time.

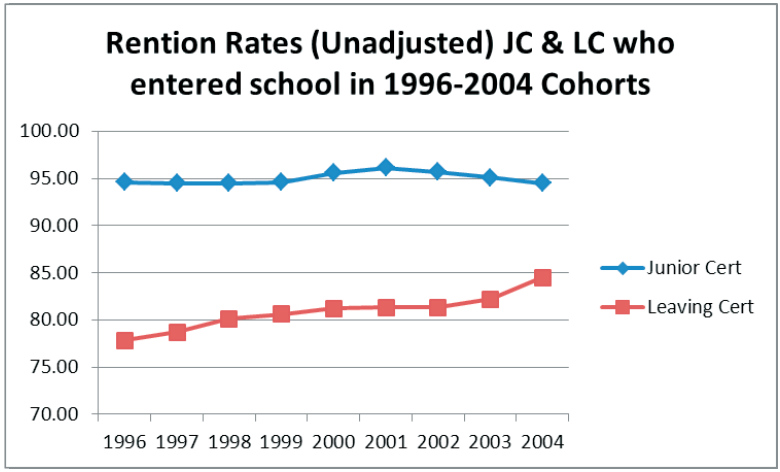


Figure 4:4.1 Leaving Cert school national retention figures *(compiled from DES report 2011)*

Figure 4.4.1 is a graph which compares the Junior and Leaving Certificate retention rates for students who first entered the State-aided school system in 1996 and those students who sat their Leaving Certificate examination no later than 2010. It shows that over this period for the Leaving Certificate there has been steady progress with a rise of more than six per cent in the number of students remaining on in school. However, the Junior Certificate has remained more or less consistent.

While welcoming the findings of the report that in 2010 one in eight students left school before completing senior cycle compared to one in five in 2001, the findings reveal that for students attending DEIS schools which is the initiative designed to lessen the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on student's performance, one in three young males and one in four young females leave school before completing senior cycle.

Figure 4.4.2 shows that between 2001 and 2010 there has been a 5

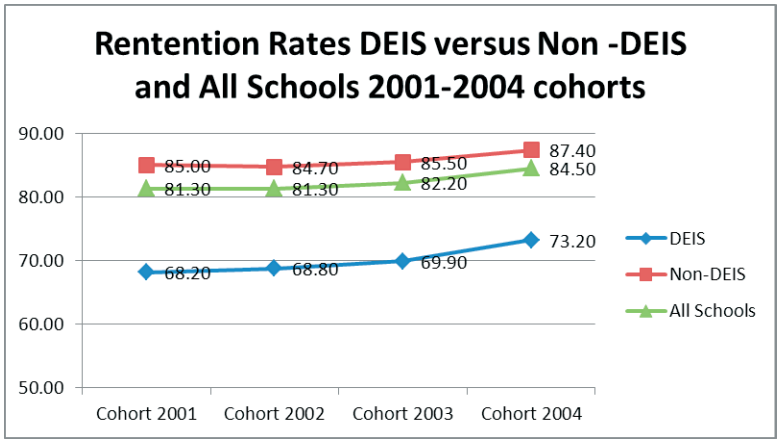


Figure 4.4.2 *Source: DES*

per cent increase in retention rate for DEIS schools. These figures show a moderate increase between cohorts 2001 and 2003 and a sharp rise in the 2004 cohort. The gap between DEIS and Non-DEIS schools has narrowed from 16.4 to 14.2 per cent, a decrease of 2.2 percent. This may be due in part to the downturn in the labour market due to the economic recession.

However while the graph shows the impact of socio-economic disadvantage it fails to show if there is any disparity of rates across the regions over the timeline and where they are located. Having established in the earlier ERC work (Gilleece, 2011) 'that higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation have a stronger negative effect on actual rates of early school leaving in city schools than in schools located outside the city' the findings of the research suggests that as Dublin City is the largest city it is more likely that as such it is having a stronger negative effect on school retention rates compared to other regions.

4.5 Dublin

Dublin was chosen for the purpose of this research because it recorded the lowest retention rate in the 1999 cohort and the objective of the research is to explore if this event is an indicator that Dublin as a location is a significant variable in contributing to the level of school retention. It is imperative then to establish a picture of the school retention rates across all regions over a time frame to see if Dublin's recording of the lowest rate is particular to the 1999 cohort or whether if it's part of a pattern.

DES in their publications provided the Leaving Certificate retention rate for each county for the cohorts 1996 to 2004. Based on that information it was possible to calculate the average retention rate for each

Ireland's Regions

Region	County	Region	County
Border	• Cavan	**Mid-East**	• Kildare
	• Donegal		• Meath
	• Leitrim		• Wicklow
	• Louth		
	• Monaghan		
	• Sligo		
Midlands	• Laoighis	**Mid-West**	• Clare
	• Longford		• Limerick City
	• Offaly		• Limerick County
	• Westmeath		• North Tipperary
West	• Galway City	**South- East**	• Carlow
	• Galway County		• Kilkenny
	• Mayo		• South Tipperary
	• Roscommon		• Waterford City
			• Waterford County
			• Wexford
Dublin	• Dublin City	**South-West**	• Cork City
	• Dublin South		• Cork County
	• Dun Laoighaire		• Kerry
	• Fingal		

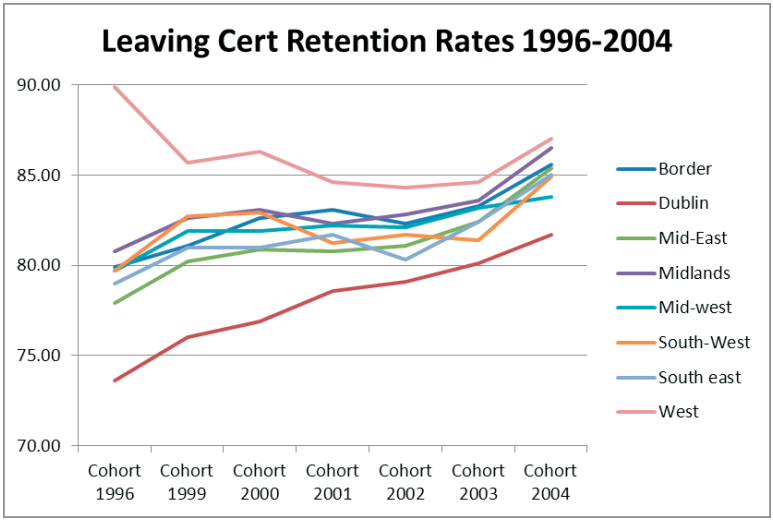
of the eight regions and to compile a national picture across the regions for students who entered the first year junior cycle in 1996 and sat their Leaving Certificate examination no later than 2010. Table 4:5.2 and figure 4:5.1 shows how the retention rates compare across the regions over the cycle of seven cohorts.

Figure: 4.5.1 shows that between the cohorts 1996 and 1999 there was a rise in retention rates of 2 per cent across all regions, followed by a moderate increase up the 2003 cohort and rose sharply in the cohort

Leaving Cert Retention rates 1996-2004
Compiled from Dept of Education and Skills Statistics

	Cohort 1996	Cohort 1999	Cohort 2000	Cohort 2001	Cohort 2002	Cohort 2003	Cohort 2004	Cohort 2004
Border	79.9	81.1	82.6	83.1	82.3	83.8	85.6	1.07
Dublin	73.6	76.0	76.9	78.6	79.1	80.1	81.7	1.11
Mid-East	77.9	80.2	80.0	80.8	81.1	82.4	85.4	1.10
Midlands	80.8	82.6	83.1	82.3	82.8	83.6	86.5	1.07
Mid-west	79.7	81.9	81.9	82.2	82.1	83.2	83.8	1.05
Southwest	79.7	82.7	82.9	81.25	81.7	81.4	84.9	1.07
South east	79.0	81.0	81.0	81.7	80.3	82.4	85.0	1.08
West	89.9	85.7	86.3	84.6	84.3	84.6	87.0	0.97

Table 4:5.2



2004. This sharp increase may be attributed to the economic recession of 2008 when a reduction in the labour market seems to have lessened the pull factor for early school leaving. However the Western region appears to be an exception, having beiqng the best performing region in 1996 recording 89.9 percent, the 2004 cohort records a rate of 87 per cent. The Western region retains its status as the region with the highest rate but is the only region to record a decrease.

Dublin shows the highest improvement, increasing its retention rate by 8.1 per cent, but continues to record the lowest retention rate of 81.7 per cent. This supports the earlier findings that retention rates within cities are lower. Over the timeline the gap between Dublin and the West, the highest and lowest regions, has narrowed from 16 per cent to 6 per cent.

Table 4:5.2 and figure 4:5.1 show that Dublin's recording of the lowest rate in the 1999 cohort is not confined to that cohort. The Cohorts 1996-2004 show Dublin consistently records the lowest retention rate.

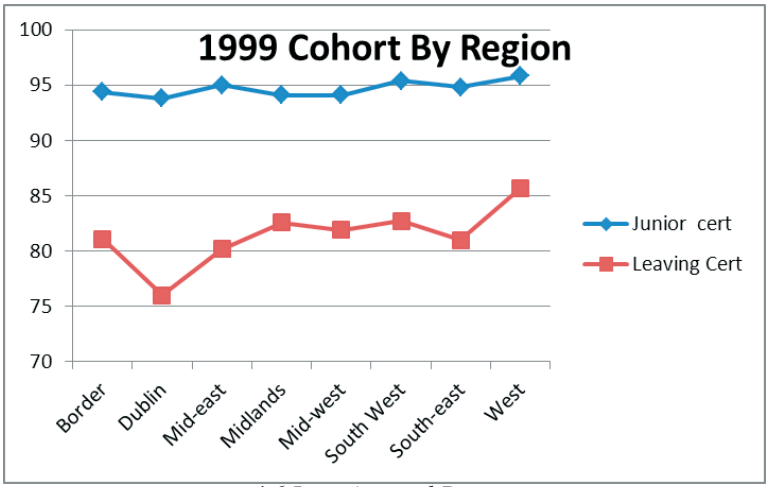
The data provided by the ERC is limited to the Junior Certificate examination data. However, when comparing the figures with the DES' data base the figures show no significant difference. In the figure 4: 5.2 below when comparing the junior certificate school retention rates across the eight regions for the 1999 cohort it is important to note that while the differential for the Junior Certificate examination are less pronounced than the Leaving Certificate rates they do provide an important

indicator of the regional spread of the retention rates for the Leaving Certificate.

Region	**ERC Data Base Junior Cert 1999 Cohort**	**DES Junior and Leaving cert Retention Rates 1999 Cohort**	
		JC	LC
Border	94.4	94.4	81.1
Dublin	93.9	93.8	76.0
Mid-east	95.0	95.0	80.2
Midlands	94.3	94.1	82.6
Mid-west	94.1	94.1	81.9
South West	95.4	95.4	82.7
South-east	94.8	94.8	81.0
West	95.8	95.8	85.7

Table: 4:5.3 Comparisons of ERC data with DES data

Taking the information recorded in the ERC database, the student population of the 1999 cohort was categorised by region. Similarly the population of students who left school before sitting the Junior



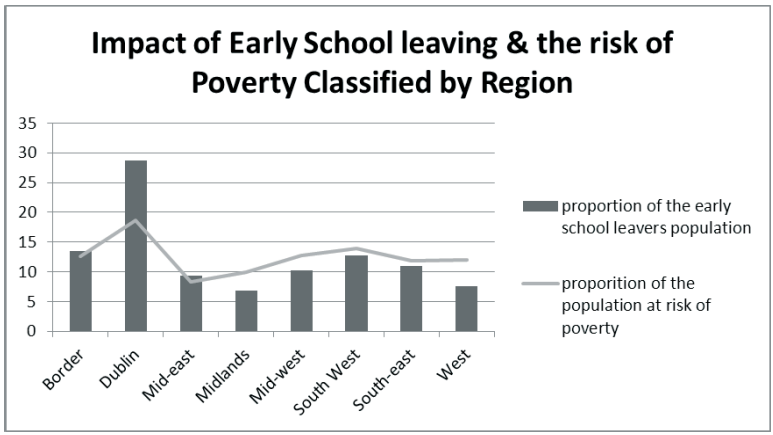
4.6 Location and Poverty

Region	proportion of the school population living in the Region	proportion of the early school leavers population by Region	Ratio	Proportion of the population at risk of poverty	% of Students who left without sitting Junior Cert	Ratio
Border	12.9	13.5	1.05	14.9	5.6	2.66
Dublin	25.2	28.7	1.14	19.8	6.1	3.25
Mid-east	10.1	9.4	0.93	6.1	5.0	1.22
Midlands	6.4	6.8	1.06	10.9	5.7	1.91
Mid-west	9.3	10.2	1.10	9.8	5.9	1.66
South West	15.0	12.8	0.85	14.7	4.6	3.2
South-east	11.4	11.0	0.97	12.6	5.2	2.42
West	9.7	7.6	0.78	11.2	4.2	2.67
State	100	100		100		

Table 4:6.1 complied from ERC Data Base & SILC 2007

Certificate examination was also categorised by region. They were then compared to observe the ratio between the school intake and those who left school before sitting the Junior Certificate. A similar exercise was carried out to monitor the relationship between location and poverty; the population of people at risk of poverty in each region was compared to the actual percentage of students in each region who left school without sitting the Junior Certificate. The proportion of people at risk of poverty was taken from SILC.

The findings of the research in Table 4: 6.1 show that Dublin with the largest proportion of the population at risk of poverty (19.8%) as one would expect has the highest proportion of early school leavers (28.7%). The Borders records the second highest proportion of school leavers and people at risk of poverty and the South-Western registers the third highest proportion of early school leavers and people at risk of poverty. However Figure 4:6:1 shows that Dublin experiences the highest impact of poverty on early school leaving. It is the only region to register a significant number of early school leavers above the line indicating the proportion of people at risk of poverty. With the exception of the Mid-East and the Borders all other regions register early school leavers below the line.



Source: ERC database Figure 4:6. 1

This is further evidence of the relationship that exists between socio-economic disadvantage and school retention rates. Dublin and the Mid-West region which include the cities of Dublin and Limerick register the highest ratio between the proportion of early school leavers and the proportion of school population suggesting that the impact of

poverty on school retention rates is greater in the City which is supported by the earlier research of the ERC which showed a 2 per cent higher impact of poverty on city schools.

The data from the ERC data base of the 1999 cohort shows that 3200 students left school without sitting the Junior Certificate in 2002. Among the students who left early almost three in ten resided in Dublin even though only one in four of the national student population reside there. Within Dublin one in two of those students resided in the city and three out of five are young males. The most recent findings shows that among the school retention rates for students who started post-primary in 2004 and who sat their Leaving Certificate no later than 2010 the Cities of Limerick, Dublin and Cork recorded the lowest rates. (DES, 2011)

4.7 Summary of Key Findings

The 1999 cohort consisted of 59,571 pupils enrolled in 707 State-aided post-primary schools. Over three thousand left without obtaining a qualification. There is strong evidence to support the proposition that the disadvantage associated with poverty and social exclusion assumes a multiplier effect when large numbers of pupils in a school are from a similar background. (DEIS, 2005) For example, evidence shows that the percent medical card had a significant negative association with retention rates and a higher negative impact on school retention in city schools.

The research shows Dublin experienced the highest impact of poverty on early school leaving and is consistently the region with the lowest school retention rate. It has the largest proportion of the population at risk of poverty and the highest ratio of early school leavers to poverty. Three in ten early school leavers reside in Dublin, one in two of whom live in the city. Starting from a low base it is the region that experienced the highest improvement.

Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 Introduction:

This chapter will give an overview of where we are with regard to the issue of early school leaving. It will then suggest an alternative vision and will make recommendations as to how we might arrive there.

5.2 Scan of where are we

It could be said that the level of education attainment effectively operates as a determinant of the level of participation one may expect to have in society. For example, research shows that education attainment

is a determinant of the level of income a person can expect to receive over a lifetime or one's place in the social stratification of society. It may be a factor in the choice of where one lives, who one socialises with or what school one's children attend. It may also contribute to a person's physical and mental health. (CSO, 2010)

This thesis has argued that those who leave school without sitting the Junior or Leaving certificate present a significant challenge to education and our society. However, of particular concern are the more than three thousand students, who leave school each year without completing the Junior Certificate. Among their peers, these young people are the most disadvantaged group, they are most likely to experience low wages, long periods of unemployment and are the least likely to engage in further education at an adult stage. (Byrne and Smyth 2010) Among the population of early school leavers Dublin is over represented, with nearly one thousand living in the Dublin, half of whom live in the city.

This group of early school leavers presents the greatest challenge. Despite numerous initiatives there has been no significant change in the number of young people who leave school with no qualification. Research shows that over a fourteen- year period (1996 to 2004 cohorts) though we have seen significant gains in the number of students staying on to complete their Leaving Certificate the figures for this particular group have remained constant. These children didn't share in benefits associated with economic and social policies.

Again research shows the negative impact of socio-economic disadvantage on a student's educational outcomes. However, the Nordic countries of Finland, Norway and Iceland continue to lead the way in how to overcome these disadvantages by designing a more equitable education system and a more equal society. Research shows that they consistently have a below average impact of socio-economic background on performance and a below average underlying inequality. Ireland on the other hand sits alongside Greece, Spain, and Lithuania with an educational system, that has an above average underlying inequality and a below average impact of socio-economic background.

5.3 A Vision for the future

Chapter three which expounds on two theories of justice offers a framework for an egalitarian society, through respecting the basic rights of citizens and providing equality of opportunities. The principle of equality of opportunity is the guiding principle of the Irish educational policy for addressing educational disadvantage. However, among policy makers some argue that equality of opportunity legitimises inequality in our education system. I have argued that to read fair equality of opportunity as if it were the panacea for inequality is a misunderstanding of

Rawls's theory. However, it is a fair criticism to suggest that too often the argument for inequality of opportunity masks the absence of serious analysis as to whether or not the existence of inequalities are to the benefit of all and in particular the least advantaged.

Persistent early school leaving presents a significant challenge to the expectation that society ought to be organised in a way that ensures the fair distribution of rights and duties for the benefit of its citizens. The evidence from the Nordic countries suggests that the way to tackle inequality in educational outcomes requires a two pronged approach. It requires policies that address the underlying inequality in society and the impact of socio-economic background on student's performance. The following recommendations are guided by the need to address both these issues.

5.4 Recommendations

5.5 Introduction

Boldt, Fagan and Wallace are among a host of researchers who reject any attempt to imply that it is children and their families who are responsible for their failure to complete school. These recommendations are shaped by the evidence that students are 'creditable witness' that 'early school leaving is a particularly serious manifestation of wider inequality in education, which is embedded in and caused by structures in the system itself.'(Healy, et al, 2011, P.176)

5.6 Recommendations re: Income distribution

a. That a review of policies to address the underlying inequalities relating to income distribution is undertaken.
b. That a fairer taxation system is introduced, by increasing the tax ratio to GDP
c. That the percentage of GDP spent on Education is increased to the level of the OECD average, particular for primary level pupils.

This is supported by evidence within the literature review 'that income inequality is more closely associated with the policies and institutions that govern the labour market than the distribution of cognitive skills' (PISA, 2009)

5.7 Recommendations re: Fifteen to sixteen-year olds

d. That this group of young people be the focus of new policy initiatives to encourage them to remain on in school and to improve the oral-language competencies of students so that they can participate fully in education and in Irish life and society

e. That education focuses on the outcome of the student acquiring competencies and skills and not on state examinations. Therefore I recommend that on-going assessment is introduced.

Despite numerous initiatives there has been no significant change in the number of young people who leave school without completing the junior cycle. Presently those who attend school for three years but who do not sit the Junior Certificate leave school with no recognition of the competencies achieved.

5.8 Recommendations re: Literacy and numeracy

f. That our investment in literacy and numeracy is increased within the school system and also among the adult population who have low levels of attainment, many of whom are the parents of early school leavers.
g. That a better culture of reading among young people is fostered.

'Children with low levels of attainment in literacy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and to leave the educational system' (DEIS, 2005, p. 35) There is also evidence that 'parental involvement, especially in areas of socio-economic deprivation, does not just benefit the children and school – it is a crucial aspect of lifelong learning.' (DEIS, 2005, p. 40)

5.9 Recommendations re: Early childhood education

h. That the continuation and development of (ECCE) is progressed.

Early school provision is recommended to maximise benefit from education for children from disadvantaged background. Research into children's vocabulary shows that students from different socio-economic background begin to diverge early on and that when children enter school the impact of socio-economic background on both cognitive and behaviour is already well established. (OECD, 2010)

5.10 Recommendations re: Impact of city and rural

i. That a review of current school enrolment policies that facilitate the separation of schools by social class to one that fosters a balanced composition among the school intake is undertaken.
j. That further research be undertaken to review the implications for policy of the higher negative impact associated with socio-economic disadvantage on city schools.

The disadvantage associated with poverty and social exclusion assumes a multiplier effect when larger numbers of pupils in a school are from a similar background.

(DEIS, 2005) The research carried out on the 1999 cohort for this thesis supports this view. The percent medical card in a school has a significant negative association with retention rates. It also showed socio-economic disadvantage has higher negative impact on schools retention in city schools.

5.11 Recommendations re: Teacher student relationship

k. That more research is undertaken into 'how some schools and communities are able to produce conditions that permit young adolescents to flourish in their leaning.' (Smyth, 2005)
l. That ongoing professional development is provided to build on school leadership and effective school self-evaluation.
m. Recommend the need to re-enforce, in initial and on-going professional development of teachers the importance of both acquiring and developing assessment skills of student's abilities.

The chapter on literature review showed that the process of disengagement by early school leavers calls for a reworking of relationships in schooling, citing Margonis Smyth argues that it calls for a 'move from a position of 'student resistance towards one of educative engagement.' Smyth argues that this raises issues not just for the teacher/ student relationship, but also for the school governance, disciplinary and curricula structures.

5.12 Recommendations re: Streaming

n. That a policy is introduced which discourages the use of streaming and promotes the use of mixed ability grouping.

The practice of ability grouping or streaming is a practice which impacts negatively on early school leavers as it reinforces social class difference, particularly in boys and is more prevalent in disadvantaged schools and in effect places a ceiling on a student's potential (Smyth, et al 2004). It may also have the effect of lowering expectations for both students and teachers.

5.13 Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the following question. Is the fact that Dublin had the lowest school retention rate, for students in the 1999 cohort (i.e., those who entered post-primary school in the 1999-2000 school year) confined to this cohort or an indication that location in Dublin a variable that is significantly related to school retention? The choice of secondary quantitative research shows that Dublin experienced the highest impact of poverty on early school leaving and is consistently the region with the lowest school retention rate.

The thesis also assessed how equitable the Irish school system is, showing through research the negative impact of socio-economic disadvantage on students' educational outcomes.

The literature review revealed that characteristics of a school also contribute to young people leaving school early and perhaps the choice of qualitative research is better suited to answer this question. This highlights the merits of qualitative or quantitative or a mixture of both in the choice of methodology of our research.

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Glossary and Abbreviations

CMRS: Conference of Major Religious Superiors
CSO: Central Statistics Office
DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES: Department of Education and Skills
ECCE: Early Childhood Care and Education
ERC: Educational Research Centre, Drumcondra
ESRI: Economic and Social Research Institute
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
HEA: Higher Education Authority
JCES: Joint Committee on Education and Skills
NACD: National Advisory Committee on Drugs
NAPS: National Action Plan for Social Inclusion
OECD: Office for Economic Co-operation and Development
QNHS: Quarterly National Household Survey
PISA: Programme for International Students Assessment
SILC: Survey on Income and Living Conditions

It began quite a few years ago…

Memories of Sr Agnes Goodwin DC

It started when I was about 19 and I went away to make a retreat and I was away only a weekend and when I came home, Father Myerscough, who was running the parish at the time because the Parish Priest had gone on a holiday for 3 months, had been visiting my mother and my mother was very distressed because I was out of the house. She couldn't take it in that I'd gone only for the weekend though it had been explained to her but she had forgotten. Father Myerscough said to me "This is not the time for you to go running after nuns or going to a convent", he said. "This is the time when you should be with your mother." He said "It's your first duty, actually, to stay with your mother so forget about the convent, forget about the vocation, forget about going to nuns because this is where you must be – your Mother needs you now." So it was there I stayed.

My father retired at the same time so that he would be at home to look after my mother. They were very close and my father was very concerned. She went away to a nursing home. The doctor advised her to go to a nursing home and they would try gold injections. She had constant pain in her back and it was the pain that was worrying her. She was about six weeks in the nursing home and having gold injections, and then the doctor came to see my father and he said that she had not responded in any way to the treatment and as it was very expensive, he advised my father to bring her home. So my mother came home. She was perfectly happy to be back home. She was unhappy away. For a while she wasn't too bad but the disease that had got her in the spine was creeping slowly and taking more possession of the uses of her limbs so she got that she couldn't walk in the end. My father hired a bath chair and used to take her out a lot. He was at home most of the time with her. However, I couldn't possibly leave home because I was the only girl – I had 3 brothers but there were no other girls to help.

War work

So that is where I was for about 18 years before my mother went gradually worse and then she went back into the nursing home where she died. That was not until 1940 by which time I was 34. I had given up all idea, anyway, of going to be a nun and I had my papers claiming me to give up my job, which they said wasn't necessary, and do war work. It was the middle of the war – the war was raging. We were all,

more or less, women that were available for work, who were asked to do war work. So I got a job in a factory but I'm afraid I only lasted 10 days. I used to faint a lot and the management sent for me one day and asked me to leave because I was a danger to myself, first of all, and to anyone that was with me at the time of the faint because I used to collapse just where I stood, and if I fell on the machinery I could do a lot of damage to myself and to the machinery, and to perhaps other people that were there too. He said he was sorry, but I would have to go. So I went and I was at home for a while and then I thought, "Well I must get something to do – I can't be here doing nothing." So I answered an advert in the 'The Universe' for a sewing mistress in a home. I didn't know where it was, it was a box number, so I answered it and I applied for the job. I got a letter back from a Sister Mary with a lot of letters after her name, and I wondered who she could be, and what high qualifications she must have, to have all these letters following her name. And I was a little bit puzzled about it. However, she told me in the letter that the job I had written for was taken but that they could offer me training as a probationer nurse, and that they'd be glad to hear from me again. So I wrote back and I said that I felt I couldn't do any nursing of any kind as I wasn't a nurse and I'd just been looking after my Mother for a number of years, and I felt I wanted to change my occupation. So that was the end of that story.

First impressions; Croft Castle

Two weeks after, I started a Novena to Our Lady of Fatima – the Novena was 28 days. Just before the Novena finished, I saw another advert in the paper which was for a mistress – it didn't say sewing mistress, it just said a mistress, and this was another box number. So I wrote off for this position and I got a letter back from another Sister Mary – quite different writing but with all the same kind of letters after her name. And I thought, "Well, I wonder did they go to the same college or do they know one another?"

I couldn't make it out at all. However, the address for this letter was a Croft Castle in Hereford. So anyway, I wrote back and I said that I didn't know what kind of a mistress they wanted – I wasn't a teacher. If they were looking for a teacher I was sorry I was not a teacher, but perhaps they'd let me know exactly what kind of a mistress they needed. So I got a letter back from the same Sister Mary saying that it was a sewing mistress they were looking for, to help look after a group of children that were evacuated, and it was to work with another Sister who had charge of the children, but she needed help as well. Anyway, that was what it was. I wrote back and I said that I was very interested in the situation but I would like to come and see her and see the place

– I had no idea where it was. She said I'd be very welcome, any time I wanted to come. So I got a friend and her husband to take me one Sunday. I hadn't ever been to this place – I didn't know where it was.

But a long time before this happened, I remember having a dream and I was on a country road, admiring the scenery, and I stopped at a drive that had a broken fort, like a moat. I remember an avenue of trees and a long, long road. I hadn't the foggiest idea where it was and I never thought any more about it until we were going along the road on the way and I said, "I wonder if that dream I had had anything to do with this – I wonder if I'd recognise it?"

As we were going along the gentleman who was driving the car said, "Are we anywhere near the place?" I said, "I've no idea – where are we?" So he said "We're approaching Hereford but I don't exactly know what spot it is at the moment." "Well," I said, "maybe it's along here – I don't know." So after a long run, he took another turn and we went down another road, and it was rather a rough kind of road but it was wide, and as we were going along we came to a broken gateway and a kind of a small entrance like a square and I said, "Stop here a minute, let me look at this. I seem to recognise this – I seem to have seen this somewhere." Then I said, "Let's get out and have a look." We got out of the car and we walked along a few yards and I said, "Oh look! This could be it – this looks as though it leads to somewhere." So I said, "Could we go up here and see?" and he said, Yes." We started to go up the drive and coming down the drive were two nuns in these big floppy hats and big flowing robes, sweeping the floor, their skirts were so long. "Turn back," I said, "I'm not going anywhere near these people, they're mad – these are mad women!; I'm not going anywhere near them." So he said, "I'm not going back now, and I can't turn round in the middle of this drive – I've got to go up to the top to turn round." We went up the drive past the two ladies, and they both began to wave. I said, "Well, I don't know them. Whoever they are I don't know them!"

We went on until we got to the building which was a huge, big grey looking stone building, and it had round turrets at the top on the roof, and a big wide open front. I got out of the car and said, "Let me just see who lives here." So I rang the door bell and another of these nuns came to the door, and as she opened the door out came a whole horde of children – all the children were laughing and joking and all clutching a big orange each, running out onto the drive and across into the field. And I thought, "Well, they seem happy enough, anyway." And so the nun, (I supposed she was a nun), then said to me, "Were you looking for someone?"

"I'm looking for Sister Mary. She wrote to me about a situation here.

I applied for a job that they advertised in the 'Universe'; a mistress. So that's why I'd like to see Sister Mary."

"Well I'm Sister Mary."

"Oh!" I said. "Good afternoon, I think it must be afternoon now as we left home about half past ten this morning. It's you I really came to see to talk about the situation, and to have a look at the place and see exactly what I would be doing."

"Well, come in."

So I said, "Can my friends come in because they have brought me here?" "Certainly," and she brought them in, and she indicated a chair for us to sit on. And I said, "Well I'd like to have a look around."

"I'll take you to some of the rooms but I can't take you to all of the rooms. I can show you where you'd be working, and I could show you our Chapel, and I could show you where the children would be having their lunch, and all their meals but beyond that it's private."

So I thanked her. She took us first of all into this big hall and she said, "The children come here from different homes, mostly from London and the borders. All these children are evacuated. Some of them have lost their parents or their parents are either doing army work, or are in the army, and they have to be evacuated from the London area, so this is where they are housed at the moment; and we, the Daughters of Charity, look after them. We bring them up. Their parents visit them when they're free – if they've got any parents. A lot of them have no parents, the parents have been blitzed and some of them have got relations of some kind, and others have none. So this is the work we want done, helping with these children."

Then she took us along to the Chapel which was magnificent – a lovely big Chapel, full of light, it was really, really very nice. Then she took us along to the children's dining room and that was a huge big place, too. And then she said, "Now I'll bring the Sister along that you'll be working with if you decide to come, so you may as well meet her and I'd like her to see you too." So she took us back into the front hall and then she went to get the Sister that I'd be working with. This Sister came. She looked very timid to me. And she introduced her as 'Sister Angela'. She said, "I'd be very glad to have your help." I said, "Well I'd like to come, too, but there are a few items that I'd want to bring with me. First of all I have a little dog that I have had for 8 years and I don't want to part with her, and I'd like to bring her with me." The nun then immediately said, "Oh I'm afraid of dogs. I really am afraid of dogs. I don't think I could do with a dog." "Well," I said, "there are dogs and dogs! This dog is a small dog. She is a toy dog really, but she's a good little house dog. She's had to be. She's more playful than anything. She's not a vicious dog. She doesn't bite and

she doesn't run after people. She plays very quietly. She loves playing with a ball, and she'd be very happy with the children."

"Oh, is she very big?"

"No,she's very small."

"Oh well, then, as long as you keep her with you. I don't want her running all over the house."

"No, she wouldn't be doing that. She wouldn't go far from where I am actually. She likes going for walks and she's happy with children." "And", I said, "I want to bring a sewing machine because I do a lot of sewing for myself. I suppose I'd still be able to do some in my free time. So I'd like to bring that. And I have a bicycle – my way of getting about is cycling. I have two actually but I'd only bring one with me, the other one I'd give away to someone."

"Certainly. The bicycle would be very useful for you. It's a long way to the shops."

So it was decided that I'd bring it and I said, "Now I can't come straight away because I've got things to see to at home – I've my brother to see to and find him somewhere to live and the house will have to be sold, and that'll take a little while to settle all that business. I have my other brother – there'll be two brothers to help me. The one is married and has his own place, but the other one is at home with me." She agreed with that and she said I was to let her know when I could come.

Then she said it was getting late in the day, getting on for half past one, and would we like a bit of lunch, or had we had some? And I said we hadn't had anything – we hadn't stopped, we'd been trying to find the place. So she asked us to come back to the dining room and she gave us a meal. And then she left us with Sister Angela. Angela kind of sat and chatted with us. So we had the lunch and then we walked round the grounds. We just saw a little bit of the grounds and the woods where the children would be playing, and the big field, and they had a pond So then we bid them good afternoon and we came away. That was the end of that Sunday.

Settling matters at home and moving to Croft

Then I had to bring my eldest brother to work with my other brother. They got on with disposing of the property and I left everything in their hands to do it. I didn't bother with it. I went to stay with some friends until this was all finished. And then I was free to go. So I went to Croft on the 8th of February, my mother's wedding day. I thought it would be nice to go on a day that had been dear to my mother. I took my little dog with me – Topsy her name was. She looked like a Pekinese but she wasn't a Pekinese – her nose was too sharp. But she was a cross

between a Sylium (Sealyham) and a Kern (Cairn). She was not a large dog. She was a very dainty little dog, really. But she was a very good house dog and she was useful there. She loved the children and the children were very kind with her. They took her out and she played with them. She'd skip with them in the skipping rope and really was very happy. The children took to her very much, which I was glad about, because it was company for her when I was busy. We had long walks together in the evenings and she used to go for walks with the children. I used to take the children for long walks on a Sunday and Saturday when there was no school, but they went to school in the house. They had their own school there. And I was very happy there.

There was an old priest there. He was Chaplain. I used to talk to him a lot. He liked company, too. He liked to come down and have a chat. His name was Quinn, Father Quinn. He was very old – I don't quite know his age but he was well over 70. He wasn't a very strong man, and he was there because it was less active work for him to be with the Sisters as the Sisters' Chaplain. And there was another priest staying there. We used to call him John Bosco because he was very like St John Bosco. He was a very nice priest. He had a beautiful singing voice and one night I took a walk down through the woods and as I was walking along I could hear music in the distance and I thought it must be some choir somewhere. I listened and it was the Mass that was being sung, parts of the Mass, and I was just spellbound listening to it because it sounded so far away in the woods, and yet it had the music of the trees with it. It was a lovely blend, it was almost like an orchestra. I listened for a long time until it gradually died away. And then I came home. It was getting quite late – round about 9.00 pm in the evening. As I was walking up the drive I could hear someone, a heavy foot fall behind me. So I waited a while to see who was coming along and it was the priest coming along and so I said, "Hello Father."

He said, "You're out late aren't you, with that dog?"

"Oh well I often take her for a walk in the evening, it's so pleasant anyway."

"I was out walking, too"

"Did you hear that music in the woods, Father?"

"No. Did you?"

"Yes, it sounded like parts of the Mass."

He just laughed and he said, "Oh, is that what it was?" And he didn't let on anything to me as to what it was although it was himself singing, but I didn't know that at the time. It was later when I found out. He used to go at night outside and sing when he was practising for something. I don't really know, but that was what happened that evening.

Vocation

I used to go to Confession to Father Quinn every Saturday. He used to hear the children's confessions and I used to tag on with them. He was always very nice, and then one night when I went into Confession he said, "I want you to come up and see me." And I said, "Why, Father?" He said, "Come up one evening. I want to have a chat with you." So I went up to him and he was asking me about what I was doing and why was I there; he said "Do you know, I'm interested, I want to know why you're here." "Well," I said, "I have to do something. I was doing army work but I had to give up what I was doing. I was a hairdresser actually and the Home Office said it was a very unnecessary occupation – it wasn't needed and war work was needed, and I should do war work." I told him that I hadn't been able to do factory work because I wasn't strong enough. I didn't know why, but I was advised not to; "This was a job that I could do. It is helping the children and that is considered, during the war, to be a vital thing. It is the only way I could be exempt from factory work. So then I came here." I told him I'd written to two places and that the other place was at Howard Hill in Sheffield and that the job had been taken. So I didn't have to go, I'd no idea what it was like. "They wanted me to go as a probationer nurse but I didn't want to do any nursing. I'd been nursing my mother for a good many years and I'd had enough of it. So I came here. Why, Father?"

He said, "Well, I was very curious, because I think you've got a vocation, you've got a calling of a kind." "Oh!" I said, "Father, I might have had a long time ago but not now. I'm 35. I'm going on 36. I don't think anybody would want me at my age."

"Have you ever tried?"

"No. I tried when I was 19 but it wasn't feasible because my mother needed me at home and I couldn't go."

"Where were you going?"

"Well, I really hadn't made up my mind. I was only at the beginning of finding out what would be suitable for me and what training I'd have to do etc, but it didn't come off because a Father Myerscough told me my place was at home to help look after my mother."

And then he wanted to know more about that so I went into a few more details about it with him, and he said, "I still think you've got a vocation and you're running away from God. You're turning your back on God." And I said "No, I'm not. I serve God in my own way." He said, "You think about what I've told you."

Illness and devotion

So in the May of that year I got quite poorly with quinsy. The nuns were very worried and they brought in their doctor. He examined me

and he said I was to drink water. I said, "I can't swallow anything because my throat was too sore." He said, "You must try and drink some water." He then said to the nun that I was running a very high temperature and I should not be with the children at that time. I should be in a room to myself and resting my throat. He said, "I will come and see her tomorrow, in fact, I will leave this prescription for you to get these tablets and if you can try and get one down. Failing that I will send some powdered tablets. I'll give you a prescription for that – it might be easier to dissolve it in the water. That would be easier to drink."

The nuns told me what Doctor Gray had said and I went to bed. I couldn't sleep so I prayed in the night light to Our Lady. I had her statue with me. I prayed to Our Blessed Lady to cure my throat. The next morning when I woke up my throat was better and yet I had taken nothing. So I got up and went to Mass. The Sisters saw me at Mass and said, "Miss, you should be in bed." And I signed to them that my throat was better and they couldn't believe it. Doctor Gray came in around 11 o'clock and he was amazed to see me up. I said, "It's all right doctor, the throat's gone." He said, "Let me have a look." So I opened my mouth to show him my throat and he said, "Right enough, there is no sign of quinsy. What did you do, what did you take?" I said, "I didn't take anything. I prayed to Our Lady." He said, "Our Lady must have listened to you." He then turned to the Sisters and he said, "That is quite remarkable. I can't really believe it. If you are better it's all right."

I was well enough for a long time and towards the end of November, I think it was, my throat got bad again and it was just the same. Quinsy came up and it was choking me. They brought in Doctor Gray again and he said, "Now listen to me. You'd better pray to that lady again that you prayed to before and see if she'll do the miracle again. I can't do anything but give you these tablets in the powder form that you must swallow. You must put the tablet in the water and try to drink it. That would help to take the inflammation out and bring down the quinsy. But apart from that I can do nothing." So I took the powder, put it in a drop of water and dissolved it away. I tried to drink it. It tasted very bitter but I couldn't swallow it. It wouldn't go down my throat. I tried to gargle with it and I couldn't even do that because I couldn't make any noise to gargle. My throat was tight, burning hot and swollen. The nuns said, "You had better go to bed again and pray to Our Lady".

This was around the 7th of December. At this time, it had been sore for about 10 days nearly before I said anything about it and then when it was getting bad I thought I had best get something done. I went to

bed. I lit my candle, as I do every night, and I prayed to Our Lady. I couldn't sleep and I was praying the biggest part of the night and eventually I must have gone to sleep.

I woke up the next morning quite early and I was able to swallow and I felt better. So I promised Our Lady the night before, when I was praying, that if she cured my throat again I would write and offer my services to the community and ask if they thought I had a vocation, and would they accept me into the community. I promised Our Lady I would do this.

The next morning, 8th December, I got up and I went to Mass and the same thing happened again. The nuns came to me saying I had no business to be at Mass with a throat like that, and I said, "It's better." They couldn't believe it and when they eventually did, of course, they realised I had prayed to Our Lady and I had big devotion to Our Blessed Lady. I always have had all my life. When I was small we used to go into the Chapel and I used to sing the latest song I had learnt to Our Lady and I used to say, "I am singing this for you. I want you to hear this." And I used to sing the song. If I had been doing any dancing, and had learnt any new dances I used to dance for her. I used to always think that she was real and I used to gaze up at the statue which was right out of my reach. I used to think that she really was a body, not just a piece of plaster and I knew she could hear me, and I used to really believe that Our Lady was there and that she was listening to what I was saying to her. I used to say a few prayers then and say goodbye to Our Lady and I used to say, "I will come and see you again." I was quite young when this used to happen and the Chapel was empty when I used to go in. I knew I wasn't seen and used to feel quite comfortable and safe. I really thought that Our Lady was right there, listening to me. So I used to think back on this when I got older, thinking how foolish I was but really it wasn't foolishness, it was real childish simplicity because I really believed Our Lady was alive and to me she always is alive. I just can't think of her any other way. She is just there. So it is quite easy for me to talk to Our Lady. I could talk to her better than I could talk to my own mother. I suppose Our Lady really loved me. I suppose she loved my openness with her because I was very open and I would tell her everything. But that was a long time ago.

A little medal

Now I suppose I should really tell you about something else that happened during my life.

A few years before all this happened I had been to a dance and I was coming home. I thought I saw a shilling on the step when I was

coming down the steps to the hall. My brother used to meet me and I said to him, "Pick up that shilling down there!" And he said, "No, I won't." So I said, "If you won't, I will." I picked up what I thought was a shilling and it wasn't, it was a medal. I looked at the medal and I couldnlt think who it was on the medal. Pope Pius XI was on one side of the medal and a lady's face in a kind of a black veil was on the other side. I tried to find out who she was. I asked several priests if they knew what the medal meant and who was it and nobody could tell me. I used to look through the pamphlets in the Chapel at home to see if there was any picture on the front of the book that would resemble this medal. But I looked for a long time and could never find anything like it at all. So I put the medal away in a tin oxo box that I used to keep buttons and press-studs in. I put it in my sewing basket and never bothered any more about it. I never thought any more about this medal until a good while later. I wish I had it now so that I could see what it was. I might be able to ask the nuns about it. But, however, I put it out of my mind because it was at home and I was here in Croft Castle so I never thought any more about the medal at that time. But I wrote to the Provincial of the Daughters of Charity and I stated that I would like to enter the community if they told me what I had to do in order to do that.

Joining the Community

I got a letter back to say that they were quite interested in my letter, and they would be very happy to receive me in the community providing my background was all right. They asked if I could let them have my birth certificate and my mother's marriage lines. I had neither, so I wrote to the parish priest at home. I asked him if it was possible to get them for me and I said I don't know what happened to them. I thought that they were in the house but I left it to my brothers to do everything when it came to clearing everything up. After a short while I got a letter back from him with my mother's marriage lines and my birth certificate. I sent them to Mill Hill and I heard nothing more until the 17th of February and I think I had written to them before Christmas. The letter said that I was accepted and I was to go to postulate at the Daughters of Charity, Howard Hill, Sheffield. They said I could choose the day myself when I wanted to go. I just had to let them know. I thought to myself, "it is the 17th of February today. I will go on the 17th of March, the feast of St Patrick, as I had lived with St Patrick all my life. I had gone to St Patrick's Church, St Patrick's school, and I really felt I belonged to St Patrick. One of the Sisters said to me "Miss, don't go on St Patrick's Day; go on the 15th, the day of Mother Louise."

"I don't know Mother Louise, I don't know of her but I know St Patrick, I have lived with St Patrick all my life. No harm has come to me so I'll go on the feast of St Patrick."

"I wish you would go on the feast of St Louise. It will be lovely to go on the feast of St Louise."

"I have never heard of her. I don't know who she is. I will settle for St Patrick."

So I wrote to Mill Hill and said I would like to go to Sheffield on the feast of St Patrick. I wrote to the Superior in Howard Hill and sent that off.

When I had sent it I remembered the address was Howard Hill that I got back on the letter from the first application I made. I thought, "That was funny. I wonder if it is the same place?"

Saying Goodbye to home

I went on the 17th and said goodbye to everybody and I left the little dog with the children. They were very happy with that and she was happy to be with them so I wasn't worried about her. I said one of the girls could have the bicycle. I had also left the machine and everything else there. Some of my clothes I gave to the children that wanted them and the rest I packed in the trunk and I think Sister Mary sent them to my auntie. I'm not sure but I think that's what she did. My brother was living with my auntie at the time. When I left home he went to live with her as she was my father's only sister and they were very close, so I was quite happy about my brother being there. I wrote and told my brother where I'd be going and he was quite happy too that I'd got what I wanted. My eldest brother wasn't very happy. Before I went to postulate, he asked me to come home for a holiday because he wanted to see me before I went. So I went home.

He met me this day when I went on this holiday, and he took me on a bus, the top of the bus in Birmingham. And he said, "I want you to come on this bus with me, and have a ride round the city. I want to show you a few places. You know, I can't understand why you're going away and doing what you're doing – entering a convent, and you don't know anything about the people you're going with. You're giving up your liberty," he said "your freedom, to go and shut yourself up in a convent – I can't understand you. All the things that you've been able to do all your life – you've got the world at your feet, and look what there is to do here? You could do anything here in this place. I really am baffled – I can't make it out at all. And Raymond's the same. Raymond said he doesn't know what to do because he can't understand you giving up your whole freedom, your whole life. You're taking nothing with you – Nothing?"

"No, nothing."

He said, "Do you realise what you're doing?"

"Yes."

"And you're not afraid?"

"What of?; I'm not afraid of anything – no!"

"Do you really want to do this?"

"Yes, I feel I've got to do it. I just feel that I want to do it. There's nothing to be afraid of. I'm going to serve God – I'm going to do God's work. It's to help look after these children. I'm going to train to do something, when I go to this place, to postulate. I don't know what it means really. I'm only going to be there 3 months and then I'm going to Mill Hill, to the Seminary."

"Do you mean to tell me you're going to wear one of those big hats on your head, and all those women you've run away from all your life – you always said they were mad."

I said, "I thought they were but I want to – they're beautiful. Actually I don't even deserve to be like one of them but there you are. I'm going to try."

"Oh well, I don't know, you've really got me highly worried."

"Well", don't worry. You've got your wife, and you've got your two children. You don't need to worry. Just look after them. I won't come to you for anything. I don't need anything."

So both my brothers were the same, neither of them could make out why I was going, and why I was giving so many things up. I said, "I'm not giving up anything. I don't want them." However, that was when I went home to see all my friends and say goodbye to them all. Perhaps I wouldn't see any of them again. It wasn't bothering me. I didn't mind. I wanted to go and be a nun. I wanted to go and be a Sister. I wanted to do something for my living. I wanted to do anything that I was asked. If I could do it I would. So that was my time with my brothers. The whole time I was trying to convince them that I was happy at doing what I was doing, but they couldn't believe it.

Postulatum in Sheffield

However, I went to postulate. The Sister that met me was an oldish Sister and I saw her looking all round the station and I went over to her and I said, "Is it me you're looking for?"

"And who are you?"

"I've come to postulate – it's to your Sisters that I'm coming."

"I see." she said,

"What's your name?" I said,

"I'm Sister Mary."

"Oh, you're the lady that wrote to me then. I thought you must be a very clever lady to have all those letters after your name."

She laughed and I said, "Yes, I was very concerned."

"Oh, you needn't be concerned. All the Daughters write that after their name when they're signing a letter. That's how they sign themselves."

"What does it mean?"

"Oh, I'll tell you sometime."

"No; tell me now."

"You sign yourself like that as it means I'm an unworthy Daughter of Charity – servant of the sick poor."

"Oh" I said, "That's what it is. It looked very well. It looked very important. Of course it is very important. That's your title, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Well, it's something to be proud of, a title like that; a servant of the sick poor but…they're not all sick are they?"

"No, but they're poor," she said.

I said, "Yes, but they're poor in many ways, aren't they?"

"That's right, they are."

Anyway, we went to Howard Hill. We walked all the way. It wasn't really very far but it was very hilly – right enough it was a hill. And it was a nice place when we got there. The children there were very retarded children. They took me to the house and as we were going in, there were just one or two children making signs and acting rather awkwardly. Sister said, "They don't speak very much, but they move their arms and their head a lot to draw your attention to them, when they want you to go to them." However, we didn't stay there with the children because there were some people minding them and they were watching them very closely in case they got away. And Sister said, "You'll see more of the children later on. We'll go in and get a cup of tea."

We went in and I saw another Sister there and then two more Sisters came along and they said, "You're very welcome, Miss." And I said, "Thank you." They said, "Come along and have a cup of tea – I'm sure you'd like a cup, wouldn't you?" And I said, "I would." So we went in and we had a cup of tea and we had a slice of bread and butter and jam on it. It was beautiful fresh bread. I hadn't seen a loaf like it before. It was kind of rigid, corrugated kind of. And it was very crusty, lovely and fresh. So I enjoyed the slice of bread and jam and a lovely cup of tea. It wasn't a cup, it was kind of a mug. It was like a jug without a spout. I had a cup and Sister had a cup and the Sister that came in with us said, "Oh I may as well have a cup." So she sat down and she had a cup. They call them cups but they were really kind of jugs. Some of them had lids on – you'd put a lid on when you'd finished. They had numbers, some had "S" and an "R" or something. Some were

different. It was the lids that had the marks on. They didn't all have a lid. Most of them had lids, and there were a lot of them on the table.

After that I went to a big polished room with beds in it. There were two girls there and they were both sort of giggling at one end of the room. They wore a kind of cap on their head and a white apron over their dresses. I supposed they were nurses, I didn't know. They could have been probationers. One of them came along and spoke to us. They said, "Good afternoon." They asked us if we wanted anything. The other Sister said, "No, no. I'm just bringing Miss in to have a look round." So she left me there and she introduced me to a Sister. She said, "This is Sister Monica. You'll be working with Sister Monica. Sister Monica has charge of this dormitory. It's Sister you'll be helping. Whatever Sister wants you to do, you work with her; maybe feeding the children because they can't feed themselves. Or it might be doing a bit of sewing, or perhaps sitting minding the children or reading stories to them, and things like that. You have to entertain these children because they've no idea how to entertain themselves." We talked with Sister Monica. She showed us round the different parts, and she showed me where I could find all the things that I needed, if the children wanted anything.

Then Sister took me to the room where I'd be sleeping. This was another room which had about 8 beds in it. All the beds had curtains all round them. So you couldn't see who was in the beds. If there was anybody, you couldn't see because the curtains were all drawn round. There was one Sister there, I remember. She was called Sister Bernard. She used to talk a lot to herself. Sometimes she talked to you and other times she would just talk to herself. The first night I was there, I remember hearing her get out of bed and she seemed to be doing something in a cupboard. I used to ask her if she wanted anything, and one night I slipped my dressing gown on and I got up and I went to ask her if she needed anything – "Could I do anything for her?" And she said, "No Miss, you go to bed, I'm all right." I think she was making herself a cup of tea or something, but I didn't know whether she was able to do that, you know, and I wondered if I should do it for her. However, she wouldn't let me do it so I left her. But I heard her get back to her cubicle where she was sleeping and she was muttering away about something so I thought she must be saying her prayers to herself so I didn't bother any more. I was a very light sleeper so I used to hear a lot of movement in the night.

A visit in Sheffield

I didn't get back to Croft Castle any more. I went to the Seminary after the three months. My brother came to see me one day in Sheffield. I

didn't actually know he was coming. I was sitting with the children in the ward, I was reading to them, just one or two that were round me but some of them were by their own beds and jumping around and clapping their hands and that kind of thing. And Sister came in with my brother. She said, "You've got a visitor, Miss." I said, "Oh Ray! What are you doing here?" And he said, "I came to see you." I said, "Well, that's lovely." One of the children came running down the ward shouting, "Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!" The next thing was she'd flung herself at Raymond, she'd put her arms round his neck and was hugging him. Raymond was absolutely baffled. He'd no idea what was happening. "That's Elsie, Ray – she's called Elsie, But she doesn't know she's hanging round you like that. It's her way of affection. Everybody's her daddy when they come here – every man that comes in is her daddy. Don't worry, she's all right, she's quite harmless – she wouldn't hurt you. She's just excited, so just put your arm round her and pat her and say 'That's nice, that's lovely'– something like that, you know what to say." He was quite shocked, but he managed very well. He said, "That's nice, you're a good little girl. What's your name?" She didn't really know what he was saying to her, so I said, "Yes, her name is Elsie, call her Elsie." So he said, "Hello, Elsie." And she beamed at him and again began to cuddle him and I said, "Don't take any notice, she'll soon get tired."

So we sat and talked for a while and then I asked him if he'd like a cup of tea. He said no and that it didn't matter.

I said, "Well, have you had one?"

"No."

"You would like a cup of tea, wouldn't you?"

So Sister said, "Come on, bring him in here and let him have a decent cup of tea. He might be able to drink it in peace. Don't give it him in the dormitory or the children will be wanting some of his tea." So we took him in this sitting room and we made a pot of tea, and I had a cup of tea with him and we sat and talked, and then after a while he said, "Well, do you want anything?"

"No, I don't want anything at all."

"Have you any money?"

"I don't want any."

"Are you allowed to have money?"

"Well, I've got some money. I brought some money with me. I've got some money in my purse".

"I would give you some money if you want it, you know."

"No, I don't really want any, Ray."

"I didn't bring you anything because I didn't know what you could have."

"Well that doesn't matter. You brought yourself which is more important."

He laughed. "If you're satisfied", he said, "then I'll leave a donation for the Sisters to use." "Oh, that's nice", I said, "because it'll buy something for the children." So I took him back to Sister and then he thanked her. I don't know how much he gave her but she just said, "Thank you very much – it's very kind of you." She said that if he was able to come again and see me before I went to the Seminary he'd be very welcome. He said, "Well, it depends if I get any time off." He was doing Government work. He was working at the English Electric and he was on special consignment work for the Government. I don't know what it was, he would never talk about his work. He said he couldn't because it was not to be mentioned anywhere. So we didn't know much of what he was doing. So anyway it was very nice to see him and he went off. He came once again before I went to the Seminary.

A little confusion

I'd been in Howard Hill about 3 days and there was a big feast day coming up. The feast was on the 25th and I know the Sisters always used to like some nice flowers for the 25th – I remembered that. So I put my hat and coat on and I went off one day into town. I never thought to tell anybody I was going out. It hadn't occurred to me. I thought I could just go. So I went. And I went to the market and I found the flower stall in the market. There was a beautiful lot of flowers, and I bought some white lilies. I think I got six big white lilies and I got some pink roses and got some fern. I got some white gypsophila, the ones with the blossom on. And I was just paying for these flowers when a Sister came over to me and she said, "Miss, what are you doing here?"

"I'm buying some flowers for the Altar."

"But you shouldn't be out."

"Why not?" I said. "Why not? Don't you get out? Why shouldn't I be out?"

"You shouldn't have gone out without telling somebody."

I said, "I didn't know."

"Where did you get the money from?" she said.

"It was in my purse, why?"

"But you shouldn't have had your purse. You shouldn't have had that, you should have given that up when you came."

"Why should I give it up when it belongs to me – it isn't anybody else's. Besides, I always buy flowers for the 25th of March. I always have done. It's Lady Day. I used to do Our Lady's Altar at home, and I always bought beautiful flowers for Lady Day." She kept telling me I

shouldn't have been doing it. She kept telling me I had no business to be out. I was baffled and said, "But nobody said I couldn't go, and I came."

"Did you tell anybody you were coming?"

"No, why would I? I wouldn't tell anybody I wanted to go out to buy the flowers for the 25th – Lady Day. We always have flowers on Lady Day." I couldn't understand what she was telling me; that I couldn't go out and I couldn't buy flowers. So I went home and when we got home she said, "You're to go and see the Superior."

"What for? It's nothing to do with her. It's my business to buy the flowers. I've always done it for Our Lady's Day."

She thought I'd done wrong but I didn't. So then she took me to Sister Josephine, the Superior was called. And I said, "Sister Josephine, I went out to buy the flowers for Lady Day because I always used to do that at home for Lady Day." So she said, "But Miss, you shouldn't have had your purse. You should have given that up when you came." I said, "Nobody asked me for it, and it's been there in the drawer. I didn't mean not to give it but it didn't occur to me to give it. Anyway, take it, I don't want it – have it." So she said, "Oh no, we'll keep it there until you go into Seminary, but you mustn't be spending your money. You mustn't go out unless somebody goes with you." "Well," I said, "I knew my way, and I remembered coming through the town, the station's there. I remember coming that way. It was no trouble to find it, and I wanted to get the flowers for Lady Day." So I asked "Do you not put flowers on the Altar for Lady Day?" "Oh yes," she said, "We do, on Our Lady's Altar – yes." So that was my experience of the 25th of March. I had never been told before not to buy flowers for Lady Day. I was so upset. However, I'd done it and that was it. I was happy about it regardless of what the Sisters said. I didn't care. I heard no more about the flowers, anyway. I still was very puzzled about all that.

Going to Seminary

It came to the day I went to the Seminary and I wanted to go on the 21st of June to the Seminary because that was the feast of St Aloysius, and I had a great devotion to St Aloysius because he was a young Saint. I used to have a devotion to St Vincent until I found out he was an old man, and when I found out he was an old man I switched and I went to St Anthony. When I heard about St Aloysius I liked St Aloysius as well, though I loved St Anthony. I used to pray to St Anthony. I used to pray to St Aloysius and when it came to going to Seminary in June I said, "Well, I came here on the 17th of March, and Patrick looked after me, and I'll go to Seminary on the 21st of June and Aloysius will look after me." In the end, I wasn't allowed to go on the 21st because Sister said I had to go on the 22nd. I don't know why I couldn't go

on the 21st – it was only one day difference. I don't know what the difference was. However, I knew when I got to the Seminary. The day before Sister Aloysius was having her vow day. She was making her vows that day, and the Sisters were evidently having a party and they didn't want a Postulant walking in in the middle of a party. So, I went on the 22nd and when I got off the train, I think it was Euston Station, I looked around to see if I could see a Sister. For a little while I didn't and then suddenly I spotted the cornette. So I wondered over to where I saw this Sister in a cornette and I looked at her, and she just passed me by, and I said, "Sister?" and she stopped. I said, "I think it's me you're looking for." She said, "And who are you?" "Well, I was a Postulant in Sheffield, and I was told to come here today, so here I am." She looked at me up and down, she stared at me, and said, "Oh well if you're the Postulant then it is you I'm looking for."

My father's death

I must go back in my story now to the time after my mother died. My father said to me, "You won't leave me now, will you?" "Well" I said, I can't very well, can I? We'll just stay as we are for the time being." So for a short while I stayed with my father and then it was just a year to the day my mother was buried that my father dropped dead in the street. I thought how sad it was because we didn't know what had happened. It was the time of the very heavy snow and when I got home in the evening from my job, there was no one in the house except the dog. My father had gone to see his sister, my auntie; she had the 'flu, and he went to see her to ask if he could do anything for her. But he didn't get there. He dropped dead on that day, and he always took the dog out but this evening he didn't. I think it was on account of the weather. It was very cold and, of course, the snow came while he was out. I waited up for him until about 2 o'clock in the morning and my brother had come home at about a half past eleven from his job. He could only take about six hours rest and then he had to go back. He said to me, "If I were you I'd go to bed. Dad won't come home now – not in this weather. He'll wait until tomorrow." So I went to bed and I got up and went to Mass at a quarter to seven the next morning, and when I got back my brother had gone to work some time ago. I'd left his breakfast ready and he'd gone. There came a ring at the front door. I went to the door and it was a policeman. And he said, "Is this Goodwin's?"

"Yes."

"Can you give me some particulars about Mr Goodwin?"

"Which Mr Goodwin do you mean, the son is here as well as the father?"

"Oh" he said, "It'll be the father."

"Well I don't know. I can't give you any details because I don't know where he is." "Oh" he said, "He's in the mortuary."

"Am I hearing you right? Did you say in the mortuary?"

"Yes, he dropped dead last night in the street, and someone identified him, but we need someone to officially come and identify him, so that's why I'm here."

"Why didn't we know last night?"

"Somebody did call here but there was no one in."

"Well," I said, "Nobody called, and I was here at 8 o'clock, much before 8 o'clock, and nobody called."

"Well, somebody was supposed to have come,"

"Well, no one came and I was here all evening. I stayed up until 2 o'clock this morning, waiting for my father to come home and we guessed he must have gone to my auntie's."

He said, "Where's your brother?"

"He's at work, You'll have to get him. Go down and see him, he's at English Electric." I told him his name but I couldn't tell him what his work was at that moment, but that was where they'd find him. So off he went. My brother came home. He had been to the mortuary and identified my father and he came home then to see was I all right. So we were both talking over what had happened. Both of us were very staggered. We couldn't make out what had really happened. So I said to Raymond, "Will I come with you to the mortuary?" He said, "I've been, and I've given them all the particulars I could. Of course, dad had papers on him. They've checked those. He must have had a massive heart attack because he didn't regain consciousness at all. He just died on the street, and he was identified by some friends of auntie's that knew him". We had the funeral two days after so then we had to decide what I was going to do.

It was then that I wrote these letters for the post. I was really looking for some work that would keep me occupied rather than go back into the factory. I wrote there to the first place and when I got no satisfaction I wrote to the second place as I thought that I was free to go now and leave home. I asked my brother what he intended to do and he said, "Just carry on." I said, "Will you stay here by yourself? If you are staying here, the only thing is the army will billet soldiers on you." We had refused them so far because it wasn't convenient, but they will now and we'd have to take in about six men. He said, "I wouldn't do that. That is out of the question. I couldn't possibly do that. I will have to get somewhere to live and we will have to sell up." I asked him to go and see Frank to ask him if he would come up and settle things between them. I said, "First of all you have got to find somewhere to live." He

said, "I have been thinking about it and I think I will go to Auntie Jessie because she has got a spare room there. I will be no trouble to her. I will just go in and come out as I am working all hours of the day and never know where I am going. I can't be relieved from this job. I have got to do it. I will go and see Auntie and fix up something. You are free, you go, you do what you want to do." That is what happened. Then I went to Croft – I've already told you about.

Toll Cross

After the Seminary was over, the first house that I was based in was in Toll Cross in Glasgow, Scotland. It was a home for deaf and blind children. There were only a few blind. The majority of them were deaf so I was sent there. When I got there, I went alone on the train and the Sister met me at the station and took me to the house. There was little talk about what name they were going to give me. The Sisters asked me what name would I like. I said, "We were told in the Seminary we were not to ask for any particular name. We were to have whatever name was given to us. I think it would be better if you gave me a name." Some of the Sisters said, "It will soon be the feast of St Winnifred, lets call her Winnifred." Sister Superior said, "Certainly not. I will not call her Winnifred. We will have all the children calling her Sister Win. Whoever heard of a Sister Win? Stupid! If I have my way I should call her Agnes after Sister Agnes O'Connell who was a living saint in this house for years. Would you like that name?" Actually, it was the name I had wanted but I didn't like to ask for it. I said, "Yes I would be very happy. It was my mother's name. It was also my baptismal name but I have never used it." I was called by my second name. I said, "I would be happy to be Sister Agnes." She said, "I will name you Sister Agnes. What is more you pray to that Sister Agnes O'Connell who was the director's sister. She's a living saint. I will give you her second habit. I want you to pray to this Sister for some of her virtues because she was a very holy nun." I said, "Thank you." That is how I got my name. Funnily enough I have never lost it.

However I was there for some time, I had charge of the girls. The girls ages went from two and a half to sixteen. There were just over 80 of the deaf children but only about 17 or 18 of the blind children. The youngest of the blind children was just two and a half with the eldest one being 15 but they would stay until they were 16 and then they went on to higher education somewhere else depending on what they were capable of doing. It was really to train the children to be independent and earn their own living. They were mostly from poor families so they had to be able to do something for a living. The blind children were very happy children, remarkable that the majority of

them had no sight, there were one or two of them that had little sight – what they called myopic sight. They were much happier than the deaf children. They seemed to be suspicious of everyone and less trustful somehow. They were nice children all the same. I was very happy with them.

There were two education authorities, there was the Glasgow Education Authority and the Lannark (sic) Education Authorities. The Lannark children were on the left of the building and the Glasgow were on the right. The girls' dining room was on the right and the boys' was on the left. I had the girls' dining room. In there, there were 90 children at that time because all the girls were together. Blind children did not sit with the deaf in the dining room. This was quite a handful to look after during a meal because you had to be going round them all the time watching them, helping them in case they needed it. There was just myself and another Sister used to come in and help me.

The medal again

I had the girls' clothes room. I used to see to their clothes – do all the repairing if they needed it. The laundry took responsibility for all the laundering. and there was a work room for doing big mending or making. So I only had small jobs to do actually as regards the clothes. The Sister Superior had been talking about the big girls having a different uniform to the younger ones. The big girls were 14, 15 and 16 and they wanted to dress them a little bit differently so the Sister said they'd get skirts and blouses for them. She asked me if I could make or help to make the blouses. There'd be about 12 biggish 14-year olds. I said I would do them. She asked would I get the material and then she changed her mind and said she would get them herself. She went out and bought the material and then came back with it. When she showed it me, I was a bit taken aback, it was grey. I said, "Sister, you are not going to put them in grey are you?"

"Oh yes, grey skirts and I thought the grey blouses would be nice."

"Oh" I said, "It would be very dull looking for the children."

"When it's made up it should look nice. Put some embroidery down the front, make some pretty flowers down the front. They'll look brighter then."

"Oh, have you got any silks to do that with?"

"Well" she said, "I suppose we could buy some."

I said, "I have plenty at home. If I could send for my work basket, I have plenty in that. I used to do a lot of that kind of work."

She said I could send for it, and I wrote a letter to my Auntie and asked could she send me my work basket. So right enough she sent it. When the work basket came I dived in for the silks but I'd forgotten

about the medal and of course the medal was in there still – I talked to you about the medal. I got the tin box and there was the medal so I took it out and showed it to the Sisters and they couldn't believe it because it was the medal of St Louise. It was the medal struck when the Holy Father nominated St Louise Patron of Charity and the medal was commemorating that. Now that was a long time ago when I'd found that medal and I'd been a long time trying to find out who it was and no one knew who it was, and it was St Louise. I was a little bit astounded at how the medal had come to me and how I'd had it all this time, not knowing it was the foundress of the Order I was entering. That was the story of the medal. I wanted to tell you about that because it linked up with other things that had happened and seemed to be quite a coincidence.

A later Irish involvement in the Australian Mission (1966-'68)

Michael Dunne CM

In 1966 the Australian Provincial, Fr Seamus O'Reilly CM, requested the help of some missionaries from Ireland to join the Australian confreres on missions and retreats. Accordingly, the Irish Visitor, Fr James Cahalan, sent five confreres - Frs John Carroll, Frank Sweeney, Tom Farrell, John O'Reilly and Tony McDonnell - to work with our Australian confreres on missions and retreats. They worked from about August to May and returned to Ireland by the USA.

In August 1967, Frs Tom Farrell, Michael Dunne, Tom Bennett and Tony McDonnell were appointed for an 8-month period. Fr O'Reilly gave us a round-the-world ticket so we travelled by Rome, Jerusalem and Teheran on our way to Sydney and returned by New Zealand, Honolulu and the US. The Australians gave us a great welcome.

To give some idea of our work, I list my own assignments. In the 8 months I conducted:

Four eight-day retreats:
- Josephite Sisters
- Josephite Novices in Canberra
- John of God Brothers
- Vincentian Seminarians

Seven three-day Retreats:
- Good Shepherd Sisters
- Nurses in Good Shepherd Convent, Sydney
- Staff in Good Shepherd Convent, Sydney
- Dominican Sisters
- Mercy Sisters
- Dominican Sisters, Bathurst
- Irish Sisters of Charity, Sydney

Two one-day Days of Recollection in Sydney

Three two-week missions:
- Sydney Parish with Tony McDonnell
- Brisbane Pro-Cathedral with Tom Farrell
- Another with Fr. Myles Hyland CM

Father Diarmuid O Hegarty CM

I feel very honoured to be asked to write Father Diarmuid O'Hegarty's obituary. I owe a lot to Diarmuid including my vocation to the Vincentian Community. I am conscious that my contact with Diarmuid was for a relatively short time in Diarmuid's 58 years in the community- two years when I was a student in St Patrick's Drumcondra 1960-1962 and 9 years when Diarmuid was Provincial Secretary. Fr Richard McCullen CM covers some other areas of Diarmuid's priestly ministry as part of this reflection.

I first met Diarmuid O'Hegarty in September 1962. He was Dean of Students in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. I was an 18 year old student about to start a two year teaching diploma in St Pat's. We called him "the bat". I am not sure of the origin of this name. I presume it had to do with Diarmuid's nocturnal perambulations. The big threat hanging over first years who broke the curfew or infringements of college regulations was "ní bheidh tú ar ais". In other words you could be getting a letter in the post during the summer holidays from the Department of Education informing you that there was no place for you in St Patrick's College for the second year of your programme. Rumour was rife among the students that every year there were a few who were deemed to be surplus to requirements – for whatever reason. The threat hanging over second years was that if you stepped out of line, you would not get a good reference from the College President, Fr Donal Cregan, at the end of your time.

Diarmuid used these two threats to great effect. To anyone who stepped out of line, the threats were raised in the nicest possible way- a 'yellow card', in footballing terms. It was a very effective way of keeping control and Diarmuid used the yellow card, when necessary, in a very telling way.

In my first year (1960-'61) St Pats was a glorified secondary boarding school with 2 hours study before and after the evening meal. My memory is that supervision was by the Head Prefects but occasionally the Dean would turn up at the back of the hall. The low murmur of whispering voices would freeze in an instant. Diarmuid would walk slowly up and down the Study Hall a few times in his soutane and cape and sash. The silence was solemn. Diarmuid had a powerful personality.

A few memories stand out in my mind from those days. One evening some former students turned up in the College to visit their pals. They were late coming from the pub and decided to spend the night in the dormitory. The first I knew about it was when the stillness of the

dormitory was broken by the sound of heavy feet and the darkness of the dormitory was broken by the light of a torch. The Gardai had come to remove the non-residents. I have no idea of the background to the incident or what happened afterwards. What we 'hedgers' (first years) knew was that you didn't trifle with "the bat". Years afterwards, over a whiskey in Provincial House, I asked Diarmuid about the incident. Something similar had happened some weeks previously and Diarmuid had either turned a blind eye or given a warning but when it happened again he called in the Guards. The incident sent a frisson through the student body.

Another memory. A mentally handicapped girl used to serve in the Refectory. She was given a nickname by the students which was uncomplimentary, to say the least. One day something happened in the Refectory (the details of which I cannot remember). Soon afterwards, when all the student body was assembled, Diarmuid let fly in a very controlled way about the treatment of this woman by the students. It was the only time in two years that I saw him angry. It was so very effective.

If I am giving the impression that Dermot was a hard man, he wasn't. He was a very kind, compassionate,considerate man who treated the students with great respect. The students respected him in return.He had the happy knack of being able to keep the college and student affairs running very smoothly and very efficiently with a minimum amount of fuss. On reflection he was a very good Dean of Students. He was well able to balance a firm hand with a great deal of compassion and kindness.

A member of my class in St Patrick's College, Declan Mangan, a teacher from Killorglin, Co Kerry, has written his memoirs. This is what he says about Diarmuid:

> *…Our Dean was Fr. O'Hegarty, nicknamed "the Bat". He was an energetic priest, who took great care in all the interests of all the students – a good role model for all deans. I always thought he was a level-headed and fair-minded administrator. He gave us an occasional lecture on the bible. He seemed to be everywhere, in every corner of the College. If you were hoping to have an unscheduled rest or slip away unnoticed from a lecture, he always seemed to be just around the corner waiting for you! In my second year, I was in charge of the Basketball Team and helped produce a concert. At the end of our days in Pat's, when I was heading off for our Graduation Dance – black tie in the Metropole – he kindly gave me a one pound note and thanked me for my efforts during the year. It was like a fortune, the taxi to the Metropole was about five shillings, so I had plenty left over for the night's activities.*

I met Fr. O'Hegarty many times after leaving College and we were always on friendly terms…

When I was appointed Provincial in 1986, Diarmuid had already served as Provincial Secretary with Frank Mullan, my predecessor, and lived in 4 Cabra Road as part of the Provincial administration. I was very happy for Diarmuid to remain in that post. It was a great assurance for me to have him as a confidante and a support. He also served as a continuity person from Frank's term of office which was invaluable.

I depended a lot on Diarmuid for advice and support and companionship. He was so shrewd and acted as a sounding board on many occasions,something which I appreciated very much.

We became very good friends. On my return to Dublin from my trips abroad, Diarmuid always met me at the airport. On the journey from the airport to Phibsboro', he would bring me up to date on what had happened at Provincial Office during my absence (in those days we had no email and no mobile phones). He would invariably start with the little things and worked his way very sensitively up to the things of more serious import.

No letter left Provincial House without my having first got Diarmuid's reaction. Diarmuid was first and foremost a politician and was acutely aware of the consequences of what was said and done. He could see around corners. He was such a good judge of people and events. Diarmuid welcomed very much the appointment of a lay secretary to the provincial office, probably in 1987-'8. He worked very well with Dympna and Una for the rest of my term of office. He introduced both of them and myself to the intricacies of the Irish Times Simplex Crossword at the 11.00 am coffee break in 4, Cabra Road.

Acting as Provincial Secretary was a part-time post for Diarmuid. He served as a full-time chaplain in St Vincent's School in the Navan Road. I know from my visits there that Diarmuid was loved by the girls and the staff. He had a great empathy with the person in trouble,whether students or staff member and gave his time most generously. The highlight of his year in the school was the Annual Graduation Mass celebrated by Bishop Dermot O'Mahony. Diarmuid would invariably return to Provincial House full of chat about the days events.

Occasionally he would talk about his father, also named Diarmuid O Hegarty. His father was at Michael Collins side in the famous photograph of Collins taking up a loan for the newly established free state government outside Leinster House. He sometimes talked about taking Fr Johnnie O'Connell to Arus an Uachtaran to meet President De Valera on Fr Johnnie's 100th birthday. Diarmuid recalled, with much pride, the conversation that took place between himself and the

President about his father. President De Valera knew Diarmuid's father very well. Even though they were on different sides of the 1921 Treaty, the President spoke very warmly about him.

Diarmuid had a great sense of humour. The mischievous twinkle in the eye accompanied by some phrase as gaeilge commmunicated the humour of situations in a very subtle, understated way. Diarmuid was one of nature's gentlemen. He was an invaluable companion,mentor and friend. Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dilis.

As my reflection covers a mere 11 years of Diarmuid's 58 years in the community, I asked Fr Richard McCullen to write a reflection to fill out some other aspects of Diarmuid's life and work.

He writes:
When Diarmuid O'Hegarty was appointed to be one of the two spiritual directors for the seminarians in St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1970, he brought to the students a wealth of experience as a priest. For over 20 years he had been associated with youth and worked for and with young people. Immediately after his Ordination in 1950 he had been appointed as an assistant secretary and dean in the third level College of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Subsequently he was appointed to St Paul's College, Raheny, and later to the staff in St Patrick's College Armagh. Subsequently he obtained a Master's degree in theology from St. John's University New York.

In 1970, from the world of youth and education he was chosen to be curate in the large parish of Dunstable, England. After a relatively short span of years in England and with such wide experience in different fields of priestly ministry, he was considered to be well qualified to assume the responsibility of being one of the counsellors and confessors to the seminarians in the National Seminary in Maynooth that numbered over 250 students for the Priesthood in 1970.

Diarmuid was a very shrewd judge of character and was graced with a keen sense of humour, with a glinting and at times a mischievous smile. When serious topics were being discussed he could be – as it was once expressed to me – "a man of formidable silences." A seminarian thought he would take a year off from his studies in Maynooth. "And what" asked Diarmuid "do you propose to do during that year." "I plan to go to the Holy Land" "For what purpose"? asked Diarmuid. "To find the historical Christ..." A long silence ensued – allowing the student ample time to immerse himself in Diarmuid's great silence, which doubtlessly would have conveyed to the student how his counsellor saw his proposal.

Although not formally trained as a counsellor, Diarmuid was the most sympathetic of listeners, with great empathy for one who was suffering

in body or mind. He took time to absorb the pain of the person before responding to him and tentatively offering perhaps a word of practical wisdom and comfort, thus facilitating and enlarging a perspective on life that was more clear and hopeful.

It was such qualities that gave him an easy entry and a remarkably deep insight into the lives of the disabled and disadvantaged children in St Vincent's Navan Road (who loved him and appreciated his patient kindness and understanding) during the 1980s when Diarmuid was working with the Provincial Administration in Cabra Road.

Returning to the year 1973, Diarmuid was pleased when he was appointed Superior of St Joseph's Blackrock in that year. It fell to him to dismantle the house when the student body was being relocated to Celbridge. He offered much support and gave generously of his time to the elderly confreres who were living there, and who had been assured that they would not be displaced from their rooms in "The Priests House."

Each evening Diarmuid would bring up a little nip of brandy to Fr Johnnie (as he was affectionately known) when he was already in bed. One evening when contentedly sipping his brandy, Fr Johnnie asked Diarmuid if he would agree with the statement that "W*e are saved by grace through faith.*" To which Diarmuid replied: "Well, Father, I would not dispute it..." The centenarian resting back on his pillows and smiling benignly said: "I did not ask you if you disputed it… I asked you if you would agree with it..."!

Both of these faithful and amiable disciples of St Vincent, are now resting (as we have good reason to believe) in the enjoyment of the vision of our compassionate and all loving God, the Supreme Truth, – who, we can respectfully add, – is also the supreme author of all good and wholesome humour.

For their fruitful lives and long ministries amongst us and God's people, – we can with full heart exclaim "Blessed be God forever!"

Mark Noonan CM

DIARMUID O HEGARTY CM

Born:	Phibsboro', Dublin, 3 October 1924
Entered the CM:	7 September 1943
Final Vows:	8 September 1945
Ordained:	28 May 1950 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin.

APPOINTMENTS:

1950-'52;	St Patrick's, Drumcondra
1952-'55;	St Paul's, Raheny
1955-'59;	St Patrick's, Armagh
1959-'65;	St Patrick's, Drumcondra
1965-'67;	St Mary's, Dunstable
1967-'69;	St John's University, New York
1969-'73;	St Patrick's College, Maynooth
1973-'78;	St Joseph's, Blackrock
1978-'79;	St Joseph's, 44 Stillorgan Park, Blackrock
1979-'81;	St Peter's, Phibsboro'
1981-2000;	Chaplain to St Vincent's, Navan Road
1981-'95;	4/6 New Cabra Road
1995-'97;	Park View
1997-2004	St Peter's, Phibsboro'

Died:	2 May 2004
Buried:	Glasnevin Cemetery

Father Brian Moore CM

Homily from the Funeral Mass
'Giving and Receiving Hands'

On the back page of your Mass booklets you will find a picture of St Vincent de Paul meeting a man who is destitute. It is an encounter of wounded healers, each bowing in mutual deference to the other, each with an infirmity, Vincent with his wounded foot, the man with a disabled hand. Both have their feet firmly on the ground. Vincent has broken off that piece of bread from the baguette, in typical French style and given it to the man. We can almost audibly hear Vincent ask forgiveness of the man. You may even hear an echo of the paraphrased saying of Vincent: "Only for your love, your love, alone, will the poor forgive you for the bread you give them." It is an exchange of give and take. Yet, if you take a second look at this picture, perhaps the man is, in fact, the person of Christ. Is it possible that he is returning the bread to Vincent, bread, which he has blessed in his gratitude? Could it be that in giving a small piece of bread to a man who is poor, Vincent de Paul is, in fact; receiving, in return, the body of Christ? Is it Eucharist on the streets of the city?

In many ways this picture sums up the entire life of our Fr Brian Moore. Fr Brian was a man who spent his entire life in giving and receiving. All of us here can picture Brian's strong hands, hands honed in his boyhood farming days, strong hands skilled at the plane and the lathe, hands which were swift to welcome and embrace, to reassure, to bless and consecrate, to forgive, to anoint and occasionally, if we may dare say it, to acclaim his favourite football team – the jury could be out on that one but, in recent years, white seemed a preferred colour!

Our First Reading today from Isaiah speaks of the Lord preparing a rich banquet for all God's people. How many times Brian offered table fellowship to the countless people whom he served both in Britain, Nigeria, and Ireland and many places in between. Our Christmas day community gatherings were almost incomplete if we did not have many who were immigrants or home alone dwellers, at our table. In our Gospel we have that prophetic reading from Matthew which speaks of a final judgement. Our prayer today is that Brian will be surprised by how many countless times he has already encountered Christ in the hungry, those thirsty for justice, those who were formerly strangers among us, those who were in any kind of captivity of mind or body. May they break for him and nourish him today with the bread of angels. Through all of these actions we hear echoes of the words of St Catherine Labouré,

who said, that those who serve people who are poor, need have no fear of death.

The second reading speaks of the life and death of each of us being an influence on others. Memories indeed have energy. Fr Brian, who gave so much of himself, costing not less than everything, is calling us, challenging us to honour his memory in how we give and take in life.

There is a poverty of time today. If you could give time to break for another the bread of welcome, the bread of reassurance, the bread of reconciliation, the bread of healing and nourishment, you honour the legacy of Fr Brian and you stand before the Lord, saying, no credit to me, Lord, but to Brian who has taught us all how to give and how to receive.

We as a community, a circle of friends, gather here to join with John and Marie and their adult children, Andrea and Brian, with Tom and Celine and their sons, Shane and Jason and, remembering his grand-nephew, William, to say how we will miss Fr Brian's wonderful strong supportive presence among us. We also thank you, and remember his parents John and Mary, for giving us Brian for thirty-six years of ministry. It was not the right time for Brian to leave us but this man who spent his life in giving and receiving seems to have got a greater offer. It is, after all the Season of *Admirabile Commercium*, the time of the admirable exchange between God and His people. It is the day when Saul catches a premature glimpse of Christ in the dying and forgiving Stephen, whose feast we celebrate today.

We will pray in this Mass that Fr Brian, who spent a life-time in giving and receiving may now receive in exchange for his humanity, the fullness of the life of Christ himself.

Ar dheislámh Dé go raibh a anam uasal grámhar dílis.

Michael McCullagh CM

Homily from the Mass at Sacred Heart Church, Mill Hill, on 27/12/2011

I would like to begin my words this evening by quoting from a letter written yesterday by Father Gregory Gay CM Superior General of the Vincentian family:

26th December 2011

To the family members of our dear brother, Brian.
To my dear confreres of the Province of Ireland.
To members of the Vincentian family and friends of Brian.

It is with great sadness in my heart that I write this message of condolence from all of us, the members of the General Curia in Rome. I was visiting the Daughters of Charity of the Province of Nigeria in a remote village of Ghana when we received the shocking news of Brian's death that was texted to one of the sisters of the community from their provincialate in Nigeria. I was taken aback. The sisters sighed deeply since many knew Brian from his missionary days in Nigeria. They send their prayers and love for Brian, to his family and the confreres of the province.

I still find it hard to believe that Brian has left us. I was with him a few months ago in London. Recently, we exchanged correspondence because he had offered All Hallows as a possible site for our 2013 Visitors' meeting. He was excited about the opportunity to host the leadership group of the Congregation. The confreres of the curia, upon receiving the sad news, celebrated Mass for Brian and his beloved family, confreres and friends. I did the same with three communities of Daughters in Ghana and Nigeria.

I can only imagine your sense of loss at this time. Brian was a good man; a true gentleman and a faithful companion in the Congregation. Brian was upbeat, full of energy, enthusiastic and joyful. He will be missed as a brother and a leader. My heart goes out the confreres of the province. You have lost a good friend

and a compassionate visitor. May Brian intercede on your behalf, giving you the courage and audacity to move forward in your task of evangelising and serving the poor together with the Vincentian Family.

My prayers for the family. One knows how hard it is to lose our parents, but when we lose a sibling, the realty of death becomes all the more striking for all. May God, who loves you, comfort you in this time of sorrow. Know John, Tom, the sisters-in-law, the niece, nephews and grand nephews that Brian is with you even beyond the good memories you have of him. Pray to him; speak with him for he is surely with you.

May Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose presence among us we have just celebrated yesterday, be your comfort, strength and light.

And may Brian and all our faithful departed Rest in Peace!

Your brother in St Vincent de Paul,

Fr Gregory Gay CM, Superior General,
and the Confreres of the General Curia.

Today, as you know, is the feast of St John Evangelist – St John the Divine – the Beloved Disciple. Our tradition is that John was a young man when he met the Lord and that he was over a hundred years old when he died – perhaps at Ephesus. It is again part of our tradition that when St John died the words that were constantly on his lips were the challenging words to his disciples: "Love one another – Love one another – Love one another – "over and over again. There is no other way if we wish to follow Christ. I cannot get myself off the hook of discipleship by saying: "Well, he doesn't love me so why should I love him." Or to say – "I'm too tired" or "This is not a suitable time" or "The weather is too cold – too hot – too damp" and so on and so forth. The Scriptures tell us "This is the acceptable time – this is the day of salvation."

Today's second reading is from the gospel of St John. It is all about the two disciples – Peter and John running to the tomb on Easter Sunday morning. John – maybe a bit fitter – arrives first and sees the linen cloths lying on the ground but waits to go in until Peter runs up and goes right in. He too notices the cloths on the ground and the head-covering lying apart rolled up on its own. It is very precise and detailed this description. Every little detail is noted.

I thought of these details yesterday week when I stood with Fr Kevin O'Shea and Fr Hugh McMahon in a side room at the Accident & Emergency Department of Hillingdon Hospital. Nurse Noreen very carefully and respectfully removed the white cloths from the head and face of Fr Brian Moore CM. Brian had died a few hours previously in that same hospital in spite of the efforts of the medical team who worked on him after his heart attack. Some time after he was pronounced dead, he was carefully wrapped once again, in the kind of swaddling cloths with which he had been covered when he was born 60 years ago, in Ireland.

Fr Brian was with us in this parish of Sacred Heart, Mill Hill only a week ago. He spent the weekend prior to his death with us. He spoke at length with each of the priests and met the parishioners at each Mass. Last Sunday week, in the afternoon, he finished his official visitation with a meeting with the Vincentian community. He said how he had enjoyed being in the parish. He spoke of the great spirit he noticed among the parishioners – old, young, black, white and all the different nationalities – he said it was something to be treasured and developed. He said he noticed a hunger for God in the parish and he challenged us to develop some scheme of spiritual mentoring and direction. I think I can speak for my fellow-Vincentians in saying that at that meeting we felt totally free to share our dreams and visions and fears. Fr Brian encouraged us to be open – to be open and honest and true for the glory of God.

And so on Monday we said farewell to Fr Brian as he left us to return to Dublin. He concelebrated Mass with Fr Kevin on Monday morning and left for Heathrow – took sick there and was taken to Hillingdon Hospital. One of his last acts was to send a text message to a priest who was meeting him at Dublin Airport, to cancel that. Typically Brian did not want to trouble people.

His funeral took place yesterday in Dublin. His parents predeceased him and so it is his brothers John and Tom and their families who mourn for him. They, the Moore family, the Vincentian family and Fr Brian's friends stood at the graveside on the hill at Castleknock College as his body was lowered into the earth of Ireland where he now awaits, with his confreres, the day of judgment and the Second coming of His Lord and Master, Jesus Christ whom he served so faithfully.

Fr Brian Moore served God as a priest in St Paul's College, Raheny, Damascus House in Mill Hill, Nigeria, St Peter's, Phibsborough and lastly as Provincial of the Vincentian Community. He was a good, faithful and hard-working priest. His death has been a great shock to all of us. His death is a reminder that: "We have not here a lasting city but seek one above."

Brian was asked to take on the task of provincial – leader – of our community in tough times – no vocations – ageing profile of the members of the community. Jesus "never promised us a rose garden" and Fr Brian took on the job. Jesus told His disciples that things would be hard if they followed him. Brian knew that being provincial would not be easy – stress and strain. Jesus said that His yoke was/is easy and His burden light. Brian Moore believed this from the bottom of his heart even if at times it was hard to accept.

St John the Divine told those who came to him for advice to "love each other as Jesus loved you" – Fr Brian Moore tried to do the same. As with all of us, he sometimes succeeded and sometimes failed.

We pray, and we know in faith, that God will hear our prayer – that He will give Brian a merciful judgment.

I came across some notes Fr Brian had in his breviary. I think they were composed for a service of anointing. He wrote:

> Our lives are a series of journeys. We interchange between the road to Calvary, sharing in the weight of the cross, and the Road to Emmaus, sharing in the life of the Risen Lord.
>
> We are in an on-going state of entering the tomb but hoping for a new beginning and new hope. Jesus in his earthly ministry brought this transformation to those who were ill. The Church today continues that ministry of healing through the Sacrament of the Sick.

Brian's earthly journey is over. Please God one day we will join him in heaven.

Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord

Fergus Kelly CM

And, from the letter which Eamon Devlin, as acting Provincial, sent to the province, some lines from Chesterton's 'House of Christmas';

> To an open house in the evening
> Home shall men come…
> To the end of the way of the wandering star
> To the things that cannot be, and that are,
> To the place where God was homeless
> And all men are at home.

Homily given at Month's Mind Mass in All Hallows College, 25th January 2012

Our first reading is about the banquet on the mountain for all peoples from Isaiah. I have a powerful memory of a meal in Ikot Ekpene, when visiting Nigeria while Brian was the superior of the house. The Bishop had presented the community with a goat for the vice provincial meeting that was due to happen and Vincentians from around the country had assembled. A feast was cooked and presented. The tables were groaning with food. Egussi (which is a kind of soup) and garri and pounded yam, and other exotic dishes. I was contemplating the embarrassment of choice with apprehension, because my digestive system tends to protest when pushed too far beyond its comfort zone. Brian slipped up behind me. "I have a nice piece of chicken laid aside for you", he said.

There were two things about Brian Moore's death that made an impression on me. The first, as with all of us, I am sure, was *the time*, the unexpected nature of his passing. One minute he was doing his normal work, the next he was dead. Sudden death of anyone is a shock to everyone who knows the person. There is no preparation. We cannot make arrangements. And I am talking about us who are left behind, not the one who dies.

A sudden death is abrupt and rapid. The departure is hasty. No time to say goodbye. No preparation of soul for he who goes and those who stay. No coming to terms with what is occurring. We cannot accompany the experience of dying with ritual, with Viaticum, food for the journey, which would make it easier for the separation. We have no chance to raise a parting cup. Eternity breaks in to a working day and demands that he comes now.

The second thing was about *place*, the place where Brian died and the places where he lived. How do you bring a life together that is spread out in time and space? A life of 60 years; from Wicklow to Dublin to London to Africa and back again. I have noticed how we here at home do not understand, or appreciate, the work that those who go abroad as missionaries or who work in situations of severe stress here at home. We talk about community support, but the community cannot empathise because they have not seen or heard. I have been lucky to see the achievements of Brian and the other Nigerian confreres. I am astounded at what they accomplished over the last 60 years.

All of this was brought back home at Brian's funeral and wake service in St Peter's, Phibsboro. One person said to me that she was amazed at the wide range of people whom Brian's ministry had touched

and affected. Everyone saw the esteem in which he was held in places far away. In a way, space and time were surmounted as the Africa he loved celebrated a life given to the mission.

What kind of a person was he? We could use the Gospel of the Beatitudes to describe him, but in these times of economic shorthand, I describe him as having a triple A rating … Brian was amiable, astute and active.

Amiable: He was always cheerful, smiling, joyful and ready to see the humour in a situation. Amiable means loving, and Brian reached out to people. He looked for good qualities in others, and tried to encourage the best side of whomever he dealt with .

*Astute***:** But he was nobody's fool. He could read a situation accurately. He was sensible and insightful. He spotted where people were coming from and how they might react. I credit my piece of chicken to that quality of empathy and understanding.

Active: Finally, he was practical and decisive. When he knew something had to be done, he did it. And he acted with confidence and assurance. I always had the feeling about Brian as one who knew where he stood, what he could do, and where he was going. Just like a Wicklow man, even one on the Kildare side…

Brian Moore did not go to a Vincentian school. Most of us (I think) joined the Congregation of the Mission because we met the priests as teachers, and wanted to join such a pleasant group of people and do what they did. The community of friends attracted us. Brian joined because he wanted to be a missionary; active from the start.

So it was right that the principal area for his missionary life was Nigeria. And when he came home to Ireland, it should have been no surprise that Africa and the needs of its people followed him and that he would respond. And so it was fitting that when eternity and heaven came calling for Brian, he was in the middle of things, going from one meeting to another function, at an airport. His whole life and his purpose for living could be summarised at that time and in that place as well as any other.

Joe McCann CM

BRIAN MOORE CM

Born:	Grangebeg, Dunlavin, Co Wicklow, 23 June 1951
Entered the CM:	7 September 1969
Vows:	25 December 1973
Ordained;	21 June 1975 at St Peter's Church, Phibsboro, by Most Rev Dr Dunne DD, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin

Appointments:

1975-'79:	St Paul's College, Raheny
1979-'81:	Damascus House
1981-'83:	Ogobia – Parish Priest
1983-'88	Ogobia
1988-'89:	St Joseph's Blackrock (Loreto House course)
1989-'97:	Ikot Ekpene
1997-2002	St Peter's, Phibsboro' – Vincentian Refugee Centre
2002-'07:	St Peter's, Phibsboro'
2007-'11:	Visitor of the Irish Province

Died;	19 December 2011
Buried;	St Vincent's, Castleknock

Fr Brian Moore
A practical pastor who lived his faith

THE IRISH TIMES

21/01/2012

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BRIAN MOORE was a practical man with a deep love of Africa and its peoples. When he returned to Ireland after two decades as a missionary in Nigeria, he found himself ministering to the wave of immigrants then arriving from Africa and elsewhere.

His sudden death at the age of 60 has robbed Ireland of an inspirational figure in the missionary world, and émigré Africans in Ireland of a good friend and powerful champion.

Fr Moore suffered a heart attack at London's Heathrow airport on his way to a winter solstice ceremony at Castleknock near Dublin, attended by members of the African community in Ireland.

He was a practical pastor and he lived his faith. When an African woman and her son perished in a tragic fire in Dublin's north inner city, he immediately arranged for her brother to come to Ireland for the funeral and found him a place to stay.

All refugees were his concern. A Romanian family who found a home in Co Longford phoned to say their custom dictated they could not move in until it was blessed, so Fr Moore set off by car immediately.

A big man, in every sense, he enjoyed a pint and a singsong as well as the next man, and his enthusiasm for rugby, soccer and Gaelic football was infectious.

He was the eldest child of Willie and Molly Moore of Grangebeg, Dunlavin, on the west Wicklow-Kildare border, and his loyalties lay on the Kildare side whenever the Lilywhites took the field.

He joined the Vincentian order (Congregation of the Mission) in 1969, aged 18, and was ordained in 1975, just before his 24th birthday.

Initially he worked at St Paul's College, Raheny, Dublin and briefly in England, but the crucial appointment was in 1981 when he was sent to Nigeria, where his life's work as an African missionary began. He spent the next two decades in Nigeria, first in Ogobia and then in Ikot Ephete, the "Raffia city", in the Niger delta.

When he came home in 1997, he founded, with Sr Breege Keenan, what became the Vincentian Refugee Centre in Phibsboro, Dublin, where many recent immigrants initially settled.

He could see the practical and cultural problems affecting the newly arrived and set about helping them. A consultation process identified priorities: the need for a place to meet, to help with immigration formalities, to set up English classes and to alleviate the boredom of not being allowed to work. Many people said the day began and ended with breakfast.

By 2007, when Fr Moore was elected provincial of the Vincentian order in Ireland and Britain, the centre was an established part of the life of many of Ireland's newest citizens. The spire of St Peter's church in Phibsboro (where he had been ordained 30 years earlier) had became a beacon of hope to strangers in a strange land. The centre expanded and moved to Cabra Road nearby.

A poem written by Fr Lazarus Iweuko, chaplain to the African community in Dublin, expressed the hope that in the next life, "may they welcome you just as you were welcoming to us". Fr Lazarus was a Vincentian seminarian in Nigeria when he met Fr Moore, who became a lifelong friend and mentor.

Fr Moore is survived by his brothers John and Tom Moore, and their families.

Fr Brian Moore: born June 23rd, 1951; died December 19th, 2011