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Declaration

I, Declan G. Blackett, certify that this thesis, which I now submit for assessment on the programme leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in education, is my own work and has not been submitted for any academic purpose, other than in fulfilment of the requirement for that which is stated.

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Date: **15th August 2016.**

Abstract

Voices from 'the back of the class': An examination of the potential role of education for regeneration from the perspective of residents from Limerick's regeneration communities.

This study sought to give voice to individuals from communities who are often excluded from participation in public discourses and processes affecting their lives. It sets out to explore how education and the education system in Limerick city served residents form Limerick's regeneration communities in the past, and how they might better serve them presently and in the future? It also sought to explore from their perspective how education might contribute to regeneration processes in Limerick city.

The thesis employed a synthesis of diverse inter-disciplinary theoretical frameworks, i.e. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and social critical theory. A theoretical framework for urban regeneration consisting of 'broken windows' (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and 'neighbourhood effects' (Wilson, 1987) was also employed. The study is supported by the literature on education and poverty and urban regeneration. A qualitative, constructivist and participatory was employed for knowledge creation, with Husserlian phenomenology employed as the central research method to investigate the lived experiences and voices of participants. The data set included twelve in-depth semi-structured open-ended focus group interviews and seven individual interviews. Field notes contributed to the data which were recorded during and after interviews, and during and after member checking.

The thesis provides a unique perspective on education from the perspective of those who took part in the study. It finds that many of the social problems in Limerick's regeneration communities developed over time, caused in part by poverty, social exclusion and hegemonic interests, of which the education system was found to have played a role. However, it also finds that the field of education has the potential to play an active part in the transformation of individuals and communities, hence the relevance of education for regeneration processes. The study likewise finds that rather than seeing education as a means for overcoming poverty, education ought to ensure that society is oriented towards a more equal and just society, through the redistribution of resources and the dividends of citizenship and democracy. Furthermore, it finds that meaningfully including those often excluded from participation in public discourses and processes affecting their lives can help ensure that education and urban regeneration better meets the needs of those whom they purport to serve. Finally, the study makes acknowledgement of the importance and the power of human relationships for teaching and learning and developmental outcomes.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Chapter One Introduction

Chapter Two Theoretical Frameworks

Chapter Three   Urban Regeneration

Chapter Six   Methodology and Research Process

Chapter Seven   Research Findings

Chapter Eight   Discussion

Chapter Nine Recommendations

Chapter Ten Conclusion

List of Tables

List of Figures

Appendices   i

Abbreviations

ABC:	Area Based Childhood Programme Dublin.
An TAISCE:	National Trust for Ireland.
BRL:	Ballymun Regeneration Limited.
BSCs:	Behavioural Support Classes.
CAMHS:	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
CDI:	Childhood Development Initiative.
CDPs:	Community Development Projects.
CHDDA:	Custom House Docks Development Authority.
CLASP:	Community Leadership Arts & Sports Programme.
CLVEC:	City of Limerick Vocational Education Committee.
CPD:	Continuing Professional Development.
CSC:	Children's Services Committee.
CSO:	Central Statistics Office.
CSPE:	Civic, Social and Political Education.
CYPSC:	Children and Young People's Services Committees.
DCYA:	Department of Children and Youth Affairs.
DDDA:	Dublin Docklands Development Authority.
DECLG:	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.
DEIS:	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools.
DES:	Department of Education and Science (pre-2010), Department of Education and Skills (post-2010), From 1921-1997 this Government Department was also known as the Department of Education.
DETR:	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, UK.
DfES:	Department for Education and Skills, UK.
DOE:	Department of the Environment.
DoEHLG:	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
ED:	Electoral Division.
EENEE:	European Expert Network on Economics of Education.
ESRI:	Economic and Social Research Institute.
ETB:	Education & Training Board.

EU:	European Union.
Eurostat:	Statistical Office of the European Communities
EU-SILC:	European Union Survey on Income and Living Conditions
EWO:	Education Welfare Officer.
FÁS:	Foras ÁiSeánna Saothair - Irish National Training and Employment Authority.
FET:	Further Education and Training.
FETAC:	Further Education and Training Awards Council.
FSC:	Financial Services Centre.
FSES:	Full Service Extended Schools.
GARDAI:	Police Force of Ireland.
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product.
GNP:	Gross National Product.
GUI:	Growing Up in Ireland.
HARP:	Historical Area Rejuvenation Project.
HEA:	Higher Education Authority.
HSCL:	Home School Community Liaison.
HSE:	Health Service Executive.
IAP:	Integrated Area Plan.
ITE:	Initial Teacher Education.
IYP:	Incredible Years Programme.
JC:	Junior Certificate.
JCSP:	Junior Certificate School's Programme.
KPMG:	Swiss based International Cooperative Network of independent Property Management firms with networks in Ireland.
LAP:	Local Area Plan.
LC:	Leaving Certificate.
LCA:	Leaving Certificate Applied.
LCETB:	Limerick and Clare Education & Training Board.
LCC:	Limerick City Council.
LEDP:	Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership.
LRA:	Limerick Regeneration Agencies.
LRFIP:	Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan.
MIC:	Mary Immaculate College.
MIREC:	Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee.
NAPS:	National Anti-Poverty Strategy.
NBSS:	National Behavioural Support Service.
NCSE:	National Council for Special Education.
NDA:	National Disability Authority.
NDP:	National Development Plan.
NESC:	National Economic and Social Council.
NESF:	National Economic and Social Forum.
NEPS:	National Educational Psychological Service.
NEWB:	National Education Welfare Board.
NSS:	National Spatial Strategy.
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
OMC:	Office of the Minister for Children.
OMCYA:	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

OSCAILT:	A network of Limerick City DEIS Schools, facilitated and supported by the Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) project, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) Limerick & the DES.
OST:	Out-of-School-Time provision.
PAUL:	People Against Unemployment in Limerick.
PDG:	Programme Development Group.
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy.
POBAL:	Pobal is a non-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the European Union.
PPN:	Public Participation Network.
PPP:	Public Private Partnership.
QDOSS:	Quality Development of Out of School Services.
QNHS:	Quarterly National Household Survey.
RESIN:	Rosbrien Education Substance Information Network (now DEPS).
SA:	Small Area.
SAPs:	Small Area Population Statistics.
SCP:	School Completion Programme.
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals.
SEN:	Special Educational Needs.
SES:	Socio Economic Status.
SEU:	Social Exclusion Unit, UK.
SILC:	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
SNA:	Special Needs Assistant.
SPHE:	Social and Personal Health Education.
SOLÁS:	An Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh Agus Scileanna - The Further Education and Training (FET) Authority.
SSP:	School Support Programme – DEIS.
TASC:	Think-tank for Action on Social Change.
TD:	Teachta Dála (a member of the Irish Parliament).
TED:	Transforming Education through Dialogue.
TUSLA:	The Child and Family Agency.
UK:	United Kingdom of Great Britain.
UN:	United Nations.
UNCRC:	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
UNEP:	United Nations Environment Programme.
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund.
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, known popularly as the United Nations Children's Fund.
US:	United States.
USA:	United States of America.
VEC:	Vocational Education Committee.

1.1   Introduction

In September 2006 two young children from the Moyross area of Limerick city were burnt in a horrific petrol bomb attack carried out by young people from their locality. This created a sense of outrage which was reflected in the local and national media. This incident was seen as a 'new low' in the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour that had come to characterise parts of the city. In response John Fitzgerald the former Manager of Dublin City Council was asked by government in November 2006 to prepare a report on the social situation in Limerick city, particularly in relation to the levels of crime, deprivation and anti-social behaviour. In April 2007 Fitzgerald submitted his report to government (*Addressing Issues of Social Exclusion in Moyross and Other Disadvantaged Areas of Limerick City*). The report highlighted the severity and the complexity of the problems in Limerick city, and the seeming inability of existing services there to resolve these problems.

> The conditions described … are stark, but on their own cannot fully bring home what I found to be the everyday reality faced by these local communities. The picture that emerged during visits to these estates and discussions had with residents and community workers was in many respects quite shocking. The quality of life for many people is extremely poor (Fitzgerald, 2007: 5).

Fitzgerald (2007: 8-13) made a number of proposals which included the need to put in place intensive policing arrangements, establish dedicated teams to address social and family problems and issues of educational disadvantage, improve access and infrastructure, attract inward investment, create incentives for development and prioritise State interventions so as to develop the Mid-West region, address the drugs problem and regenerate the housing stock. The Fitzgerald report also paved the way for the establishment of the Limerick regeneration programme (2007 onwards). The subsequent Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

DoEHLG[1]) Ministerial Orders *Statutory Instrument* (SI) 275 and 276 of 2007 provided the legal framework for Limerick's regeneration and shortly afterwards (July 2007) two regeneration agencies were established. One agency focussed on the Northside of the city, including the area of Moyross, the other on the Southside of the city to include the areas of Southill and parts of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect. Later St. Mary's Park (Island Field/Kings Island) would be included within the remit of the Northside Regeneration Agency. These four areas are the sites which are the primary focus of this study (hereafter referred to as the study sites or study site areas).

A concern highlighted by Fitzgerald related to the area of education. Fitzgerald (2007: 11) stated that:

- 'Initiatives to address educational disadvantage should be prioritised in the five year regeneration strategy';
- The Department of Education and Science, now the Department of Education and Skills (DES) 'should identify how local schools can be supported in developing their facilities and services to students, both during and outside of school hours';
- 'Educational activities to suit different learning needs should be encompassed within the curriculum', and 'educational welfare and counselling services' should be 'provided in a focused way to those who need it';
- Local schools 'to increase their numbers and dedicated teams should be established as part of the strategy';
- Attention should be given 'to outreach and adult education schemes, with the Colleges of Higher and Further Education providing opportunities and advice to these communities'.

These educational priorities were considered 'critical to achieving progress both in the short and longer-term' (Fitzgerald, 2007: 15). In the urban regeneration programme that followed (July 2007-June 2012) education would feature as an important sub-theme.

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[1] DoEHLG is the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. In 2011 this Government Department changed its name to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG).

1.2 The purpose of the study

The study sets out to take account of the voices of members of communities in Limerick city that have often been excluded from participation in public discourses. Its primary purpose is to identify from the perspective of those who took part in the study how education served them in the past and how educational policy might better serve those living in the study sites, presently and in the future. The study also looks to identify what part education could play in regeneration processes. As part of the study, national historical examples of regeneration are examined. These provide a context in which to discuss and analyse regeneration practices, with a view to identifying specific aspects, e.g. resident participation, education, etc., and making comparisons across contexts to see if the lessons learned from these examples of regeneration could be applied to the Limerick context.

1.3 Rationale and motivation for undertaking the study

I came to this study as a result of my work with the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (October 2007-June 2012). As part of this work I had for a time responsibility for progressing aspects of the education and training section of the social regeneration pillar of the Limerick regeneration programme. A major part of the work in the early stages of regeneration was to engage in consultation primarily[2] with educational service providers and decision makers, with a view to identifying a series of actions to be included in the regeneration vision document *Our Community, Our Vision, Our Future* which was launched on 21st January 2008 by the then President of Ireland, Mary McAleese. The actions identified in the vision for regeneration would also feature in the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) *Master Plan* (Oct. 2008) which was subsequently presented to Limerick City Council and the DoEHLG for approval. After the hype that surrounded the launches of these documents it began to dawn on me that something fundamental was missing from the consultation process, namely the voices of residents from the study site areas, especially their input into decision making on issues which would ultimately impact on them. This is because the above

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[2] See Appendix VI, Table 1Timeline and overview of Limerick Regeneration from June 2007–2016.

documents were predominantly influenced and shaped by the voices of those with responsibilities around service provision. Conscious that people have a right to participate in and access information relating to decision-making practices that affect their lives and well-being (Hunt, 2005; Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1992); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (1994), I found myself wondering how residents felt about education and educational policy, and how both might relate to regeneration. Towards the end of 2008 I was interested in pursuing further studies and having gained acceptance on a PhD programme I chose to attempt to explore these. These were the factors that prompted my interest to undertake this study.

1.4   Theoretical frameworks for the study

Two main theoretical frameworks were employed in the study; Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development and the socially critical perspective. These are discussed in Chapter Two 'Theoretical Frameworks'. A theoretical framework for regeneration is also provided and is discussed in Chapter Three 'Urban Regeneration'. The frameworks employed for the study traverse philosophy, sociology, psychology and education, with Husserlian phenomenology (1913/'83) employed as the central research method to investigate lived experiences and the voices of participants.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework provides a lens in which to understand the complexities of human development and the processes involved. An ecological perspective understands education to be part of a 'broader socio-political tapestry' (Pirner, 2011: 8), therefore educational researchers must 'look beyond single settings to the relationships between them' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 51). This framework emphasises the importance of healthy ecologies (environments) and relationships and interactions (proximal processes) between the various ecologies to ensure better child outcomes. Employing ecological approaches in support of children experiencing economic marginalisation or poverty can help ensure that schools strive for more equal learning outcomes for all their students (Higgins, 2008: 26). While likewise concerned with human development, the socially critical perspective focuses on 'imagining a better world which is less oppressive' (Leonardo, 2004: 16). This perspective is

however critical of education as currently configured, mainly because education is implicated in creating and reproducing inequality (Raffo et al., 2007: 35). Nevertheless a socially critical perspective acknowledges that high quality education can equip individuals with knowledge and skills needed for democratic participation and development (Freire, 1970), while providing a route out of poverty and exclusion (Bivens et al., 2009). These will be explored further in Chapter Four 'Education and Poverty'. The socially critical perspective also orients us towards issues of power and challenges static and deterministic views of identity. It posits that quality education must not only provide students with the ability to read and write, but with the tools of inquiry needed to question the world around them (Giroux, 1988: 9) and 'to read the world more critically' (Leonardo, 2004: 16).

1.5   Main research question and embedded questions of the study

The core research question of the thesis is concerned with how the education system in Limerick city has served residents living in Limerick's regeneration communities in the past and how it could better serve them presently and in the future? Embedded within the central research question are questions which relate to participants':

- childhood experiences of school;
- barriers to their educational participation, retention and progression;
- their views on the current system of education and aspirations for children;
- their views on the potential of the education system to meet the learning needs of all children; and
- thoughts on the Limerick regeneration programme, and views on how education might contribute to regeneration processes.

As part of the research participants were invited to consider what their participation in the study has meant to them. This was included in the study's design because of its potential implications for future policy, as it pertains to participation in public discourses, such as education and regeneration.

1.6   Methodology

This study sets out to access participants' experiences, perceptions, beliefs, priorities and concerns about education and subsequently create knowledge based on these. Data was collected and interpreted within a constructivist framework, which recognises that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and their reflection(s) on those experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). In order to achieve the objectives of the study a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate and phenomenology was employed as the central research method. Phenomenological inquiries prioritise how people 'make sense of their everyday life world from their own perspective' (Cho, 2000: 46). This methodology complements the approach taken and the philosophical perspective of the study. During the research phenomenology would be employed to provide a context for participants to reflect on and describe their experiences, priorities and concerns, and so generate rich data for phenomenological analyses.

1.7   Structure of the thesis

The remainder of this chapter provides an outline of the chapter structure of the thesis.

In Chapter Two, 'Theoretical Frameworks', I outline and critique the theoretical frameworks employed in the study. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and the socially critical perspective are presented as providing a theoretical basis from which to examine the relationship between individuals and social systems (society, education, the education system and regeneration), and how they can best benefit one another in the context of Limerick's regeneration.

In Chapter Three, 'Urban Regeneration', I review the urban regeneration literature. I begin with a definition of the term regeneration and then present an analysis of how the concept regeneration developed in the urban policy literature. This is followed by a presentation on the theoretical framework for regeneration which consists of 'broken windows' (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and 'neighbourhood effects' theory (Wilson, 1987). Next, I present two recurring themes associated with modern urban regeneration programmes; gentrification and sustainable-development-sustainable-communities. I then present an overview of the Irish urban regeneration experience. Subsequently, examples of some of the more high profile urban regeneration programmes are presented, especially those that took place in Ireland during what has come to be known as the Celtic Tiger period[3]. The main processes involved in these examples of regeneration are then discussed, along with some of the important lessons arising from these experiences; especially with regards to the concerns and the priorities of regeneration from a resident's perspective, as well as the importance of meaningful participation in regeneration processes. Finally, an outline of the Limerick regeneration programme from July 2007 to 2016 is presented, together with some of its more salient features.

In Chapter Four, 'Education and Poverty', I explore the relationship between poverty and education and the potential of education to impact on regeneration processes. I begin by outlining how poverty is understood in the literature and consider the main causes of poverty. Then I examine the extent of child poverty in Ireland and explore how poverty can impact on the lives of children. Next, I examine the relationship between poverty and education. I subsequently present ways in which economic poverty and inequality can be addressed. This is followed by considering ways in which inequality in education can also be addressed. Finally, I present the wider benefits of education and consider the potential benefit of education for regeneration processes.

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[3] In Irish history the Celtic Tiger period was characterised by profound economic wealth and social change. According to Fahey et al. (2011: 14) it usually refers to the time from c. 1994-95 to c. 2007.

In Chapter Five, 'Area Profiles', I present a social profile of Limerick city and the study site areas. The profiles depict two contradictory images of Limerick city, 1) depicts Limerick as having a high level of social, retail, environmental, historic and cultural infrastructure, as well as a developed higher level education and industrial sector, 2) depicts Limerick as having a 'brand' image of gangs, feuding, drugs and serious crime. Data for the area profiles are informed by a variety of sources, including Census data, maps, reports, journals and books. The profiles of the study sites illustrate that these areas have experienced elevated levels of inequality, poverty and social problems; problems which arguably prompted the need for regeneration in the city. As part of the area profiles I provide an outline of the national context during and after the Celtic Tiger period (1994-2007). In presenting the national context I outline some of the dramatic and profound social, demographic and economic changes which took place in Ireland during this period. Towards the end of the Celtic Tiger period the Limerick regeneration programme commenced (cf. Chapter Three, 3.9). The national context provides a context in which to understand some of the many challenges that confronted regeneration in Limerick from October 2008 - 2013.

In Chapter Six, 'Methodology and Research Process', I outline and describe the approach taken to the study, the methodology, the data collection and data explication processes. I begin by presenting an in-depth explanation of the rationale and motivation for undertaking the study. This is followed by the study's purpose, aims and objectives, and how the study was scoped and designed. I then outline the methodological framework, its philosophic underpinnings and the how the methodology was employed in the study. Next, I present an outline of the study sample and the study site areas and describe how these were accessed for the research. An ethical and reflexive approach was employed throughout the study. This is described along with presenting how the challenges encountered during the course of the research were dealt with. Subsequently, I present an outline of the verification procedures employed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of this research. I then reflect on my own transformation as a researcher as a result of having undertook this study. Following this I discuss the generalisability and transferability of the research findings. Finally, I present what I perceive are the main limitations of the study.

In Chapter Seven, 'Research Findings', I present the main findings of the research. The chapter begins with an outline of participants' accounts of their experiences of primary and post-primary school. Next, I describe some of the main barriers to participants' engagement, retention and progression in education. This is followed by participants' accounts of the value and perceived benefits of education. Subsequently, I present participants' thoughts on the Limerick regeneration programme. I then outline the educational priorities of participants. Finally, I present participants' views on their involvement in the study and what that involvement has meant to them, while considering the implications of this for participation in public discourses and processes affecting people's lives.

In Chapter Eight, 'Discussion', the main findings of the study are discussed and developed with reference to relevant literature. In interpreting the findings Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework is employed, together with the socially critical perspective. The chapter is organised as follows: I begin by discussing participants' experiences of school. This is followed by a discussion on barriers to engagement, retention and progression in education. The educational priorities of participants are then described. Finally, I explore ways in which those often excluded from participation in public discourses can be facilitated to participate more meaningfully in these processes.

In Chapter Nine, 'Recommendations', in this Chapter I present a set of recommendations based on the findings in Chapter Seven and the discussion in Chapter Eight. The recommendations in the chapter are organised broadly as follows: recommendations for education, recommendations for regeneration and recommendations on the research method and process. Under these broad headings the recommendations are presented according to a number of thematic headings.

In Chapter Ten, 'Conclusion', this is the final chapter of the thesis. In this chapter I revisit my research questions and the aims and objectives of the study. Next, I summarise the study. Then I outline the unique features of this study and the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge. Finally, I share my final thoughts and conclusions.

Chapter Two
Theoretical Frameworks

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development and the socially critical perspective. I begin by presenting an overview and critique of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development. This is followed by an overview and critique of the socially critical perspective.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979: 13) human development is

> A process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content.

Concerned with 'the interactional nature of individual and environmental influences on human outcomes', Bronfenbrenner's ecological model provides a 'conceptual tool for understanding social influences on development' (McIntosh et al., 2008: 87), while taking account of the various contexts within which individuals learn. The ecological model also posits that an individual's interactions with their environments and others (proximal processes) are necessary for positive learning experiences and outcomes (Lewthwaite, 2011: 38). The socially critical perspective provides 'a multi-disciplinary knowledge base with the implicit goal of advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge' (Leonardo, 2004: 11). It aims to understand relationships between individuals/groups and social systems, while considering how they produce one another and 'ultimately how critical social theory can contribute to the emancipation of both' (Leonardo, 2004: 11). Also concerned with issues of power in society, in classrooms and in schools (Raffo et al., 2007: 46), when employed to educational contexts the socially critical perspective places emphasis on cultivating in students and teachers the ability 'to question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation' (Leonardo, 2004: 12).

The theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter inform other chapters of the thesis, i.e. Chapter Four 'Education and Poverty', Chapter Six 'Methodology and Research Process', Chapter Seven 'Research Findings', Chapter Eight 'Discussion' and Chapter Nine 'Recommendations', and are likewise employed to help interpret the findings.

2.2   The ecological theory of human development

According to Derksen (2010: 327) the term ecology was first coined by Ernest Haeckel a German zoologist and evolutionist (c. 1873). Deriving from the Greek word *oikos* meaning house or environment and *logos* meaning knowledge, the term ecology was subsequently defined by the Chambers Dictionary (1993: 325) as 'the relationship plants, animals and human beings have to their environments and to each other'. Soon after Haeckel's usage of the term, other disciplines, namely geography, sociology, anthropology and economics, incorporated ecological understandings and approaches in their studies. Since then ecological and contextual approaches to human development have been employed by scholars such as Bronfenbrenner and colleagues (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986; 2004; 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Lerner, 2005, etc.).

The ecological model presented by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is understood through means of separate 'nesting' and interconnected structures, classified as the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: 45). The *microsystem* is the innermost system closest to the developing child, and usually involves the settings of the home, school and community. For Bronfenbrenner (1979: 22) the microsystem is 'a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting, with particular physical and material characteristics'. The *mesosystem* refers to the 'inter-relations between two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). This includes relationships between different microsystems such as family, community groups or peers. The importance of having positive relationships between these settings is considered essential for the developing person. The

exosystem encompasses the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not ordinarily contain the developing person, but in which events occur that influence processes within the immediate settings that do contain that person, e.g. for a child, relations between the home and the parent's work place; for a parent, the relations between the school and/or social group (Bronfenbrenner 1989: 227). The *macrosystem* describes the culture in which an individual lives and encompasses the system of beliefs, values, norms and ideologies which influence the formulation of policies, from which practices and structures are developed which contribute to or hinder the overall quality of life for the developing person. The micro-, meso-, exo- and macro- systems serve as contexts for development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: 165), whereas the chronosystem is a methodological construct that pertains to a type of research design, which 'permits one to identify the impact of prior life events and experiences, singly or sequentially on subsequent development' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005: 83).

A later development on the micro, meso, exo, macro, chrono framework was Bronfenbrenner's process-person-context-time (PPCT) framework. Subsuming the earlier micro, meso, exo, macro, chrono framework; from the 1990s onwards the process-person-context-time (PPCT) framework became the essence of Bronfenbrenner and his colleagues' theory (Tudge et al., 2009: 199). The PPCT framework is as follows: *Process* involves bidirectional interactions between the person and other people and between them and their ecology, which are the mechanisms through which human potential is realised. These interactions must however be reciprocal, occur regularly and take place over an extended period of time (Smith, 2011: 3). Processes help to explain connections between aspects of a context (e.g. culture or social class) and aspects of the individual (e.g., gender) and an outcome of interest and the relationship(s) between these (Tudge et al., 2009: 199). *Person* refers to the characteristics a person is endowed with, i.e. genetic, physical, psychological or behavioural attributes. C*ontext* consists of all those processes, relationships and influences on the developing person, i.e. family, school, peers, neighbourhood, historical, cultural and policy environment. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) likewise considered time and timing an important part of the PPCT framework. Time and timing are gauged by the extent to which human potential is realised into positive developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner and

Ceci, 1994: 568). *Time* refers to what is taking place during the course of a specific activity or interaction, as well as the extent to which activities and interactions occur with some consistency in the developing person's environment. These can vary according to specific historical events which occur during the person's lifetime. In summary the PCCT incorporates the following respectively: the process of development, the systems within which the developing person exists, the factors associated with change over time which influences development and the characteristics of the developing person, i.e. their disposition, ability, knowledge, experience and the influence of these on their subsequent relationships (Lewthwaite, 2011: 38).

Bronfenbrenner (1979: 60) posited that human development is facilitated

> By the participation of the developing person in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity [with people] with whom that person has developed a strong and enduring emotional attachment and when the balance of power gradually shifts in favour of the developing person.

Bronfenbrenner (2005: xxvii) likewise highlighted the importance and the power of human agency and suggested that human agency makes '…humans for better or for worse active producers of their own development'. However, just as the child is influenced by the settings in which they exist (e.g. family, school and neighbourhood), the ecological model makes acknowledgement of the influence of historic, physical, social, cultural and political factors on the development cycle (Christensen, 2010: 104). Finally, Tudge et al. (2009) posit that when employing the PPCT framework researcher's should focus on proximal processes in and between the various ecologies, while acknowledging how these are influenced by the characteristics of the developing individual, as well as considering 'how they are implicated in relevant developmental outcomes' (ibid: 207).

2.2.1   The ecological framework and education

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework has particular relevance for education and learning. While acknowledging the influence of each of the systems, it highlights the importance of the microsystem of school, in particular positive and nurturing relationships with teachers, as well as the influence of the mesosystem on educational outcomes. As a set of microsystems that interacts with one another, the mesosystem is 'a set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the developing person participates' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25). An example of the mesosystem for a child is relationships had between settings such as the home, school, neighbourhood and/or peer group. For an adult the mesosystem could be the set of interrelations had with family, work or social life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 25), all of which can influence children and their learning. While the exosystem does not involve the individual student as an active participant, influences such as school policies and school practices can have a significant bearing on their engagement with education and thereby their educational outcomes. The ecological framework thus highlights the importance of school policies and practices being structured so that they cater for the needs of all students individually, especially those experiencing difficulties or barriers. While the macrosystem embodies the larger cultural world of the developing child, recognition is made of the impact and influence of government policies, cultural customs and beliefs, historic events and economic influences on children's learning and the contexts in which children learn. Concerned with historical and life events and individual change across the life span the chronosystem focuses on changes which occur over a period of time in any one of the ecological systems (e.g., the development of policy or legislation that supports the microsystems of the family or the school). Interventions at the chronosystem level also includes those revisions of national educational policies for schools at the exosystem level, the maximisation and utilisation of resources and the improvement of relationships between the various players in the mesosystem, together with the active preparation of students, teachers and parents in the microsystem, for the changing circumstances in which education is dispensed in schools (Geldenhuys and Wevers, 2013: 14-15).

2.2.2   A critique of the ecological model

One of the core principles of the ecological theory of human development is that the developing child is at the centre of this model. A main criticism of this theory comes from Bronfenbrenner's own writings. Bronfenbrenner stressed the importance of looking 'beyond single settings to the relationship between them' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 51) and likewise stressed the importance of commonplace approaches to studying children, while emphasising the importance of studying children's development in real life settings. Years after *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979) Bronfenbrenner (1995, 2004; 2005) altered some of his original work because of a concern that the original model tended to over-emphasise children's environments, often to the neglect of an equal emphasis on the developing child. Another criticism is offered by Tudge et al. (2009: 207) who contend that Bronfenbrenner failed to provide a clear guide to help in the application of his theory. Nor did he write about his research as a way of showing how he applied an appropriate method, 'preferring instead to comment on others' research, none of which was designed specifically as a test of the theory'. A further criticism posits that the model of concentric nested systems, even with the subsequently added chronosystem can be static in its structural relations (Downes, 2013: 359). Downes (2013) therefore argues that the ecological framework needs to acknowledge power relations and their impact on human development (Downes, 2013: 359). O'Kane (2007: 52) contends that while Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory supports systemic descriptions of settings in which development takes place and the relationships between these settings, it can overlook issues such as oppression and the misuse of power. This is because the theory does not explain why things happen or why connections exist. Another criticism suggests that the ecological model can be too prescriptive to inform practices directly (Ungar, 2002: 483), and therefore can be guilty of 'overstating the importance of the parts of a system; making it appear that homeostasis (system stability) is preferable to conflict and change and leaves unchallenged underlying assumptions such as hierarchies and institutions' (Ungar, 2002: 484). Christensen (2010) proposes that resilience should be added to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. This is because resilience can help explain how individuals overcome trauma in their lives, and how when brought up in adverse

environments/circumstances they survive and become successful (Christensen, 2010: 105).

While acknowledging some of the limitations associated with this theory, the ecological perspective on human development does nonetheless provide an integrated system to help us understand the course and the factors involved in human development (Lerner, 2005: xv). It also provides a theoretical basis from which to examine social policy and the interactive influences of individuals and environments. By foregrounding children's environments and relationships as central influences in development, the model presented by Bronfenbrenner and colleagues (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986; 2004; 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Lerner, 2005) lays emphasis on connected relationships and functional environments for achieving positive developmental and learning outcomes (Smith, 2011: 2). Consequently, it enables identification of more comprehensive responses to problems affecting individuals, families and communities, such as marginalisation and exclusion and their impact on education and developmental outcomes. In *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* (2014: 13) it is stated

> That children and young people live and interact in multiple connected spheres (nested contexts such as families, peer groups, schools, clubs, etc.) and that a continuum of investment is necessary across the life course for all children and young people, with additional support for 'vulnerable' groups, including those living in poverty.

In this study the ecological model is employed to interpret and discuss the findings, and make appropriate recommendations based on these. When supplemented by the socially critical perspective, this theoretical framework has the potential to inform a comprehensive and systematic reform agenda for education and the education system. In a changing context such as regeneration in Limerick employing an ecological perspective to educational policy can help guide the development of interventions so that they better meet the needs of individual students, while nurturing more equal educational outcomes.

2.3   The socially critical perspective

The socially critical perspective has its roots in the school of thought that emerged from the work of German theorists collectively known as the Frankfurt School (1923), whose principal members were Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodore Adorno (1903-1969) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). From there social critical theory[4] emerged as a multi-disciplinary system of critique rooted in the dialectical tradition of Marx and Hegel and from 'an expanded set of criticism with the advent of more recent discourses such as postmodernism and cultural studies' (Leonardo, 2004: 12). Cook (2004: 418) posits that social critical theory 'is a mode of reflection that looks critically at processes of social development from the point of view of the obstacles they pose for human flourishing'. According to Leonardo (2004: 11) this perspective helps to critique education and educational processes, such as parental involvement (Lareau, 2000), curriculum formation (Apple, 1989), popular culture (Giroux, 1994) and new constructions of identity in postcolonial contexts (McCarthy and Dimitriadis, 2004). Postmodern perspectives, especially the writings of Foucault also provide some important insights on educational processes, particularly with regards to the role of education in social control; student/learner resistance; the exercise of power and the relationship between power and knowledge (Skelton, 1997: 185). As a framework the socially critical perspective is ideologically and politically committed to achieving emancipation and transformation through analysis, critique and human action (Jessop, 2012: 3- 4). It also aims to shed light on aspects of social life that are exploitative and oppressive (Agger, 1998: 4-5). In educational discourses the socially critical perspective can act as a lens to help teachers and educators identify and oppose oppressive structures and dominant pedagogies that privilege some and marginalise others (McLaren, 2007).

At the micro level the socially critical perspective calls for critique and dialogue and small scale changes in the location and exercise of power in schools. It exhorts teachers and educators to take greater responsibility for the way in which 'taken-for-granted' assumptions or prejudices might limit children's opportunities and success

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[4] The term critical theory was coined by Horkheimer (1937). It describes a politically committed response to the problems of modernity and employs interdisciplinary methods to provide critique; recognising the transformative/emancipatory intention of theory (Jessop, 2012: 3).

in the classroom (Raffo et al., 2007: 35, 36 & 59). Teachers and educational professionals are likewise urged to become attuned 'to their own assumptions through self-reflection and self-criticism' (Agger, 1991: 111). By highlighting the importance of critique the socially critical perspective proposes that critique should be an integral part of a teacher's profession and feature prominently in their continuing professional development (CPD). At a micro level the socially critical perspective aims to foster democracy in schools through, 1) developing opportunities for nurturing and hearing student voices (Fielding, 2006: 8), and 2) creating 'spaces' where teachers and students can work and learn together in partnership (Raffo et al., 2007: 42). It also draws attention to the universalistic and particularistic characteristics of schools (Lynch, 1989: 118), and in doing so challenges the view that schools, teachers and students are merely passive receivers of 'hidden curriculum' as opposed to active creators of meaning (Lynch, 1989). In the literature 'hidden curriculum' is described as the learning of attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and assumptions expressed in school ritual or regulations, which more often are taken for granted and rarely questioned (Seddon, 1983: 1-6). While the literature presents differing perspectives on the 'hidden curriculum' i.e. functionalist (Dreeben, 1968: Jackson, 1968, Eisner, 1985; etc.), liberal perspectives (Hargreaves, 1978; Lacey, 1970, etc.) and critical perspectives (Apple, 1979, 1982, 1986, 1990; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983; Lynch, 1989; Young, 1971; Willis, 1977, etc.), Giroux (1983: 48) emphasises the importance of exploring 'hidden curriculum' 'through the social norms and moral beliefs tacitly transmitted through the socialisation process that structure classroom social relationships'. The socially critical perspective in problematising and challenging classroom social relationships advocates for 'critical'[5] and 'emancipatory' forms of pedagogy. In the literature pedagogy is recognised as an approach employed by teachers to lead students in their learning (Alexander, 2008). While teaching is 'the act' pedagogy is 'the act and discourse' which 'connects the apparently self-contained act of teaching with culture, structure and mechanisms of social control' (Alexander, 2008: 6). Pedagogy

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[5] The term critical pedagogy was coined by Henry Giroux (1983) to describe the work of theorists and practitioners who have an emancipatory orientation. Paulo Freire is however considered the 'inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy, even though Freire seldom used the term' (McLaren, 2000: 1).

likewise describes the act of teaching, while encompassing 'the production of social and cultural values and learning relationships' (ibid: 6).

At the meso level the socially critical perspective stresses the importance of creating 'spaces' where those in other systems, i.e. the wider community, can work together with parents and teachers to support the microsystem of the home and the microsystem of the student-teacher relationship, in order for better educational and developmental outcomes to be achieved. While the literature acknowledges that the identities of individuals and/or groups are shaped and conferred by social, political and historic constructions and power relations (Abes et al., 2007: 2), a socially critical perspective posits that deficit identity demarcations tend to attribute the cause of poor educational and other life outcomes to deficiencies in the child's family or community (Haberman, 1995: 51). Such perceptions and the literature they derive from however often fail to make sufficient reference to deficient educational policies, the lack of adequate educational resources and the continuous failure by governments to address the crucial issue of poverty and inequality in society (Apple, 1989: xvii). The socially critical perspective therefore challenges static and limiting views of identity; because identity demarcations are often used to define 'otherness' and are then used 'as a vehicle for subordination' (Ellsworth, 1992: 114). In this study deficit perceptions of participants were shown to have had negative impacts on school participation, retention and progression, with resultant negative later adult life outcomes (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.2.4 & 7.2.5). Challenging static views of identity is therefore important for the socially critical perspective, because of the near impossible task of providing 'a hopeful or an equal education to a child that one perceives as deficit or inadequate' (Haberman, 1995: 51).

At the macro level the socially critical perspective posits that due to current social arrangements education is 1) a 'classed' phenomenon and is inherently inequitable, because it 'reflects unequal distributions of power and resources' (Raffo et al., 2007: 5), 2) tends to serve the interests of children whose families possess the greatest levels of economic, social and cultural capital, rather than children living in adverse capital circumstances (Raffo et al., 2007: 36). The socially critical perspective is also critical of much of the language used in the social policy literature, especially the usage of terms such as 'choice', 'standards', 'excellence', the 'free market' and

'value for money'. This is because these terms are often used to legitimise the interests and the values of the rich and the privileged in society (Apple, 1989). Macro level factors such as the increasing links between education and global economic competitiveness and success in the labour market are also problematic for this perspective, because they have led to education and human capital development discourses being defined in terms of workplace preparation (Morrow and Torres, 2000: 47). With the result that educational practices are increasingly emphasising 'competence-based skills at the expense of the more fundamental forms of critical competence required for autonomous living and active citizenship'[6] (Morrow and Torres, 2000: 47). For these reasons Apple (1990: vii) posits that linking education with the labour market and economic competitiveness raises fundamental questions about education and school processes, while also raising questions about 'what knowledge is of most worth' and more fundamentally 'what it means to be educated'.

2.3.1   A critique of the socially critical perspective

The socially critical perspective emphasises cooperation, dialogue, interactive social relations, communication, positive social values and democratic participation (Freire, 1970). When applied to education it offers the possibility of generating alternative and transformative practices and theories. It does so by bringing together various dimensions of social life 'to craft a multi-perspectival optic on contemporary society' (Kellner, 2003: 8) to effect progressive social change, transformation and the full development of individuals (Marcuse, 1937/1989: 59). While seeming attractive as an alternative to traditional theories or perspectives on education, a number of criticisms are directed at the socially critical perspective.

The first criticism posits that this perspective is not a unified corpus of critical inquiry. Instead it is 'constituted by a fusion of several conceptual traditions and socio-cultural dynamics, alongside divisive methodological approaches and theoretical readings of self and society' (Brown, 2011: 4). Another criticism is made

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[6] Active citizenship is described as the active exercise of social rights and shared responsibilities associated with belonging to a community or society (NESF, 2003: 136).

against social critical theorists who stand outside the policy process looking to 'wrest control of policy from its current owners and deliver it to those who are disadvantaged by current arrangements' (Raffo et al., 2007: 46). Such a stance can adopt idealist (utopian) positions, but be devoid of action to effect substantial or lasting change. This runs contrary to the basic underpinnings of this perspective, which sets out to enhance and transform the human condition (Fielding, 2006; Jessop, 2012; Kellner, 2003; Marcuse, 1937/1989). A further criticism is offered by Leonardo (2004: 16) who posits that when pedagogy centres only on critique it 'becomes a discourse of bankruptcy, a language devoid of resistance or agency on the part of students and educators'. Another criticism of this perspective comes from feminist research (Burbules and Berk, 1999; Connolly, 2003, 2007; Luke and Gore, 1992). Connolly (2007: 126) for example argues that critical pedagogy (and by association the socially critical perspective)[7] 'is still embedded in patriarchal relations, silencing the feminist voices, or at least marginalising them'. Burbules and Berk (1999) contend that the masculine way of knowing is different to the feminine way of knowing, and as critical thinking and critical pedagogy tend to rely on empirical evidence, they run the risk of excluding 'other sources of evidence or forms of verification', such as experience, emotion or feeling. In doing so can mask 'a closed and paternal conversation' which excludes issues and voices that other groups can bring to educational discourses (Burbules and Berk, 1999: 10).

Given the many criticisms levelled at the socially critical perspective one could argue about its usefulness, relevance and efficacy. Notwithstanding these criticisms a critical theory of education does present 'a model of explanation which incorporates a theory of praxis-orientated action' (Lynch, 1999: 79) and is committed to achieving emancipation and transformation through analysis, critique and human action (Jessop, 2012). However, this perspective must be questioned and challenged when it becomes artificial or abstract, and so needs to be 'interrogated when that which is central to critical thinking', i.e. the critical spirit, is inhibited (Burbules and Berk, 1999: 11). While offering critique feminist critical education analysis and feminist critical educators can also make an important contribution to the socially critical perspective. Feminist critical education analysis can demonstrate new ways of working in

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[7] Insertion the authors.

education and provide a 'key to offering alternative concrete policy' with 'political implications' (Connolly, 2007: 113). Feminist educators can likewise help create pedagogical situations which 'empower students, demystify canonical knowledge, and clarify how relations of domination subordinate subjects marked by gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and many other markers of difference' (Luke and Gore, 1992: 1, in Connolly, 2007: 125). How feminist pedagogy can be employed in schools and other educational settings is offered by Shrewsbury (1987: 6-14) who posits that the feminist classroom tries to cultivate a sense of mutuality, connection and care, where decision making takes place by consensus as well as by formalised decisions and rules. In the feminist classroom students are encouraged to share in the responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others. Feminist pedagogy also involves developing leadership through responsible participation in developing aspects of the course, and the feminist teacher/educator serves as a role model, facilitating members of the class to develop a community of learners with a sense of shared purpose and a set of leadership skills needed, so that teacher and students can jointly proceed and achieve their educational objectives.

2.4   How the theoretical frameworks were employed in the study

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model has led to new directions in psychological and sociological research and contributed much to the development of effective policies and programmes for the well-being of children and families (Vander Ven, 2006). In this study Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective on human development has provided a 'lens' in which to consider educational issues, along with considering how these are influenced and affected by the individual themselves, the family, school and community links and the various dynamics between these. The ecological perspective also emphasises the importance of the microsystem as a central influence for the developing child, i.e. settings where the child has the most direct interactions, e.g. home or school. Therefore should relationships in these microsystems breakdown, difficulties can arise for the child in all the other settings (O'Kane, 2007: 423). Evidence of this in this study can be seen in Chapter Seven 'Research Findings', where relationships in the microsystem, i.e. student-teacher relationships (cf. 7.2.1-7.2.5) and family difficulties (cf. 7.3.1) presented difficulties in students'

experience of school and presented barriers to their education. While the ecological model draws attention to the importance of fostering and developing positive and nurturing relationships in the microsystems of home and school, especially for children and families experiencing difficulties or poverty (Bronfenbrenner, 1986: 736), it also proposes that initiatives aimed at improving educational provision must look at supporting the mesosystem, i.e. the relational network with others and the linkages between any of the settings in which a child spends time (O'Kane, 2007: 423). This is because changes in relationships and understandings between these settings can over time result in better outcomes for children (ibid: 423). Consequently, supporting home, school and community links can contribute to more sustainable developmental outcomes for individuals and communities. While the developing child has little or no control over the exosystem, influences such as school curriculum and the organisational context the child operates in within the school environment has a direct bearing on them. Therefore to create a more inclusive education system in Limerick city as part of Limerick's regeneration, family friendly policies are needed, together with developing school curriculum and a school culture which actively supports, nurtures and facilitates learning for *all* students regardless of their ability and/or socio-economic status. Finally, the ecological perspective submits that the levels of support in the closer systems, i.e. micro and meso, needs to be supported by the macrosystem (O'Kane, 2007: 42). Hence for the transformations sought in regeneration (cf. Chapter Three, 3.2) strategies and policies which are developed at the macro level must be genuinely focused on supporting families and schools at the micro level, in their efforts to nurture and develop children.

When supplemented by the socially critical perspective the ecological model provides a comprehensive understanding of power and the contexts of power (Ungar, 2002: 484). This can be useful for identifying and studying particular social phenomena, such as poverty and social exclusion, while having the potential to critically assess processes of development from 'the point of view of the obstacles they pose for human flourishing' (Cook, 2004: 418). Bronfenbrenner's ecological model with the help of the socially critical perspective can help researchers unearth social problems such as poverty and social exclusion, and the various levels these operate at, bringing them to light and then with the help of critique work at changing them. Foucault (1980: 131) asserts that '… each society has its regimes of truth, its

"general politics"; that is the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true'. These are reinforced and constantly redefined through institutions such as the education system or the media. Foucault postulates that power is not only negative or coercive, but is a positive and productive force. Foucault therefore counsels that when resisting oppressive ideologies and practices, one must detach 'the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991: 75). In being committed to questioning societal attitudes, i.e. capitalism, racism, sexism, oppressive ideologies and educational practices associated with power and domination, the socially critical perspective thus provides a framework in which to critique the education system, as is currently configured. By drawing attention to inequality in society and in schools, a socially critical perspective can also positively influence the education-poverty relationship and help bring about greater equality in education. Together with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, the socially critical perspective is capable of providing a progressive theoretical basis for teachers and educators to 'put into practice their commitment to broad social change' (Ungar, 2002: 493). As a result, these two theoretical frameworks can help expose the norms and objectives of education and regeneration; unmasking how they are often used to serve the interests of the privileged, while maintaining the status quo (cf. Chapter Three, 3.3). In doing so these frameworks provide a constructive theory of practice; capable of bringing about changes in the location in the exercise of power, and in promoting the development of social justice in society and in schools (Procee, 2006: 252). For these reasons the ecological perspective on human development supplemented by the socially critical perspective provides a useful theoretical framework from which to construct an education system in Limerick, and a regeneration programme, that better serves the needs of those who took part in the study, their children and communities, presently and in the future.

2.5   Chapter conclusion

The ecological perspective on human development has drawn attention to the quality and the context of a child's environment, as well as the importance of supportive proximal processes between the various ecological systems for positive developmental outcomes.   Furthermore, it has drawn attention to the importance of employing systemic responses to the problem of exclusion in education.   The ecological model puts forward that to create a more equitable education system for *all* students, multi-system level responses are required that are informed by policies which support families in their efforts to raise their children.   By illustrating how the ecologies surrounding a child can help or hinder development, this theoretical framework is supportive of efforts undertaken for the betterment of children and families, such as urban regeneration.

In Chapter Seven of this thesis, 'Research Findings', the experiences of participants highlights the need for a social justice ethos in education.   By orienting us to issues of power the socially critical perspective focuses on issues related to opportunity, voice and dominant discourses (Keesing-Styles, 2003: 3).   The socially critical perspective is also concerned with negotiating and transforming relationships between students and classroom teachers, the production of knowledge and the institutional structures of school (Lynch, 1989) and the social and material relations of the wider community, society and the nation State (McLaren, 1993).   Furthermore, the socially critical perspective recognises and acknowledges the potential of individuals to bring about and effect lasting change (Burbules and Berk, 1999; Foucault, 1980).   This is also a central concern of the ecological perspective on human development, where the individual actively participates in and influences interactions within and among the micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1993; 1995; 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998).   For the socially critical theorist the end goals are a world which is less oppressive, and an education system exists where students learn how to question, deconstruct and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation.   Necessary to this is engagement with the language of transcendence, and imagining an alternative reality and hope for society and the education system (Giroux, 1983).   Finally, the central question of this research

sought to identify how education and educational policy might better serve residents and their communities as a result of regeneration. In answering this question the theoretical frameworks presented in this chapter provide a robust framework from which a more comprehensive, inclusive and equitable education system can be developed in Limerick's as a result of regeneration.

3.1   Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature on urban regeneration. The review has two goals. Firstly, the theories and concepts that inform regeneration policies and practices are reviewed in order to provide a framework through which to explain the processes involved. Secondly, I offer specific examples of regeneration in Ireland, including an overview of the Limerick regeneration programme. These provide a context in which to discuss and analyse urban regeneration in Ireland. In presenting these examples of regeneration comparisons across contexts are made and the lessons learned from these guide an understanding of what should be the priorities for urban regeneration programmes.

I begin the chapter by providing a definition of urban regeneration. This is followed by tracing the evolution of the term regeneration in the urban policy literature. Then I present a theoretical framework for regeneration, which draws on two closely related theories; 'broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects'. Next, two recurring themes associated with modern urban regeneration programmes are presented 1) gentrification, 2) sustainable-development-sustainable communities. Gentrification is of interest to this study because it features in some of the examples of regeneration discussed in this chapter, and also because of its impacts on individuals and communities. In recent years sustainable development and sustainable communities have become local, national and global concerns; because of this it will be explored further in the chapter. Subsequently, I present a historical overview of Irish urban development. This is followed by a review of the content and processes involved in some of the more high profile urban regeneration programmes in Ireland. Many of the examples of regeneration presented took place in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period (c. 1994-2007). Having reviewed the literature and the examples of regeneration a number of important lessons have been learned, these are then

presented. Finally, I present an outline of the Limerick regeneration programme from 2007-2016. During the period (July 2007-June 2012) regeneration in Limerick was coordinated and directed by the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA). In June 2012 LRA ceased to exist with regeneration in Limerick thereafter (2013-2023) coming under the remit of the combined Local Authorities of Limerick City and County[8].

3.2   Defining regeneration

The term regeneration derives from the Latin *regenerare.* As a concept the term regeneration is 'infused with religious content and spiritual connotations' (Furbey, 1999: 420) i.e. 'rebirth', 'renewal' and/or 'bringing to life again' (Browning, 1996: 318; Hastings, 1981: 639). In the urban policy literature regeneration is understood to refer to the 'transformation' and 'renewal' of the urban environment (Furbey, 1999; Roberts, 2000). Roberts (2000: 17) further defines regeneration as

> a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change.

This definition encompasses a number of features; namely the need to better understand the processes of decline and an 'agreement on what one is trying to achieve and how' (Lichfield, 1992: 19). It also highlights the need to address weaknesses in approaches to regeneration, especially those that are 'short-term, fragmented and 'without an overall strategic framework for city-wide development' (Hausner, 1993: 526). Roberts (2000: 9) contends that urban regeneration is an outcome of a range of processes which drives physical, social and environmental transitions in response to the opportunities and challenges that are 'presented by urban degeneration in a particular place at a specific moment in time'. Urban regeneration programmes are therefore expected to respond to the specific circumstances of the city or the region where they are located. Roberts (2000: 21)

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[8] On the 1st June 2014 Limerick City and County Council became the single Authority responsible for local government in Limerick City and County (Local Government Reform Act, 2014).

also puts forward that urban regeneration is characterised by the following interventions and activities. These:

- straddle the public, private and community sectors;
- results in changes to institutional structures over time in response to changing circumstances (economic, social, environmental and political);
- influences policies and develop institutional structures to support specific proposals;
- supports the uniqueness of place and prioritise the needs of local communities;
- mobilises collective effort and encourages a diversity of discourses about the content and processes of regeneration;
- facilitates individuals and communities to input to and shape regeneration so that it is more responsive to their needs (Healey, 1995: 256).

Regeneration programmes must likewise endeavour to reintegrate communities and neighbourhoods experiencing physical and social decline into mainstream society, while seeking to progress measures aimed at addressing social exclusion and fostering economic and social development (McGregor and McConnachie, 1995; Roberts, 2000).

Increasingly sustainable environmental development is coming to dominate the urban policy literature and the theory and practice of urban regeneration management (Roberts, 2000: 16). Sustainable environmental development according to the DECLG (2012: 10) involves 'creating a sustainable and resource-efficient economy founded on a fair and just society, which respects the ecological limits and carrying capacity of the natural environment'. In 1992 the UN *Rio Declaration* (Principle 8) stated that sustainable development must be achieved by putting in place measures which ensure 'a higher quality of life for all people' while reducing and eliminating 'unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies'. In more recent times urban regeneration has a concern to protect the natural environment (*Department of the Environment Community and Local Government* (DECLG), 2012; *European Environment Advisory Councils* (EEAC), 2009; Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, 2007; UN Environment Programme (UNEP) *Towards a Green Economy - Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, 2011; *The World Business*

Council for Sustainable Development, *Vision 2050*, 2010). In December 2015 world leaders assembled in Paris to adopt a global agreement that would head off the growing dangers of human-induced climate change. An outcome of the Paris summit was the identification of a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which would guide policy to ensure sustainable development and inclusive sustainable growth. The SDGs formulated at the Paris summit identify key issues such as: fostering economic growth; raising average living standards through more equal income distribution; ensuring a more equal sharing of the world's resources; and measures to protect the natural environment (*Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015). The SDGs also stipulate that cities must not only provide essential services in areas such as health and education 'at lower costs per capita due to economies of scale benefits' *United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP, 2011: 15), they must likewise achieve efficiencies in vital infrastructure, e.g. housing, water, sanitation, transport and the development of interactive spaces for 'cultural outreach and exchange' (ibid: 15). Furthermore, the SDGs urge governments and local authorities to engage in planning that will address population dynamics in a proactive way (UNEP, 2011: 15).

3.3   Regeneration and its evolution in the urban policy literature

In the aftermath of World War II (1945) many European countries embarked upon extensive programmes of re-construction as a result of the devastation created by the War. During the late 1940s and 1950s terms such as 'rebuilding' and 're-construction' feature in much of the urban policy literature. In the 1960s and 1970s terms such as 'urban re-development' and 'urban renewal' tend to be used, and the focus of policy during these decades was on improving the quality of cultural, leisure and retail facilities in the urban environment (Parkinson et al., 2006; Urban Task Force, 1999; Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), 2000). From the 1980s onwards the term regeneration becomes firmly established in the urban policy lexicon. By the 1990s urban regeneration policy, particularly in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) begins to reflect a growing concern with social and community issues. There is also a greater emphasis placed

on the re-development of run-down or derelict areas, and measures to improve public services, re-build communities and create safer neighbourhoods.

From the 1990s onwards the urban regeneration literature shows an increasing concern for partnership, inclusivity, community development[9] and the active participation of citizens in urban regeneration processes (Furbey, 1999; Carley, 2000; Roberts, 2000, etc.). According to Furbey (1999: 429) these concerns were informed by research programmes undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) that were established by the Blair government in the UK to coordinate commitments to 'achieving a more equal society' (DETR, 1997: 3). While the vocabulary of locality, inclusiveness, community participation and partnerships might have an appeal, Furbey (1999) contends that the language used masks the reality that decision making in regeneration is made by the State and its agencies with 'powerful business interests' (Furbey, 1999: 432) having an influential role. Furbey (1999) also contends that local stakeholder participation and decision making in regeneration tends to take place in a subordinate capacity (ibid: 432). In Ireland recent policy emphasises the importance of including the local community in urban regeneration processes (DECLG, 2012). The DECLG (2012: 64) states that the local community is 'at the heart of everything the State does' and should be 'enabled to identify and address social and economic issues in their own areas' while 'assessing needs, identifying the challenges necessary to improve conditions and making these changes happen'. This exhortation therefore behoves those responsible for regeneration to ensure that individuals and communities are facilitated to play an active role in regeneration processes and decision making. However, the Irish urban regeneration experience presented later in the chapter (cf. 3.7 - 3.7.7) demonstrates contrary practices.

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[9] Community development involves a community – geographical or issue-based, identifying their needs in terms of development, sustainability and education, and collectively working together to meet those needs (Connolly, 2007: 117). According to the (DECLG, 2012: 64) community development can help address the 'underlying causes of disadvantage while offering new opportunities for those lacking choice, power and resources'.

3.4   A theoretical framework for regeneration

Two distinctive strands of theory inform much of the policy and practice of modern urban regeneration in the Global North and Western Countries. Both strands originated in the US and were subsequently adopted and applied in the UK and other parts of Europe. The first theoretical strand is 'broken windows' (Wilson and Kelling, 1982), the second theoretical strand is 'neighbourhood effects' (Wilson, 1987).

3.4.1   'Broken windows': a theory of neighbourhood safety

In the *Death and Life of Great American Cities,* Jane Jacobs (1961) argued that traditionally social control over public spaces was informal and was provided at a local level by residents, shopkeepers and people going about their everyday lives. As a result 'normal' human activity indirectly kept a check on unruly behaviour and minor incidents of crime. Jacob's ideas about informal social control were further developed by two North American criminologists James Wilson and George Kelling (1982) in 'broken windows' theory. This theory focuses on the tangible outcomes of social disorder and the title 'broken windows' theory comes from an observation that if a window is broken there is an expectation that the occupier or owner will quickly take action to have it repaired. However, if the behaviours which led to the 'broken window' go unchecked, there is a step by step progression into further decline. The hypothesis underlying this theory is that in a community with elevated levels of social disorder, the ability or the desire of local residents to exercise social control is undermined. As a result the neighbourhood becomes attractive to additional and sometimes more serious social disorder activities (Skogan, 1990: 84). Indicators of disorder include: anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and taking, crime, violence and urban dereliction.

Wilson and Kelling (1982) sought to understand why residents in areas experiencing disorder and decline no longer exercised 'control' of their communities in the way Jacobs (1961) described. In their research they found that the fear of crime made citizens reluctant to intervene and more likely to avoid places where disorderly

behaviour might be expected to occur. Wilson and Kelling (1982) however also purported that a 'virtuous spiral' can be created when disorder is brought under control, when the fear of crime is reduced, when the sense of communal safety is restored. Once a critical momentum of these community gains are achieved 'broken windows' theory proposes that neighbourhood improvement is re-enforced and becomes self-sustainable, with residents more likely to renew commitments to their communities and their neighbourhoods (Wilson and Kelling, 1982: 34).

3.4.2   A critique of 'broken windows' theory

The main contention in 'broken windows' theory is that minor 'disorders' leads to an increasing spiral of serious crime (Shelden, 2004: 3), which subsequently leads to neighbourhood decline. Critics of this theory (Bauder, 2002; Bayley, 1994; Dilulio, 1995; Miringoff and Miringoff, 1999; Shelden, 2004) have questioned the mechanics of how public disorder morphs into more serious crime. Shelden (2004: 3) argues that there is insufficient empirical evidence to suggest that serious crime will diminish if minor offences are addressed, or offenders of crime are apprehended. Another criticism levelled against this theory is the seemingly implicit assumption that criminal offences, typically described by Kelling and Wilson (1982) are caused by people living in marginalised and excluded circumstances, with little or no reference made of the impact on the neighbourhood of crimes committed by the affluent and the wealthy. A more fundamental critique of 'broken windows' theory comes from studies in criminology, who question whether increased policing actually impacts on crime reduction (Bayley, 1994: 3), or whether small instances of street disorder or minor crime actually leads to neighbourhoods being drawn into further crime, anti-social behaviour, social exclusion and eventual physical and social decline (Bayley, 1994; Sherman and Eck, 2002). Another criticism argues that proposing 'broken windows' theory as a means of redressing the negative effects of declining neighbourhoods is a dismissal of those conditions which give rise to crime, namely poverty, inequality and social exclusion (Dilulio, 1995). Therefore, urban policy makers are urged not to blame inner-city communities for the failures and decline of neighbourhoods. But instead look to society for answers to this problem, and be critical of social policies which facilitated social engineering that created

communities with concentrated levels of deprivation, who experience social polarisation and have to contend with poor environmental quality and maintenance issues (Hanley, 2007: 231; McCafferty, 2014: 17). Insights from 'broken windows' theory therefore proposes that more benefits are to be derived for regeneration when policy makers focus on addressing deficits in social development and increasing the performance and the delivery of public services, especially in areas such as estate management, environmental improvement measures and various forms of policing (Bauder, 2002; Bayley, 1994; Dilulio, 1995; Fahey et al., 2014; Maguire et al., 2002; Miringoff and Miringoff, 1999; Sherman and Eck, 2002).

3.4.3   The theory of 'neighbourhood effects'

The theory of 'neighbourhood effects' first emerged in the writings of the Chicago *Urban Poverty and Family Life Study* (UPFLS) directed by William Julius Wilson who later became professor of sociology at Harvard University in 1996. He subsequently became an advisor to US President Bill Clinton. Wilson undertook an in-depth study of several North American cities in an attempt to understand why neighbourhood conditions, especially those within black communities, deteriorated so rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s. In his work *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) Wilson explains that the growth of unemployment and poverty dramatically increased among ethnic minorities during this period, which led to the growth of what he describes as an inner-city underclass (ibid: 8). Wilson (1987) attributed the growth of this phenomenon to macroeconomic forces and policies which created barriers that prevented people from accessing many of the opportunities, e.g. education progression, social mobility, etc., open to those with privilege and influence. Long-term unemployment, protracted periods of poverty, welfare dependency, the lack of education, training and skills development opportunities needed to access available employment, high incidences of street crime and teenage pregnancies, together with the repeated failure of US governments to create meaningful opportunities for inner-city people to play an active part in decision making in their communities and on issues affecting their lives; combined to create 'neighbourhood effects' and the deterioration of neighbourhoods in the cities studied (Wilson, 1987: 8).

The theory of 'neighbourhood effects' posits that living in poor neighbourhoods makes people poorer and limits and erodes their life chances. The theory is explained in terms of *concentration effects* and *buffer effects*. *Concentration effects* refer 'to the constraints and opportunities associated with living in a neighbourhood in which the population is overwhelmingly socially disadvantaged' (Wilson, 1987: 144). *Buffer effects* refer 'to the presence of a sufficient number of working-and-middle-class professionals to absorb the shock or cushion the effect of uneven economic growth and periodic recessions on inner city neighbourhoods' (ibid: 144). In 'neighbourhood effects' theory neighbourhoods are defining worlds. This is because neighbourhoods are the primary source of contact and interaction for persons in communities. As a consequence neighbourhoods with elevated levels of social problems risk becoming 'trapped in a vicious cycle of decline, where social problems reinforce each other and become intractable' (Page, 2006: 22). This can lead to stigmatisation, discrimination, social isolation and exclusion, which reaches a 'tipping point' beyond which the neighbourhood is lost to mainstream society (Page, 2006: 23). 'Neighbourhood effects' is recognised to have impacts on outcomes in educational achievement, school drop-out rates, deviant behaviours, poor health outcomes and negative impacts on successful transitions from welfare to work and social and occupational mobility (van Ham and Manley, 2012: 2). The theory of 'neighbourhood effects' provides a structural explanation for the evolution of social exclusion. It also provides a framework in which to understand how the spiral of decline develops in communities.

3.4.4 A critique of 'neighbourhood effects' theory

The main criticism made against this theory is that insufficient evidence exists to support the view that living in poor neighbourhoods makes people poorer or erodes their life chances, independently of those factors which contribute to their poverty in the first place (Durlauf, 2004; Galster, 2010). Another criticism postulates that urban policy discourses fail to sufficiently take into account the influence of market forces as a determinant of where people live and the conditions they live in (Slater, 2013: 1). Bauder (2002: 88) contends that 'neighbourhood effects' theory is the product of an ideological discourse which implies a culture of poverty which it associates with an underclass. While Slater (2013: 2) posits that 'neighbourhood effects' stems from an

understanding of society which assumes that where one lives affects one's life chances and that poor neighbourhoods are 'incubators of social dysfunction'. Bauder (2002: 90) cautions against the usage of 'neighbourhood effects' theory for social policy responses, because of its potential to be used by public officials and researchers as 'a political tool to blame inner-city communities for their own marginality'. Furthermore, the theory is critiqued because it can be employed to 'provide scientific legitimacy to neighbourhood stereotypes among employers, educators…and justifies slum-clearance and acculturation policies' (Bauder, 2002: 88). Andersson and Musterd (2005: 386) put forward that 'problems in neighbourhoods are seldom problems of neighbourhood', and a socially critical perspective on modern urbanisation, advances that it is not neighbourhoods that are the problem, but the way society is structured 'that truncates the life chances of the poor, who become stuck in place owing to the exclusive nature of a city's highly competitive housing market' (Slater, 2013: 1). For these reasons researchers are opined to be critical of the underlying assumptions inherent in 'neighbourhood effects' theory. They are also encouraged to depart from policies which are targeted at supposedly 'dysfunctional neighbourhoods and to the literature from which those policies draw credibility' (Slater, 2013: 17). However, by inverting the traditional 'neighbourhood effects' thesis, i.e., where you live affects your life chances, to your life chances affect where you live, a more progressive and inclusive understanding of this theory is provided. This can enable researchers and social policy makers to view life chances as not being determined by geographical location, but by capital deficits (economic, social, cultural), hegemonic interests and class struggles in urban environments (Slater, 2013: 1). Inverting the traditional 'neighbourhood effects' thesis therefore presents urban regeneration programmes with a theoretical framework from which to develop a range of responses to counter many of the challenges confronting neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation and social problems; thereby halting or reversing the neighbourhoods decline.

3.4.5 The contribution of 'broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects' theory for urban regeneration

Despite the criticisms levelled at 'broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects', the Wilson and Kelling (1982) and Wilson (1987) arguments have been influential on both sides of the Atlantic, finding their way into government policies and reflected in many area-based urban regeneration programmes across the Global North and Western world. 'Broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects suggest that specific actions need to be taken at a micro and macro level, in a 'symptoms' and 'solutions' approach to halt or reverse the process of neighbourhood decline. In 'broken windows' the failure of public services and the lack of community ownership are considered central to the process of neighbourhood decline. Whereas in 'neighbourhood effects' the spiral of decline is triggered by macro-economic policies and the collapse of local economies, resulting in 'worklessness', the lack of legitimate employment opportunities and the creation of poverty and social problems.

The analyses and remedies contained in 'broken windows' operates on a small scale and over a shorter period of time, and has to do with developing ways in which to deal with public disorder that arises from social exclusion. 'Broken windows' theory likewise emphasises the need for improvements in the delivery and performance of public services, especially enhancing safety and security in communities through proactive policing, along with efforts to enhance and maintain the physical environment. The remedies contained in 'neighbourhood effects' are structural, economic and longer term, and involve measures which aim to improve the social and economic situation of residents living in adverse and challenging circumstances. Progressing these measures can contribute to poverty reduction, while helping to address class inequalities, social segregation and social exclusion, which according to Page (2006: 26) are necessary for the development of behaviours viewed as normative and acceptable in society. Page (2006: 26) offers an interesting commentary on 'broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects' and posits that both describe models of reality which are predictive, that is 'if certain objective conditions are reproduced then certain and specified outcomes will occur'. Page (2006: 26)

likewise asserts that a corresponding spiral of progress and transformations can occur when the recommendations in each theory are applied and adhered to.

As an overarching theoretical framework 'broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects' presents practical activities and interventions which can help reverse the process of neighbourhood decline, while helping to facilitate community transformation and improvement. Such a framework has therefore much to offer urban regeneration programmes; 1) it provides policy makers with a theoretical basis from which to identify those factors which contribute to neighbourhood failure and decline, 2) puts forward ways in which neighbourhoods and communities can be transformed so that they are safer, more inclusive and sustainable. The challenge however for policy makers is to find a way in which to integrate these two approaches and to maximise their benefits.

3.5   Recurring themes associated with modern urban regeneration

Two themes associated with modern urban regeneration are presented in this section: gentrification and sustainable-development-sustainable-communities. These themes are selected because they are particular concerns and priorities for modern urban regeneration programmes (Crookes, 2011; Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR), 2000; DoEHLG, 2007 & 2008; DECLG, 2012; Kintrea and Atkinson, 2001; Larkham, 1996; Slater, 2013; Raco, 2005 & 2007; Smith and Williams, 1986; UNESCO, 1976; UNEP, 2011; World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987).

3.5.1   Gentrification

According to Mathema (2013: 1) the term gentrification was first introduced by Ruth Glass in 1964. However, Slater (2013: 11) contends that much earlier Engels recognised 'the systemic injustices upon which [gentrification] thrives as early as 1872'; namely the owners of capital, who at the expense of those residing in neighbourhoods 'robbed of adequate investment', see the potential for wealth gains

(ibid: 11). As a concept gentrification is defined as 'the displacement of the existing function and users to accommodate a middle or upper class invasion of a lower class neighbourhood' (Tiesdel et al., 1996: 42). As a process gentrification involves 1) reinvestment of capital, 2) social upgrading of locale by incoming high-income groups, 3) landscape change, and 4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups (Davidson and Lees, 2005: 1170).

Harvey (1978: 124) argues that capitalist property markets favour the creation of urban environments which serve the needs of capital accumulation. While Abreu (1987) posits that governments often align themselves with those who see the potential for wealth gains, often at the expense of people and communities in marginalised circumstances. In the US, gentrification is viewed by some social policy analysts as a welcome result of sound economic redevelopment policies (Mathema, 2013: 3), and is seen to help assuage the impacts of 'neighbourhood effects'. This is because gentrification usually involves forms of revitalisation, redevelopment and an element of social mixing (Mathema, 2013: 3). Gentrification was however highlighted by UNESCO (cf. Nairobi, 1976, article 46) as a concern and a challenge for modern urban regeneration programmes, mainly because of its adverse impacts on the social fabric of communities and its tendency to amplify 'social distancing between the rich and the poorer stratum' (Larkham, 1996: 82). For Crookes (2011: 188) gentrification is nonetheless 'the violent dispossession of home for people, who for various reasons may have a much stronger connection to home and place than those that do the taking'. Cognisance must therefore be taken of the extent to which gentrification takes place in order to avoid or minimise its effects. This is an important consideration in the context of this study, especially when urban regeneration programmes claim to rebuild, renew and transform communities (cf. LRA Master Plan, 2008 and the LRFIP, 2013). Crookes (2011: 188) maintains that urban policy makers must avoid processes which result in the displacement of people. Therefore governments and Local Authorities must put in place protective measures for what is already there, while consciously safeguarding against what could be lost, i.e., social ties, networks and friendships, social solidarity, people's roots and

identification with place[10] and the potential loss of community spirit and supports (ibid: 188).

Examples of gentrification in Ireland are presented in this chapter (e.g. Custom House Docks, Temple Bar, HARP regeneration and the regeneration of St. Michaels' Estate). Gentrification did not feature in the Limerick regeneration programme in the period 2007-2016. However, what did take place was the dispersal and re-location of many residents from Limerick's regeneration communities to other parts of the city and the county. According to some participants in the present study, the dispersal and re-location of residents to other parts of the city and the county has contributed to the erosion of the study site areas and the loss of community spirit within them (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.6). McCafferty and O'Keeffe (2009) have also raised concerns about those who have become dispersed and located as a result of the Limerick regeneration programme, and in particular how they have subsequently been accommodated and catered for.

3.5.2   Sustainable development and sustainable communities

According to the 2011 *Housing Policy Statement* sustainable development is a stated aim of Irish government policy for all future housing developments in the Irish State (DECLG, 2011). As a concept sustainable development involves making efficient use of land in urban areas and providing necessary physical and social infrastructure, such as: public transport, schools and social amenities and other facilities and creating places where people want to live and stay (DoEHLG, 2007: 26). More recently sustainable development has been defined as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (DECLG, 2012: 10). This has resonances with the definition proposed earlier by the *World Commission on Environment and Development* (WCED), 1987: 8). Sustainable development is conceptualised as a 'continuous, guided process of economic, environmental and social change aimed at promoting wellbeing of citizens now and in the future' (DECLG, 2012: 10). Consequently, the

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[10] Identity and sense of place is a key attribute of urban liveability (Lynch, 1981).

DECLG underlines the need to create 'a sustainable and resource-efficient economy, founded on a fair and just society, which respects the ecological limits and carrying capacity of the natural environment' (DECLG, 2012: 10).

Sustainable development is considered essential for the creation of sustainable communities. Sustainable communities are places that people want to live and work in, are safe and inclusive, well-planned, well-built and managed and offer equality of opportunity, together with having good services for all (DECLG, 2012: 63). Sustainable communities should also be capable of meeting the needs of existing and future residents (DECLG, 2012: 63). To create a sustainable community is however a complex challenge, one which 'cuts across many policy areas' (DECLG, 2012: 63). Consequently, the DECLG (2012: 63) recognises the importance of spatial planning and quality in the built environment, along with measures which contribute to social inclusion. The policy position on sustainable communities also recommend that housing developments are characterised by mixed housing tenure (DoEHLG, 2007; DECLG, 2012). In the literature mixed housing tenure involves introducing into communities owner-occupiers and those who possess the necessary human and social capital to fulfil the requirements of the active and responsible citizen (Bailey, 2006; Rowlands et al., 2006). The logic underpinning mixed housing tenure is according to Norris and O'Connell (2014: 70) to 'break up the concentration of disadvantaged households and associated stigma often associated with large social rented estates'. Therefore implied in the policy position is an assumption that sustainable communities will emerge from minimising the numbers of those with elevated levels of poverty and/or social problems in communities. However, a potential outcome of such policy is gentrification.

Work undertaken by Raco (2005 & 2007) in the UK critiques the vision of the active and responsible citizen in the sustainable-development-sustainable-communities' debate. Raco also contends that much of this debate has captured the sustainable development narrative, repackaged and reinterpreted it to promote the 'market' agenda. The market agenda embraces greater participation of the private sector, along with the promotion of market competition as a strategy to address deficits in housing needs for communities at risk of marginalisation and social exclusion. In

Ireland market based approaches reflect a growing trend towards entrepreneurial planning and development (Russell and Redmond, 2009: 635-650). The 'market' agenda and entrepreneurial planning and development in Ireland are probably best exemplified in the Public Private Partnership (PPP[11]) arrangements, which have been part of the Irish urban regeneration experience (cf. section 3.7.6 & 3.7.7), especially during the Celtic Tiger period. The PPP arrangement proposed for Limerick's regeneration (cf. Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) Master Plan (2008: 13) required that c. €467.7 million would come from private sector investment and the remainder of the €3.5 billion project would come from the public exchequer. However, as no substantial building programme took place in housing, retail or commercial development, the impact of the PPP as part of the LRA programme proved negligible. An analysis of the Irish urban regeneration experience (see later in the chapter) puts forward that regeneration strategies developed under the PPP arrangement were predominantly driven by profit making as the overriding concern. Due to the continuous and fluctuating nature of the 'market place' such strategies were found to have had serious implications for the processes and outcomes of regeneration. These will be discussed further in the following sections.

Finally, having reviewed the literature what emerges is that sustainable development and the creation of sustainable communities in urban regeneration programmes requires a range of strategies and actions, which include: high quality affordable housing in attractive environments; nurturing social inclusion 'through active citizenship and reducing poverty through employment creation' (DECLG, 2012: 63-64); developing local support services in education and training, libraries, childcare and family support services, health and leisure opportunities and local management of housing and community services (Winston, 2009: 28). Those responsible for urban regeneration must likewise 'take steps to ensure that redevelopment is truly inclusive' by 'opening lines of communication between the old and new and

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[11] Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are used for infrastructural projects, i.e. roads, schools and housing. In the case of regeneration 'deals' were made between Local authorities and private developers to develop predominantly private housing schemes on public lands that previously contained social housing and open spaces. The 'deals' often meant zero public investment. However, the cost to the private partner of building some social units and community facilities was offset by a gift of the rest of the site for commercial exploitation (Punch, 2009: 84).

involving community members in the decision making process' (Crookes, 2011: 188). According to Winston (2009: 28-29) neglect of these important aspects of community in regeneration are likely to result in the failure of the regeneration programme, and the continued marginalisation and exclusion of those living in such communities.

3.6   Modern urban development in Ireland

Ireland has a long history of urban settlements and development. In modern times (since the 1960s) many housing developments took place, especially in Dublin the country's capital and the area with the largest concentration of population. During the 1960s Ireland experienced fast rates of population growth which can be attributed in part to the high levels of emigrants returning to Ireland from the US and the UK to be part of the economic boom of the 1960s. On their return these new immigrants would find an 'under-resourced and under-developed Irish public housing sector, ill-equipped to cope with the new strains being placed on it' (Norris, 2001: 2). To rectify the problem local authorities assisted by the *National Building Agency* (NBA) undertook mass house-building programmes. In Dublin the *Myles Wright Planning Strategy* 1964-67, set out to build many new towns on the periphery of Dublin. Commenting on urban planning for the period Murphy (1995: 135-154) states that this strategy was led by an emphasis on 'quantity rather than quality', which resulted in the creation of a suburban landscape characterised by monotony and devoid of necessary community facilities. Bissett (2008) contends that the new suburban developments of the period also led to the inner city becoming 'very much neglected and left to decay' (ibid: 12). The tenants of the new estates would also experience difficulties, namely 'feeling separated, isolated and estranged from the social networks they previously enjoyed' (Bissett, 2008: 12).

By the mid-1980s due in no small way to the critiques of suburbanisation and the changing political and economic contexts, urban planning in Ireland underwent major reorientation and change. This was facilitated in part by a range of government legislation, namely *the Urban Renewal Act* (1986) and the *Finance Act* (1987).

According to Norris (2001: 21), these *Acts* detailed what should be 'normative for all future public housing developments in Ireland'. They also provided a legislative framework 'in which new models of urban development could take place' (Bissett, 2008: 12). In 1998 the Department of the Environment (DOE) stipulated that inter-agency cooperation would help support the regeneration of public housing estates. The DOE also recommended the establishment of estate management task forces to facilitate this cooperation. However, during the 1980s and 1990s neo-liberal and neo-corporate ideology became the dominant ideological instruments for modernising and reforming public sectors across the Global North and Western World. In the literature neo-liberalism is a theory of political economic practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework which is characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005: 2). Harvey (2005: 2) contends that the role of the State in this process is to create and preserve the institutional framework appropriate for such practices; however, once created State interventions in markets must be kept to a minimum. This is because the State does not possess sufficient information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups could interfere with and bias State interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit (Harvey 2005: 2). By contrast, neo-corporatism focuses on economic policies and sectors of society such as businesses, labour and government which are involved in negotiations about questions of policy concerning matters of economics (Thomas, 1993: 9). According to Hearne (2006) neo-liberal and neo-corporate ideology and policies were pursued and promoted by organisations such as the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. As a result many public services and State enterprises were privatised, resulting in governments concentrating 'on enabling and promoting the private sector to the detriment of State services' (Hearne, 2006: 1). Depending on the extent to which individual governments embraced neo-liberal policies, 'the involvement of the private sector in public governance, policy formation, public service and infrastructure delivery' (Hearne, 2006: 2) was increased.

With the onset of the new millennium the Irish State witnessed a plethora of building developments and programmes of urban regeneration, particularly during what has now come to be known as the 'Celtic Tiger' period (c. 1994-2007). Leonard (2010: 2) argues that after decades of economic stagnation the Irish State began to embrace 'the dualistic agendas of neo-liberalism and neo-corporatism to create the economic basis for multi-national led developments that have become synonymous with the boom decade of the Celtic Tiger'. Leonard (2010) also argues that the State actively facilitated unfettered housing developments in response to the housing needs of individuals in 'communities traditionally marginalised by high levels of unemployment and emigration' (Leonard, 2010: 4), as well as other infrastructural developments (e.g. hotels, industrial units, shopping complexes, etc.). Subsequent critique would associate these developments with a form of 'development-led corruption', which in the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger period 'left a legacy of poorly planned urban wastelands' (Leonard, 2010: 4). Buttressed by irregularities in the banking sector, the pursuance of these objectives no doubt had a major role to play in creating the conditions that led to the economic recession in Ireland from 2008 onwards. According to Hearne et al. (2014: 76) economic recession in Ireland from 2008-2013, 'saddled the Irish populace with the debt of the failed banks and developers', leaving in 'its wake a housing system not only inherently unequal, but now fundamentally unfit for purpose'. Economic recession also entrenched 'social and spatial injustices, making them increasingly difficult to dislodge' (Hearne et al., 2014: 76). In the next section I examine a number of high profile examples of urban regeneration programmes in Ireland.

3.7   Examples of regeneration: the Irish experience

The policy and the literature critiqued in this section relate to urban regeneration programmes which have taken place in Ireland since 1982. These developments are primarily located in the Dublin context, which as the capital city of Ireland has witnessed some of the most prolific series of urban changes in recent times (Bissett, 2008: 12). I begin the section by presenting an overview of what is referred to as the 'Gregory Deal'. Then I present examples of regeneration progressed according to

Local Area Plans (LAPs[12]) e.g. the Custom House Docks, Temple Bar and the Historic Area Rejuvenation Project (HARP); examples of regeneration progressed according to Integrated Area Plans (IAPs[13]) e.g. Ballymun regeneration; and regeneration programmes progressed under the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) e.g. Fatima Mansions and St. Michael's Estate regeneration. I also consider some of the lessons learned from these. This section of the chapter is then concluded by presenting an overview of the Limerick regeneration programme from July 2007 to 2016.

3.7.1   The 'Gregory Deal' (1982-1984)

Named after Tony Gregory TD[14], the 'Gregory Deal' refers to the regeneration programme which was agreed in 1982 for the north-inner-city area of Dublin, an area considered at the time as being severely impacted by the challenges of disadvantage (Gilligan, 2011). On being elected to Dáil Éireann[15] as an Independent TD, Tony Gregory immediately achieved national prominence by negotiating a deal with the then Fianna Fáil[16] leader Charles Haughey. In return for supporting Haughey to become Taoiseach[17] Gregory was assured of major investment to regenerate his constituency. Table 3.1 provides a summary overview of the achievements and shortcomings of the 'Gregory Deal'.

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[12] LAPs are Local Area Plans.

[13] IAPs were established under the Urban Renewal Act 1998. The preparation and implementation required consultation and partnership across a broad range of public and private interests.

[14] See glossary of abbreviations.

[15] The Irish Parliament.

[16] An Irish Political Party.

[17] The Irish Prime Minister.

Table 3.1   The achievements and shortcomings of the 'Gregory Deal'.

Achievements	Shortcomings
The 'Deal' included a commitment to nationalise a 27 acre site in Dublin Port and Clondalkin Paper Mills, together with a programme of social housing, flat maintenance and the modernisation of dwellings in and around Dublin's inner-city.	Gregory was criticised for focusing exclusively on providing benefits for his own constituency and for holding a Government to ransom (Gilligan, 2011). Gregory defended his actions on the grounds that his constituency was in dire need of investment and renewal.
Proposals for the employment of 500 unskilled workers in Dublin Corporation, with plans for 3,746 jobs to be created in the inner-city of Dublin over three years 1982-1984 (Gregory Deal, 1982: 199-200).	The political life of the 'Gregory Deal' was short lived, as was the political leverage associated with it, mainly because of the collapse of the Haughey Government after only nine months in power.
Measures included plans to train and up-skill local residents for employment; a number of health, family and children welfare and community development initiatives and measures to address educational disadvantage (Gregory Deal, 1982: 214-218).	The Gregory Deal made no explicit reference to prioritising community consultation.

It is estimated that the impact of the 'Deal' secured c. €100 million to the economy of Dublin's inner city at a time when the country was falling into recession. The accomplishments of the 'Gregory Deal' included approximately 500 jobs, improved housing conditions and more inner city housing, a tax on derelict sites and in the region of £20 million to support Dublin Corporation[18] (Gilligan, 2011). For the remainder of his political career until his early death in January 2009, Gregory worked to ensure that much needed resources were invested in the inner-city of Dublin for its regeneration and betterment.

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[18] The city boroughs of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Galway and Limerick titles changed from Corporations to City Councils (Local Government Act, 2001).

3.7.2 Custom House Docks Development Authority / Dublin Docklands Development Authority Regeneration (1987-1997; 1997–2012)[19]

According to Bartley et al. (2000: 12) the Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA) was the 'first effective model of urban regeneration in Ireland'. The raison d'être for this regeneration programme was to rejuvenate a historically significant, yet decaying part of the urban core in and around Dublin's Docklands area through a 'development which [would form] part of a broader vision in which the city asserts its qualities as a place in which to work and live' (CHDDA, 1987: 15). The Master Plan for CHDDA was modelled on the Urban Development Corporations in the UK, specifically London's Docklands (Moore, 1999: 142) and the fortified City of Quartz in Los Angeles (US) (Davis, 1998). The CHDDA in 1987 proposed to establish a consultative Community Liaison Committee (CLC), which aimed to involve the local community in decision making relating to the developments. It was also proposed that financial assistance would be provided to local community groups for community based projects. However, the CLC did not come into existence until 1995, and so failed to provide local residents with meaningful opportunities to influence the development (Moore, 1999: 143). In 1997 the CHDDA was restructured to become the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA). The parameters of the DDDA Master Plan are summarised as follows:

> The overall objective of the Master Plan must be to secure the sustainable social and economic regeneration of the Area, with improvements to the physical environment being a vital ingredient (Dublin Docklands Area Task Force Report, 1996).

> Provide encouragement and support for 'bottom up' local development activity, and a framework within which the attainment of the social and economic objectives of the many community and local development organisations in the Area can be progressed (Dublin Docklands Area Task Force Report, 1996).

Table 3.2 provides a summary of the achievements and shortcomings of the CHDDA and the DDDA.

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[19] On 31st May, 2012 Government announced its decision to wind up the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) within 18 months, while retaining a fast-track planning framework to complete the Docklands Regeneration (Dublin Docklands Conference, Gibson Hotel).

Table 3.2   The achievements and shortcomings of the CHDDA and the DDDA

Achievements	Shortcomings
The ultimate objective was the rejuvenation of the area in partnership with the private sector.	KPMG (1996) criticised the CHDDA for its explicit focus on physical and economic regeneration. The late establishment of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) resulted in a lack of community consultation and participation.
General perceptions of the area became more positive with the CHDDA acclaimed for fulfilling its remit in a relatively short period. It also successfully transformed a derelict wasteland in Dublin into an international financial and corporate centre. CHDDA & DDDA attracted new technology and industrial investment; developed the largest entertainment venue in the city-region; developed private interests and led improvements in the residential and transport infrastructure of the area.	According to Bissett (2008: 13) 'there was no real attempt to integrate the project with the surrounding communities in the inner city, nor was there any real thought given to the social implications of regeneration'. Driven by market forces, fuelled by rising property values, underpinned by profit and supported by Government policy, the CHDDA and DDDA regeneration effectively excluded the local community from the Dublin's Docklands development process (Bissett, 2008).
The social structure of the area irrevocably changed with new residential schemes constructed in the vicinity, including Fisherman's Wharf and the George's Quay developments. Docklands new residents are younger and more educated, and there is increased labour force participation rates with this group (Moore, 1999: 144).	Little done to alleviate the social tensions between 'old' and 'new' dockland residents. In certain areas unemployment rates remained high. Large scale restructuring of the community along social class lines (gentrification). This was because the CHDDA did not provide enough social housing on the site (Bissett, 2008).

Many positive developments and transformations took place in the Dublin Docklands area under this regeneration programme. Bissett (2008) contends that local residents hoped the DDDA would attempt to redress many of the shortcomings and the exclusive nature of the practices of the CHDDA, and be supported in this by grassroots organisations and community activists working in and around the Dublin Docklands area (Corcoran, 2002). However, rising property values in Dublin at the time resulted in many former residents of the area, effectively priced out of the housing market 'in an area that was once their home' (Bissett, 2008: 14). Subsequent critique of the CHDDA and the DDDA postulates that this regeneration programme effectively acted

in the interest of the powerful elite to the detriment of the local indigenous community (Hearne, 2006: 35). Bissett (2008) and Hearne (2006) note that this example of regeneration was characteristic of much of the Irish urban regeneration experience during the 1990s and 2000s; where gentrification, social segregation and socio-economic polarisation were outcomes (intended or not) of regeneration processes.

3.7.3   The Temple Bar Regeneration (1991 - 2001)

The Temple Bar regeneration began in 1991, the area considered for regeneration comprised of a 30 hectare urban quarter between O'Connell Bridge to the East, Dame Street to the South and the River Liffey to the North in Central Dublin. From the 1950s this area experienced accelerated economic and physical decline as a result of many businesses in the area closing or relocating to other parts of Dublin city (Montgomery, 1995). In the 1980s the Temple Bar area had several derelict sites and many buildings were in a poor state of repair. In 1991 Dublin Corporation together with a consortium of local architects put forward an application for EU funding to the European Regional Development Fund for a pilot project to examine the feasibility of developing a cultural quarter in Temple Bar. The application was successful and shortly afterwards Temple Bar Properties Limited (TBPL) undertook responsibility for a regeneration programme. A stated aim of TBTL was 'to develop a bustling cultural, residential and small-business precinct that will attract visitors in significant numbers' and 'to raise the profile of the area nationally and internationally' (Development Programme for Temple Bar, 1992: 7). In order to achieve this TBPL was structured into three major divisions – Property Division, Cultural Division and Marketing Division. A feature of the regeneration plan was to conduct public consultation and participation. Internal marketing exercises were also undertaken with people living and working in the area by TBPLs Marketing Division (Development Programme for Temple Bar, 1992).

Temple Bar regeneration had many similarities to the CHDDA which preceded it. However, its primary focus was progressing a cultural quarter in the city to promote culture, heritage and tourism (Bissett, 2008: 15-16), and by developing 'a people oriented site with a permeable urban fabric with high quality open spaces' (Bartley and Treadwell Shine, 2003: 156) the regeneration programme would contribute to

attracting people into the city centre for leisure, socialising and recreation purposes. Table 3.3 provides a summary of the achievements and the shortcomings of the Temple Bar Regeneration.

Table 3.3   The achievements and shortcomings of Temple Bar Regeneration

Achievements	Shortcomings
Temple Bar Regeneration achieved a range of physical developments, e.g., residential apartments, new retail units, hotels, offices for business, etc.	Alterations were made to important buildings of distinction in the area, including the demolition of five early eighteenth century houses on Essex Quay. According to McDonald (1993) this approach to regeneration resembled façadism.
Many jobs were also created in construction and in the cultural and service industries.	Some of the cultural activities were underpinned by tax and other incentives and so were short-term in nature (Montgomery, 1995).
Public participation exercises were undertaken by TBPL's marketing division (Montgomery, 1995; TBPL, 1996).	Marketing aims took priority over enabling the local community to contribute to and benefit from the development.
The area became the fourth most popular tourist destination in Dublin, which according to Montgomery (1995) enabled a 'critical mass' of initiatives to be achieved that attracted both tourists and investors.	*An Taisce* highlighted that the regeneration could have been secured much more cheaply, with no loss in character to the area (Smith and Convery, 1996). Efforts to access European Union Structural Funding to coincide with Dublin's 1991 designation as European City of Culture led to centralised co-ordination and increased the risk of gentrification arising from the project (Fitzsimons, 1996).

Commenting on the achievements of the Temple Bar regeneration Montgomery (1995) suggests that it is a good example of a successful cultural quarter, evident in the improvements made to the local buildings, the range of cultural activities, tourism, small businesses and wealth development, all of which helped to enliven an area that traditionally was characterised by dereliction. Without similar cultural districts Montgomery (1995: 135-172) contends that cities would be left behind other cities who were developing these types of districts.

The literature on cultural quarters emphasise the importance of community involvement in culture-led regeneration initiatives (Evans and Dawson, 1994; Falk, 1993; Landry et al., 1996; Montgomery, 1995). A major shortcoming with this regeneration programme was the level of local community involvement as well as the lack of affordable housing for local residents and local employment opportunities (Evans and Dawson, 1994). Subsequent criticisms of Temple Bar regeneration maintain that it devolved into a corporate and 'property-led model of regeneration' which contributed to gentrification, as many of the local residents either moved out or were displaced to other parts of the city (Bissett, 2008; Landry et al., 1996; Montgomery, 1995). Bissett (2008: 15) contends that this regeneration programme proved to be 'anti-democratic and exclusive in nature' and the social, economic and environmental elements expected by residents were never realised. This according to Landry et al. (1996) was because the regeneration programme was driven by forces whose priorities were image enhancement and 'symbolic' effects, rather than progressing holistic social and cultural led regeneration objectives.

3.7.4   The Historic Area Rejuvenation Project (HARP) (1995 - 1999)

The Historic Area Rejuvenation Project (HARP) is situated in the Markets and Smithfield area of Dublin's Northwest inner-city, an area that had long suffered years of neglect and decay. The HARP regeneration began in 1995 and was expected to be completed by 1999. The aim of the regeneration was to enhance the quality of life for residents as well as developing businesses and attracting visitors to the Smithfield and Mary Street/Henry Street areas of Dublin city. Subsequent to the introduction of the 1998 Urban Renewal Scheme and Guidelines for the preparation of Integrated Area Plans (IAPs), it was determined that the HARP Framework Plan (1996) met all the criteria required of an IAP. It was therefore considered that the adoption of the Plan as an IAP would help secure the success of its strategies. However, like regeneration programmes which preceded it the HARP regeneration progressed, guided by a Local Area Plan (LAP).

The HARP regeneration set out to:

- encourage private development on derelict/vacant sites for residential and/or commercial uses;
- ensure investment by promoting the area as an attractive and viable enterprise and residential location;
- provide play facilities, upgrade open spaces and recreational facilities;
- address the lack of provision for training and education in the area;
- promote the conservation of historic buildings;
- upgrade public areas and develop an urban space at Smithfield (Historic Area Rejuvenation Project, Local Area Plan, 1996).

According to Bissett (2008: 17) the HARP signalled the reintroduction of local government with Dublin City Council having a coordinating role. Directed by Dublin City Council the regeneration plan was overseen by a monitoring committee that was comprised of representatives from the Local Authority, business interests and the local community. The Local Area Plan (LAP) highlighted the need to harness the strengths of the area and to ensure that sustainable regeneration would be achieved through a framework of interventions, i.e., social, physical and economic initiatives (Historic Area Rejuvenation Project, Local Area Plan, 1996). Also recognised in the Plan was 'the importance of community-based expression' and the need to develop the area with the needs of the local community in mind. This concern Bissett (2008: 16-17) claims was prompted by the criticisms of exclusivity which were levelled at the Temple Bar regeneration. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the achievements and shortcomings of the HARP Regeneration.

Table 3.4   The achievements and shortcomings of the HARP Regeneration

Achievements	Shortcomings
The residential development focused on *social housing* - the renovation of flat complexes and new private apartments; *environmental* improvements - refurbishment of parks and open spaces; *commercial* - the Fruit Market; *cultural* - Collins Barracks was converted into The National Museum of Decorative Arts; *transport* - Ha'penny Bridge, Boardwalk and the Millennium Bridge, as well as improved ease of access and pedestrian mobility in the area; *leisure and community developments* - MACRO Community Centre, enterprise units and a new Community Resource Building. These were funded by EU, State and private funds injected into the area.	The construction and new private apartments led to demographic shifts. Local representatives complained about the lack of social integration between settled residents and 'new comers'.
Jobs initiatives such as the HARP Jobs Club and the Inner City Employment Services (ICES) helped to provide a number of new jobs in the area for local people. Access to training and education, scholarships for local residents and a construction skills course offered by FÁS[20] in conjunction with Dublin City Council was provided. However, it was primarily funded by developers in order to qualify for tax incentives.	Many of the new residents came from the professional classes, were highly mobile and had little in common with the existing settled community.
Community participation with a steering group comprising of residents, traders, conservation groups and other statutory groups was formed to oversee the regeneration's implementation.	While the community was represented on the steering committee and consulted with 'the "partnership" masked the continuing emphasis on facilitating private sector development' (Russell, 2001: 17).

The HARP regeneration focused by and large on land use and investment, the built environment, urban design, the movement and transport of people, socio-economic issues, tourism and conservation, recreation, culture and housing developments, with mixed housing tenure promoted in the Framework Plan. The HARP regeneration saw for the first time a clearly identified structured role within urban regeneration for local communities and the community sector; which meant a collaborative drawing up of

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[20] FÁS or Foras ÁiSeánna Saothair was the Irish National Training and Employment Authority. On the 1st July 2014 FÁS was replaced by SOLÁS as the new National Training and Employment Authority.

the local area plan (Bissett, 2008: 17). While the area witnessed significant and dramatic infrastructural physical developments gentrification also became a feature of this regeneration. As the regeneration progressed the local community would play an increasing minor role, both in consultation and decision making (Bissett, 2008: 20-22). Learning's from the HARP regeneration would pave the way for the introduction of IAPs as the model for future regeneration projects (Bissett, 2008: 18).

3.7.5   Ballymun Regeneration (1997 - 2015)

Since the 1960s the Ballymun complex in North Dublin has had a 'significant symbolic resonance' (Norris, 2001: 3). Norris (2001: 3) posits that the Ballymun development in the 1960s was reflective of Ireland's progress and expression of its 'embrace of modernity'. In March 1997 the government of Ireland announced its commitment to fund the demolition of fifteen eight-storey-high tower blocks and replace them with more conventional type of housing. The Master Plan (1998) for Ballymun regeneration was developed between September 1997 and March 1998 and was submitted to government via Dublin City Council. It was envisaged that the regeneration of Ballymun would be realised through a system of tax reliefs under the 1998 *Finance Act.* Norris (2001: 21) notes that while the areas eligible for tax relief were decided by government the majority of these schemes were administered by the local authorities, a practice which has continued in various forms since then. The Master Plan was agreed by the Department of the Environment (DOE) in the latter part of 1998, and a quasi-governmental private limited company, Ballymun Regeneration Ltd. (BRL), was established to coordinate and direct the regeneration. BRL sought to develop and implement a Master Plan for the physical, social and economic regeneration of the area (Ballymun Regeneration, Frequently Asked Questions 1998 - 2005: 5). The Master Plan also set out a series of objectives and targets aimed at 'rehousing people in new homes' and building 'a vibrant, self-sufficient Ballymun, with all the facilities people needed, including a strong local economy, local jobs and good leisure and community facilities' (Ballymun Regeneration, Frequently Asked Questions, 1998 - 2005: 49).

From the outset the involvement and support of local residents as partners in the process were considered crucial and a variety of means were employed to actively engage and ensure community involvement. The consultation process was designed around the key objectives of involving people in agreeing priorities, considering options and identifying solutions. This sought to 'build a strong local consensus to support the Master Plan' (Ballymun Master Plan, 1998: 1). The consultation and involvement /engagement process included:

- *Public Meetings*: to present ideas for the Master Plan and to inform people how to get involved, answer questions and address local concerns.
- *5 Area forums*: established to ensure that the Master Plan reflected the views of the community and individual localities.
- *Design Groups*: concentrated on the land uses for Ballymun and the possibility of developing a new town centre, along with evaluating existing facilities for youth, young children and recreation and assessed the need for further developments in these areas. They also provided the project team with a source of locally based knowledge to ensure that the proposals in the Master Plan were relevant, applicable and acceptable to Ballymun residents.
- *Surgeries/Drop-Ins*: held fortnightly for those unable to attend public meetings or who otherwise did not have the opportunity to give their views, or did not want to raise issues of concerns in the public forums.
- *Public Events*: were held to test early ideas for the Master Plan and to check that the project team understood the community's perceptions.
- *Newsletters*: used to reach households in Ballymun and adjoining areas and to keep people informed of plans and developments.
- *Focus Groups (6):*comprising of local community groups and relevant agencies working in Ballymun to consider six key social themes which included Children and Youth, Training and Education, Employment and Economic Development, Advice Support and Community Development, Leisure Sport and Recreation, Health and the Physical Environment.
- *Working Groups*: to carry out the recommendations of the Focus Groups.

BRL proposed to build on the public consultation process and continue engaging in consultation with the local community (Ballymun Master Plan, 1998: 1). It was repeatedly highlighted that the focus of the regeneration programme was to enhance the quality of life for residents 'through a range of improving initiatives' (Sustaining Regeneration a Social Plan for Ballymun, 2009: 18). Table 3.5 provides a summary of the achievements and shortcomings of the Ballymun Regeneration.

Table 3.5   The achievements and shortcomings of Ballymun Regeneration

Achievements	Shortcomings
The Integrated Area Plan (IAP) and BRL's Master Plan established a five pronged strategy for regeneration; demolition, new builds and housing refurbishment; employment creation; education and training and plans to re-design the estate, giving it a unique identity and town centre.	BRL's Master Plan made no strategic attempt to review other plans in the area, nor did it identify gaps in provision apart from those which related to the built environment (Norris, 2001: 2).
Procedures were developed for the involvement of residents in the development of the regeneration plan.	
It was viewed at the time as constituting a model of good practice in the Irish context (Norris, 2001).	Ballymun regeneration adopted a 'one dimensional orientation' focusing on refurbishment and the built environment, despite the plans laid out in the five pronged strategy for regeneration (Norris, 2001: 30).
The Plan of BRL proposed to diversify housing tenure and 'encourage private sector investment so as to ensure its development' (Norris, 2001: 2).	Concerns were raised over adequate provision of housing for the people of Ballymun (Ballymun Master Plan, 1998: 1).

BRL set out to be highly innovative in the Irish housing context, being the first of its kind as a designated 'quasi-governmental agency established to regenerate a public housing estate' (Norris, 2001: 33). Norris notes that because of its subsequent emphasis on the built environment, Ballymun became 'a relatively conservative example of regeneration' (ibid: 33). However, the Ballymun regeneration programme did set a precedent within Irish urban policy for the establishment of quasi-governmental, designated companies to direct and coordinate urban regeneration initiatives.

3.7.6   Fatima Mansions Regeneration (2001 - 2010)

According to Fahey et al. (2011: 43) Fatima Mansions in Dublin city was one of the more 'troubled' housing estates in the country, characterised by poor quality dwellings, significant drug misuse and general anti-social behaviour. Located beside the Grand Canal in Rialto in Dublin's south west inner-city between Dolphins Barn and Inchicore, Fatima Mansions was built in 1949 as part of the inner city solution

to inner-city tenement living. In 2001 Dublin City Council produced a Master Plan *Regeneration Next Generation* for the regeneration of Fatima Mansions in Dublin's Liberties, and it was anticipated that it would be completed by 2009. The Master Plan made provision for 150 units of social housing, which included tenancies for single people and for local residents (with Dublin City Council continuing to act as landlord). There was also provision for 70 dwellings which would be offered to tenants who had the option to purchase them. In addition 369 private apartments concentrated in higher rise development would be included as part of the plan, as would a large Neighbourhood Centre, a Leisure Centre with a 20 metre swimming pool, gym and aerobic studio, with affordable access to local residents, and retail units. A feasibility study to develop social economy projects was also to be undertaken. An initial sum of €3 million was proposed by the development company for the implementation of a social regeneration plan, with a commitment to funding the balance as required. Built into the contract was provision for 75 jobs to be made available to the local community, together with a training project for younger people from the area (Fatima Mansions Master Plan, 2001). The Master Plan (2001: 7) saw Dublin Corporation commit itself to 'the establishment of organisational and participative structures to ensure that the plan is successfully developed and implemented in full consultation with the community'. According to the Fatima Regeneration Board, *Eight Great Expectations* report (2005: 105) the aims of the regeneration programme were to address and prevent poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion by:

> Bringing together the various community groups in Fatima that are involved in social and community development and to improve and develop the capacity of these groups to plan, manage and operate both existing services and any new services or programmes.

> Leading the regeneration of Fatima through working proactively to develop Fatima in areas identified by the residents, i.e. education; housing; youth and child-care services; health and employment services.

> Drawing in statutory agencies to engage co-operatively to further the positive developments of Fatima as a better place to live.

Table 3.6 provides a summary of the achievements and shortcomings of Fatima Mansions Regeneration.

Table 3.6 The achievements and shortcomings of Fatima Mansions Regeneration

Achievements	Shortcomings
The physical transformation of the area was the most visible manifestation of the Fatima Mansions regeneration.	
Key social changes included: actions by the Gardaí and Dublin City Council to address 'anti-social behaviour, as part of a wider reform of housing management'; diversified housing tenure, consisting of social housing, affordable dwellings and private rented apartments; the development of strong community services in areas of drug treatment, family support, childcare and education; actions undertaken by community development projects and community activists to secure funding for social services (Fahey et al., 2011: 44).	With the property crash towards the end of 2008 the 'community dividend' from the property developer to the local community failed to materialise in full.
In order to address the social problems that existed on the estate a number of evictions also took place. Some 'difficult' households continued to live in the estate after regeneration but 'were better coped with in the context of the better general environment and improved social services that now exist' (Fahey et al., 2011: 46).	While the displacement of 'difficult' households meant success for the residents of Fatima Mansions, 'it was qualified by the consequences of the displacement of those difficult households, to other less fortunate neighbourhoods, who now became the new bottom rung of the ladder' (Fahey et al., 2011: 45).

Fatima Mansions' regeneration adopted a new model for financing the regeneration, namely the Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement. This saw responsibility and potential risks associated with project delivery transferred to a private developer, while enabling the local authority to deliver the project at a minimal cost to the State. The terms of the PPP would therefore finance and allow for the physical transformation of the area. It would also provide cash resources to fund some of the social aspects of the Plan. However, the provision of these resources was 'predicated on inflated land values, the demand for private housing and easy credit for development purposes' (Fahey et al., 2011: 23). This model of regeneration is seen to reflect a good example of a 'top-to-bottom regeneration programme'; characterised by extensive consultation with residents in the local community 'who took part in its design and in the implementation, particularly the social regeneration plan' (Fahey et al., 2011: 43). Fahey et al. (2011: 45) contend that the size of the community of Fatima

Mansions gave it 'a manageability and community character', which made it easier to address many of the social problems in the area. While a number of successes are noted, an analysis of the broad social profile of the post-regeneration tenant population suggests that tenants experienced equally high levels of deprivation in broad terms, as those that lived on the estate pre-regeneration (Whyte, 2005). Furthermore, due to the linkages between the regeneration plan and the property boom of the period, Fahey et al. (2011: 45) contend that it would be difficult to replicate the regeneration experience of Fatima Mansions as a 'fit for all' for other regeneration programmes.

3.7.7   St. Michael's Estate Regeneration (1998 - 2008)

St. Michael's Estate is a Dublin City Council flat complex situated near the village of Inchicore, two miles from Dublin city centre. The regeneration plan for the area began in 1998, prompted by local residents. The plan was to have the estate demolished and a new estate with facilities and amenities built in its place (Consultation Document on the Future of St. Michael's Estate, 1998). In 2001 Dublin City Council launched a draft framework plan for the area titled *Moving Ahead* and a period of three months was dedicated to consultation with residents of the Estate. This was followed in 2002 with a community vision for the area *Past, Present and Future.* In August 2003 the final details of the *Moving Ahead* plan were signed off by the design sub-group and the local task force. It was then lodged with *An Bord Pleannala*[21] with a view to securing planning permission. In September 2003 Dublin City Council however announced that a new plan was underway, using the PPP mechanism. The PPP arrangement involved the State 'as landlord and guardian' (Bissett, 2008: 4) trade the land of St. Michael's Estate in return for the building of a number of social, affordable housing units and community facilities. A 'cash offer' would also be made to the State on the basis of current projections and estimates in the housing market. In return the private sector investor could build a number of separate, private residential and commercial units and facilities as part of the development (Bissett, 2008: 117). While continuing 'to be supportive of the City Council's decision to implement effective regeneration of the St. Michael's Estate' (*Letter from the Department of the*

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[21] Irish Planning Board.

Environment to Dublin City Council read into the minutes of St. Michael's Estate Task Force, 6th Sept. 2003), the PPP would concentrate on efforts to derive greater values from the land of the estate. The frenzy of the property boom was now in full swing and the rising property values led to the land of St. Michael's Estate, with its location near to the centre of the city, become immensely valuable.

The rejection of the *Moving Ahead* plan caused much anger and frustration and an official campaign was launched by residents and community activists to reinstate it. In 2004 Dublin City Council launched a completely new framework plan for the Estate (which also included the PPP). According to Bissett (2008: xx) this new framework plan was developed in isolation, with no input from local residents or community groups. In 2005 St. Michael's Estate Task Force was disbanded and replaced by St. Michael's Estate Regeneration Board, which was tasked with overseeing the physical and social regeneration of the Estate. In 2007 the PPP developer (McNamara / Castlehorn Construction) was chosen to complete the regeneration. However, in 2008 this construction company collapsed and withdrew from the PPP arrangement, leaving the regeneration of St. Michael's Estate abandoned and incomplete. Dublin City Council then began relocating the remaining residents of the Estate to other parts of the city (*Correspondence sent to remaining residents of St. Michael's Estate from Dublin City Council, Oct., 2008*). This action according to Bissett (2008: 134) saw the word regeneration 'imperceptibly slipped out of use' and 'replaced by the language of relocation'.

Table 3.7 provides a summary of the achievements and shortcomings of St. Michael's Estate Regeneration.

Table 3.7   The achievements and shortcomings of St. Michael's Estate Regeneration

Achievements	Shortcomings
The PPP model presented opportunities for the exchequer, as the private sector partner would provide the necessary finances to fund the programme of regeneration. The first phase of the regeneration (1998-2001) was considered reasonably successful with 22 residents moving into new accommodation.	Rejecting the *Moving Ahead* plan caused anger and frustration and an official campaign was launched by residents and community activists to reinstate it. The PPP made claims of a process that was transparent, accessible and participatory, however the PPP model proved arbitrary, at the discretion of State officials 'as to what was accessible and what was not' (Bissett, 2008: 114).
The logic of 'social-mix' to transform the social structure and conditions on the estate became a vehicle for servicing the needs of new private households moving to the estate.	Using the 'logic of the 'market' Dublin City Council privatised the estate and made little provision for social and affordable housing (Bissett, 2008: 79).
Dependence on the private sector for the regeneration of publicly-owned housing estates meant that only certain outcomes were permissible, i.e., the interests of the City Council and the private developer.	The regeneration favoured the more powerful party, and led to 'a restriction and fragmentation of social housing' (Bissett, 2008: 128). The PPP ended up serving the interests of property developers and the wealthy more than the residents of St. Michael's Estate.
The development of community resistance forced the local authority to adopt the regeneration so that the needs and wishes of local residents were better met.	The subsequent lack of ownership of properties by tenants left them exposed to changes in policies, with diminished control over the regeneration process.

According to Bissett (2008) two contradictory models of urban regeneration emerge from the St. Michael's Estate experience. Both differ in how regeneration might take place and what outcomes can occur, especially from a resident perspective. The first is 'the market' or the 'for profit' model of regeneration, which is inequitable and favours the more powerful party. The second a 'public-good' model of regeneration driven by the local community and having at its core 'the values of equality, democracy, social justice and community sustainability' (Bissett, 2008: 113). Bissett (2008: 128) maintains that the St. Michael's Estate regeneration was an example of how with the right supports and opportunities community spirit and community resistance can make a difference; ensuring that the State and powerful business interests meaningfully include local residents in regeneration processes.

3.8   Analysis of the Dublin experience of regeneration

In sections 3.7 - 3.7.7 a number of high profile examples of urban regeneration were presented and critiqued. Critique of these highlights what should be prioritised in urban regeneration programmes for local residents. These priorities reflect many of the remedies charted in the theoretical framework for regeneration. An analysis of the Dublin experience of regeneration puts forward that when regeneration focuses on the built environment, without attending to those actors that prompted the need for the regeneration in the first place, is unlikely to achieve sustainable regeneration outcomes (Norris, 2001: 31). While urban regeneration programmes traditionally include improvements in the physical environment, an analysis of the Dublin experience of regeneration suggests that enhancing the quality of life for residents in all its facets should be the priority concerns. According to the *Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress* (Stiglitz et al., 2009) factors which contribute to quality of life include: a high quality social and natural environment for people to live, community safety, social and cultural amenities, health and well-being supports, educational and employment opportunities and opportunities for participation in political processes.

The Dublin regeneration experience has drawn attention to the importance of facilitating and sustaining the engagement of residents through consultation, meaningful participation and partnerships. However, this chapter demonstrates that some of the attempts made at inclusion and partnership (e.g. Ballymun, Fatima Mansions, St. Michael's Estate, etc.) were undertaken to promote efforts to progress the built environment, and arguably to serve the interests of private sector developers and the State, more so than residents of the estates identified for regeneration. In fact the examples critiqued in this review suggest that local communities were often not valued as equal partners and were deliberately excluded from regeneration activities. Atkinson and Kintrea (2001: 25) contend that the lack of participation and power can create social exclusion. In the examples of regeneration critiqued in this chapter exclusion and gentrification were identified as outcomes of the Irish urban regeneration experience (cf. CHDDA, HARP and Temple Bar). A further analysis of the Dublin regeneration experience demonstrates that towards the end of the Celtic Tiger period, terms such as 'relocation' and 'dispersal' begin to feature in the urban

regeneration policy literature, e.g. Fatima Mansions and St. Michael's Estate regeneration. Gentrification, dispersal and relocation practices run contrary to the endorsements outlined by the Urban Task Force (2005: 11), who underlines the importance of valuing existing communities and community infrastructure and stresses the need to ensure that environments 'remain intact' and 'social systems hold communities together'. An analysis of the Dublin experience of regeneration also suggests that to address social exclusion and create a more inclusive, equitable and participatory regeneration, those presently excluded from regeneration processes must deliberately be included in the future (Arnstein, 1969). The benefits of inclusion and participation presents the possibility of forging new discourses about sustainable communities and how they might be shaped and developed (Russell and Redmond, 2009). While discourses define and produce the objects of our knowledge, they also influence how issues are talked about (Foucault, 1980: 194). Furthermore, discourses contribute to influencing how ideas are put into practice, while regulating behaviours (ibid: 194). As the State does not own power, nor are there 'regimes of truth' that cannot be contested or subverted (Foucault, 1980: 98), future regeneration programmes must therefore see changes in the behaviours of the various partners involved, so that power in regeneration becomes a productive and positive force; where relations between individuals and institutions in regeneration and political systems work more effectively together to achieve enhanced regeneration outcomes for those for whom they are supposed to serve. Finally, learning's from the Dublin regeneration experiences suggests that it is not enough to merely include people; local communities must also have decision making powers and be facilitated to agree or veto proposed regeneration initiatives or developments (Arnstein, 1969; Carley, 2000; Muir and Rhodes, 2008).

3.9   Limerick City Regeneration (2007 - 2016)

Subsequent to the publication of the Fitzgerald report (April, 2007) the Limerick city regeneration programme was established and given a legal basis by the Ministerial Orders SI 275/276 of 2007 on 15th June 2007. The statutory mandate for regeneration set out a number of aims to guide the work of Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA). These sought to ensure that:

- social and economic regeneration would be secured on a sustainable basis;
- statutory bodies and other relevant bodies would be identified to contribute to the regeneration process;
- strategies would be developed, taking into account other relevant strategies and programmes by statutory and other bodies, operating in the region;
- coordinated arrangements would be established by statutory and other bodies to contribute to social regeneration;
- LRA would act 'as a body to drive and coordinate intensive actions to deal with social and educational disadvantage' (SI, 275 / 276 of 2007: 3-4).

Shortly after issuing SI 275/276 of 2007 independent structures for regeneration were established. This resulted in two agencies been set up; one for the Northside of the city and the other for the Southside of the city, thereafter referred to as the LRA. The recommendations of Fitzgerald (2007) together and the Ministerial Orders influenced the comprehensive and integrated Master Plan for Moyross on the Northside and Southill and Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect on the Southside (a timeline and overview of regeneration in Limerick from 2007-2016 is presented in Appendix VI). The challenge for Limerick regeneration was to provide 'a clear roadmap towards the development and implementation of a social, physical and economic regeneration' (*Our Community, Our Vision, Our Future*, 2008: 2), so as to transform the study sites 'into some of the most vibrant and sustainable communities in the country' (ibid: 3).

In the early stages of the Limerick regeneration programme (July, 2007 - Oct., 2008) a process of consultation was undertaken with residents and the various stakeholders and partners, as they pertained to the physical, economic, intellectual, cultural and social life of the city. The information gleaned from this process subsequently informed LRA's vision document. The vision document set out how social, physical and economic regeneration would take place in Limerick city. Following the launch

of the vision documents, a further process of consultation and planning took place, primarily with the various service providers in preparation for the LRA's Master Plan (July, 2007 - Jan., 2008). The Master Plan was a statement of intent as to how Limerick's regeneration communities would be transformed. Included in the Master Plan was a broad overview of the historical and current social context of the regeneration communities (Humphreys, 2008: 31-35). While much consultation took place, the decisions regarding the shape of regeneration were made by professionals and the various service providers. These decisions were then subsequently communicated to residents via public meetings etc. Such actions are demonstrations of the misuse of power and are examples of how the voices of those in marginalised circumstances are often excluded from decision making processes affecting their lives.

Like Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL) LRA proposed to diversify housing tenure and encourage private sector investment for the proposed developments. However, the economic recession (from 2008 onwards) meant that the LRA's programme was characterised by uncertainty. This resulted in a dramatic paring back of the proposed programme outlined in the Master Plan (2008)[22]. No substantial building programme got underway. Instead, in conjunction with Limerick City Council, a programme of relocation of residents to other parts of the city and county was embarked upon, which continued until June 2012. Significant investment was made during the period (2009 - 2012) to devise a series of plans and feasibility studies in order to ensure that the study sites were 'regeneration ready'. Plans were also drawn up for proposed housing and social developments in each of the study site areas. From 2010 onwards much of the efforts of LRA focused on promoting various aspects of the social 'pillar' of the Limerick regeneration plan (LRA Master Plan, 2008: 35-65). This included supporting a range of small scale projects in local infrastructure (e.g. football pitches, refurbishment and upgrading of youth and community centres). Investment was also made into education and training, children and youth and family support projects, sporting clubs, community safety initiatives and research projects. While this funding no doubt assisted these projects, it also

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[22] The estimated financial cost of the LRA regeneration programme c. €3.075 billion (cf. LRA Master Plan, Oct., 2008: 16). Half of this was to come from the public exchequer and the remainder derived from the private sector through PPPs, tax or other business incentives.

introduced a number of new initiatives into the study site areas, which added more layers of social infrastructure to an already inflated system of poorly funded support services and organisations. With funding streams tenuous and no guarantee of continuation, many organisations had difficulties coordinating efforts and forward planning. Such an approach to social inclusion I contend offered no real promise of impact, accountability, integration or possibility of sustainability.

The initial regeneration plan (2008) aimed to be radical and ambitious (cf. strategic partners in the Master Plan, 2008: 35-65). However, due to the deepening economic crisis (from Sept. 2008 onwards) many organisations were forced to limit the scope of their services, due to embargos on staff numbers and limited funding available. The LRA programme would also be limited in its scope and delivery of actions. Gradually within the city and the study site areas hopes began to fade, as did the hope that regeneration would make a qualitative difference to the lives of local residents. This led to disappointment, anger and frustration, with participants in the present study reporting feeling let down and betrayed by the State and its agencies (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.6).

In June 2012 LRA was disbanded with regeneration thereafter subsumed into the Office of Regeneration as part of the combined Local Authority of Limerick City and County. From June 2012 to September 2013 a slowdown in the pace of regeneration in Limerick was noticeable. However, on the 27th September 2013 the new Limerick Regeneration body launched *Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan: Delivering Safe and Sustainable Communities* (LRFIP). The LRFIP reflects a renewed commitment by government to support regeneration in Limerick over the next ten years, costing c. €253m (cf. Appendix IX.7). Building on the work of LRA the LRFIP aims to 'bridge the gaps that still exist between the built environment and the social and economic life' of the study sites and 'other parts of the city' (LRFIP, 2013: 5). The vision of the LRFIP (2013: 16) was to create

> safe and sustainable communities where people of all ages enjoy a good quality of life, a decent home and feel a strong pride of place. Well serviced and attractive neighbourhoods will be fully integrated with social, economic and cultural life of Limerick.

Like LRA's Master Plan (2008: 5) the LRFIP (2013) called for a 'joined up approach' between agencies and community leaders to deliver on the series of actions outlined in the LRFIP under the headings of physical, social and economic regeneration. In proposing 'a sustainable development approach' (ibid: 16) the LRFIP (2013) stressed the importance of:

- reducing the social and economic inequalities in the city;
- improving physical connectivity between the regeneration areas, the city and the wider Mid-West region;
- providing access to opportunities in education, training and work.

The LRFIP also emphasised the need to harness 'existing resources in the city', including those in the regeneration areas, together with 'attracting coordinated public and private investment over the next 10 years' (LRFIP, 2013: 16). Like LRA the LRFIP claimed to be committed to community involvement, acknowledging the importance of the local community and key community development service providers for the delivery of sustainable regeneration (ibid: 20-21). Subsequent involvement would take place through Resident Committees, Community Consultative Forum and the Public Participation Network (PPN[23]). In Appendix VI Table 1 Timeline and overview of the work of regeneration in Limerick, a summary is provided of the key activities of the Office of Regeneration in Limerick from 2014-2016.

3.10   Chapter conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature associated with modern urban regeneration. In the urban policy regeneration is seen to represent a complex system of social, economic and political influences and choices (Roberts, 2000: 34). Specifically, regeneration involves the transformation and renewal of the physical environment, while addressing social exclusion and facilitating economic and social development

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[23] Section 46 of the *Local Government Reform Act* (2014) states that Local Authorities must take all appropriate steps to consult with and promote effective participation of local communities in local government. The PPN now acts as the main link through which the Local Authority connects with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors, while striving to facilitate the public to have an active and formal role in the policy making and oversight activities of the Local Authority's areas of responsibility.

(Roberts, 2000). In addition to outlining recurring themes associated with modern urban regeneration, a theoretical framework for regeneration was also presented, consisting of insights from 'broken window' and 'neighbourhood effects' theory. This framework stresses the importance of area-based regeneration programmes prioritising measures aimed at: 1) improving public services in their delivery and their performance, 2) enhancing community safety through policing and estate management, 3) continuous and proactive efforts to manage and maintain the urban environment (Wilson and Kelling, 1982), 4) promoting and developing employment, education and training opportunities, and 5) establishing structures which foster meaningful participation and engagement in political and social processes. Prioritising and progressing such measures in regeneration are proffered as helping to halt and/or reverse the process of neighbourhood failure and decline (Page, 2006; Wilson, 1987; Wilson and Kelling, 1982).

In the chapter historical examples of regeneration in Ireland were also reviewed. An analysis of these highlights the failures of the State to equalise and enhance the life conditions of many residents in urban developments across Ireland. Part of the reason for this Hearne et al. (2014: 77) contend had to do with the State's 'ideological opposition to social housing' and its 'obsessive support' of the property market. Likewise there appears to have been a failure on the part of the State to recognise and value 'housing as a home and a right, and not a commodity' (Hearne et al., 2014: 77). Furthermore, it was found that the Irish State proved negligent in prioritising the interests and the needs of local communities. Bauder (2002) and Andersson and Musterd (2005) posited that problems in neighbourhoods are the product of broader structural shortcomings which underlie many of its problems. Power (2007: 59) argues that while public interventions might set out to improve 'poor' neighbourhoods by trying to eradicate visible problems, this can 'cut across families trying to create a sense of community by holding on to familiar places and people'. Therefore, 'reconciling these countervailing needs of regeneration and community may be the biggest challenge facing low-income communities and government approaches to neighbourhood renewal' (Power, 2007: 59).

Much of the language employed in regeneration discourses, i.e. 'inclusivity', 'community', 'participation', 'partnership' and 'locality' was also highlighted in the review. However, the rhetoric of regeneration and the experiences presented in this chapter illustrates that this language often masked the fact that regeneration in Ireland, especially during the Celtic Tiger period, favoured and prioritised the interests of government and market forces. With the task of regeneration presenting major challenges, learning's gained in this chapter suggest that regeneration in Limerick as elsewhere, must remain focused on achieving sustainable development, while nurturing the development of sustainable communities (DECLG, 2012).

The embedded questions of this study sought to identify how participation in public discourses can have implications for future social policy. Having analysed some of the shortcomings of the Dublin experience of regeneration, the lessons learned from these emphasise the importance of meaningfully and respectfully engaging those often excluded from participating in public discourses and social processes. While the Limerick regeneration programme saw intensive levels of consultation take place, both in the time frames of 2007-2012 and 2013-2016, an important lesson arising from this review suggests that not only must those for whom regeneration purports to serve be facilitated to participate in regeneration processes, they must also be empowered to actively participate in decision making. Such a measure can provide a platform from which meaningful partnerships between government agencies, social and business interests, community groups and residents can be developed (Arnstein, 1969; Carley, 2000; Roberts, 2000). This chapter therefore proposes that area-based regeneration programmes must look to foster stronger and more reciprocal engagement between urban policy, local residents and social critical theory (Castells, 1996; Slater, 2013). Engagement of this nature can help address inequitable power relations, facilitate greater levels of social inclusion and cohesion and lay the foundations for a more equitable and sustainable urban regeneration.

Finally, as this thesis is primarily concerned with education and educational issues, acknowledgement is made of the contribution education can make to regeneration processes. The importance of education in regeneration is affirmed by the DECLG (2012) and the European Commission *Strategy on Education for Sustainable*

Development (2012), who propose a policy framework for the development of knowledge, skills and values which encourages individuals, businesses and organisations to take action in support of a sustainable and more just society, while contributing to caring for the environment and fostering global citizenship. While education has the potential to strengthen the capacity of individuals and communities; it also has the potential to enable businesses and governments to make sounder judgements and decisions (DECLG, 2012: 77). For these reasons education for sustainable development should be 'embedded at every level of the formal and informal education system' (DECLG, 2012: 77), and be an integral part of urban regeneration programmes.

4.1   Introduction

Education is envisioned as the great equalizer (Horace Mann, 1848, cited in Cremin, 1957: 6), with the capacity to mitigate the effects of poverty on children by equipping them with knowledge and skills needed to lead successful and productive lives (Coley, 2013: 8). For many of those who took part in this study, economic hardship presented major barriers to their educational aspirations, participation, retention and progression. While some participants reported that they would have liked to progress in education their aspirations were curtailed by the reality of the lack of economic resources in the home and limitations imposed by economic poverty.

In this chapter I set out to explore the relationship between poverty and education. I also explore the contribution education can make to regeneration processes. I begin by presenting how poverty is understood in the literature and consider the main causes of poverty. I then examine the extent of child poverty in Ireland and explore how poverty impacts on the lives of children. Next, I examine the relationship between poverty and education. This relationship is a complex one, because while potentially offering a way out of poverty and inequality, education does not always fulfil this potential. Instead education as currently configured more often contributes to replicating and perpetuating the intergenerational transmission of inequality (Raffo et al., 2007). Subsequently, I examine ways in which poverty and inequality can be reversed, while considering how the achievement gaps between students can also be addressed. Finally, I present some of the wider benefits of education and consider the potential of these benefits for regeneration processes.

4.2   Understanding poverty and its causes

The term poverty derives from the Latin *pauper* and usually refers to the lack of material possessions, especially money. The *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (2009) defines poverty in absolute and relative terms. Relative poverty is useful for describing poverty in terms of children and families who are poor relative to their peers and to the expectations of the society they live in (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003). Whereas absolute poverty is characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, such as: food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and shelter. It can also include the lack of access to education and health services and the lack of safe environments, social discrimination and exclusion. In the literature poverty is understood to exist when people's income and resources (material, cultural, social and symbolic) are such that they are precluded from having a standard of living regarded as acceptable by society generally (Lynch et al., 2000: Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), 1997 & 2002). For Sen (1999) poverty is not only the absence of financial and material resources, but the lack of capability to function effectively in society. Another dimension to poverty is presented by Pugh (2009: 5) who suggests that rising consumption has established 'a new cultural environment with new expectations about what parents should provide, what children should have, and what having, or not having signifies'.

While the causes of poverty maybe complex and have 'many variants and different roots' (Bradshaw, 2006: 5), at the basis of poverty is inequality (Valentine, 1968). This view finds support in Coote et al. (2015: 2) who posit that poverty extends to non-participation in societal processes, and adds that the experience of poverty is relative to societal norms and can never be separated from inequality. Inequality is understood to exist when inequities in wealth ownership, employment opportunities, taxation and disposable incomes exist. Inequality is problematic because of its limiting effects on equality of opportunity, its restrictions on social mobility and its tendency to reinforce economic advantage and disadvantage (Coote et al., 2015: 4). Coote et al. (2015: 7) proposes that the way society is structured and organised, and the way in which resources are allocated makes poverty a distributional issue. In Ireland the Barnardos report *Rise Up for Children* (2015: 5) asserts that poverty and inequality are also political issues. This is because poverty and inequality are perpetuated and become

entrenched due to political decisions made at every level of government. Therefore while defined and conceptualised in various ways, poverty and poverty research are inescapably political acts (O'Connor, 2001: 12). Consequently, how poverty gets discussed, responded to and addressed, depends on political biases, values and interests.

4.3   Poverty and inequality in Ireland

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2010) and findings from the European Union (EU) Study on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) (2009) survey reported that at the beginning of the recent economic recession in Ireland (2008-2013) the number of households in Ireland living in consistent poverty[24] rose from 4.2 percent in 2008 to 5.5 percent in 2009. The EU SILC findings for Ireland (2010) show that in 2009 children (aged 0-17) remained the most vulnerable age group at risk of poverty[25] at 18.6 percent. Regional 'at-risk' of poverty rates were also recorded, with the highest regional 'at risk' of poverty rate recorded for persons living in the Midlands (23.5%). The Mid-West region (which includes Limerick) was recorded as having the next highest 'at-risk' of poverty rate (18.9%), followed closely by the South-East region (18.3%), and the lowest regional 'at-risk' of poverty rate in Ireland in 2009 was recorded for Dublin at (8.3%).

In 2014 the *State of the Nation's Children* reports that over the period 2009-2013, children experienced consistent poverty rates higher than the population as a whole. The highest consistent poverty rate for children occurred among those in the age group 12-17 years, this rate was 16.6 percent in 2013 compared with a rate of 11.1 percent for children aged 6-11years and a rate of 7.4 percent for those aged 0-5 years (ibid: 176-177). More recently Ireland has ranked 22nd out of EU-28 countries for poverty prevention (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2015). Barnardos' *Rise Up for Children* (2015: 14)

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[24] The consistent poverty rate combines relative income poverty and material deprivation (EU SILC, 2009).

[25] At risk of poverty rate is calculated as the percentage of persons with an equivalised disposable income of less than 60% of the national median income.

reports that households with children were 56 percent more likely to experience food poverty than households without children. The same report finds a link between families with children and indebtedness; with one in four households with children having gone into debt between 2014 and 2015 (64% higher than the number of households without children). The 2008-2013 economic recession also gave rise to higher numbers of people experiencing deprivation and inequality. *Rise Up for Children* (2015) reports that in 2015, approximately one in three people in Ireland experienced one or more forms of material deprivation; one in eight children in 2015 were living in consistent poverty; two out of every five children experienced some form of material deprivation, and an estimated one in six children experienced food poverty. Furthermore, in the six months period from January to September 2015, 1,496 children were reported to be homeless, with children from the poorest households 62 percent less likely to get hospital treatment and be longer on waiting lists than children from wealthier households, while at the same time 10 percent of the population of Ireland own 60 percent of the total wealth of the nation (*Rise Up for Children*, 2015). These statistics depict the extent of poverty, deprivation and inequality that currently exists in Ireland.

Poverty can be a heavy burden to carry in childhood, and the literature notes that poverty can negatively impact on children's well-being, health and development into adulthood (Swords et al., 2011: 8). The cumulative effect of inequality is also noted as a particularly worrying feature of childhood poverty, with poverty and inequality casting 'long shadows' condemning some children to 'a life full of hardship' (Grinspun, 2004: 2, cited in Swords et al., 2011) while lacking the necessary capital to influence change. A socially critical perspective prompts the need to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded in public policies. Given the harmful effects of poverty on the lives on individuals, a socially critical perspective suggests that poverty must be systematically tackled and 'society made more equal' (TASC, 2015: 11). In doing so many benefits can accrue for individuals and for society. Namely, the 'more equal a society is the better that society performs on a range of social indicators, e.g. crime, health and educational attainment' (TASC, 2015: 11). Also the more equal societies are the more stable they are and consequently 'have better chances of stronger and more sustained economic growth' (ibid: 11). Therefore for urban regeneration to

achieve some of its intended objectives, anti-poverty measures[26] should guide and underpin regeneration efforts.

4.4   The impacts of poverty on educational and life outcomes

The impact of poverty on educational and life outcomes of children is well documented in the literature (Barnardos, 2015; Boston, 2013; Bradshaw, 2006; Combat Poverty Agency, 2003; Coote et al., 2015; Croxford, 1999; Duncan and Magnuson, 2013; Ferguson et al., 2007; Goodman and Gregg, 2010; PIRLS, 2011; Pirrie and Hockings, 2012; PISA, 2012; Raffo et al., 2007 & 2010; Ridge, 2011; Swords, et al., 2011; TASC, 2015; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Growing up in poverty can have negative effects across the life-course; from conception and early years through transition into adulthood (Croxford, 1999). Deep-seated inequalities in many areas of life impact on the lives of all citizens, especially children (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Poverty can penetrate 'deep into the heart of childhood, permeating every facet of children's lives from economic and material disadvantage, through the structuring and limiting of social relationships and social participation, to the most personal often hidden aspects of disadvantage associated with shame, sadness and the fear of social difference and marginalisation' (Ridge, 2011: 73).

Poverty is often manifested in poor housing, poor physical and mental health, high levels of unemployment, lack of aspirations and 'manifold forms of emotional and spiritual deprivation' (Pirrie and Hockings, 2012: 10). Recent studies in New Zealand (Gibbs et al., 2011) and the US (Duncan and Magnuson, 2013) illustrate how poverty impacts on children's development in general and on school readiness in particular (Ferguson et al., 2007: 701). Specifically they highlight how poverty impacts on children's physical and cognitive development and on their social support systems. Duncan and Magnuson (2013: 16) found 'a remarkable sensitivity of developing brain structures and functions that are related to growing up in an impoverished home'. Pirrie and Hockings (2012: 7) also report that economic hardship and stress in

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[26] Namely employment creation which includes a living wage; more access to education, training and health services; better quality housing and safe and maintained neighbourhoods.

childhood can adversely affect a child's nervous, immune, endocrine and metabolic systems. With the result that children who grow up poverty are disproportionately likely to face social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and commence school at a social, cognitive and behavioural disadvantage to their peers. This can continue throughout their time in the education system, with the mitigating effects of school often unable to equalise this gap (Ferguson et al., 2007: 703). While the efforts of school can help compensate for social disadvantages and promote social mobility, the influences of the family microsystem and the local community mesosystem are powerful contexts which can lessen or reinforce social disadvantages through the various effects they exert on children's lives and their future careers. Poverty likewise can contribute to parental stress, relationship difficulties and mental health problems (Boston, 2013), and negatively impact on parenting behaviour and child-rearing practices (Humphreys et al., 2011). Boston (2013: 11) posits that poverty can lead to higher incidences of neglect and/or maltreatment; with typical problems including parental inconsistencies regarding daily routines, frequent changes of primary caregivers, a lack of supervision and poor role modelling. Which in turn can undermine a child's sense of security, their self-worth and self-esteem and reduce their motivation and ability to gain the full benefits of education in school (Boston, 2013: 11-13).

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in acknowledging the impact of poverty on the educational outcomes of children, finds no single reason as to why children experiencing poverty perform worse in education than children from more affluent backgrounds (Raffo et al., 2007: 50). However, a large body of evidence demonstrates the strong association between socio-economic status (SES) and educational attainment. For example studies undertaken by PIRLS (2011) and PISA (2012) sought to assess students' attainment at different stages in their educational journey (elementary or primary level through to high school or post-primary level). They found that socio-economic status had significant impacts on educational attainment, with children living in poverty more likely to have poorer educational outcomes than children from higher-income families. The *Growing Up in Ireland* report (2016) also shows that socio-economic status (SES) is associated 'with a wide array of outcomes in children, pervading all areas, including health and cognitive and socio-emotional development' (Morgan et al., 2016: 38). Factors which link SES to child well-being

involve among other features 'access to material and social resources, and reactions to stressful situations (such as unemployment) by both children and their parents' (Morgan et al., 2016: 38). The same study finds that for adolescents, 'low SES can be associated with poor adaptive functioning, an increased likelihood of depression and delinquent behaviour, with adolescents from poorer families more likely to experience higher rates of emotional difficulties than their more affluent peers' (ibid: 38). The Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2016: 42) also reports that students from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to have access to the social and culture capital networks associated with higher education, and 'by consequence often have a less smooth transition to higher education, when compared to their more affluent peers'. Therefore, while education can be a route out of poverty, full participation in school is a luxury that children in poor families often cannot afford (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2011: 5). Furthermore, children in poor families tend to have unmet basic human needs, i.e. food, shelter and other material needs; and as a result can struggle in the classroom. Many children's school experience in Ireland have in recent times been seriously impacted upon by economic recession. The impact of recession led to severe cuts in public expenditure and the public sector moratorium on staff recruitment in vital service areas resulted in many children in Ireland having been left without much needed supports, e.g. social workers, special needs assistants, language support and resource teachers. The End Child Poverty Coalition (2011) also reports that children can wait months for a clinical or educational assessment, and wait even longer to acquire the much needed continuum of supports required to participate fully in education. The same report claims that one in ten children in Ireland from poorer backgrounds, will leave school with literacy problems, this rises to one child in three who live in marginalised circumstances (The End Child Poverty Coalition, 2011: 5). Goodman and Gregg (2010) contend that the gap between children living in poverty and those who don't widens significantly from the time a child enters nursery or primary school, and this persists throughout the life-course. With the result that children who experience poverty early in life are more likely to experience educational failure, and as they move into adulthood are more likely to leave school before 16 years of age[27], become a NEET (not in education, employment or training), be less

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[27] In Ireland this is the acceptable legal age for a young person to leave school (Education Welfare Act, 2000).

likely to go on to higher education than their more affluent peers (The Sutton Trust, 2008; HEA, 2016), experience long-term unemployment, poverty and/or enter the criminal justice system (End Child Poverty Coalition, 2011: 5).

4.5 Addressing economic poverty and inequality

In Chapter Two the microsystem of the family was shown to be the most important ecology for a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986; 2005). This review finds that should the family life of a child be characterised by poverty or hardship, significant, pervasive and persistent influences on life outcomes can arise (Ferguson, 2007: 702). Economic hardship during early childhood was shown to negatively impact on educational attainment (Duncan and Magnuson, 2013; Ferguson et al., 2007; Ladd, 2012; Raffo et al., 2010) and have limiting effects on later life employment and earning opportunities, while constraining upward social mobility and contributing to entrenching the poverty cycle generationally (Boston, 2013: 12). For these reasons it is imperative that economic poverty and inequality are addressed. Lynch et al. (2000: 3) posit that the State has a pivotal role to play in eliminating poverty and addressing inequality. Pirrie and Hockings (2012: 10) contend that to date the literature has however tended to focus 'on fixing the child, fixing the family, fixing the school and fixing the community', whereas what is needed are commitments to 'more fundamental issues relating to social justice', and to systemic issues relating to fairness and more equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and benefits (ibid: 10). Studies undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) (cf. Coote et al., 2015; Goulden, 2013; MacInnes et al., 2015) propose that to address poverty and inequality multi-dimensional approaches are needed which take into account the underlying causes of poverty. Therefore approaches to poverty reduction must recognise the interdependence of social, environmental and economic resources and relationships, while considering how these can best be employed. Coote et al. (2015: 4) also posit that markets must be made to serve the interests of society and the environment, not the other way around, and greater provision must be made for universal childcare, good jobs, decent wages and work conditions, along with developing fairer taxation policies. In addition, there is a need for more equal distribution of financial resources across different socio-economic groups and regions, including greater access to fair and

affordable banking services and credit. Coote et al. (2015: 5) also stresses the importance of governments harnessing financial systems through the regulation of rent extractions, financial speculation, tax avoidance and the concentration of wealth. Added to these governments must aim to build strong local economies and create greater linkages between national and local resources, institutions and strategies, if poverty and inequality are to effectively reduced. *Rise Up for Children* (2015) also stresses the importance of adopting systemic approaches and puts forward a number of ways in which poverty and inequality in Ireland can be addressed. These include:

- investing more in public services;
- improving tax efficiency;
- exploiting untapped and under-utilised sources of revenue for investment in public services;
- creating a centralised, ring-fenced funding stream managed by the Department of An Taoiseach for use by government departments to invest in prevention and early intervention programmes;
- raising spending on early years care and education from our current 0.2% level to match the OECD average of 0.8% of GDP during the five year programme of the next government;
- providing extra investment to the DES of c. €103m per annum to ensure that all children enjoy free primary education. Once implemented this investment should be expanded to include secondary education;
- investing in targeted educational supports for children who need them and making such interventions available early enough so that all children have equal opportunity to achieve their educational aspirations;
- providing a fully operational primary care team for every 1,500 children in the country;
- guaranteeing families fair rent and security of tenure by linking rent rates to Consumer Price Index while also raising Rent Supplement rates to realistic levels in all areas, enabling those availing of the payment to compete in the open residential market;
- increasing the State's provision of social housing beyond that contained in the *Social Housing Strategy 2014-2020* (2014[28]) and moving away from an over reliance on the private rented sector for the supply of social housing.

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[28] The Social Housing Strategy 2014-2020 (2014: iv) aims to provide more than 35,000 new homes to meet social housing needs by 2020, and in addition, to deliver up to 75,000 units of long term, quality accommodation through local authority housing support schemes for tenants.

Finally, the literature recommends that attention must be paid to power relations in society, as critical autonomy is a basic human right and need, and is fundamental for overcoming inequality and addressing poverty in the long-term (Coote et al., 2015: 4).

4.6 Addressing inequality in education

Educational policies are often seen to fail to close the achievement gaps between students. This according to Ladd (2012: 203) is because the focus of much of the policy is usually on curriculum and test-based accountability systems, i.e. student scores in standardised tests and teacher evaluations, more so than the educational challenges faced in the daily lives of children experiencing poverty. Findings from a synthesis of qualitative research conducted mainly in the UK and in Ireland however puts forward a number of strategies and interventions to help improve the educational outcomes of children who experience poverty and inequality (Goodman and Gregg, 2010; Kerr and West; 2011; Pirrie and Hockings, 2012; Sharples et al., 2010). These focus on the home and the school (microsystems), the community (mesosystem) and macrosystem responses which include the more equal distribution of societal resources and 'family friendly' polices.

Strategies and interventions at the micro level highlight the importance of raising pupil aspirations through engagement/aspiration programmes (Pirrie and Hockings, 2012: 21) and engaging parents (particularly hard-to-reach parents) and raising their own educational aspirations (Pirrie and Hockings, 2012: 21). Furthermore, efforts to improve the parent-child relationship, especially parental style and parental involvement inside and outside of the school environment can positively impact on general development for children (Chao and Willms, 2002: 149-166). However, to make the home environment an effective supportive learning environment parents must provide predictability in their behaviours, be socially responsive and attentive, while being involved in children's learning inside and outside of the school. Goodman and Gregg (2010: 51-52) contend that improving the home learning environment will enable parents to believe that their own actions and efforts results in their children achieving more educational outcomes.

At the school level Sharples et al. (2010: 37) has found that improving the effectiveness of teaching; through teaching approaches which employ co-operative learning, phonics instruction and meta-cognitive strategies can be helpful, especially 'for children from deprived backgrounds'. UNICEF (2000) stresses the importance of quality teaching and quality educational environments for all children (UNICEF, 2000). Quality teaching necessitates that teachers are educated in child-centred teaching approaches and become skilled in organising and running well-managed classrooms, as well as developing assessments which facilitates learning to overcome learning outcome disparities (UNICEF, 2000: 4). Quality learning environments should likewise be safe, protected, gender and race sensitive and adequately resourced. Added to these quality teaching and learning should have at their disposal relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills in the areas of literacy, numeracy and life-skills (UNICEF, 2000: 4). Outcomes of quality teaching and learning include the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes which not only enhances educational objectives but enables fuller participation in social and political processes (UNICEF, 2004: 4). Finally, Pirrie and Hockings (2012) emphasise the importance of strong and visionary leadership in schools, seeing these as necessary to guide and coordinate school improvement efforts, so that *all* students may benefit from their time spent at school.

Goodman and Gregg (2010) acknowledge that parents who experience economic hardship may need support in order to provide their children with a home environment that fosters educational success. Potential interventions identified in the literature to help support such parents include early year's initiatives, early childhood care and education (ECCE) services and Full Service Extended Schools (FSES). These have been found to be successful in closing the achievement gaps in education between children from marginalised backgrounds and their more affluent peers (Barnardos, 2010; Cummings et al., 2007; Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011; European Commission, 2011; Harvard Family Research Project, 2015; Hayes, 2010; National Economic Social Forum (NESF), 2005; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2011). ECCE programmes in particular have been found to positively impact on brain development and help children achieve better test scores, grade retention, high school graduation, and later in life better labour market outcomes and reduced criminal activity (Woessmann and Schutz, 2006: 13).

They can also provide family support for education, foster greater relationships between home and school and help in the development of quality teaching and the creation of more nurturing educational environments (ibid: 13).

For families experiencing difficulties and hardship, the mesosystem of the local community can be an important source of much needed support and care at the local level. Schools can help facilitate links and connect children and families to the available supports and resources as needed (NESF, 2003: 34). To be effective in this schools must find creative ways to ensure that families lacking the necessary cultural capital can best support their children's educational progress. Schools however must also be assisted in this endeavour by 'family friendly' social policies for the duration of the child's time spent in formal education (Rothstein, 2004). In addition teachers and students, parents and community services are encouraged to develop tolerance, promote fair-play, engage in critical discussion of social issues, respect the rights of others and foster democracy (Andre, et al., 2012: 5). While democracy in education has been part of the agenda for many years, Connolly (2007: 123) contends that education is however increasingly being 'commodified, as a product to be consumed, rather than a process to be undertaken'. Connolly (2007: 123) therefore raises questions as to 'whose future, story and interests do schools and the education system represent?' This suggests the need for macro level changes in the education system. Specifically the goals and the philosophy of the education system need to be reviewed, together with reviewing school systems and the way schools are organised, developed and run (Pirrie and Hockings, 2012: 21). This can include a school effectiveness approach and school improvement efforts linked to wider efforts to tackle inequalities in communities and in society, along with measures which targets neighbourhood and family background factors and characteristics (Kerr and West, 2011: 8-9).

In Ireland interventions which have targeted schools in marginalised areas and in particular children in those schools, include Delivering Equality of Opportunity in schools (DEIS) 2005[29]). Another initiative, the Area Based Childhood (ABC[30]) Programme 2013-2017, is committed to adopting a multidimensional approach to tackling child poverty by setting a national child-specific social target to lift over 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020. The literature further identifies the need to target specific groups, i.e. those with additional support needs, e.g. young parents, care leavers, NEETs, along with bolstering family income during periods of early childhood (Duncan and Magnuson, 2013: 16). The Council of the European Union (2011) also stresses the importance of improving efficiency and equity of education and training systems at all levels; from the early years through to adulthood, recognising them as playing a major role in achieving the Europe 2020 goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Council of the European Union, 2011). Downes and Gilligan (eds.) (2007) argue for a life-cycle approach to education, which includes pre-school education and adult and community education, seeing these as helping families to move beyond educational disadvantage. In the literature the benefits of lifelong learning[31] is acknowledged for its role in helping to reverse the effects of poverty and inequality, and helping to close achievement gaps in education (*Building Ireland's Smart Economy, 2008*). Connolly (2014: 2) posits that in the context of lifelong learning, adult education, in particular community education, can enhance both the capacity 'and empowerment of people to tackle very difficult personal and social issues, including poverty, domestic violence and drug misuse, in various ways

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[29] DEIS is an action plan by the DES in Ireland for educational inclusion. The plan has two main features 1) a standardised approach to target resources, 2) a streamlined and integrated delivery of supports. DEIS is delivered through the School Support Programme (SSP), The School Support Programme under DEIS provides: - reduced class size (urban Band 1 schools only), additional funding, access to planning supports, access to literacy/numeracy programmes and professional support in their implementation, access to the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme and a range of supports under the School Completion Programme (SCP), access to the School Meals programme, additional funding under the School Books Grant Scheme and access to a range of professional development supports.

[30] The ABC programme is a prevention and early intervention initiative consisting of committed funding for an area-based approach to helping to improve outcomes for children by reducing child poverty.

[31] Lifelong learning includes all purposeful learning, from the cradle to the grave that aims to improve knowledge and competencies, for individuals who wish to participate in learning activities (OECD, 2004: 1).

from improving well-being to developing advocacy and social action groups'. However, unless these strategies and interventions are matched with macro level policies that prioritise addressing poverty and inequality, children in households affected by poverty will continue to be 'at-risk' of passing on disadvantage through the generations (Boston, 2013; Healy et al., 2016). Therefore given the relationship between poverty and education, educational policies must focus on reversing the effects of poverty on children. Furthermore, to close the attainment gap between students and ameliorate young people's educational achievement and opportunities (Coley, 2013: 45), educational policies and strategies must aim to improve the overall educational outcomes of all students.

Finally, while the literature advises that drawing generalised conclusions from these strategies and interventions can be difficult, with no "magic bullets" available to ensure that all students will perform and 'derive the same educational benefits as their more advantaged peers' (Raffo et al., 2007: 50). The evidence nonetheless suggests that education has potential to positively impact on poverty reduction (van der Berg, 2008: 24). However, to ensure the effectiveness of any strategy or intervention, Pirrie and Hockings (2012: 21) recommend that rigorous monitoring and assessments of these are made, and are closely linked, evidenced based and data driven.

4.7 The wider benefits of education and the benefits of education for regeneration processes

Education and educational credentials have distributive and formative functions; they can enhance human capital and be used as a means for accessing other goods, i.e. economic growth, addressing economic inequality and enabling fairer distribution of wealth (Vila, 2000: 26). Education can likewise increase people's potential to have better jobs, higher incomes and greater levels of well-being. Education is also recognised for its benefits beyond monetary effects, and educated people usually tend to make more informed choices about issues such as lifestyle, personal habits, consumption behaviours, location and type of housing, family size and structure, occupations and the use of leisure time, etc. (Vila, 2000: 24). As a result education can positively impact on health longevity, quality of life and cultural and social capital

development (Conti et al., 2010; OECD, 2010, 2013 & 2014). With education having a part to play in social and cultural capital development, the development of these can likewise contribute to the development of other forms of capital (i.e. economic, symbolic, physical, environmental and political) (Bourdieu, 1986; Bennett and Silva, 2006; Wildhaven, 2010), while impacting on children's preparedness to learn and their subsequent performance in the education system (Halpern, 2005: 151). Education is recognised in the literature for its role in helping to facilitate the transmission of culture, socialising the young into an appreciation of the norms and values of society (Drudy and Lynch, 1993: 26), and enabling 'children and young people to develop intellectually, socially and morally and reach their full potential' (Smyth and McCoy, 2009: 1). For Downes (2011: 3) education provides social support, strengthens social networks and mitigates against social stressors. The *Irish Primary School Curriculum* (1999) saw education as helping children to develop as social beings, living and co-operating with others and contributing to the good of society. Education can also equip people with knowledge and skills so that they can participate more fully in society (Bivens et al., 2009: 97), and act as responsible citizens in politics and culture. Consequently, education is 'necessary for social life' (Dewey, 1916: 9). Vila (2000: 25) argues that education and knowledge can likewise contribute to the stability of social structures, with positive impacts on levels of social conflict and violence.

In the introduction to this chapter education was presented as problematic, because of the part it plays in serving, advancing and reinforcing existing economic, social and cultural structures and dominant ideologies (Raffo et al., 2007). Connolly and Hussey (2013: 76) postulate that education in the context of lifelong learning can help to build the capacity of students, so that they can challenge these as well as those forces which maintain the unequal status quo. The White Paper on Adult Education (2000) sees education as contributing to consciousness raising, social cohesion, citizenship and personal and community development. Gonzalez (2007: 30) posits that the exercise of citizenship involves developing a set of intellectual tools which enables people to 'identify the dialectic relations between local and global processes, i.e. economic, political, social, cultural and environmental'. In urban spaces local and global processes are lived, and it is in urban spaces that new socio-spatial configurations are taking place, i.e. diversity, interculturality, citizenship, the waning importance of the nation-state and the emerging importance of neighbourhoods and the local community

in the lives of people (Andre et al., 2012: 6). These new configurations present new challenges for society and education. Therefore education and urban regeneration must be cognisant of what it means to be a citizen in society in the 21st century and develop responses accordingly. André et al. (2012: 2) proposes that to meet the needs of the 21st century, education must be promoted, information must be disseminated, critical skills must be developed, and those committed to making education relevant and meaningful must engage in practices which do not 'conform to, and may even contradict or subvert hegemonic knowledge'.

In many European cities schools are considered strategic partners in area-based regeneration programmes. This is because schools often serve as important resource centres in marginalised urban areas (Crowther et al., 2003). Schools can also facilitate connections between parents, students, teachers, the wider community and support services, etc., and in doing so contribute to breaking the isolation and exclusion of families and communities. As a result of the bridges established between schools, families and communities, and the relational capital they expand in children and young people, schools can be powerful agents of local development processes while contributing to poverty reduction and the wider goals of social inclusion (Andre, et al., 2012: 10). Hence schools have much to offer regeneration processes. In addition adult education, especially community-based adult education can have an important contribution to make to regeneration processes; helping 'to transform community development into a radical movement for social change', and in 'the struggle for liberation strengthens the resolve to bring about a more just and equal society' (Connolly, 2007: 126). The literature also recognises the significance of learning communities of practice[32], and the potential these possess for contemporary urban regeneration (André, et al., 2012; Plumb et al., 2007). An urban learning community of practice 'is woven like cloth by inhabitants, as they engage with each other in acts of social learning in communities of practice' (Plumb et al., 2007: 46). While education helps support interpersonal relations, fosters personal reflexivity and addresses exclusionary dynamics, education can also promote and support social and urban (spatial) cohesion (André et al., 2012: 11). This requires exploring 'more

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[32] Learning communities of practice can be a local community, a broader territory or society of which they are a part of (Plumb et al., 2007).

deeply' how education and learning can shape society 'and its spatial forms in dynamic collective ways' (André et al., 2012: 2). Consequently, developing a research agenda which focuses on education and learning and socio-spatial cohesion, has potential for policy development in support of better regeneration outcomes (André et al., 2012: 3).

4.8   Chapter conclusion

In this chapter low family income during childhood was seen to affect a range of educational and life outcomes. Children growing up in poverty were found to be more likely to commence school at a cognitive and behavioural disadvantage to their peers, which continues throughout their time in the education system, and often the efforts of schools are unable to equalise this gap. Economic poverty in childhood was also shown to have limiting effects on the later employment and life opportunities of adults. Poverty and inequality were shown to be more than just economic concerns; but social, cultural and political concerns (Lynch et al., 2000). The review identified a number of strategies and interventions to improve the short-term, medium-term and long-term educational and economic outcomes of children affected by poverty. Specifically, early childhood interventions, family friendly policies and the provision of key services in areas such as health and education (Mallon and Healy, 2012: 41; European Commission, 2011: 7), were considered most beneficial, especially when targeted at those most in need. The review also looked at ways in which the relationship between poverty and poor educational outcomes might be disrupted. This was found to require ideological[33] and institutional level changes which extend beyond the formal relations of material production, distribution and exchange (Lynch et al., 2000: 5). The review also identified that addressing inequality and helping families out of poverty will require changing the way wealth is managed and owned in society (Barnardos, 2015; Coote et al., 2015; Lynch et al., 2000; TASC, 2015), together with multi-dimensional approaches (HEA, 2008: 69) which are part of a 'broader socio-economic reform

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[33] Ideology is 'the production and representation of ideas, values, and beliefs and the manner in which they are expressed and lived out by individuals and groups' (McLaren, 2003: 205). Ideology 'provides a starting point from which to raise questions about the social and political interests that underlie many of the pedagogical assumptions taken for granted by teachers' (Giroux, 1983: 67); assumptions about learning, achievement, teacher-student relations, objectivity, school authority, etc., which need to be critically evaluated by educators (ibid: 67).

agenda' Education Disadvantage Committee (EDC) (2005: 21). However, due to the political nature of poverty and inequality, such efforts will require 'a policy sea change' (Pirrie and Hockings, 2012: 23) which is informed by critical perspectives and social justice concerns, and is matched by commitments of governments.

Higgins (2008: 57) advances that schools and centres of education are an integral part of the socio-economic-cultural landscape of industrial societies, and so have an important role to play in addressing the attainment gaps between students and reducing poor outcomes as a result of poverty. Schools like most social sites are also 'marked by contradictions and struggles which, while primarily serving the logic of domination also contain the possibilities for emancipatory practice' (Giroux, 1983: 234). While in themselves schools cannot change society; schools and teachers can help create 'a discourse that illuminates the ideological and material conditions necessary to promote critical modes of schooling and alternative modes of schooling for the working class and other groups that bear the brunt of political and economic oppression' (Giroux, 1983: 235). Furthermore, education (formal and informal schooling, skills training and knowledge acquisition) can also be a means to escape poverty and its insidious effects (Rose and Dyer, 2008: 11-12). However, rather than seeing education as a means of escaping poverty, education must aim to ensure that society is oriented towards a more equal society, through the redistribution of resources and the dividends of citizenship and democracy. Given the intricate links between poverty, inequality, education and educational attainment, concerted and sustained efforts must therefore be made to ensure that all children are facilitated to develop the skills and the attitudes necessary to 'propel them to their eventual life destinations' (Sylva, 2000: 121).

Finally, the core research and embedded questions of the study sought to identify what education has to offer regeneration processes. This chapter finds that for cities to embrace and accommodate education and learning as part of urban regeneration programmes, significant additional investments must be made in public education across the spectrum of lifelong learning. This chapter also acknowledges the need for the active participation of communities in the design and the development of relevant learning and educational programmes. Furthermore, lessons learned from this review suggest that sustained efforts must be made towards the development of a culture of education and learning among social groups, who often don't realise the benefits of

education, or who ignore or reject the role of education in terms of its empowerment potential (André et al., 2012: 4).

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Chapter Five
Area Profiles

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5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents area profiles of Limerick city and the study site areas. Data for the profiles are derived from maps, reports, journals, books and newspaper articles. The area profiles are supported by statistical information from the Census of population as they apply to the Irish State, Limerick city and the study site areas. Data sources for the chapter are augmented by Appendix VII & VIII and the findings of the present study.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I present a profile of Limerick city which consist of two contradictory images. One depicts an image of a city with a high level of social, cultural and economic infrastructure. The other depicts a 'brand' image of a city characterised by deprivation, crime and social problems. Secondly, I present a profile of the study site areas. As part of the profile I outline some of the difficulties and challenges experienced by those living in the communities designated for renewal as part of the Limerick regeneration programme (2007-2023), along with documenting some of those factors that contributed to the social and physical decline of these areas. Thirdly, I provide an outline of the national context during and after what has come to be known as the Celtic Tiger period (1994-2007). Towards the end of the Celtic Tiger period the Limerick regeneration programme commenced (cf. Chapter Three, 3.9). In presenting the national context during and after the Celtic Tiger period I outline some of the dramatic and profound changes which have taken place in the social, demographic and economic profile of Ireland during this period. This provides a context in which to understand some of the many challenges that confronted regeneration in Limerick, from October 2008 - 2013.

5.2 A socio-demographic and economic profile of Limerick city

The profile of Limerick city discussed in this section is described in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and includes comparisons made with Ireland as a whole.

5.2.1 Limerick a modern, progressive, prosperous and socially balanced metropolitan community

Situated in the Mid-Western region at the lowest point on the banks of the river Shannon, Limerick is the third largest city in the Republic of Ireland and is one of the oldest chartered cities in the Country. Since Viking times Limerick has been the centre of trade and culture in the Mid-West region (McCafferty, 2005: 1). Today Limerick continues to be a centre of trade and has developed into the 'manufacturing, commercial, administrative and cultural capital of the Mid-West region' (Walsh and Coyne, 2007: 2). As a result of its location and infrastructure the Limerick-Shannon region was designated with Gateway[34] status under the *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) (2002). Walsh and Coyne (2007: 24) state that because of its many attributes social, retail, environmental, historic, cultural, research and industrial attributes Limerick has the potential to become a 'modern, progressive, prosperous, socially and economically balanced metropolitan community, known for arts and culture, innovation, industry and science'. Jim Power (2008a: 2) economist also stated that Limerick was in the middle of a 'silent revolution 'that was gradually transforming the city 'into a modern, dynamic European city, clearly on the move, where its future looks promising'. The NSS (2002), *National Development Plan* (NDP) (2007-2013), the *Mid-West Strategic Plan* (2012-2020) and *the Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick* have also helped to pave the way 'to advance the development of the City and its Metropolitan Area for the benefit of the entire region'

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[34] Gateway status is conferred when a city/region possesses a: population (c. 100,000 or above); wide range of primary / post-primary education facilities and national or regional third level centres of learning;) large clusters of national/international scale enterprises; focal point for transportation and communications, i.e. national roads and rail networks, near to an airport or port facilities; broadband access; integrated public transport with facilities for pedestrians and cyclists; regional hospital and specialised health-care centres; theatres, arts and sports centres and public spaces/parks, cultural and entertainment quarters; water and waste management services; integrated land-use and land-banks in anticipation of needs associated with economic growth as well as strategic development zones (NSS, 2002: 40).

(McCafferty, 2014: 5). The potential of Limerick to deliver 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' is affirmed in the LRIFP (2013: 9). The LRFIP also recognises that in order to achieve these objectives, social and economic inclusion must be prioritised, as must the creation of opportunities for employment, education and training, along with 'harnessing and promoting existing resources and making early interventions' (LRFIP, 2013: 9).

5.2.2   Limerick city the 'brand' image

While Limerick can boast of a wide range of social, retail, environmental, historic, cultural, research and industrial infrastructure located within and surrounding the city area, the city also embodies a number of contradictions (Hourigan, 2011: xi). According to Hourigan (2011: xi) it has the 'highest proportion of local authority housing of any Irish city (41 %), the highest rate of suicide, self-harm and marriage breakdown, and extremely high rates of unemployment and single parenthood'. McCafferty (2005: 78) reports that since 1991 Limerick city has consistently ranked as the second most deprived of the then 34 local authority areas (i.e. cities and counties) in Ireland (cf. Appendix VII for a more in-depth statistical profile of the levels of deprivation in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole). While having integrated into the global economy, the city is also 'torn apart by a feud that is reminiscent of the most ancient forms of tribal conflict' (ibid: xi). Duggan (2009: 16) claims that because of this the city has been seriously tainted by a 'brand' image of dereliction, gangs, feuding, drugs and serious crime. In the 1980s Limerick gained the name 'Stab-City', and this phrase according to Duggan 'has been heard across the world, leaving politicians and civic leaders with the unenviable task of trying to deflect from this unwanted moniker' and 'it is the crime problem which continually drags Limerick into the spotlight'(ibid: 16-17).

While Limerick is depicted in the local, national and international media as having high levels of social disorder and crime, McCullagh (2011: 30) contends that Limerick is in fact a low-crime city, whose levels of crime are not distinctively different from the national picture in terms of the 'level of victimisation' and the 'associated problems

of fear and non-reporting to the Gardaí'[35]. The 'brand' image of Limerick city has however undoubtedly impacted negatively on the city's reputation and its economic and social development. It has also led to the stigmatisation, marginalisation and exclusion of certain areas within the city, i.e. the study sites (Hourigan, 2011; Power, 2008a; Power and Barnes, 2011; Walsh and Coyne, 2007). In the following sections I discuss the extent and the impacts of deprivation in Limerick city.

5.2.3 Deprivation and affluence

The levels of deprivation and affluence of an area in Ireland is measured according to deprivation index scores. McCafferty (2005: 78) posits that the deprivation index was developed to track changes in deprivation levels over time, and is used to guide area-based planning and policy interventions. The deprivation index for Ireland takes into account dimensions of social class disadvantage, labour market deprivation and demographic decline. These are then measured with respect to underlying census variables, i.e. housing, social class, educational attainment, unemployment, single parenthood and age dependency (McCafferty, 2005: 78). In August 2012 Pobal announced the HP Deprivation Index as a new method for measuring the relative affluence or deprivation of a geographical area, using data compiled from various censuses (Haase and Pratschke, 2012). The HP Deprivation Index is based on Small Areas (SAs[36]) which replaces all other measures, i.e. Electoral Divisions (EDs[37]). Percentage data for an SA is given under the following categories: population change; age dependency rates; single parent rates; primary education only; third level education rates; male and female unemployment rates; and the numbers of people living in local authority rented housing.

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[35] The Gardaí are the official police force of the Republic of Ireland.

[36] SAs are standardised in size with a minimum of 50 households and a mean under 100 and provide street-level information on the Irish population. The Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) (2011) contains 18,488 SAs (Haase and Pratschke, 2012: 1).

[37] EDs were legally defined administrative areas from which Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) were published from the Census of population. Prior to Census 2011There were 3,440 EDs in the Irish State.

The deprivation level of an area is calculated with reference to a score with a national average of zero, ranging from -35 (being the most disadvantaged) to +35 (being the most affluent). When making comparisons over time absolute index scores are used, and when making statements about a particular SA at a particular point in time, relative index scores with the following categorisations are used: extremely affluent; very affluent; affluent; marginally above average; marginally below average; disadvantaged; very disadvantaged and extremely disadvantaged (Haase and Pratschke, 2012: 4). The deprivation indices for Limerick and the study sites are presented in Appendix VII & VIII. In the following sections I discuss small area statistics from various censuses.

5.2.3.1 Limerick population trends

Population trends in an area can be indicative of how that area, city or region is performing socially and economically (Power, 2008a: 15). Upward population trends may indicate a desire to live in a particular area, conveying something of its quality of life; namely the social and economic opportunities available as well as access to public services in areas such as health, education, retail and industry (Power, 2008a: 15). Upward population trends might also indicate that an area is in a commuter belt, or that the price of housing is relatively low in comparison to other areas. However, when population numbers of an area are in sharp decline, this is usually indicative of a 'shortcoming in some other area that comes within the broad quality of life definition' (Power, 2008a: 16).

In the 1981 Census the population of Limerick city was recorded at 65,593 persons, in 1986 it was recorded at 62,785 persons a decline of 4.3 percent. The Limerick population had further declined to 59,331 by 1991 and to 59,141 by 1996. In 2002 the population increased to 60,955, but again declined in 2006, where the census recorded a population of 59,788 for the city. By 2011, the population had fallen to 57,106, an overall decline of 8,487 persons between 1981 and 2011. In contrast the population in Limerick's suburbs increased during the period 2006-2011 by approximately 8.3 percent (CSO, 2011). According to McCafferty and O'Keeffe (2009: 17) this sharp population decline in the city and growth in the suburban areas

'far exceeds what might be attributable to normal demographic transitions associated with the maturing/ageing of a community', thereby suggesting 'a strong element of differential out-migration' (McCafferty and O'Keeffe, 2009: 17). A number of factors may have contributed to this, 1) the unique boundary extension of Limerick city, i.e. three Local Authorities existing side by side in a relatively small area (Limerick City, Limerick County and County Clare), 2) the proliferation of infrastructural developments on the outskirts of the city, as a result of urban planning priorities, and 3) the practice of 'dispersal' and 'relocation' of residents from the study sites and other parts of the city as part of the Limerick regeneration programme during the period (2008-2012). The decline of the population in the city, in particular the study site areas, was captured by one participant in the present study, who stated that

> People just want out of the community as they can't see anything happening and the community is slowly disappearing in front of our eyes' (Female Southside, mid 50s).

In order to reverse the trend of sharp population declines in the city, the *Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report* (2013[38]) proposes to increase the population of Limerick city, by 1) an amalgamation of the combined Local Authorities of Limerick City and County, and 2) progressing the range of measures outlined in in the 2013-2020 regeneration programme (LRIFP, 2013: 114).

5.2.3.2   Limerick age profile and age dependency rates

Age dependency rates provide an insight into the age structure of the population. According to the CSO (2014: 16) age dependency rates is defined as the percentage of the population of working age between the ages of 15-64 years. Age dependency rates have implications for policy making and urban planning, and identifying the extent of

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[38] In July 2011 the *Limerick Reorganisation Implementation Group* was established by the DECLG to oversee the creation of a new single local authority; replacing Limerick City and County Councils. Six electoral areas for the merged Council was recommended to form a new 'Metropolitan District'. The new local electoral area boundaries for the merged Council are made on the basis that they acknowledge the identity of areas within the city and county, and integrate current suburban areas into the metropolitan district. This merger provides a critical mass of population c. 102,161 in the city and 89,648 in the county local electoral areas, which hopefully will facilitate greater economic and social development in the city (Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report, 2013: 81-83).

age dependency can help inform the level of services and facilities required to meet the needs of these demographic groupings, namely the elderly, children and youth (PAUL, 2011: 9). The Census data for Limerick in the period 1991 to 2011 record age dependency rates to be consistently less than the national average. In 2011 PAUL Partnership highlighted concerns regarding health and welfare services for the elderly (ibid: 9). Humphreys et al. (2011: 158-183) also noted concerns regarding the availability, accessibility and take up of services for age dependent groups in Limerick city and the study site areas. In the present study concerns were voiced about the level of provision of services, especially for children and youth (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.7.1.2 & 7.7.1.3).

5.2.3.3   Single parent households

According to the 2011 census over half a million people in Ireland live in single-parent families, this is almost 1 in 5 children (18.3%), with 13.5 percent of all single-parent families headed by a father. The EU Survey on Living and Income Conditions (SILC) (2010) found that people living in single parent households tend to have the lowest disposable income of all households in the Irish State and experience the highest rates of deprivation; with almost 69 percent of individuals from such families experiencing one or more forms of deprivation. Census 2011 data for Limerick records single parent rates in Limerick to have decreased by 1.1 percent in comparison to Census 2006. Consistently the national averages for single parent families have remained lower than those recorded for Limerick city, with single parent rate households in Limerick in 2011 remaining above the national average by 15.9 percent.

Across the literature people living in single parent households are consistently more likely to be at risk of poverty in comparison to other social groupings. Studies in the US have highlighted that children in single-parent households are five times more likely to be poor than two parent families (US Census Bureau, Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics, 2003) and are more likely to leave school early and/or under perform in education (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1993 & National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). Other studies have found

that in father-absent households youths tend to have higher rates of incarceration than those in dual parent families (Harper and McLanahan, 2004), with adolescent boys more at risk of drinking, drug taking, smoking and aggression, than those from two-parent households (Anderson, 2002; Griffin et al., 2000). Ellis et al. (2003) also found that in father-absent families, girls are twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and are seven times more likely to get pregnant as an adolescent, than girls living in two-parent households. In Limerick city a study undertaken by Kelleher Associates and O'Connor (2008) for PAUL Partnership reported on the invisibility of young single fathers in the lives of their children, and recommended that education and training programmes should be developed to target the engagement of young fathers so as to help them develop confidence in parenting, while enabling them to learn necessary parenting skills. The Kelleher Associates and O'Connor (2008) study also recommended that mainstream services should integrate parenting, sexual health and relationship programmes within their work, while promoting education and training for recreation and crime diversion.

In the present study single parent households were perceived to be particularly vulnerable (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.7.1.6) 'some of them (single young mothers) have a lot going on in their lives' (Female Southside, mid 40s). The research outlined above shows the challenges single that parent households can often encounter. Mindful of this, it is important to stress that the statistical associations regarding single parent households are not a commentary on any individual family. Instead they are presented here to highlight the need for effective, inclusive and strategic services to support them. McCafferty and Canny (2005: 19) posit that these supports should be part of an overall strengths based approach anti-poverty strategy. Such an approach recognises both the resources and the knowledge that exists in families. While marking a departure from deficit views of parents and families in marginalised communities, such an approach also presents the possibility of including those in single parent households from such communities in support structures which best suits and meets their needs.

5.2.3.4   Housing profile

In the literature housing tenure has a strong correlation with poverty and deprivation, with social housing often viewed as housing for the poor (Watson et al., 2005). According to McCafferty and Canny (2005: 8) residents in local authority housing estates tend to score worst on all measures of deprivation, and the emphasis on home ownership in Ireland has had the unintended consequence of social housing being seen as less desirable than other housing tenures (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 9-10), even though social housing can provide a route to home ownership for families on low incomes (Silke, 1999). The perceptions associated with social housing has contributed to an increased sense of marginalisation and segregation for those whose circumstances offer them no alternative but to live in social housing estates (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 13). Commenting on social housing provision in Limerick city, Fitzgerald (2007: 4) reported that the construction of large scale local authority housing estates in parts of Limerick city 'undoubtedly helped to create the conditions for problems to develop'.

The CSO data 1991-2011 shows a continuous decrease in the number of people renting from the local authority in Limerick, decreasing from 19.3 percent in 1991 to 12.5 percent in 2011. Similarly it shows that privately rented housing in Limerick and the State has risen consistently since 1991 with the number of people privately renting in Limerick city higher than the national average by 6.4 percent in 2011. Census 2011 also shows that the number of people in the private rented housing sector has more than doubled nationally as well as in Limerick. Furthermore, there is a trend towards the privately rented sector and away from renting from the local authority. From 2002 onwards the Census data shows a decrease in home ownership nationally and also in Limerick city. This decrease is due in part to, 1) the increasing price of houses, 2) the lack of available and affordable dwellings to buy, 3) the limitations and the restrictions imposed by the European Union (EU)/International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout (Nov. 2010) with regards to access to mortgage finance. These have led to increased uncertainty in the labour market, limited finances, falling incomes and tighter mortgage restrictions, which in turn has impacted on the availability of finance for housing, as well as influencing decisions to either enter into home ownership or not.

Focus Ireland (2012: 13) acknowledges that the private rented sector is now playing an increasing role in Irish housing tenure, especially for those on low incomes. However, in parts of Limerick city as elsewhere in Ireland the private rented sector is often characterised by poor quality dwellings that don't comply with specified minimum standards in relation to structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, light and the safety of gas and electrical supply (Drudy, 2015: 23-24). Poor quality housing can contribute to a range of negative outcomes in areas such as health and well-being, education and general quality of life (Blackburn, 1990; Coates and Feely, 2007; DoEHLG's *Action Plan on Private Rented Standards, 2006*; Marsh et al., 2000). With homelessness having become an increasing concern in recent years (Barnardos *Rise Up for Children*, 2015), it is important that in post-recessionary Ireland, greater efforts are made to provide quality social housing and more affordable home ownership, especially for low income families (*Social Housing Strategy 2014-2020*).

5.2.3.5   Employment profile

In the literature employment is recognised as the primary means for appropriating income. Employment is important, because not only does it validate young lives it also confers on people an economic and social role (Power, 1997, cited in McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 44). Therefore when people are affected by unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, they are likely to experience deprivation, welfare dependency, poverty and social and cultural marginalisation (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 43). International reports highlight that at times of economic crises job opportunities decrease, as does the quality of work opportunities, especially for young people (International Labour Organisation, 2008; Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010; OECD, 2009). In 2011 the CSO reported that Limerick city and Donegal recorded the highest levels of youth unemployment in Ireland with rates of 50 and 49 per cent respectively (half of all young people in the labour force in these areas). In this section the employment profile of the Limerick area is discussed, and comparisons are made between Limerick city and Ireland as a whole.

In 2006 the Mid-West region which includes Limerick had a high percentage of the workforce employed in low skilled employment in the manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail, restaurants and accommodation sectors (AECOM, 2013: 22). With the collapse of the construction industry and the ensuing period of economic recession from 2008 onwards, these sectors would be exposed to the devastating impact of recession and would be worst affected by it. In 2011 Limerick recorded a high percentage of employment in the restaurant and accommodation, transport and communications sectors at 16 percent, compared to the Ireland as a whole at 11 percent, whereas 15 percent of the employment in Limerick city in 2011 was in the manufacturing and construction sectors, which is 1 percent lower than the national average. With the closure of the computer company DELL in 2010 Limerick's economy would experience further setbacks. An estimated 2,000 jobs were directly lost in DELL and a further 7,000 jobs lost in many of the local businesses dependent on this company alone (PAUL Partnership, 2011: 21). In 2011 the unemployment rate of for the Irish State was 19.0 percent, for Limerick this was significantly higher at 28.6 percent. According to the LRFIP (2013: 53) the high rates of unemployment in the city are 'indicative of deeply structural economic and social problems, which have been in evidence for a long time' (ibid: 53).

Johnston (2014: vii) posits that unemployment is one of the most devastating impacts of the economic crisis. In 2007, when employment in Ireland was at its highest historically the Mid-West region had 172,200 people in employment and an unemployment rate of 5.8 percent, which was above the national rate of 4.6 percent at that time (Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), 2007). However, in the fourth quarter of 2010 the unemployment rate for the region rose to 17.1 percent, 3 percent above the national rate of 14.1 percent. In the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2014 employment rates in the Mid-West region fell by over 27,700 to 144,500 300 (*Action Plan on Jobs* 2015 - 2017: 14). The greatest rate of decline in employment was recorded in the financial, insurance and real estate activities sector (-3.9% or -4,000). The *Action Plan on Jobs 2015 - 2017*, citing figures from the QNHS (June, 2015) shows that unemployment rates for the Mid-West region in 2015 fell to 11.2 percent, but is still above the national unemployment rate of 9.8 percent.

As the national economy recovers the employment situation in the Mid-West region of Ireland is also improving, 'albeit slowly' (*Action Plan on Jobs,* 2015-2017: 14). Johnson (2014) however posits that across Ireland there continues to be high levels of households where no one is at work. At a national level the QNHS (26th February, 2016) reported an annual increase of 44,100 (+2.3%) in employment. This represents an increase of 18,900 (+1.8%) in male employment and an increase of 25,200 (+2.8%) in female employment, over the year 2015. The QNHS (February, 2016) also shows that employment increased in twelve of the fourteen economic sectors over the year 2015, with the largest rates of increase recorded in the construction (+8.5% or 9,900) and other NACE[39] activity sectors (+4.7% or 4,600). These patterns indicate that Ireland is successfully emerging out of economic recession, which bodes well for the future economic, social and cultural life of the nation and Limerick city. However, for Limerick to flourish and deal with the many challenges facing it, it is imperative that more jobs are created. Creating more employment opportunities will not only enhance the productive capacity of the economy, but also help reduce poverty and build a brighter future, while 'promoting the common good and the well-being of society' (Johnston, 2014: vii). Consequently creating new employment opportunities and opportunities for training and up-skilling to support employment should be priority issues for regeneration in Limerick. Progressing these objectives can be achieved by working closely with the labour market Activation System, and in particular the Government's *Action Plan for Jobs* (2015), the *Pathways to Work Strategy* (2016-2020) *and the* OECD *Youth Guarantee (2014).* Furthermore, the recent DES *Consultation on Statement of Strategy 2016-2018* (2016) recognises the need to develop further work related skills development, vocational training and education as key components in the creation of more employment opportunities.

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[39] NACE from the French *Nomenclature statistique desactivités économiques dans la Communauté européenne.* NACE provides a framework for collecting and presenting statistical data according to economic activity in production, employment and national accounts, etc. (Eurostat, 2016).

5.2.3.6   Social Class Composition

In this section the social class composition of Limerick city compared to the national context is presented. Gordon (1949: 262) described social class as 'the horizontal stratification of a population' that 'has no precise or agreed meaning', but is used to 'designate differences based on wealth, income, occupational status, group identification, level of consumption and/or family background'. According to the CSO (2002) social class groups include: professional workers, managerial and technical workers, non-manual workers, skilled manual workers, semi-skilled workers and unskilled workers, as well as all others gainfully 'occupied and unknown'; this category is used where no precise allocation is possible. In Census 2002 Limerick recorded its highest percentage rates of those in the professional, managerial and technical social class group at 24.1 percent. This rate decreased in 2006 to 22.4 percent but increased again in 2011 to 23.5 percent. Data from Census 2011 shows that those in the professional, managerial and technical social class group in Limerick is 23.5 percent. However, this is less than the national average by 11.1 percent, as the State recorded its highest percentage in the professional social class groups in 2011 at 34.6 percent. As noted social class is often determined by an individual's occupational status. McCafferty (2005: 45) posits that in recent years the economic base of urban areas has changed, reflecting a shift in employment towards more highly skilled occupations.

Census (2011) shows a significant difference between Limerick and the Irish State in the percentage of persons in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class group category, with Limerick recording 23.9 percent of the population in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class group, whereas nationally this figure is 17.5 percent. PAUL Partnership (2011: 14) states that Limerick has one of the highest rates for any county of those in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class groups. This can be attributed historically to the sectoral employment structure in the city (cf. Table 10 in Appendix VIII), however there are also current social contexts, such as geographical patterns of social class which correspond with levels of educational attainment. McCafferty (2005: 45) stated that in Limerick as elsewhere, where educational attainment levels are higher social class status also tends to be higher.

5.2.3.7 Educational attainment

Low levels of educational attainment can have long term impacts for young people, which include economic, personal and social consequences (Mallon and Healy, 2012: 23). Eurostat (2011) highlights that those having attained only lower secondary education are more at risk of unemployment in the EU by 14.2 percent than those with tertiary educational qualifications, whose risk rate is 4.9 percent. The European Commission (2012: 13) posits that those who leave school early are also more likely to be limited to unskilled manual work, unemployment, welfare dependency, poverty and social exclusion. Whereas Mallon and Healy (2012: 23) maintain that those with no educational qualifications are at a higher risk of having limited opportunities to develop culturally, personally and socially.

In Appendix VIII Tables 13 and 14 illustrate a national decrease of 20.1 percent between 1991 and 2011 in the percentage of people with only primary educational level attainment. When compared to the national average Limerick reported a consistently higher percentage of those possessing only primary level educational attainment (CSO, 2011). Tables 13 and 14 also show that 23.1 percent of the population in Limerick possesses third level qualifications; such as higher level certificates, degrees or post graduate degree qualifications. These rates compare poorly to the Irish State where 30.6 percent have third level educational qualifications. In Chapter Four 'Education and Poverty' low educational attainment was shown to have limiting effects on employment, earning opportunities, constraining upward social mobility and entrenching the poverty cycle generationally (European Commission, 2011). In Chapter Three 'Urban Regeneration' poverty, unemployment and deficits in work related skills identified were factors that contributed to poor neighbourhood liveability and eventual neighbourhood failure and decline (Norris, 2014; Wilson, 1987). Lessons deriving from these chapters suggest that every effort must be made to improve educational outcomes across the entire spectrum of the education system, while ensuring that all children in Limerick are provided with quality education. This concern was acknowledged by Fitzgerald (2007: 15), was included in the LRA Master Plan (2008: 35) and features in the LRFIP (2013: 18). Consequently, addressing unequal educational outcomes is considered important for successful regeneration outcomes.

5.2.3.8   Anti-social behaviour, criminality and the drugs trade

In the literature anti-social behaviour, criminality and illegal drugs misuse are recognised as major factors in the decline of neighbourhood liveability and neighbourhood failure (Fahey et al., 2014; Norris, 2014; Wilson, 1987). In this study these social problems were shown to have, 1) contributed to the negative 'brand' image of Limerick city, 2) negatively impacted on the quality of the social environment, 3) downgraded 'the residential appeal of these neighbourhoods' (Fahey et al., 2014: 12), and 4) resulted in parts of Limerick city experiencing stigmatisation, marginalisation and social segregation (McCafferty and Canny, 2005). The literature illustrates that when people experience marginalisation and segregation there is 'a rupture of the social bond that constitutes an under-girding of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship' (Beall, 2000: 34), which in turn can generate organised crime and drugs-related criminality (Hourigan, 2011: xv). Fitzgerald (2007: 5) noted that much of the high profile crime in Limerick city was linked to gang rivalry and the illegal drugs trade, and noted that it was a serious issue that was 'gradually extending over wider areas'. Fitzgerald (2007: 4) also commented that addressing criminality was fundamental to 'restoring the confidence of local communities' and 'creating the conditions for other interventions to be successful', i.e. regeneration.

Given the seriousness of the impacts of anti-social behaviour and criminality, it is imperative that in regeneration consideration is given to how best to, 1) promote positive social behaviour and active citizenship, 2) improve the liveability of neighbourhoods and 'the life ability of residents in the city' (Corcoran, 2014: 62), and, 3) avoid social fragmentation. These concerns were highlighted in the theoretical framework for regeneration, particularly 'broken windows' theory (cf. Chapter Three, 3.4.1 & 3.4.2), which states the importance of maintaining the physical environment and ensuring neighbourhood safety, in order to create a spiral of improvements, transformation and renewal. Finally, McCafferty and Humphreys (2014: 141) posit that for 'environmental justice' reasons, it is necessary to maintain and support existing social supports in mainstream services, as well as area-based regeneration initiatives.

5.2.4   Limerick city compared to the Irish State, summary

The profile of Limerick has showed that Limerick city and environs possesses a high level of social, retail, environmental, historic and cultural attributes and research and industrial infrastructure. Limerick however was also shown to one of the most socially deprived urban areas in Ireland, with the Pobal HP Index (2012) ranking Limerick as the most deprived of all 34 city and county authority areas in the Irish State. According to McCafferty and Humphreys (2014: 132) this picture has remained more or less unchanged since the index was first calculated in 1991. The profile of Limerick shows that between 2006-2011 the population of the city and its environs increased by approximately 0.8 percent. According to McCafferty (2014: 23) this is the lowest rate of growth of any of the nation's five main urban settlements. Census data for the period 1991 to 2011 also records age dependency rates in Limerick to be consistently less than the national average. While positive in terms of national comparisons, age dependency rates of those over 65 years of age and under the age of 15 years of age nonetheless amounts to almost one third of the total population of the city. This has implications for policy and service planning for these age dependent groups. Census 2011 recorded single parent household rates in Limerick to have decreased by 1.1 percent from the 2006 Census.   However, the percentage of single parent rate households in Limerick is above the national average by 15.9 percent. This is worrying because single parent households were shown to be vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. Housing in Limerick showed a decrease in the number of people renting from the local authority from 19.3 percent in 1991 to 12.5 percent in 2011.   Whereas privately rented housing in Limerick and the Irish State has risen consistently since 1991.

In 2011 the city's unemployment rates were higher than national averages, with male unemployment at 32.7 percent, compared to a national average of 23.3 percent and female unemployment at 23.7 percent, compared to 15 percent nationally (McCafferty and Humphreys, 2014: 132). Census 2011 shows a significant difference in social class composition between Limerick city and the Ireland as a whole. The percentage of the population in Limerick in the professional, managerial and technical social class groups was in 2011 less than the national average by 11.1 percent, whereas in 2011

the Irish State recorded its highest percentage rates of those in the professional social classes. Social class was shown to be strongly related to participation and achievement in education, thus suggesting the importance of education and training for life opportunities and social mobility. Census 2011 also shows that Limerick has higher percentages of its population with primary level education only, than the national average. Limerick also compares poorly to the Irish State with only 30.6 percent having third level educational qualifications. In the literature poor educational attainment was seen to have long term economic, personal and social consequences, with failure or underachievement in education contributing to perpetuating the cycle of poverty inter-generationally. Finally, the review undertaken in this section has shown that Limerick suffers from high levels of deprivation, criminality, anti-social behaviour, with strong links to the illegal drugs trade. These factors have contributed to a 'brand' image of Limerick that has tarnished the city's reputation. While McCullagh (2011) reports Limerick to be a low crime city, the 'brand' image depictions of Limerick undoubtedly has impacted on the city's economic and social development, and has contributed to the stigmatisation, marginalisation and social segregation of parts of the city, namely the study site areas. In the following section I present a more in-depth profile of these areas.

5.3 Profile of the study site areas

In this section an in-depth profile of the study sites areas is provided. The profiles describe the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of each area, and are informed by data from the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012, which has been summarised by the Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre: *Community Consultation Report* (2013) (cf. Appendix VIII). The study sites areas are located to the north and the south of Limerick city. The Northside regeneration area comprises of the estates of Moyross and St. Mary's Park and the Southside regeneration area comprises of the estates of Southill and parts of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect. Figure 5.1 situates the study sites relative to the rest of the city.

Figure 5.1   Map of Limerick city and the location of the study sites
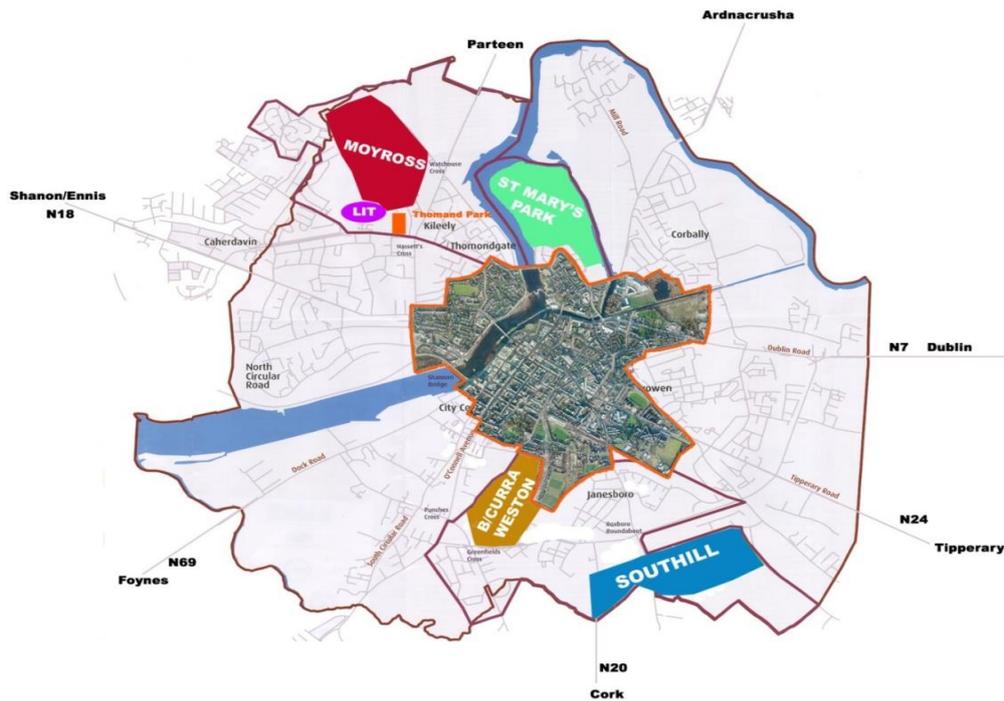
(Reproduced with permission from Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2012)

Figure 5.1 provides an illustration of Limerick city and situates the study sites relative to one another and to the rest of Limerick city. The Northside regeneration study site area of Moyross is located north of the River Shannon and North-West of the city. The second Northside regeneration area St. Mary's Park is located close to the city centre on the north of the city. The study site areas of Southill and Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect are located south of the River Shannon and are the Southside regeneration areas. Like St. Mary's Park, Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect is close to the city centre, while Southill is located on the periphery of the city. At the time this research was undertaken the four regeneration areas comprised of approximately 3,000 households and had a population of over 10,000 people, which in 2011 was a little under one fifth of the total population of Limerick city. The study sites are considered to have a number of common traits, i.e. 'structural and economic deficiencies, extensive social problems and physical planning issues' (*Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick 2030*, 2013: 31).

In the following sections I discuss the study sites, beginning with St. Mary's Park, then Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect, next Southill and finally Moyross. The rationale for this order has to do with when each of these areas were developed as housing estates. St. Mary's Park was the first development, followed by parts of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect, next Southill and then Moyross. As part of the profiles I highlight some of the social challenges encountered in these areas. These challenges have been compounded by socio-economic polarisation and the trend of 'out-migration' of residents from the study sites, particularly as a result of the Surrender Grant Scheme (1984-1987) and later the regeneration practice of dispersal and relocation of residents to other parts of the city and the hinterland (2007-2012). Then I draw on a number of reports (Hourigan, 2011; Humphreys et al., 2011; Power and Barnes, 2011; Rogers, 2009) to inform the area profiles and to provide further insights into the lived experiences and quality of life of many residents living in the study site areas. These reports also give an insight into those factors which prompted the need for regeneration in Limerick, while outlining the magnitude of the challenge involved for the process of regeneration.

5.3.1 Northside Regeneration area: St. Mary's Park

St. Mary's Park is situated on the northern half of King's Island, to the north of Limerick city and close to the city centre. According to McCafferty (2005) this area forms the historic core of what is now called Limerick city. Surrounded by 'the River Shannon to the north and west and the Abbey River to the east and south' (LRA Master Plan, 2008: 166), this study site area is approximately forty hectares in size and is divided by the upgraded R454 road which accommodates a continuous heavy flow of traffic between Limerick city and county Clare. Figure 5.2 provides an aerial view of the study site area St. Mary's Park.

Figure 5.2   Aerial view of the Northside Regeneration area: St. Mary's Park

(Reproduced with permission from Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2012)

According to the LRA Master Plan (2008: 171) St. Mary's Park experiences a paucity of social and community facilities and services. There is also 'extensive open space that is low lying, generally neglected and subject to regular flooding'. Access and egress to this study site is limited to one main entrance off the Island Road, which eventually leads to a cul-de-sac. This single point of access and egress has according to the LRA Master Plan (2008: 172) 'contributed greatly to the isolation of the estate and added to the many social problems which exists in the area'. The study site area is located in the electoral district (ED) area of John's A (cf. Appendix VII for comparisons with the rest of the city). According to Humphreys et al. (2011: 44) St. Mary's Park is the only study site area with a precise match to an ED and is classified as extremely disadvantaged (-28.5) (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012).

5.3.2 Southside Regeneration Area: Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect

The estates of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect are located on the Southside of Limerick city, close to the city centre. Parts of this study site area were built in the 1930s. However, the main housing scheme of Ballinacurra Weston was opened by the then Minister for Local Government, Michael Keyes on September 5th, 1950 (Duggan, 2009: 21-22). Another housing development in this study site took place during the mid-1990s and consisted of Clarina Park and Clarina Court. In 2013 these estates were demolished as part of the regeneration programme, with residents located to other parts of the city and county. The study site area of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect is particularly complex in comparison to the other study sites. A review of Figure 5.3 shows that the study site area is only part of the broader Ballinacurra Weston and Prospect areas. The study site area is located in multiple EDs (e.g. Prospect A, B and Glentworth C), which in 2007 included the minor housing estates of Clarina Park, Clarina Court and Clarina Avenue, Crecora Avenue, Beechgrove, part of Hyde Road and parts of Lenihan Avenue and Byrne Avenue in Prospect. This study site area is located in EDs of Glentworth C which was classified as extremely disadvantaged (-20.8) and Prospect A (-18.9) & B (-18.1) classified as disadvantaged (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012).

Figure 5.3 provides an aerial view of the study site area of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect.

Figure 5.3   Aerial view of the Southside Regeneration Area: Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect

(Reproduced with permission from Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2012)

The construction of Ballinacurra Weston in the 1950s was viewed as 'another answer to the housing crisis for the city's ever-increasing number of young families' (Duggan, 2009: 22). However, soon after its construction social problems began to develop. Commenting on the area years after it was built Ryan (1967: 8) stated that 'while town-planners made ample provision for the movement of traffic, no provision was made for the movement of children'. More than thirty years later this concern was reiterated by King (2000) who described the geographical landscape of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect as having a range of cul-de-sacs, poor quality open spaces and a paucity of facilities and services to engage residents; especially young and older residents in any meaningful way within their community.

5.3.3 Southside Regeneration Area: Southill

The Southill housing estate is made up of four parks: O'Malley Park, Keyes Park, Carew Park and Kincora Park, within these four parks there are minor estates. Southill was built in the 1960s and the early 1970s as a response to the housing shortage in the city. The 1960s and 1970s was a time of increased industrial employment, due to the increase in the number of manufacturing industries in the city, notably the German owned KRUPS factory in 1964 (now the Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership - LEDP) which is located in close proximity to the Southill area. At the time of construction (1960s-1970s) Southill was the largest public housing development undertaken by the Local Authority in Limerick city. Many of the tenants came from other parts of the city and from the surrounding suburban areas, in pursuit of the employment opportunities being developed in the city at the time (Humphreys, 2008: 31-35). Figure 5.4 provides an aerial view of the study site area of Southill.

Figure 5.4   Aerial view of the Southside Regeneration Area: Southill

(Reproduced with permission from Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2012)

The housing design in Southill is based on the Radburn layout[40]. According to Humphreys (2008) this layout type has posed problems in terms of access for visitors and services and has proved problematic in terms of security and privacy. The Southill area is also characterised by large estates with vast open spaces and poorly landscaped green areas. The Fitzgerald report (2007) was critical of the housing layout in Southill and other estates in Limerick city, proposing that they contributed to the overall social malaise of the area. At the beginning of the regeneration programme (July 2007) Southill was synonymous with an image of deprivation (see Appendix VII & VIII) and serious crime. The EDs which include the Southill study site area are Galvone B (-26.6) and Rathbane (-20.6). These are classified as extremely disadvantaged (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012).

5.3.4   Northside Regeneration Area: Moyross

The Moyross estate was constructed between 1973 and 1987 and consists of a number of individual estates - Delmege Park, Pineview Gardens, Craeval Park, College Avenue, Cliona Park, Dalgaish Park, Cosgrave Park, Hartigan Villas, Sarsfield Gardens, White Cross Gardens, Castle Park, and Ballygrennan Close. At the beginning of the Limerick regeneration programme Moyross comprised approximately 1,100 housing units. By 2011 this was reduced to 840 housing units (Humphreys et al., 2011: 53). The Moyross estate like Southill is characterised by underdeveloped landscapes and large open green spaces. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index scores (2012) classifies the ED for Moyross (Ballynanty) as extremely disadvantaged (-21.2). Figure 5.5 provides an aerial view of the study site area of Moyross.

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[40] Radburn layout refers to a particular type of housing and estate design where houses face onto open greens and vehicular access is via back courts to the rear of houses.

Figure 5.5   Aerial view of the Northside Regeneration Area: Moyross

(Reproduced with permission from Limerick Regeneration Agencies, 2012)

In common with the study sites already profiled, Moyross experienced high levels of deprivation and social problems. The social problems in the estate were the catalyst for the Limerick regeneration initiative, namely the petrol bomb attack by youths on the estate which injured two young children. According to Fahey et al. (2011) Moyross has in the last decade or more seen a large number of community-based social inclusion initiatives set up in the estate, but these have not yielded the expected outcomes. Instead they have been 'counterbalanced by a sharp worsening in social order conditions' (Fahey and Norris, 2009: 28), where Moyross 'clearly continues to have significant levels of disadvantage, more so than existed a decade earlier' (ibid: 27). Humphreys et al. (2011: 53) claim that Moyross is one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city. Fahey et al. (2011: 52) report that the estate's decline is due to criminality and intimidation rather than 'disadvantage per se'. While Hourigan (2011: 87) contends that '…tight knit family groupings exercising a type of control that contributes to widespread social pathology in the area'.

115

5.3.5 Profile of the study site areas: demographic and socio-economic characteristics

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics presented in this section include relative deprivation rates, population decline, age dependency rates, single parent rates, local authority housing rates, male and female unemployment rates, social class composition and levels of educational attainment. In-depth statistical data relating to these is provided in Appendix VIII. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index (2012) finds that the study sites are some of the most disadvantaged areas not only in Limerick city but also in the Irish State (cf. Appendix VII). CSO 2011 shows that the population of Limerick city declined by 4.5 percent between 2006 and 2011. In contrast the population in the suburban areas of Limerick increased by 8.4 percent (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012: 8) during the same period. An analysis of the Census data for the study sites for 2006 and 2011 suggests that the population of the study sites has dramatically declined, thus suggesting 'a strong element of differential out-migration' (McCafferty and O'Keeffe, 2009: 17). In the period 2006 - 2011 the population of St. Mary's Park declined by 18 percent, in Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect it declined by 11 percent, in Southill by 25 percent and in Moyross the population declined by 16 percent (Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre, 2013: 25-28). The practice of dispersal and relocation of residents from the study site areas to other parts of the city and the hinterland, as part of the regeneration programme during the period (2008-June, 2012), has no doubt contributed to population decline in these areas (McCafferty and Humphreys, 2014: 139-140). However, the declining rates of population might also suggest that people are choosing not to live in the study site areas because of perceptions of quality of life, as well as the availability of alternative options.

In section 5.2.3.2 age dependency rates were discussed and reference was made to the need for service planning for both youth and older persons. An analysis of the population profiles of Limerick city and the individual study areas indicates the need for strategic and systematic planning for service delivery if the needs of this age dependent population are to be met effectively. The Pobal HP Deprivation Index (2012) for Limerick as reported by the Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre (2013) records 18 percent to be under 15 years of age and 13 percent of the

population to be 65 years of age and older. Variation was found across the study sites in relation to the age dependency profile. In St. Mary's Park age dependency rates in 2011 were recorded as follows 19 percent of the population were under 15 years of age and 17 percent of the population were 65 years of age and older. In Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect 16 percent of the population were recorded under 15 years of age and 13 percent of the population recorded as 65 years of age and older. In the study site of Southill 22 percent of the population were recorded as less than 15 years of age, with 14 percent of the population 65 years of age and older. In Moyross 23 percent of the population were recorded under 15 years of age and 9 percent of the population were 65 years of age and older. Census 2011 shows that single parent rates are based on the number of single parent family units where at least one child is under the age of 15 years. Census 2011 reports that Limerick city has a single parent rate of 37.5 percent which is significantly higher than the national average of 21.6 percent. Single parent rates in the study site areas are dramatically higher than the rate recorded for Limerick city as a whole at 37.5 percent. In some instances, with the exception of Southill, where the rate was recorded as 47 percent, the figures are almost double the rate for the city and treble the national average rate (e.g. St. Mary's Park 64 percent, Ballinacurra Weston 69 percent and Moyross 64 percent,). High levels of single parent rates, combined with other deprivation factors can lead to marginalisation and social exclusion. In the present study supporting vulnerable families, especially single parent households was voiced as a priority concern that should be addressed as part of the Limerick regeneration programme (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.7.1.6 & 7.7.1.7).

Concerning housing the Pobal HP Index (2012) shows that the national owner occupier rate is 70.8 percent, the city owner occupier rate is 60.2 percent, whereas in St. Mary's Park owner occupier rate is 48 percent, 55 Percent for Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect, 56 percent for Southill and 47 for Moyross. The national figure for renting from the local authority is recorded at 7.9 percent, for Limerick this figure is 19.7 percent, while 27 percent of residents rent from the local authority in St Mary's Park, 20 percent in Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect, 35 percent in Southill and Moyross 41 percent (cf. Appendix VIII, Table 19). The privately rented sector recorded the lowest category of residency in the study site areas, with 8 percent in Moyross, 18 percent in Southill, 19 percent in Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect and 19 percent in St Mary's Park. This

compares to 26.1 percent for Limerick city and 19.7 percent nationally (cf. Appendix VIII, Table 19). Due to the high rates of renting privately or from the local authority, this suggests that those concerned may not have options or the money to buy their own homes.

In profiling the unemployment levels of the study site areas and comparing them to the rates of unemployment for Limerick city and the Irish State the following data is presented. At the time of data gathering for this study (2011-2012) male unemployment rates in Limerick city was 32.7 percent, nationally the male unemployment rate was 22.3 percent, whereas the female unemployment rates in Limerick was 23.7 percent and 15.0 percent nationally. The study site areas records male unemployment rates in St. Mary's Park at (49%) and female rates at (40%). In Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect male unemployment rates are (53%) and female rates (34%). In Southill male unemployment rates were (56%) and female rates (42%), whereas in Moyross male unemployment rates were (54%) and female rates (40%).

In relation to educational attainment the CSO 2011 reports that 19.9 percent of Limerick city population over the age of 15 years of age left education at primary level, in comparison to 16 percent for the Irish State. The CSO (2011) figures also show that the study sites possess much higher levels of the population over 15 years of age with only primary level education; with St. Mary's Park having 37 percent in this category, Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect having 42 percent, Southill with 41 percent and Moyross having 36 percent, who attained primary level education only. In 2011 Limerick city recorded a lower level of the population completing third level education (23.1 percent), which is compared to the national rate of 30.6 percent. Within the study sites the percentage of the population with third level education is less than the city at 23.1 percent, with St. Mary's Park at 11.1 percent lower than the city average, Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect 15.1 percent, Southill at 17.1 percent and Moyross at 17.1 percent lower than the city average. According to McCafferty (2014: 79) 'persistently low levels of educational attainment in these communities suggest that deprivation is inter-generational'. Other factors relating to education in Limerick have been highlighted in the LRFIP (2013: 54-55), who point out that problems exist in relation to school participation rates, incidences of early school leaving, low educational attainment levels, declining school enrolments in regeneration area

schools, high rates of absenteeism and poor retention rates at Junior and Leaving Certificate levels, compared with Limerick city and the Irish State. The LRFIP (2013: 55) also claims that young people who experience these difficulties are at greater risk of personal, social and cultural losses, which has the potential to perpetuate the cycle of poverty across the generations in Limerick city.

Finally, in summarising how the study sites perform with regards to levels of deprivation or affluence the evidence shows that Limerick city remains one the most disadvantaged areas in Ireland (CSO 2006 & 2011). While significant degrees of variation were found to exist between affluent areas in Limerick city and areas suffering extreme levels of deprivation, the CSO (2006 & 2011) shows that Limerick has some of the country's most disadvantaged urban areas, with the study sites for this thesis being some of the most deprived urban areas, not only in Limerick city but also in the Irish State.

5.3.6   Profile of the study site areas: perspectives and insights

In this section the profile of the study sites is further developed through providing various perspectives and views and highlighting some of the factors which arguably prompted the need for regeneration in Limerick city, along with the many challenges facing regeneration in Limerick. I begin by providing a historical background to the study sites. Then, I discuss the impact of the Surrender Grant Scheme in Limerick. Next, I outline the extent of socio-economic polarisation which exists in Limerick; located along a defined geographical corridor of deprivation (McCafferty, 2005). Finally, I present insights into the quality of life for residents in the study sites, by drawing on a number of studies undertaken in these areas during the timeframe of this study.

5.3.6.1   Historical background to the study sites

From the mid-nineteenth century poverty in Limerick city was extensive at that time and there were also clear patterns of social segregation evident within the city (Kemmy, 1988). In the last decades of the nineteenth century Kemmy (1988: 72) reports that Limerick had one of the worst housing records in the country. In 1932 the housing crisis in Limerick came to a head when a number of tenement houses in the George's Quay area collapsed due to neglect and decay. The *Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act* (1932) proposed to make provision for a State funded subsidy to Local Authorities for the construction of social housing. This was welcomed 'to tackle the problem of the festering slums that had so long pockmarked the city' (Kemmy, 1988: 73). Subsequent analysis would see this as an important landmark in the social and economic history of Limerick city (Kemmy, 1988). The first housing development to take place in Limerick under the *Act* (1932) was the Island Field (St. Mary's Park). This became populated by those who previously inhabited the areas of Irish town, Boherbuoy and the Abbey. According to Humphreys (2008: 31) some of these residents were among 'the poorest of the poor'. From the 1930's onwards further Local Authority social housing developments were constructed in other parts of the city (O'Dwyer's Villas, Kileely, Thomondgate, Janesboro, Prospect and parts of Ballinacurra Weston located on the Southside of the city (Kemmy, 1988). As these developments progressed it was reported that the tenants moving into the new dwellings

> Dearly longed for their battered but beloved hovels with all the attendant privations and squalor where they and their families had lived out their lives, while other new residents complained that they had been moved too far out from the centre of the city and inveighed against isolation from their old familiar haunts (Kemmy, 1988: 73).

In the late 1960s and also during the 1970s the study site areas of Southill and Moyross (1973-1987) were developed. These estates were constructed in response to the housing needs of those living in over-crowded accommodation in the city (Humphreys, 2008: 31). Southill would become the largest local authority housing estate in the city.

From their beginnings the residential areas, now the study sites for this research were beset with difficulties. This was due to high unemployment levels, poor educational attainment levels, in some areas poor quality housing and the lack of social amenities. In time a culture of poverty and welfare dependency became normative (CSO 1981-2011) and social disorder problems developed. In the 1980s the growth of the illegal drugs trade 'sneaked up on a complacent and naive Irish society, which was ignorant of the modern urban, opiate drugs subculture which believed itself immune to its worst excesses' (O'Mahony, 1996: 42). The growth of the illegal drugs trade would play a major part in contributing to the development of serious criminality, gangs and drug feuds in Limerick, and would further compound the level of social problems already existing in the study sites. These factors would likewise be instrumental in creating the negative 'brand' image of the study sites and Limerick city.

5.3.6.2   The impact of the Surrender Grant Scheme

The *Surrender Grant Scheme* had a major impact on the study site areas. This grant was part of a nationwide strategy administered by the Local Authorities between 1984 and 1987. The *Scheme* provided a grant of £5,000 to local authority tenants with at least three years satisfactory tenancy to enable them to purchase private sector housing, thereby freeing rented housing for occupancy to those on the social housing waiting list. Across Ireland this *Scheme* was taken up mostly by tenants with the greatest capacity for upward mobility and those better positioned to access mortgage finance. The impact of the *Surrender Grant Scheme* in Dublin led to the 'out-migration' of approximately 50 percent of residents from the Ballymun Flats (Power, 1997). In Limerick the *Scheme* led to a mass exodus of 'upwardly mobile' tenants in some areas. It also had the unintended consequence of leading to a further deterioration of the Local Authority housing estates; as much of the poorer quality housing stock remained in Local Authority ownership (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 10). Those who moved out of the estates around the country tended to be replaced by those considered 'worse off' in terms of income and socio-economic disadvantage (Redmond and Walker, 1995: 312-316). In Limerick the *Surrender Grant Scheme* was a 'most significant blow to the sociological profile' of the study sties (Hourigan, 2011: 52), and led to depressing

further the profile of local authority housing estates, towards higher concentrations of poverty, disadvantage and social problems. A further outcome of the *Surrender Grant Scheme* in Limerick was the development of 'place poverty' and the 'stigma effect'. Place poverty occurs when people 'are at greater risk of experiencing social exclusion simply by virtue of the area they live in, regardless of any other family or individual circumstance' (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 9). In the literature the high concentration of people living in poverty in social housing areas is considered 'the main social process underlying the emergence of problem estates' (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 9) and these problems become exacerbated when estates are devoid of much needed social and economic infrastructure (Drudy and Punch, 2001; McCafferty and Canny, 2005; Redmond and Walker, 1995; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998; Wilson, 1987). The 'stigma effect' occurs when residents' home addresses acts as barriers to life and employment opportunities (McCafferty and Canny, 2005: 9). Power and Barnes (2011: 77) contend that the 'stigma effect' has resulted in residents from the study sites been unfairly treated by those in public services. The 'stigma effect' has also resulted in residents from areas such as the study sites being denied equal access to services, i.e. taxis, insurance cover and costs, mortgages, etc. (Devereux et al., 2011: 220). Twenty years on from the introduction of the *Surrender Grant Scheme* the social problems in parts of Limerick city developed to the point that prompted the Fitzgerald report (2007) and the subsequent Limerick regeneration programme.

5.3.6.3 Socio-economic polarisation and the study sites

According to McCafferty (2011: 5) cities are characterised by a high degree of diversity and heterogeneity, and because of market forces and urban governance and planning systems there can be a filtering of different social types to different areas of the city. This in turn results 'in a structured geography in which clear patterns of social variation can be identified' and 'the typology of neighbourhoods in cities gives rise to contrasts in social activity patterns and lifestyles. Underpinned by levels of socio-economic disparities and inequality, McCafferty (2011: 9) contends that this 'can translate into marked spatial differences in socio-economic well-being' (McCafferty and Humphreys, 2014: 133). In Limerick a strong degree of socio-economic polarisation exists and is located along a defined geographical corridor of

deprivation (McCafferty, 2005: 78). A visual representation of the geography of deprivation in Limerick city is outlined in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6   The geography of deprivation in Limerick city
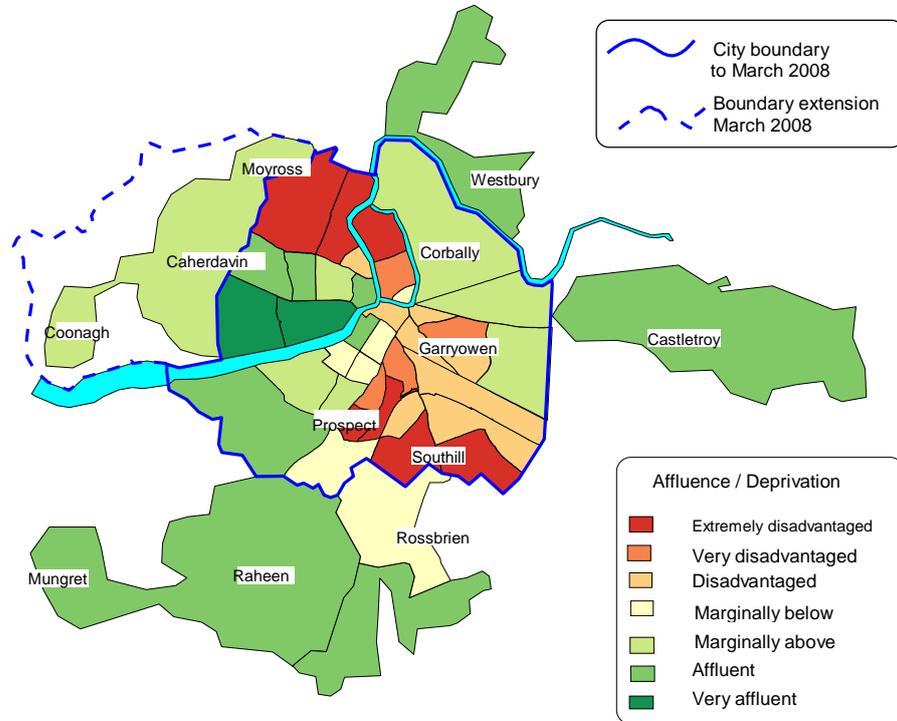
The areas marked in red in Figure 5.6 show the study site areas relative to the rest of the city. Census 2006 noted that the areas where the study sites for this research are located are some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Limerick city and in the Irish State. Over the period 2006-2011 the spatial pattern of change has been one of widespread dis-improvement, and the EDs where the study sites are located continuing to be classified as extremely disadvantaged (Haase and Pratschke, 2012). A review of Census 2011 as it relates to the study sites reveals a greater concentration in the levels of deprivation, which according to Humphreys et al. (2011: 46-50) is indicative of the inequality in the spatial pattern of affluence/poverty in Limerick city. The LRFIP (2013: 10) considers inequalities that arise from aspects of the socio-economic environment, e.g. differences in levels of social capital and social networks between middle-class and marginalised communities are the 'root causes

as well as the symptoms of social and economic exclusion in Limerick's regeneration areas'. Humphreys et al. (2011: 185) contend that social inequalities negatively affect social cohesion and increase social distance between people and groups in society. This is problematic because it has the potential to reduce the likelihood of shared social associations being formed. In order to counter this as part of Limerick's regeneration, it is important that policies are developed which strategically fosters community self-sufficiency (Van Ryzin et al., 2001), promotes sustainable development (Rosenbaum et al., 1998; Vale, 1998) and seeks to alter the social and economic composition of communities affected by poverty and inequality. The impacts of adopting such approaches and 'promoting social diversity in neighbourhoods to address the problem of spatially concentrated poverty' (Humphreys, 2011: 209) can go a long way towards being part of the solution in the medium and long term.

5.3.6.4 Insights into quality of life for residents in the study sites

A number of perspectives derived from studies carried out in the study site areas are presented in this section. These include: *How are our Kids*? by Humphreys et al. (2011), *Feeling Safe in our Community* by Power and Barnes (2011), *Understanding Limerick: Social Exclusion and Change* by Hourigan (ed.) (2011) and *Social and Physical Ecologies of Childhood* by Rogers (2009). These studies support the area profiles by offering insights into the quality of life of residents living in the study site areas. *How are our Kids?* (2011) is a comparative study which documents the experiences and needs of children and families in Limerick city. It draws comparisons across four areas including the two regeneration agencies areas, and an area that experiences high levels of deprivation, but is not included in the regeneration programme as well as an 'average' area. Funded by LRA and Atlantic Philanthropies, this study was conducted on behalf of the Limerick Children's Services Committee and was carried out by IKOS Research and Consultancy Ltd. with Mary Immaculate College. *Feeling Safe in our Community* (2011) was commissioned by LRA and the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Limerick. Carried out by Power and Barnes this study was conducted in the regeneration areas on the Southside of Limerick city.

Understanding Limerick: Social Exclusion and Change (2011) is an edited collection of scholarly contributions which shows how social exclusion and poverty-related criminality developed in Limerick. *Social and Physical Ecologies of Childhood* (2009) takes a constructivist, exploratory approach to gaining an understanding of children's lived experience in one of the study sites on the Northside of the city. In contributing to the various perspectives on the study sites, I also draw on my own PhD research findings.

5.3.6.5   Stigmatised and pathologised community identities[41]

According to Humphreys et al. (2011: 193) the profile of the study sites portrayed in the local and national media has played a major role 'in forming and perpetuating a negative impression' while failing 'to adequately acknowledge the positive elements of their communities'. This concern was noted in the LRA Master Plan (2008: 35), which stated the dangers of 'the attention given to the disadvantaged estates of Limerick, particularly in relation to criminality resulted in an intensely negative external image of the estates and of Limerick generally, as well as undermining the functioning of and service delivery'. In *Feeling Safe in Our Community,* Power and Barnes (2011: 53) report that participants' on the Southside of Limerick city believed that outsiders had no real concern for the plight of residents and were guilty of 'tarring all residents with the same brush', thereby reinforcing a homogenised stigmatised identity. Participants' in *Feeling Safe in Our Community* also believed that media reporting not only unfairly represented their neighbourhoods but also failed to distinguish between the 'decent people' living in them and other residents. Devereux et al. (2011: 220) claim that negative media coverage can have a powerful impact on the interactions of residents, and the influence of external actors can result in prejudicial and differential treatment. This is evidenced in *Feeling Safe in Our Community* (2011) where accounts of participants perceiving that social disorder problems in their estates were often not taken as seriously by public officials, as they would be if they occurred in middle-class neighbourhoods of the city. These same

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[41] Stigmatised and pathologised community identities is taken from Power and Barnes *Feeling Safe in Our Community* (2011: 51)*.* It is used in this study as it captures the essence of what is reported.

participants also voiced concerns that there appeared to be no great urgency on the part of public officials to curtail or address incidents of anti-social behaviour, arson, joyriding and drug taking, which were cited as regular occurrences in the study sites. This inaction was found to have contributed to local residents feeling unsafe, powerless and isolated in the neighbourhoods that many of them grew up in.

5.3.6.6   Concerns relating to the physical environment

Power and Barnes (2011) identified concerns relating to the physical environment of the study site areas. These included: abandoned houses, horses being moved into abandoned gardens, the proliferation of rats and mice, illegal dumping and the utilisation of the vacant houses for drinking and drug use, especially at night time. Residents reported experiencing distress and a lack of security which comes from being surrounded by poorly maintained buildings and boarded up houses with no continuity of residence. They also reported feeling isolated and alone in blocks of empty houses which was compounded by a shared fear of fire (Power and Barnes, 2011: 35). Physical degradation and neglect of the neighbourhood was seen to have 'implications beyond the symbolic feeling of neglect and marginalisation' (ibid: 35). These fears were reported to be 'constant and well founded' (ibid: 35). Residents in the study also reported that the 'sense of community which characterised their neighbourhood in the past is gone now' (ibid: 36), and recounted watching their neighbourhood deteriorate through a combination of social and demographic changes, unemployment, drug abuse and 'the unfettered rise of powerful criminal factions and the mismanagement of their estates' (Power and Barnes, 2011: 52). These same concerns are noted in *How are our Kids?* (2011: 194-195) which also highlights that while the physical environment of the study sites is unsightly, there were even more sinister elements associated with them, namely a hiding place for criminal activity and drug taking and selling. The same report found that the condition of the physical environment of the study sites was 'soul destroying and depressing' (ibid: 194). In *Social and Physical Ecologies of Childhood* (2009) environmental concerns such as illegal dumping, damage to green areas by fires, broken glass, neglected play areas and public spaces, boarded up houses, untended

horses and stray dogs, anti-social behaviour, drink and drug parties, gangs gathering at night creating noise and nuisance, bullying and the intimidation of residents, were reported as contributing to the physical and social decline of the area.

5.3.6.7   Concerns relating to community safety

Community safety was identified as a major concern in each of the studies referred to and was seen to impact on the quality of life and neighbourhood liveability. Power and Barnes (2011) found that despite reductions in crime rates, residents in the study sites on the Southside of Limerick city continued to have fears that they would either experience or be the victim of some form of crime in their neighbourhood. Concerns regarding community safety are also noted by Hourigan (2011: 78) who reported that many residents in the study sites often felt vulnerable to random attacks and 'experienced considerable anxiety as a result'. Interestingly, low level anti-social behaviour and petty crime, i.e. car crime, joyriding and illegal drugs being sold in the community and consumed by young people were reported as causing the most distress to residents, especially the elderly. It was also perceived that these social disorder problems had the least amount of resources focused on addressing them. The fear of being 'seen to see things' was reported by Power and Barnes (2011: 24) to be a reality for many residents living in the estates of Southill and Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect. Concerns relating to community safety were given as the main reason why residents sought re-location out of these areas. These same concerns were also the main reasons given for residents on the Southside of the city not wishing to become involved in their community or volunteering to participate in community groups or residents' associations. Concerns relating to community safety were perceived as further disadvantaging the study sites and depleting the levels of social capital in these areas, and worryingly making it increasingly difficult to mobilise residents to work together for change and 'engage public agencies in the process' (Humphreys, 2011: 207). Humphreys et al. (2011) reports the concerns of parents regarding stolen cars, horses, joyriding and the dangers of needles on the greens of the estates, feuds, firearms, intimidation and anti-social behaviour. These social disorder problems were seen to create a situation where residents felt compromised in their ability to address these

anti-social behaviour issues, stating that if they approached certain families they would be putting their lives in danger. This concern is also voiced in this thesis (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.3.2 & 7.6). Rogers (2009) also reports that some of the children who took part in her study felt exposed to 'risks' in their community, such as criminal activity, violence, being kept awake at night by shots fired, stolen cars racing around the estate which were subsequently burnt out, groups gathering to drink, lighting fires and fights breaking out. In addition the often ambivalent relationships residents in the study sites were reported as having with the Gardaí compounded further the sense of being isolated and 'at-risk' in one's community. Rogers (2009: 212-214) also notes that when children grow up with exposure to violence of this nature, they are at risk of becoming less socially and academically motivated, less controlled in their behaviour, less empathetic, more likely to use aggression and risk being drawn into anti-social behaviour and gang-related violence and activities. Commenting on Limerick's regeneration, participants interviewed for this thesis reported that while the demolition and relocation programme helped 'regeneration' to get underway, it was having the effect of breaking the social fabric of the area. This was perceived as not boding well for the future of the study sites or regeneration in Limerick (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.6).

5.3.6.8   Concerns regarding parenting

In this study poor parenting was noted as a contributory factor to much of the trouble and anxiety experienced by many living in the study site areas (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.7.1.6). Power and Barnes (2011: 40-41) report that the decline in community safety and community spirit in the study sites on the Southside of the city was due to poor parenting, and the granting of housing to young single mothers without any 'support around parenting or household management' (Power and Barnes, 2011: 41) was seen to contribute to many of the social problems in the study sites. Power and Barnes (2011) also report that many young children in the study sites no longer respected adults or authority figures. This lack of respect for adults was understood to originate from parents' failure to discipline or teach their children how to behave appropriately. It was further voiced that there was a growing number of young parents in the study site areas who were either disengaged from the community and from work, or were either unable or unwilling to discipline and/or educate their children. Hourigan (2011:

66) describes the children of these parents as the 'disadvantaged of the disadvantaged'. Due to the knock on effects of poor parenting Power and Barnes (2011: 45) reports that 'unless parents can be encouraged, enabled or even forced, through fines etc., to take control of them, the situation will not improve'. While most parents in Humphreys et al. (2011: 218-219) study reported having high aspirations for their children, these aspirations were often impeded by the circumstances they found themselves in. Namely, being young and immature, possessing low levels of parenting skills, suffering from poor self-esteem and mental health problems and not having their own developmental needs met as children. In the present study some participants reported having had negative experiences of school and State services and as a result were often reluctant or unable to engage with schools and/or support services. However, failure to engage with these was voiced as contributing to the social pathology of the study sites and to the continuation of social disorder problems in these neighbourhoods (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.3.1). In view of the concerns regarding parenting, it is suggested that to nurture positive behaviours and create positive social relationships in the study sites, more personal development and parenting programmes were needed for adults and programmes for children and young people to develop civic awareness.

5.4   National context

This section offers an overview of the national context highlighting some of the dramatic and profound changes which have taken place in the social, demographic and economic profile of Ireland, before, during and after the Celtic Tiger years. The national context provides a background and an understanding of some of the challenges encountered by regeneration in Limerick during the period October 2008-2013.

5.4.1 National context: before, during and after the Celtic Tiger period

In the late 1980s approximately 30 percent of the Irish population were employed, and much of Ireland was characterised by social and economic difficulties, i.e. high rates of unemployment, poverty and deprivation, high outward migration and 'seemingly insoluble problems in the public finances' (O'Reardon, 2001: 113). From 1987-2007 the Irish economy experienced an unprecedented period of economic growth. This was due in part to a growing population, expanding incomes and a relaxation of the European Monetary Fund (EMF) regulations on mortgage finance. The construction industry also played a major role in Ireland's economic development. These factors laid the foundations that led to the housing boom and the period of unprecedented wealth of the Celtic Tiger period (Whelan, 2013: 3). With unprecedented economic growth there was also 'an unparalleled change in the social conditions in Ireland' (Haase, 2014: 25), which was rapid and profound. Whelan (2013: 11) suggests that during this period a number of individuals (bankers, business developers, etc.) became rich on extravagant investments which were facilitated in part by the Irish government who provided a range of tax-base incentives that encouraged property speculation that could only be paid off if property prices continued to rise (Whelan, 2013: 11). Haase and Pratschke (2008) in their analysis of the spatial distribution of deprivation in Ireland, highlight that some of the most deprived urban areas failed to gain from the generalised improvement in living standards which were characteristic of the Celtic Tiger period, and disturbingly fell further behind the more affluent areas. Therefore the gains of the Celtic Tiger period failed to 'have an equalising impact' (Higgins, 2008: 177), evident in the high degrees of economic inequality in comparative terms (Nolan and Maître, 2007: 27). Kirby (2002) also notes that the dividends of the Celtic Tiger boom in Ireland were not distributed equally throughout the social spectrum and this contributed to exacerbating socio-economic polarisation. The extent of the levels of inequality would become evident in the period of economic recession that followed the Celtic Tiger period (2008-2013). The economic recession took hold in the US, Western Europe and Ireland and was marked by a decline in demand for exports, reduced opportunities for work, cuts in public services and rising prices in all areas of life, e.g. fuel, food, services, etc. (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010; OECD, 2009). Due to the recession Ireland faced significant annual deficits in GDP, c. 20 percent (Whelan, 2013: 10). The severity of the recession was due to the over-reliance of the

economy on the housing market, together with 'serious corporate governance problems' in banks, including Anglo-Irish Bank (ibid: 10). The supervisory culture of the Central Bank did little to regulate banking operations, which resulted in a supervisory policy of 'not-so-benign neglect that left the banks totally unprepared for a slowdown in the property market' (Whelan, 2013: 12). In an attempt to ease the impacts of the economic downturn the Irish government cut public sector pay, increased taxes and VAT rates and reduced capital spending, which amounted to approximately 28.8 billion euro. These 'cuts' according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook (October, 2010) were the largest budgetary adjustment in the western world in modern times. On the 30th September 2008 despite many warnings from senior civil servants and others, the Irish public learned that the government of Ireland would provide a guarantee for almost all existing and future liabilities of the domestic Irish banks. This action saw the government adopting 'a policy of denial', denying that 'any solvency problem existed at Irish banks' (Whelan, 2013: 14). However, with the failing property market and investors showing little interest in Irish banks, thoughts of bailing out bank creditors at the expense of Irish tax payers began to emerge. By December 2008 the government announced plans to provide State capital to rescue the banks, which continued into May 2009 (Whelan, 2013: 14). In late 2009 a government backed National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) was set up as one of a number of initiatives undertaken by government to address the serious crisis in Irish banking over the course of 2008 and early 2009. By September 2010 the Irish government made provision to recapitalise Anglo-Irish Bank at a cost of approximately €30 billion to the Irish State or roughly €7,000 per person (Whelan, 2013: 14). With a worsening financial situation the Irish government was forced by mid-November 2010 to request assistance from the EU and the IMF in order to stabilise the banking sector. This led to the loss of Irish financial sovereignty, a prioritising of paying back bond creditors, and resultant hardship for many Irish citizens in the form of austerity and severe public service cuts (Whelan, 2013: 27-31).

During the economic recession of 2008-2013 investment in the building and construction sectors rapidly decline, resulting in declines in Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The economic restrictions imposed on the Irish Government and the Irish people by the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund bailout (IMF) (Sept. 2008), led to reduced revenue for

the Exchequer. This negatively impacted on public expenditure levels and resulted in the range of austerity measures that would lead to the erosion of many of the social infrastructure developments that took place during the Celtic Tiger period (e.g. investment in roads, schools, educational services, health and well-being services, community and leisure facilities, etc.). The economic and social landscape of post Celtic Tiger Ireland also had profound implications for regeneration in Limerick. Government would be limited in its capacity to fund the same or provide tax and/or other incentives to investors to fund aspects of the proposed extensive building programme (LRA Master Plan, 2008: 76-154), and the ambitious range of social and economic regeneration measures proposed for the city (Master Plan, 2008: 31-75), would not or could not be progressed or realised.

While Ireland has made slow but steady progress in reducing its fiscal debt and meeting its financial targets to the EU and IMF (Healy et al., 2014; QNHS, March, 2015; TASC, 2015), the pace of economic growth has according to TASC (2015) failed to materialise in tangible outcomes for many Irish citizens, many of whom bore the brunt of unregulated, unsupervised and poorly planned fiscal objectives. Ireland's cost of living during the recession of 2008-2013 is estimated to be 20 percent higher than the EU average. This means that Irish incomes have significantly less purchasing power, thus making the economy more unequal and worsening economic inequality, with gross income inequality in Ireland one the highest in the EU (TASC, 2015). In 2014 UNICEF looked at the impact of the economic crisis on children's well-being across 41 countries. It found that Ireland ranked in 37th place in the league table, measuring relative changes in child poverty, with only Croatia, Latvia, Greece and Iceland below Ireland in the UNICEF league table. The same report found that Irish families with children have lost the equivalent of ten years of income progress and the child poverty rate rose by over 10 percent to 28.6 percent between 2008 and 2012. This corresponds to a net increase of more than 130,000 poorer children in Ireland. When compared to poverty among older people, the report suggests that this also has increased by 2.5% within the same period. The UNICEF (2014) report likewise shows a strong correlation between the impact of the financial crisis and a disproportionate decline in children's well-being. As a result of European and Irish fiscal policies the austerity programme embarked upon during the 2008-2013 recession has put at stake the progress made in education, health and social protection over the last fifty years

(Frazer and Marlier, 2014: 51). To redress these, responses by the State to the fallout of the recent economic crisis, requires transforming the capacity of populations living in 'low-employment' to access employment opportunities (Meredith and Faulkner, 2014: 127). Spatially differentiated strategies will also 'be required to provide training, human capacity development and physical infrastructure development in urban and rural areas' (ibid: 127).

5.5   Chapter conclusion

This chapter has presented a social and economic profile of Limerick city and the study site areas. The profile shows that Limerick has an array of physical, social, infrastructural, cultural, industrial and economic attributes, but also shows patterns of deprivation and inequality, which has become more pronounced since the early 1990s, and specifically in the period 2006-2011 (CSO, 1991-2011). Drawing on CSO 2011 data Humphreys et al. (2011: 50) suggests that spatial patterns of change in Limerick shows levels of dis-improvement across the entire urban area. This is characterised by increased levels of deprivation, dramatic population changes, i.e. migration from the city to the hinterland areas, high age dependency rates, high rates of single parent households, deficits in education levels, high rates of male and female unemployment and high percentages of the population of Limerick living in Local Authority or rented housing (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012). The levels of deprivation in Limerick were shown to have contributed to the marginalisation and exclusion of areas within the city, i.e. the study site areas. Marginalisation, exclusion and poverty were shown to be the main social processes involved in the development of social disorder, petty and serious crime (Hourigan, 2011: xv), poor levels of social cohesion (McCafferty, 2011: 12) and poor levels of neighbourhood liveability (Norris, 2014). Marginalisation and exclusion were also depicted as locking families into poverty and perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage (Hourigan, 2011: 72). Hourigan (2011: xv) posits that those who grow up in marginalised communities recognise their social exclusion and often turn to criminality 'to subvert this process' (Hourigan, 2011: xv). While only a small minority may be involved in criminality, 'poverty-linked crime' poses major challenges for society and represents 'a distinct problem which must be fully understood in order to be resolved' (Hourigan, 2011: xvi). Understanding and

responding to these complex social problems will remain a major challenge for regeneration in Limerick city.

The chapter also presented a brief overview of the national social and economic context, before, during and after the Celtic Tiger period. In the aftermath of the Celtic Tiger period Ireland was cast into a deep economic recession that has had disastrous consequences across the island of Ireland, as well as having negative impacts on the progress of regeneration in Limerick. The analysis undertaken in this chapter suggests that in a post recessionary Ireland social policy and regeneration practices must actively seek to address poverty and inequality, in the short, medium and long-term, in order for sustainable development and sustainable social change to take place in Limerick city as a result of regeneration. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that education, training and up-skilling can have an important part to play in helping to achieve these objectives.

6.1   Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodology, data collection and data explication process.   I begin by outlining my motivation for undertaking the study.   This is followed by an outline of the research aims, objectives and research questions.   The nature of the core research question and the embedded questions indicated that a qualitative research approach was most appropriate for the study.   Furthermore, as the study was concerned with the discovery of things rather than '…verifying existing theories or hypotheses' (Hitchkock and Hughes, 1989: 297), perceptions and descriptions were paramount to the inquiry; consequently phenomenology was employed as the research method.   A summary of how the qualitative research paradigm and the phenomenological research method are presented, along with how they were employed in the study.   This is followed by an outline of the sampling strategy, together with a brief description of the research participants.   I subsequently present a summary of the study sites and describe how the research participants were recruited and how the study sites were accessed.

The thesis was guided by an ethical approach.   This involved obtaining informed consent, managing expectations and safeguarding the interests, privacy and confidentiality of participants.   Details of this approach are presented, followed by the data collection and data explication processes.   The next section of the chapter discusses the verification procedures employed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research. These include: triangulation, clarification of researcher bias, prolonged engagement, rich, thick descriptions and member checking (Creswell, 1998).   Reflexivity was integral to the study and to my own development as a researcher.   Having engaged with participants and the data they provided, I discuss how the study impacted on me personally and professionally.   The final section of the chapter discusses the generalisability of the findings and the limitations of the study.

6.2 Motivation for undertaking the study

As mentioned in Chapter One 'Introduction' the motivation for this research comes from my experience working with Limerick's Regeneration Agencies (LRA) from October 2007-June 1012. A key element of the work in the early stages of the regeneration programme (Oct. 2007-Oct. 2008) was to engage in consultation with the various stakeholders on issues pertaining to education, learning and training. This consultation was for the most part undertaken with teachers, educational service providers and educational decision makers, so that a series of actions would be identified and subsequently included in the Regeneration Agencies vision document (Jan., 2008) and Master Plan (Oct., 2008).

The Fitzgerald report (2007) which paved the way for Limerick's regeneration highlighted that many of the social problems in the city were created by social exclusion. Fitzgerald (2007) therefore recommended that coordinated responses to these were 'critical to achieving progress both in the short and longer-term' (ibid: 15). In the early consultation phase of regeneration it was repeatedly reported that failure in education was a particular problem in parts of the city, i.e. the study sites. The more I became immersed in the work of the Limerick Regeneration programme, the more I began to realise that these failings were being articulated by teachers, educational service providers and educational decision makers; who essentially were 'cultural strangers' to the lived experience of those living in Limerick's regeneration communities. In the literature 'cultural strangers' as considered 'non-indigenous commentators' who bring with them 'a set of expectations, categories of knowledge and interpretations that are likely to differ from those of the indigenous culture' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 461). While 'cultural strangers' can have a positive contribution to make, i.e. illuminating a culture and challenging people to see their culture and their relationship to it more clearly (Bourdieu, 1988; O'Sullivan, 2005), 'cultural strangers' can also interpret a culture in terms of assumptions and logic from their 'own standpoint, bias or point of view' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 461). This can lead to misunderstanding, misinterpreting, and the making of inappropriate assessments of individuals or communities, which in turn can lead to blaming inner-city communities and minority lifestyles for the social problems they experience, i.e. failure in education or neighbourhood decline. Accordingly it is important that

'cultural insiders' are actively involved in public discourses, while playing an active part in processes that impact on their lives; in this study this includes education and urban regeneration.

By October 2008, the LRA vision document and master plans were completed and launched amid much fanfare and hype (cf. Appendix IX, 1-3). In the midst of this I began to realise that something fundamental was missing from the consultation on education, namely, the input of residents from the regeneration areas. While residents were consulted on various aspects of the built environment, they had little input into much of the social plan for regeneration (cf. Appendix VI Table 1 Timeline and overview of Limerick Regeneration from June 2007-2016), or had little influence as to how education might better serve them in regeneration. As I became aware of this, it led me to think that the input of residents in the study sites should have underpinned every aspect of the physical, economic and social regeneration plan. This is because the active and informed participation of individuals and communities in decision-making that affects them is a fundamental right of the citizen (see Chapter One 'Introduction', 1.3). Around the end of 2008 I was considering pursuing further studies in education. Having later gained acceptance on a programme, I decided to embark on this study. While this study's findings would not impact on regeneration plans, it would provide an opportunity for a sample of residents in the regeneration areas to voice their views on education, as well as voicing their views on how the education system in Limerick might better serve them, their children and communities, as a result of regeneration.

6.3   Research aims and objectives

One aim of the study was to gain an insight from the perspective of a sample of adult residents from the study site areas about their school experiences, in a way 'that avoids the trap of sensationalising their lives' (Fine and Weis, 1996: 259). Another aim was to identify priorities and concerns for education that the residents might have. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1) Gain a greater understanding of the educational experiences of those who took part in the study.
2) Elicit perspectives and views as to how education and the education system could better serve participants, their communities and the next generation.
3) Identify how the education system might contribute to breaking the cycle of marginalisation and exclusion in Limerick, and contribute to regeneration processes.

6.4 Research questions

The core research question of the study is how the education system in Limerick has served participants in the past and how could it better serve them as a result of regeneration? The core research question sits within a framework of embedded questions, which have been informed by a review of literature on education, poverty and urban regeneration. The embedded questions of the study relate to:

- Participants' experience of school;
- The barriers to education encountered by participants during their time at school;
- Participants' educational aspirations for themselves, their children and the next generation;
- How the education system can be adapted so that it better meets the needs of members from Limerick's regeneration communities, currently and in the future;
- Participants' perceptions of their community and their thoughts on the Limerick regeneration programme;
- Participants' priorities for education in Limerick's regeneration;
- Participants' involvement in the study and what that has meant to them.

In order to achieve the aims and objectives the interview questions were constructed in such a way that they enabled the gathering of data rich in detail and meaning. The interview schedule employed for the study is presented in Appendix III.

6.5 Research approach and methodology

When undertaking this study I decided to employ a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that places value on human experience and human subjectivity as part of the scientific inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994: 15). I argue that a qualitative research approach was best placed to achieve the objectives of the study, because of its concern with contextual findings and the discovery of things, and its commitment to ensuring participants' commentary is foregrounded in the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 83). A qualitative research approach also complements my philosophical perspective for the study, because I believe people living in marginalised communities rarely get the opportunity to share their experiences or have their voices heard on issues affecting their lives. Furthermore, as I was seeking to learn about peoples' experiences of education and discover from them how the education system could better serve them in the context of the regeneration of Limerick, a qualitative research approach was deemed most appropriate for the study.

The following sub-sections describe the qualitative research approach, the approach employed for knowledge creation and the research method. Phenomenology as a philosophy and a research method are then described, along with how the phenomenological research method was utilised to investigate lived experiences and the voices of participants.

6.5.1 Qualitative research

Grinnell (1993: 4) describes research as a structured inquiry which utilises 'acceptable scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge that is generally acceptable'. In qualitative research certain attributes are common to the discovery enterprise. These include:

- a belief in multiple realities;
- an approach that is committed to participants and to their point of view;
- a commitment to identify an approach which understands and supports phenomena[42] (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 83).

Qualitative research seeks to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of a particular research topic (Cresswell, 1998: 2). The processes involved seeks understanding of 'social or human problems based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants' and is usually conducted in natural settings (Cresswell, 1998: 1-2). Qualitative research also acknowledges the role the researcher has in adding to the richness of the data, especially during the process of data analysis/explication. Before undertaking qualitative inquiries researchers are advised to declare 'the value-laden nature of the study' and actively report their 'values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of the information gathered from the field' (Cresswell, 1998: 76-77). Researchers are also exhorted to prioritise and rely on the 'voices and interpretations of informants, through extensive quotes and the presentation of themes that reflect words used by informants, while advancing evidence of different perspectives on themes as they emerge' (Cresswell, 1998: 76). The knowledge created in qualitative inquiries derives from perceptions and personal constructions of reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore the research methods employed to support this approach must be 'capable of offering the opportunity to study and create meaning that enriches and informs human life' (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995: 6). In the next section I outline the approach employed for knowledge creation.

6.5.2 A constructivist approach to knowledge creation

As an outsider to the world of the study sites and the participants I sought to gain an understanding of their experiences, with the intention of subsequently presenting these, after analysis, to a wider audience and contribute to knowledge creation. To achieve these objectives a constructivist approach was employed. Constructivism is a

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[42] Phenomena is 'that which displays itself' (Farber, 1928: 41-44).

theory of knowledge creation which is premised on the belief that knowledge is internally constructed based on interpretation of experiences (Cooperstein and Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004: 141-148). Knowledge in this study was constructed from 'co-participation' (Cobb and Yackel, 1996: 37) and from 'dialogic interaction' (Bakhtin, 1984: 110), which took place by means of the following processes: 1) engaging and interacting with participants, 2) engaging with the literature and exploring existing theories, and 3) drawing conclusions from both sources. Arising from these activities a rich body of data was gathered which describes experiences and priorities and concerns from the perspective of those who took part in the study (cf. Chapter Seven). From these descriptions patterns emerged, contextual findings were constructed (van Manen, 1990) and knowledge was subsequently created (Cresswell, 1998: 75). The process was aided by the particular research method employed, i.e., phenomenology. A full description of phenomenology is presented in the following sub-sections.

6.5.3   Phenomenology

Cohen et al. (2007: 22) defines phenomenology as a theoretical point of view which advocates the study of experiences taken at face value, and one which considers human behaviour to be determined by the phenomena of experience 'rather than by external objective and physically described reality'. In the literature phenomenology is considered a distinct philosophy and a rigorous research method. Both are explained further in the following sections.

6.5.3.1   Phenomenology: a philosophy

The term phenomenology has a long history in the world of philosophy. Kant (1724-1804) used the term to represent the study of phenomena or appearances, as opposed to 'things' in themselves which he supposed lay behind appearances. In his *Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel (1770-1831) used the term for his discourses on the manifestation of mind (Macquarrie, 1972: 22). However, as a distinct philosophical

movement, phenomenology according to Macquarrie (1972: 22) is usually associated with the philosophy developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). In his *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913) Husserl argued that meaning and understanding are created by 'mental acts' through which the world becomes present to consciousness. For Husserl 'mental acts' derive from one's own subjective state which are constituted by factors, such as memories, experiences, reflections, intuitions, intentions, sensations and judgments. At the core of phenomenology are descriptions and in order to ensure the accuracy of descriptions Husserl argues that it is necessary to clear the mind of prejudices and presupposition, so as to be present and attuned to phenomena as it presents. This is often referred to as *epoché* (bracketing) (Crabtree and Miller, 1992; Husserl, 1913; Hycner, 1999). According to Mcquarrie (1972: 24) Husserl's phenomenology was primarily concerned with 'investigating the source of and the foundation of science and the questioning of common sense and "taken for granted" assumptions of everyday life'. Husserl's work had a major influence on the subsequent existentialist philosophers, namely Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Merleau-Ponty (1905-1980) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). However, his transcendental phenomenology was later criticised by Heidegger (1927/1962), Sartre (1943/2003) and Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), who contended that experiences are situated in the context of 'the embodied and situated subject' (Langdridge, 2008: 1128). Therefore while one might seek to 'bracket' some aspects of our way of seeing the world, it is impossible to assume a 'view from nowhere' (Ricoeur, 1996). Thus began a hermeneutic turn in phenomenology initiated by Heidegger, who stressed the need for phenomenology to employ methods of interpretation to phenomena. Langdridge (2008) claims that this however was not realised epistemologically or methodologically until Gadamer (1981) and Ricoeur (1996). Despite these critiques McGill et al. (1968: 799) compares Husserl's significance as a philosopher to that of Descartes or Kant. McGill et al. (1968: 799) sum up Husserl's contribution to philosophy as the attempt 'to revive knowledge and to make possible again a rational view of the world and of human endeavour', while searching for 'the transcendental conditions which makes meaning possible'. Wertz (2005: 175) subsequently described phenomenology as 'a low hovering, in-dwelling, meditative philosophy that glories in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminacy and ambiguity, primacy over the known'.

6.5.3.2   Phenomenology: a research method

Cherry (2000: 49) posits that all qualitative studies are based on phenomenological research traditions. This according to Cohen, et al. (2007: 23-24) is because they concern themselves with 'the world of everyday life', and a person's living sense of an experience. In the literature several procedural interpretations of phenomenology as a research method are posed. Despite their differences, Curtis (1978: xii-xiii) maintains that phenomenologists tend to agree on the following principles and set of assumptions relating to phenomenology. These include:

- a belief in the importance of and the primacy of subjective consciousness;
- an understanding that consciousness is active and meaning-bestowing;
- a belief that there are certain essential structures to consciousness of which we can gain direct knowledge by reflection.

For Finlay (2009: 6) the central concern of phenomenological inquiries is 'to return to the embodied, experiential meanings, while aiming for a fresh, complex, rich description of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived'. In phenomenological inquiries perceptions are the primary source of knowledge, and studies which employ Husserlian phenomenology emphasise the importance of descriptions of experiences and perceptions, more so than analysis of them (Giles, 2007: 7; Scruton, 1991: 259). For van Manen (1990: 27) phenomenological descriptions are collected from lived experiences, recollect lived experiences and in turn are validated by lived experiences, and through the phenomenological process researchers come to uncover meaning in people's perceptions and their descriptions. Researchers who undertake phenomenological inquiries are therefore urged to trust the phenomenological process and allow the possibility of 'seeing' phenomena and its meanings emerge (Giles, 2007: 7).

Phenomenology was employed for this study because: firstly, its attractiveness as research method for educational researchers (Cohen et al., 2007: 25), namely its usefulness as a method to explore 'deep issues quickly' (Lester, 1999: 4). Secondly, those who choose to employ this method usually possess some knowledge of the topic under investigation and are interested in developing a more in-depth understanding of it or 'clarifying potentially conflicting or equivocal information from previous data'

(Henry et al., 2008: 10). Thirdly, phenomenology underlines the importance of making individual voices heard, while preserving 'the integrity of the situation' (Lester, 1999: 4). Fourthly, phenomenology is a dynamic process (Reinharz, 1983: 77) which seeks to make 'public what is essentially private knowledge' (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995: 41), and looks to create a body of knowledge capable of being 'consensually validated as knowledge' (Reinharz, 1983: 78). Finally, phenomenology was employed for this study, as I previously employed this method for my Master's thesis, and so was familiar with the theory of this method and its usage. These factors were the main reasons that influenced my decision to employ this research method for this study.

6.5.3.3   How phenomenology was employed in the study

According to Reinharz (1983: 77-79) those who employ a phenomenological methodological orientation should attend to the following steps or transformations in their research work.

1. A person's experience is transformed into actions and language that become available to him/her by virtue of a special interaction s/he has with another person(s).
2. The researcher transforms what s/he sees or hears into an understanding of the original experience(s). As we can never experience another person's experience, we must rely on the data subjects produce about their experience(s), and from there produce our own understanding(s).
3. The researcher transforms this/these understanding(s) into clarifying conceptual categories which s/he believes are the essence of the original experience(s).
4. The researcher transforms the conceptual categories existing in their mind into a written document which captures what s/he has thought about the experience(s) the other person has talked about or expressed.
5. The audience of the researcher helps to transform the written document into an understanding, which functions to clarify all preceding steps and clarifies any new experience(s) the audience might have.

In this study phenomenology was employed in the following ways. The first step took place when participants' experiences were transformed into language which became available to them by virtue of the interaction had with me, the researcher. As the researcher I created a context (interviews) through which participants' lived experience became available to them in language (though not necessarily for the first time). The willingness and openness of participants also provided a context where experiences of school were shared and priorities and concerns for education presented. The second step involved transforming what was heard into an understanding. As phenomenology is concerned with the individual's first hand experiences and perspectives rather than the abstract experiences and perspectives of others (Selvi, 2008: 39), I had to rely on the data produced by participants about their experiences, and from there produce my own understanding(s). The third step involved transforming this/these understanding(s) into clarifying conceptual categories, which I believed were the essence of the original accounts. The fourth step involved transforming the categories into a written document, which attempted to capture as accurately as possible, what I thought about the experiences and views expressed by participants. In doing this I was mindful that something valuable could be lost, and so tried to ensure that I did not distort or lose any of the richness or integrity of what was shared (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995: 42). The final step involved those who participated in the research contributing to transforming the written document into a further understanding, which functioned to clarify the preceding steps as well as clarifying any new experiences participants might have had (Reinharz, 1983: 79). van Manen (2007: 11) contends that the creation of the phenomenological text is an important part of the phenomenological research process. Creating the phenomenological text for the public (in this case the thesis) led to clarifying experiences and the development of 'insights about new actions that we want to take' (Reinharz, 1983: 79). These are to be found in Chapter Nine 'Recommendations'.

The process of making private knowledge public and constructing a credible body of knowledge was aided by reference to the literature, which helped illuminate and develop a fuller understanding of the issues that emerged during the research, placing them in the context of existing knowledge. The findings were then interpreted using Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework. In considering individual voices and experiences, and trying to adopt a dynamic focus (Downes, 2011: 30) so as to add

value to policy and practice in the education system, in the context of Limerick's regeneration, I needed to reconcile a phenomenological approach with a socially critical perspective. A superficial reading of phenomenology might suggest that because of its concern with content and meaning phenomenology offers little potential in this regard, nor is it capable of 'radically re-conceptualising the phenomenon being studied' (Langdridge, 2008: 1135). Despite this criticism it is possible 'to radicalise the phenomenological project' so that it does take 'politics and social change seriously' (Langdridge, 2008: 1136). However, in order to achieve this phenomenology and critique must work together dialectically (Ricoeur, 1996). By doing so phenomenological inquiries can generate new insights which are capable of disrupting the status quo and contribute to new possibilities for living (Langdridge, 2008: 1137; Lester, 1999: 4).

6.6   Researchers subjectivity

Prior to undertaking this study I worked for a number of years in community pastoral work, teaching, work with the homeless and those considered 'at-risk' of early school leaving and their families, as well as working with Limerick regeneration. My work experiences have provided me with insights into many of the issues and challenges experienced by those living in adverse socio-economic circumstances. This work has also influenced my views on political and social relations; particularly how hegemony and instruments of hegemony contribute to poverty and inequality in society. In addition to my work experiences, my studies in education and continuous professional development have helped to shape my views on teaching and education. Consequently, I view high quality education to be necessary in helping to empower individuals and communities in their efforts to transform social relations, so that they are more just and equal.

As a result of my work experiences, education and professional development I therefore come to this inquiry not as a disinterested observer, but as someone with a 'deep familiarity' and sensitivity towards those who experience social and educational exclusion. In the literature sensitivity is understood as '…having insight, being tuned in to and being able to pick up on relevant issues, events and happenings in the data'

(Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 32). In being reflexive I realise that having a 'deep familiarity' with a particular grouping can be a potential asset. I likewise appreciate that it can also dull an investigator's powers of observation (McCracken, 1988: 22). Therefore to make the best use of 'self as an instrument of inquiry' for this study, it was necessary to be conscious and reflexive and observe 'with critical awareness familiar situations' (McCracken, 1988: 22).

6.6.1   Reflexivity

The methodological paradigm employed for the study considers the researcher an important instrument in data collection (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998). However, just as research participants' experiences 'are framed in socio-cultural contexts, so too are those of the researcher' (Bourke, 2014: 2). Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the beliefs, political views and cultural background of a researcher can affect the research process and impact on the research findings. Consequently, to ensure the integrity of the study it was necessary to be reflexive. Reflexivity is defined by Callaway (1992: 33) as 'a continuing mode of self-analysis. Freire (1974: 3) understands reflexivity to be a process where people better organise themselves, chose the best responses, test themselves and act and 'change in the very act of responding'.

Being reflexive throughout this study meant reflecting on, critically examining and exploring analytically the nature of the research process and my motivations and role in the study (Fonow and Cook, 1991: 2). It also required being aware of 'vested interests, predilections and assumptions', while being 'conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings' (Finlay, 2009: 17). During data gathering I needed to be focused on the task at hand and not be preoccupied with my own thoughts, emotions and experiences. To do so would have led to the research been 'pulled in unfortunate directions' and privilege my own interests and concerns over those of participants and their accounts (Finlay, 2009: 13). Furthermore, it was important to be attuned to how I was in the context of the research relationship (van Manen, 1990). I believe I did this by, 1) embracing my own subjectivity (Giorgio, 1994: 205), 2) having an 'open' attitude to participants and trying to see the world from their perspective as communicated by them (Finlay, 2009: 12), and 3) adopting

an interactive, participatory and respectful approach (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Daly, 2000; Etter-Lewis, 1996). By adhering to these guiding principles I believe I was able to organise myself, chose the best responses, i.e. separate out what belonged to me and what belonged to participants, test myself, and act and change in the very act of responding. This process was aided by trying to stay close to what was given/shared by participants 'in all its richness and complexity' (Finlay, 2009: 12).

6.6.2   Researchers role in the study

As I began the research I was conscious of my role both as a researcher and a worker with the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA). I was also conscious that during the interviews I was facilitating an opportunity for people to openly express their views. Given the high profile nature of the Limerick regeneration programme and the seeming lack of progress of same (cf. Chapter Three, 3.9 & Chapter Seven, 7.6), the potential existed for the interviews to become a forum for venting anger and frustrations. I was also aware that I could not fully overcome perceptions of symbolic power that might be attributed to me because of LRA and was constantly looking out for this during the interviews. I dealt with this by trying to minimise this perception where and when it arose. For example, on occasion I was asked to explain certain things about the Limerick regeneration programme. Other times some participants were critical of aspects of the programme and directed this at me. In being honest and open I regularly found myself agreeing with some of the criticisms levelled, and at times defended LRA and aspects of the regenertion programme. At other times I sensed that some participants were holding back on things they might have liked to say, either because of politeness or because of percevied pressures on them from the group to act or speak in a particular way. To overcome any reservations participants might have had I encouraged them to be open and honest as they wished. I also attempted to balance the flow of conversation, while trying to keep to the interview schedule as much as possible, without usurping the power of participants. Etter-Lewis (1996: 119) cautions researchers about usurping the power of participants and reminds us that unless the narrative process is kept human and the personal dignity of interviewees is preserved 'what we have left is not collaboration but coercion'. However, when conversations

took off in different directions I did need to exercise my power as a researcher, by interjecting and bringing the disussion back on track.

During the research I was also assuming a new identity as a researcher with people who knew me through my work with LRA or my previous work with the School Completion Programme[43] (SCP), and was meeting some participants for the first time. I was therefore crossing boundaries and so had to position and negotiate my role. For Freire (2000: 50) positionality represents a space where objectivism and subjectivism meet in a 'dialectic relationship'. Hall (1990: 18) contends that there can be no enunciation without positionality, therefore researchers must position themselves if they are 'to say anything at all'. I positioned and negotiated my role in the study in the following ways. I first outlined where I was 'coming from' by introducing and describing myself as a research student undertaking further study in education. I also explained that while I worked for LRA the study was completely independent of LRA and that its primary purpose was to fulfil the requirements for a PhD. Secondly, at the beginning of each interview I encouraged participants to actively participate and share freely should they so wish. I needed also to remind myself that I was a member of the focus groups and being entrusted with people's experiences, concerns and views. Therefore, I needed to be respectful and sensitive to what they shared without judgement or reproach. Thirdly, I was conscious of being a professional male interviewing male and female particpants. I was sufficiently aware that in society women are often socialised into unequal roles in comparison to men (United Nations, 2005: 4). Newbury and Wallace (2014) highlight that from birth gender inequalities can be internalised, with men and women often seeing their status, roles and responsibilities differently. In addition many women, especially those living in poverty can perceive themselves as not having equal rights to men and the marginalisation some women experience is often seen as the natural order (Newbury and Wallace, 2014: 13). Often this can be compounded by the influence of religion, discriminatory laws, traditions and customs. The reality of gender inequality meant that I could be seen consciously or unconsciously as a possible oppresssor by female members in the focus groups and/or individual interviews. Higgins (2008: 114)

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[43] Established in 2002 by the DES to address educational exclusion and early school leaving. In 2011 it was subsumed into the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. In 2014 it became part of TUSLA, the new Children and Family Support Agency.

suggests that researchers must 'be acutely aware of how the power dynamic is manifested through the quality of relationships within the research process'. Citing Starhawk (1987: 10) who differentiates between three types of power, e.g. power-over, power-from-within or power-with, Higgins recommends that power-with is most desirable in qualitative research, as power-with comes from our willingness to listen to each other and is based on respect (Higgins, 2008: 114). During the research I found that my gender and familiarity with some of the male participants in the study gave me an 'in' and they seemed comfortable to share their stories with me about their lives and their experiences of school. While I had no control over how I was perceived, or how my gender might impact on the interactions between me and the female participants, throughout the study I viewed myself as 'one participant among many' (Daly, 2000: 65), genuinely interested in the views of each and every participant and aimed to be respectful of gender and other issues; i.e. living in communities experiencing marginalisation and exclusion. In the study more women than men took part as research participants. From the volume and the quality of the data gathered, it seems that my gender did not present a barrier to participation or sharing (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.8).

Positioning myself, negotiating my role and dealing with power and perceptions of symbolic power in the above ways, I believe lent to greater sharing during data gathering. Fundamental to this was fostering a trusting and respectful research relationship with participants (Lather, 1992: 72). In the study I was asking participants to trust the research process they were invited to participate in and to trust that I would genuinely represent their views. Uppermost in my mind was the concern that the research would be a positive and an empowering experience for all involved (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 82). I was sufficiently aware that research projects can also be of benefit to researchers and participants alike, with both parties having a vested interest in the research process (Oakley, 1981: 49). My concern for the study was to learn how the education system in Limerick served participants in the past and how it might better serve them and contribute to regeneration in Limerick city. The findings in Chapter Seven, (especially section 7.8) suggests that for many of the participants the research was an opportunity for representation and provided an opportunity to engage with their memories, emotions and aspirations, to vent anger and frustrations and to share stories, experiences, priorities and concerns.

6.7   Sampling strategy

The decision to select the particular participant sample for the study required being cognisant of the purposes of the study, the time scales and constraints, the research method and the instruments used for data collection (Cohen et al., 2007: 117). The sampling strategy employed was a form of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is defined as 'the judgement of the researcher as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study' (Kumar, 1999: 162).   In phenomenological inquiries this type of sampling is commonly used (Cohen et al., 2007: 115; Patton, 1990: 169; Streubert and Carpenter, 1995: 43). The selectivity built into purposive sampling derives from the decision to target a particular group in the knowledge that 'it does not represent a complete population, but simply represents itself' (Cohen et al., 2007: 113). Patton (1990: 169) contends that all types of sampling in qualitative research is a form of 'purposeful sampling', because qualitative research inquiries typically focus on samples which are selected purposefully. Participants in this study were selected on the basis that they were perceived to be information-rich cases that possessed the potential to provide 'rich thick descriptions' of the phenomena being investigated (Cresswell, 1998: 203). Information-rich cases 'are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (Patton, 1990: 169). Those who took part in the study were chosen because they were perceived as being 'capable of giving voice to the lived reality from a culturally sensitive "insiders" view' (Kumar, 1999: 118).

The criterion for participant inclusion in this study was as follows:

- A sample size of no more than sixteen focus groups and eight individual interviews;
- The sample size would consist of no more than c. 100 adults.
- An age range of 18+ years of age;
- A gender representation of 40 percent - 60 percent, male to female[44];
- In each of the four study sites no more than three community groups would be considered for focus group interviews;
- Eight individual interviews would be conducted with two persons from each of the four study sites;

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[44] From my work with SCP and LRA I observed that more women than men participate in community groups and attend community meetings, consultations, etc., hence the decision to adopt this ratio.

- Two specialist groups would be considered for focus groups to represent particular age and gender differences.

6.7.1 Participant profile

Sixty eight participants took part in this study. Sixty one took part in focus groups and seven participated in individual interviews (see Table 6.1 and 6.2 below). The age range of the sample was from 18 years to early 70s and included male and female participants. The younger participants were those in their late teens, early and mid-twenties and early thirties, while older participants include those aged forty years of age and older. Though not intentionally part of my purposive sampling, I made a decision during data explication to distinguish between older and younger participants on the basis that from the 1980s onwards many developments begin to take place in Irish society and in education, notably the abolition of corporal punishment in 1982; this is because corporal punishment was a feature of the school experiences of many of the older participants. Interviews were conducted mostly with adult residents from Limerick's regeneration communities in each of the study site areas, with the exception of two interviews which were held in venues familiar to participants and used by them in the context of the groups they were involved in. Focus groups were first conducted and then individual in-depth interviews were conducted. Field notes contributed to the data and were derived from notes taken during and after the interviews and during and after member checking.

Table 6.1   Participant Profile: Focus Groups

Area / Code	Female	Male	Age group
Southside B1	2	1	Early 40s – mid 60s
Southside B2	4	0	Early 30s – mid 40s
Southside B3	6	0	Mid 20s – mid 50s
Southside S1	2	1	Mid to late 50s
Southside S2	4	0	Early 30s – mid 50s
Southside S3	-	-	Interview not held[45]
Northside M1	7	0	Mid 40s – early 70s
Northside M2	7	0	Early 20s – early 40s
Northside M3	7	0	Mid 20s – mid 40s
City Centre 1	4	2	Early 30s – early 60s
City Centre 2	1	3	Early 30s – late 50s
Other 1	6	0	Mid 20s – early 60s
Other 2	0	4	18 – 21 year olds
Total	50	11	

Table 6.2   Participant Profile: Individual Interviews

Area /Code	Female	Male	Age group
Southside B1	1	0	Mid 60s
Southside B2	0	1	Mid 40s
Southside S1	1	0	Late 30s
Southside S2	0	1	Early 40s
Northside M1	0	1	Early 50s
Northside M2	0	1	Mid 50s
City Centre 1	1	0	Mid 50s
Total	3	4	

Those who took part in the focus groups were selected on the basis that they were adults involved in pre-existing groups in the study site areas, i.e. school committees, regeneration committees, the community-adult education network, community development groups and personal development or self-help groups. While these might seem to represent an 'advantaged' group of people, during the research they shared many of their own struggles living in communities experiencing marginalisation, exclusion and social problems. During the research an unforeseen and unintended consequence of the sampling strategy saw six individuals participate in the study who were not residents of the study sites. One was a former resident of one of the study sites; two had strong familial connections to the study sites, while the others did not

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[45] See limitations section in this Chapter, section 6.14.

fit the profile of the intended participants (i.e. residents of the study sites). Their inclusion in the study was negotiated on the basis that they were present in the groups on the day of the focus group interviews. While their participation in the study was contrary to the purposive sampling strategy, I did not wish to create an issue by asking them to leave so that I could focus the interviews on residents from the study site areas. These persons also expressed an interest in being part of the focus group interviews and indicated that their experiences, priorities and concerns might be of value. There was a mutual acceptance of their involvement by the intended participants in the two focus groups concerned. During data gathering these participants proved 'knowledgeable' (Ball, 1990) and their accounts supported the data shared by those purposively selected, i.e., experiences of children from socio-economic poorer backgrounds not being treated fairly or respected during their time at school. Their experiences and views also provided valuable insights and supported the richness and complexity of participants' accounts, and their priorities and concerns for education had many similarities with those of the purposively selected sample; namely SEN provision deficits, the costs associated with education, the competitive nature of the education system and concerns regarding participation, retention and progression in education.

Those who took part in the individual interviews were not part of the focus groups. They were selected because they reflected a representation of adults from the study sites, i.e., unemployed construction worker, adult learner, Jobs Initiative (JI) worker[46], Centre Manager, part-time community development worker, youth worker and part-time drugs education worker. Given the high profile nature of the Limerick regeneration programme other specifics relating to individuals are anonymised in order to safeguard privacy and confidentiality. Participation rates in the research show that more women than men participated, thus suggesting that while men may have been on the various committees and groups, they may also have been unwilling to take part in the study.

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[46] The JI was funded by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) to provide full-time employment for people 35 years of age or over who are unemployed for 5 years or more, and in receipt of social welfare payments over that period. The programme aimed to prepare the long-term unemployed for work through work experience and training and development opportunities. It was sponsored by groups such as local communities' voluntary organisations, public bodies and not-for-profit organisations.

6.7.2 The study sites

As previously discussed the study sites for this research are the four communities designated for renewal by the Limerick Regeneration programme (2007-2023). During the Celtic Tiger period these areas failed to make improvements in absolute and relative deprivation terms (CSO, 2011). Instead since the mid-1980s the study site areas experienced pronounced levels of deprivation and social problems (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012). These factors have resulted in a range of negative outcomes for residents living in these estates (Power and Barnes, 2011), such as negative labelling, stigmatisation and the marginalisation and isolation of these estates and its residents within Limerick city (McCafferty and Canny, 2005). Deprivation and social problems have also contributed to the 'brand' image of Limerick of gangs, crime and dereliction and led to the failure and decline of these neighbourhoods (Norris, 2014). Details of the extent of deprivation and social problems in the study sites are documented in other sections of this thesis (cf. Chapters One; Three and Five). The social and physical problems associated with the study sites gained prominence in the build-up to regeneration in Limerick and were instrumental in influencing government to embark on a programme of urban renewal for these areas.

6.7.3 Accessing participants and the study sites

From my work with LRA and my previous work with School Completion Programme I was aware of many community and adult education groups in the study site areas. During the early consultation for regeneration I also got to know some of those whom I would subsequently call on to be part of the study as participants. I was fortunate to know key persons in the study sites, i.e. school principals, community development coordinators, community-adult education facilitators, centre managers and regeneration officials. I asked these contacts to suggest groups that could provide insights into the research question. I accessed participants for the focus group interviews by making contact with a representative from the various groups. At that meeting I discussed the study I was undertaking and asked for their help in distributing the *Participant Information Letter* to members of their groups

(cf. Appendix I). I then agreed a date and time to meet to conduct the interviews. For the individual interviews I made direct contact with the persons purposively selected. In the initial meeting I discussed the research and agreed a date and time to meet. The individual interviews were conducted at a second meeting. For those who agreed to participate in either the focus groups or individual interviews, I explained on the day of interview the research, the interview process and how the findings of the study would be used. I also discussed the *Participant Information Letter* (cf. Appendix I) and clarified any queries or concerns participants might have had. In the early stages of planning for the study a number of potential host sites were identified as venues for the interviews. The criteria used for selecting the host sites were familiarity and accessibility, as I believed such venues would be less threatening to participants and so would lend to greater participation and interaction. Host sites for the research were local primary schools, a School Completion Programme centre, community-adult education centres, community development project centres, community centres and regeneration board rooms.

The focus groups and individual interviews, while structured, possessed a level of informality. Most of the focus group interviews were held over a cup of tea, which were kindly organised by the key personnel associated with the host sites and the groups identified. This enabled interaction and lent to promoting 'dialogue rather than interrogation' (Ellis and Berger, 2003: 469). From observational data recorded after the interviews it seemed that during the interviews participants felt comfortable in 'talking back' in an equal way (Cook and Fonow, 1986: 9).

6.8   Ethics guiding the study

The study was grounded in a belief that residents from the study site areas possess valuable insights, information and expertise, and so should be facilitated with opportunities to share these and contribute to knowledge creation. As qualitative studies involve face-to-face interaction for data collection, an element of reciprocity takes place between researchers and participants in the process of knowledge creation (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 397). This rightly placed an onus on me to protect participants and to operate within an ethic of respect for those directly or indirectly

involved in the research process (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2011; Ethical Standards of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), 2011). The ethics guiding this study derive from a set of core values which recognise that by its nature, educational research must aim for the improvement of individual lives and societies (BERA, 2011). These concerns permeated all aspects of the study from conceptualisation, design, data collection and analysis (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002: 19), through to the presentation of the final thesis report.

The ethical approach employed for the study consisted of the following: In the early stages of the research (before I had any contact with potential participants) I submitted the following to Mary Immaculate College's Research Ethics Committee (MIREC), 1) my research proposal and details of the study, 2) a copy of the *Participant Information Letter* and *Participant Consent Form* (cf. Appendix I & II), and 3) a copy of the interview schedule (cf. Appendix III). After due consideration MIREC approved my application (A10-040 MIREC 6) and an ethical approach was followed for the duration of the research project. This included obtaining informed consent, managing expectations, and safeguarding participants' interests, privacy and confidentiality.

6.8.1   Informed consent

The literature highlights the importance of informed consent for participation in research projects (Christians, 2000). Unless participants agree to 'voluntarily participate, that is, without physical or psychological coercion' (Christians, 2000: 138) the research project can be considered unethical. On conducting the research it was necessary to ensure that participation in the study was completely voluntary and based on informed consent and dialogue. To achieve this I devised a series of guiding principles. These include:

- Informing participants verbally and in writing about the study, how it would be carried out and how information shared would be used (cf. Appendix I).
- Asking participants before each interview about any concerns they might have and attempt to address these.

- Informing participants that interpretation and explication would be based on the information provided by them, and that any conclusions or assumptions made would be clearly identified and justified.
- Being mindful of the potential of research to either illuminate or worsen a situation for individuals or groups (Kimmel, 1988). Therefore throughout the study I would at all times be respectful of participants and aim to safeguard their interests, privacy and confidentiality.

The consent of participants was made authentic by adopting the following approach. In being invited to participate in the study I clearly outlined that participation was completely voluntary. I highlighted that the level at which participants wished to share their experiences was totally within their control, should they agree to take part in the study. Before conducting each interview I again outlined how participation in the research was voluntary and that participants should feel free to leave at any stage of the interview process or desist from answering any question put to them, should they wish. I also encouraged participants to ask questions prior to and throughout each of the interviews. Once satisfied that participants had full knowledge of what was involved in the research, and that they were satisfied to actively participate, they were asked to declare this by signing the *Participant Consent Form* (cf. Appendix II). While being a requirement of MIREC, this would also demonstrate that I was meeting my obligations as a researcher and would communicate to participants that the research was being conducted in an ethical way. Throughout the interviews I regularly checked with participants to see if they understood the question being put to them, and whether they wanted to contribute to the discussion or not. At the end of each interview I asked participants if they wished to contribute anything else to the discussion or raise any concern. The findings in Chapter Seven (cf. 7.8) give testament to the interviews being a participatory and empowering experience for participants.

6.8.2 Managing expectations

Before undertaking the research I was conscious that during the interviews those taking part in the study would be invited to voice their views about Limerick regeneration, and their potential responses might prove challenging for me. I also felt that as a result of taking part in the study participants might have certain expectations, and so I wondered how I would constructively manage these. I decided to address these concerns and try to manage expectations by declaring at the outset of each interview the independent and personal nature of study. I likewise felt it necessary to make an agreement with participants to try to keep to the interview schedule as much as possible. Even though this was an example of me exercising my power as a researcher, I believe it was necessary to guide the interviews and to keep the research focused, while at the same managing expectations. Finally, I tried to manage expectations by engaging with participants in open and frank discussions, about the issues or concerns raised by them before and during the course of the interviews.

6.8.3 Safeguarding interests, privacy and confidentiality

Researchers have a dual responsibility, 1) to protect the confidence of participants from others in the research setting, and 2) to protect research participants from the general public (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993: 399). In this study all reasonable steps to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of those who took part in the study were taken. However, during data gathering focus groups presented a major challenge to confidentiality, as any one participant could have chosen to disregard the confidentiality agreed within the different groups. This concern was discussed prior to each interview. After some discussion a verbal agreement was reached whereby all involved would respect the confidentiality of the content of the focus groups and would not relay anything of what was shared to others outside of the group. Having made this agreement participants seemed reassured and there was a mutual acceptance of the shared risk involved, and despite the perceived risks participants reported that they

were comfortable to be part of the group interviews. The same issues did not arise for the individual interviews.

Another measure to safeguard interests, privacy and confidentiality was how data was stored after collection. Data from the focus groups and individual interviews when transcribed was stored on my home personal computer, which was password protected, and the room secured by me under lock and key. After transcription the recordings of the interviews were destroyed. The interviews were labelled by an area code (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2), which helped to identify the study site area participants came from. Finally, when drawing up the final thesis report a number of techniques were employed to safeguard and protect participant confidentiality in the research. These included: deletion of identifiers such as leaving out specifics of an individual or a group, crude report categories such as general data as opposed to specific detail on participants, micro-aggregation and the constriction of 'average persons' rather than in-depth data on individuals or specific groups (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). Added to these precautions the data gathered was aggregated and presented thematically. These actions helped to ensure that no individual response or person was readily recognisable or identifiable. These measures likewise helped to safeguard the interests, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of those who took part in the study.

6.9   Data gathering

Data for the study was gathered through a combination of primary sources, namely focus group interviews, individual interviews and observations. The focus group and interview data was collected using audio recordings which were later transcribed. Field notes were used which were taken during and after interviews and during member checking and were added to the data. Before carrying out observations I asked for participants' permission to make notes about what I might observe or anything that might be worth noting during the interviews. Spending quality time with participants during interviews can be intensely personal and powerful and bring one closer to the experiences of those we study (Ochberg, 1996: 97, cited in Higgins, 2008: 130). Seidman (1998: 7) claims that interviews 'as a method of inquiry is most consistent

with people's ability to make meaning through language'. Through interviews researchers can engage 'in the iterative process of storying, restorying, questioning, interpreting and understanding' (Higgins, 2008: 129). Fontana and Frey (2000: 649) assert that interviews 'are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two or more people leading to negotiated, contextually based results'. Employing interviews for data gathering is however not without its challenges; as researchers are dependent on the knowledge and the commitment of informants (Fine and Deegan, 1996: 440) and so must trust them to share their experiences, but also to encourage them 'to attend to and tell about important moments in their lives' (Kohler-Riessman 1993: 54, cited in Higgins, 2008: 129). For these reasons it is important that researchers pay close attention to methodological considerations, participant selection while ensuring that the environments interviews take place in are 'safe, nurturing and facilitative' (Higgins, 2008: 129).

The following sub-sections discusses focus groups and individual interviews as methods for data gathering. I also discuss how these methods were employed in the study, and how I addressed the challenges encountered.

6.9.1   Focus groups interviews

As a recognised method for data gathering focus groups are used by researchers to 'obtain information of a qualitative nature from a predetermined and limited number of people' (Patton, 1990: 26). Focus groups usually consist of a selected group 'convened for the purpose of discussing a specific research topic' (Barbour, 1999: 19), and are 'designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (Kreuger, 1988: 18). As a method for data gathering focus groups can encourage the disclosure of behaviours and attitudes, which ordinarily might not arise in an individual interview session (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981: 455). In the right environment participants in focus groups can be less on guard against personal disclosure as 'the atmosphere is tolerant, friendly and permissive even when selfish, egocentric, aggressive, daring or questionable judgments are voiced' (ibid: 455). Focus groups can also foster lively dialogue which can activate memories, feelings and experiences (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981: 455), and provide a forum for

participants to share information about themselves and the issues affecting their lives, while enabling them to safely articulate their thoughts and feelings (Winslow et al., 2002: 566). Furthermore, focus groups can be effective for data collection from members of groups 'that are generally hard to reach, such as the disadvantaged or disfranchised' (Barbour, 1999: 20).

However, focus groups are not without their disadvantages. For example some participants can feel intimidated or may not be completely honest, especially if a perceived 'superior' or more 'experienced' participant is present. Similarly participation can be inhibited by those who dominate discussions with their persistent contribution and views. With participants who are shy, but might have much to contribute, participation in focus groups interviews can require a lot of effort on the part of the researcher to get them to elaborate their views (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981: 455). In an effort to address some of these concerns I employed the following:

1) Ensured that the focus groups were not too large to be unwieldy or 'preclude adequate participation by most members', and not too small so that they fail 'to provide substantially greater coverage than that of an interview with one individual' (Merton et al., 1990: 137).

2) Tried to be as inclusive as possible and provide each participant with the opportunity to have their voices heard, along with making low-key interventions to bring the group back to the interview schedule plan and questions, should independent discussions break out.

Numbers in each focus group ranged from three to a maximum of eight and were limited to those situations where the group was small enough to permit genuine discussion. While I had no control over the gender breakdown in the focus groups, the gender representation of those who took part in the study is outlined in Table 6.1 Participant profile: focus groups. Focus groups helped to enrich the research process in the following ways. Firstly, they allowed for flexibility and left 'room for variation in responses' (Fontana and Frey, 2000: 649). Secondly, in being 'safe, nurturing and facilitative' (Higgins, 2008: 129) they yielded rich descriptions, out of which various themes emerged and were subsequently developed. Some of which were explored further in the individual interviews, as well as during member checking with participants.

6.9.2   Individual interviews

As an instrument for data gathering individual interviews are a 'joint product' of 'what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other, where the analysis and interpretation of that conversation is a representation of that talk' (Mishler,1990: 45). In phenomenological inquiries in-depth, interactive interviews are most often used for data gathering (Cohen et al., 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Streubert and Carpenter, 1995; van Manen, 1990, 2007). Based on my reading of Seidman (1989) I decided that individual interviews using semi-structured open-ended questions should be employed, because they would, 1) help to ensure that descriptions and their settings would best be captured (Kensit, 2000: 104), 2) help to establish 'the territory to be explored' while 'not presuming the answers' (Seidman, 1998: 62). In keeping with the constructivist approach to knowledge creation and the phenomenological form of inquiry, the interview questions employed were directed at participants' experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the phenomenon under scrutiny (Welman and Kruger, 1999: 196). With the help of interview probes I was able to capture participants' accounts and clarify the meaning(s) they attached to them, rather than just explain them (Selvi, 2008). Patton (1990) describes three main types of interview probes often used in interviews: *detail-oriented probes, elaboration probes* and *clarification probes*. In this study detail-oriented probes were used to gather more detail via follow-up questions. Elaboration probes encouraged participants to share their experiences even further, whereas clarification probes helped to ensure that what was shared was what participants intended to communicate. The use of in-depth interviews with semi-structured open-ended questions enriched the research process by affording participants the opportunity to construct their experiences according to their own sense of what was important for them, and what they would choose to share.

6.9.3 Observations

All research it is argued is a form of 'participant observation' (Cohen et al., 2007: 305), for we cannot study the world without somehow being part of it (Adler and Adler, 1994). Observation involves collecting information as it unfolds before us rather than indirectly via the accounts of others (Pole and Lampard, 2002: 71). As a method for gathering data observation is as much about the construction of data as it is about its collection (Pole and Lampard, 2002: 71). In employing observation for data gathering it was important to consider a number of factors, 1) selecting a setting to focus the observation, 2) gaining entry to that setting, and 3) commencing the observation and undertaking analyses during the period of observation (Adler and Adler, 1994: 377-392). It is also recommend that during the research a journal is kept to record observations made (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The initial setting for learning about the study sites and participants was my work with the LRA (Oct. 2007-June 2012). In this setting I met parents in the study sites, engaged with schools and learning centres and attended meetings and planning days concerning education and learning. I was also involved in a number of research projects and educational strategies, and was directly involved in crafting the key elements of the education section of the Regeneration Agencies Vision Document (Jan., 2008) and Master Plan (Oct., 2008). These informal observations helped to influence the formulation of the research questions for the study, but were not part of data collection. During primary data gathering (March 2011-March 2012) I adopted a focused approach to observation during the interviews. This required being aware of surrounds, distractions, time lapses, participant emphases, body language, non-verbal communication with other participants and expressions of emotion. It also required being aware of the level of participation and the interactions of participants. As a result of being observant I tried to include those, insofar as they wished, who were less vocal or active, due to others either being more vocal or the personal disposition of participants.

The observations made during and after each interview were recorded as written notes in the journal. The journal also included a daily schedule of practical matters and logistics, while serving as a personal diary for reflection and speculation (Lincoln and

Guba, 1985: 380). Observations helped to enrich the research process in a number of ways. Firstly, they allowed further access into a social world different from me the researcher. Secondly, they enabled me 'to enter and understand the situation being described', while affording the opportunity 'to gather live data from live situations' (Patton 1990: 203-205). Thirdly, they enriched the recorded data by contributing to explanations and interpretations, which helped data analysis (Morrison, 1993: 88).

6.10   Data analysis/explication

Collection of the data generated a considerable amount of information which required analysis. Data analysis involved organising what was seen, heard and read so that sense could be made of what was learned (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). While analysis takes place throughout a study, it is through shaping and the re-shaping data that data gets transformed into research findings (Watt, 2007: 95).

In phenomenological inquiries the term explication is considered more applicable than analysis. This is because phenomenology looks at investigating 'the constituents of the phenomenon, while keeping the context of the whole' (Hycner, 1999: 161). The process for data explication consisted of the following stages: The first stage took place during the focus groups and individual interviews and when field notes were made during and after each interview. The second stage involved transcribing the interviews and focus group discussions. The third stage involved analysing the content of these and preparing a summary report for feedback to participants, as pre-arranged with them at the interview stages. Participants were then met and feedback was given (member checking) by means of a draft report which was prepared, together with relevant quotations and thoughts on what was shared. During member checking I asked participants if the accounts presented reflected what was shared during the focus group and individual interviews. Any additional comments and clarifications made were taken on board and included in the data, which helped with the next level of explication. The fourth stage involved identifying patterns and trends while considering various meanings and perspectives. The fifth and final level of explication resulted in producing final descriptions (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995: 46) which can be seen in the findings of the study in Chapter Seven.

Data explication led to new understandings and provided fresh insights and perspective into how education and the education system in Limerick might better serve participants, their children and communities, while also contributing to regeneration processes. At all stages of explication it was important to remain focused on individual voices. This required 'clear thinking on the part of the analyst' (Robson, 1993: 374) and developing an intimate relationship with the data (Pole and Lampard, 2002: 206). Strauss and Corbin (1998: 7) suggest some of the skills needed by researchers for effective data analysis. These are summarised as follows:

- Having the ability to step back and critically analyse situations;
- Having the ability to recognise the tendency towards bias;
  Having the ability to think abstractly and be flexible and open to constructive criticism;
- Sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents;
- A sense of absorption and devotion to the work process.

In explicating the data I was on the alert for any weaknesses and strengths in my approach, as well as being aware of the directions the research was taking. In stepping back and critically analysing situations, I regularly reviewed the interview questions in terms of their content, order, language and phraseology. I also reviewed the suitability of locations for the interviews, and had to consider whether the interviews were being effective and/or how they might be improved. To increase my familiarity with the data for analysis, I regularly listened to the audio recordings at home and while travelling to and from my work. These actions enhanced my sensitivity to the words of participants and helped to build deeper layers of understanding (Higgins, 2008: 138).

6.11 Verification procedures

Throughout the process of data gathering and data explication a conscious reflexivity was employed. I tried to ameliorate any shortcomings during the research by employing a number of verification procedures, as offered by Cresswell (1998: 201-203). These included: triangulation, clarification of researcher bias, prolonged engagement and the production of rich, thick descriptions, persistent observation, peer

review, debriefing, negative case analysis, member checks and external audit. According to Cresswell (1998) using these in a study can enhance its credibility and reliability and enable readers to have confidence in the research. Cresswell (1998) also suggests that not all of these are necessary to establish the trustworthiness of a study, but does recommend researchers to employ some of these procedures. The verification procedures employed in this study include: clarification of researcher bias, triangulation, prolonged engagement, rich thick descriptions and member checks. In the following sub-sections I outline how these were employed.

6.11.1   Clarification of researcher bias

Due to the level of subjectivity involved there was a real danger of researcher bias. Deliberate bias is an attempt to either hide or disproportionately highlight something contrary to its true existence (Kumar, 1999: 194). It was therefore important that correct procedures were applied in order to find answers to the questions being asked (Kumar, 1999: 194). During data gathering I was conscious of my role as a researcher and someone working in a particular context, i.e., LRA. Throughout data gathering I attempted to remain focused on the data, while recording and reporting findings as accurately as possible, without distorting what was communicated for my own interest. To do this I employed the process of bracketing (*epoché*). Bracketing one's beliefs involves suspending taken for granted assumptions or unintentional pre-understandings (Husserl, 1936/1970) about participants and their settings. The process of bracketing is used in phenomenological research to view phenomenon through a critical lens so as not to interject personal experiences or preconceptions into a study (Denzin, 1989). Bracketing is however one of the most misunderstood and controversial aspects of the phenomenological method (Langdridge, 2008: 1129), and has been criticised by existential phenomenologists such as Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, who argue that while we may wish to bracket off aspects of our way of seeing the world, we cannot put aside all our experiences and understanding and see phenomenon 'as if for the first time' (Langdridge, 2008: 1129). Mindful of this critique Langdridge (2008: 1129) asserts that bracketing is nonetheless a valid and an important process to employ in phenomenological research inquiries.

Having a conscious reflexivity helped the process of bracketing and was employed in the following ways. Firstly, by being reflexive I was sufficiently aware that complete bracketing is neither possible nor desirable. Secondly, in being reflexive I was able to recognise and name any preconceived notions or ideas I might have had about participants and their communities, and so was able to bracket any biases I found myself to have, while remaining centred on the dialogical relationship and what participants chose to share.

6.11.2   Triangulation

Triangulation is a process where a combination of different methods, sources, expertise and theories provide supporting evidence and depth to the methodological proceedings (Cresswell, 1998: 202). According to Birley and Moreland (1998: 42-43) triangulation in research aims to map out or explain more fully the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. Triangulation can help researchers organise different types of evidence into a coherent frame of reference or relationship, so that it can be compared and contrasted (Elliott and Adelman, 1976; Elliott, 1978). As a method of verification triangulation is an intended check on data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 315), i.e., checking the consistency of findings in an investigation, while ensuring greater understanding (Cresswell, 1998; Denzin, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 2001).

For this study the research method, data sources, research sample and the extensive literature reviews helped to contribute to the triangulation of findings. The theoretical frameworks for the study, the ecological perspective on human development and the socially critical perspective were diverse but supplemented one another and supported the interpretation of the findings. Data sources were multiple and included focus groups, individual interviews and observations. These combined to provide a rich body of qualitative data. The research sample also helped to provide a broad view of the phenomena being investigated. While the research sample provided complementary and often contradictory views, their perspectives were organised via the research method into a coherent frame of reference that is documented in the research findings (cf. Chapter Seven). Finally, the literature reviews in the study were

extensive. Literature reviews according to Fink (2009: 3) are 'a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners'. Boote and Beile (2005: 3) consider literature reviews to be a most important part of any research process. In this study literature reviews helped provide 'a convincing thesis to answer the study's question'(s)[47] (Machi and McEvoy, 2009: 4), in doing so the literature reviews supported the process of triangulation, while illuminating the findings and situating them in the context of existing knowledge.

6.11.3 Rich thick descriptions

According to Power (2008b: 46) rich thick descriptions are usually obtained by means of prolonged engagement with participants. To obtain rich thick descriptions I first drew on 'self as an instrument of enquiry' (McCracken, 1988), specifically I drew on my previous work with School Completion Programme and my current role with LRA. Having worked in these settings I observed various aspects of the study sites and learned about some of the community dynamics. During my work in both of these settings I often spoke with and developed relationships and rapport with members of the study sites, some of whom participated in the study. Added to this engagement in the 'field' (Adler and Adler, 1987) during data gathering enabled me to develop a greater understanding of the social setting of the study sites and the culture of participants. Consequently, I was able to better convey the situations under investigation as well as their contexts (ecologies) (Shenton, 2004: 69). As a result of prolonged engagement a rich body of qualitative data was gathered, full of experiences, insights and views (cf. Chapter Seven 'Research Findings'). The volume and quality of this data suggests that rich thick descriptions were obtained. The study's recommendations in Chapter Nine 'Recommendations' further outlines the extent and the depth of these descriptions, while also demonstrating that the 'voices' of participants are predominantly heard in this study.

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[47] Brackets the authors.

6.11.4   Member checking

According to Cresswell (1998: 203) member checking is another important means for establishing credibility in research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that member checking is perhaps the single most important provision to bolster a study's credibility. When making sense of field data Van Maanen (1983: 37) contends that 'one cannot simply accumulate information without regard to what each bit of information represents in terms of its possible contextual meanings', this 'requires verification from those who took part in the research'. In phenomenological studies member checking involves researchers looking to engage participants' views on the findings and the researcher's interpretations (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995).

In this study member checking was achieved by sharing with participants who took part in the focus groups and individual interviews, a prepared summary draft of the transcripts. Through member checking I sought to learn whether the accounts presented accurately reflected their views and what was shared. During member checking a number of challenges emerged. Namely, in three of the focus groups a number of those who took part in the study were not present on the date organised for feedback. In discussion with those who were present, it was suggested it would be difficult to reconvene the group and that more than likely they would not be present again, as the term of the course or programme they were participating in was complete. Two of the individual interviewees were also unable to meet for feedback. In an effort to ensure that participants had the opportunity for feedback and member checking I employed the following: Firstly, I provided feedback to those who were present and discussed whether any additional comments or clarifications needed to be made or included. Secondly, I invited those who presented to communicate with the other participants, inviting them to contact me for feedback. To facilitate this I provided those present with my telephone number and asked that they pass this on to those not present and relayed that should those not present be interested in meeting again I would make myself available at a time that would better suit them. Thirdly, I spoke with the school principals, coordinators and organisers of the groups and asked that should they be in contact with the groups identified, to remind them to make contact with me either individually or as a group for feedback, or to discuss any aspect of the research (no contact was made). One of the groups had completed their programme and would not

be in contact again with the course organisers. I made a copy of the transcript for each individual member and included a note with my contact details and again invited them to meet with me for feedback or to discuss any aspect of the research, at a mutually acceptable time. This was placed in a sealed stamped envelope. I then asked the coordinator of this group to post it to their home addresses (none made contact for feedback or to discuss further the research). Fourthly, for those who participated in the individual interviews and were not available to meet for feedback, I compiled a transcript and a summary of the key points of the data gathered from the interviews and posted these out to them. Shortly afterwards I followed up with a telephone call to find out if what was contained in the transcript and summary notes captured the essence of the interview. It was communicated back that the accounts provided were a true reflection of what was shared during the interviews. Those participants who engaged in member checking acknowledged that the accounts of the interviews essentially captured what was shared. They also reported that they were satisfied to have these accounts of their experiences, views, priorities and concerns included in the research findings. In order to further ensure that the accounts were rich, robust and well-developed, my findings and explication were subject to external audit and critique from my thesis supervisors, who provided invaluable support as to the ordering and refinement of the findings and the final thesis report.

Employing member checking as a verification procedure enriched the study in a number of ways. Firstly, it helped to establish trustworthiness and gave authority to participants' perspectives. Secondly, it helped manage the threat of researcher bias (Padgett, 1998). Thirdly, having employed this verification procedure I believe readers can have confidence in the study as a credible research project.

6.12   Researchers transformation

Researching and writing this thesis has presented many personal challenges. I embarked on this journey believing that I could take it in my stride. In reality it has taken over my life these last few years. My time has been taken up with reading the literature, developing my writing skills, planning interviews, listening to and transcribing interviews, meeting with my supervisors, writing and re-writing chapters

and developing a study discipline, while trying to balance work and family life. The challenges encountered were felt at every level of my being, and more than once I felt like giving up. However, in the face of these challenges I believe I have learned a lot about myself and about research. Clandinin (1985: 365) asserts that as a result of research projects, 'neither researcher nor participant emerges unchanged'. According to Fonow and Cook (1991) research has a transformative quality. It can emancipate and empower participants and through the experience of engaging with participants and the data derived from them, it can also transform researchers. Having undertaken this research, I firmly believe that I have emerged transformed by the process. As a result of engaging with participants I gained a deeper insight and an appreciation of the many challenges and the difficulties that most of them encountered during their time at school. I have also come to appreciate the importance of having the interviewee's welfare central to the research enterprise, specifically with regards to confidentiality and privacy, and especially the importance of making interview encounters as positive experiences as possible. Over the course of the research I felt that my skills as an interviewer improved and I gained a greater understanding of qualitative research processes. Participation in this study has also provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my own role in regeneration. It has prompted me to stop and consider whose needs are being served by regeneration processes. As a result of this study I have also reflected much on my work as an educator and teacher. I firmly believe that I have now a greater appreciation of the educational challenges faced by children affected by poverty. The data provided by participants has also convinced me of the importance of schools creating environments which are positive, safe and supportive for all children, regardless of their circumstances or socio-economic background. Finally, through my engagement with participants I have come to appreciate the importance of positive human relationships for educational outcomes, especially positive student-teacher relationships for children who experience marginalisation or exclusion.

In conclusion as a researcher and as someone who has worked with the Limerick regeneration programme (2007-2012), I feel deeply privileged at having been allowed access into the lives of people, even if only for a short time. The welcome received and the openness and honesty of participants motivates me to want to honour this in some way and give something back. While limited in this regard, it does not stop me

from producing a thesis where the voices of those who took part in the study are recognised and valued. Therefore, in presenting voices 'from the back of the class' to wider audiences, it is hoped that these culturally sensitive insider's views are appreciated for their unique perspective on education and regeneration processes.

6.13   Generalisability and transferability

In the literature generalisability is a view that the theory generated in a study is useful to understanding other similar situations (Cohen et al., 2007: 135). Schofield (1990: 209) posits that qualitative research is capable of being generalised by studying the typical for its applicability to other situations. Cohen et al. (2007: 137) suggests that it is possible to assess the typicality of a situation, i.e., the profile of the participants and settings, so as to identify possible comparisons and to indicate how data might translate into different settings and cultures. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 45) claims that generalisability can be addressed when accounts provided possess a high degree of commonality between various social settings. These views are supported by Power (2008b: 48) who suggests that theory adds to existing knowledge when it is re-contextualised and when concepts found in one situation are capable of being re-applied to other settings. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 316) however advise researchers who look to generalise their findings to provide their readers with sufficiently rich data. Therefore the production of rich thick descriptions makes possible the transferability of research findings (Cohen et al., 2007: 13; Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 316).

While the intentions of the study were primarily to provide an opportunity for representation and participation, a hope for the study is that the learning gathered through the research does justice to the contributions made by participants. The typicality of the participants enables the possibility of generalising 'within specific groups or communities, situations or circumstances validly and beyond to specific outsider communities, situations or circumstances' (Cohen et al., 2007: 135). The quality of participants' responses provides a unique perspective on education, and when referenced by the literature and placed within the context of existing knowledge,

the findings of the study are capable of being compared to and transferred to other settings or cultures.

6.14   Limitations of the research

This study set out to describe the educational experiences of adult residents from Limerick's regeneration communities, as well as their educational priorities and concerns, while identifying how education might contribute to regeneration in Limerick. While the study appears to have achieved its general aims, inevitably there were limitations.

The first limitation relates to the issue of representation. In designing the sampling strategy it was anticipated that more equal gender and age representation would be achieved. This is because I was aware that many of the groups identified had a diverse gender mix and age profile. However, on the interview dates gender and age participation did not reflect this. In fact actual gender representation in the study reflected a ratio of over 3.5: 1 in favour of women to men. Similarly there was an over-representation of participants in their forties and older. While a considerable body of data and insights were obtained during data gathering, and the voices of males and younger age participants contributed substantially to the findings, age and gender representation in the study had no doubt a limiting effect on the breadth and scope of the research and its findings.

A second limitation arose in relation to respondent participation. One of the community based groups did not turn up on the day of interview due to bad weather. I subsequently tried to organise another date and time for the interview. However, despite assurances given no one turned up on the alternate date. Given the limited availability of the host sites I decided not to pursue interviewing this group any further. While one cannot legislate for climate conditions, this highlights that I lacked a strategy to provide alternative means to reach this group. I also had hoped to interview two people from each of the study sites. However, in one of the study sites I managed to interview only one participant as the other wished not to participate. The right to participate or not in the research is a fundamental right of

all prospective participants (BERA, 2011: 5). The choice not to participate was acknowledged with the upmost sensitivity and respect, thus illustrating that the research was being conducted in an ethical way. I decided at this stage not to attempt to identify further participants because a large body of data was already gathered, and at this stage in the process no new themes were emerging and the data was beginning to repeat itself (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995: 44).

A third limitation I believe was the deliberate decision to exclude from the study those under eighteen years of age. However, the inclusion of children's voices would have introduced certain dynamics into the research process, i.e., a range of design, ethical and child protection concerns which would have needed to be addressed before the research could be undertaken. Given the time frames involved and the essential focus of the study, this was not possible. I acknowledge that the inclusion of children in the study would have added another dimension to the research; such as offering insights into the experiences of students currently or more recently engaged in the educational system.

A fourth limitation concerns possible perceptions that could be made about the study sample, i.e., some of those who took part in the research might seem to represent a more 'advantaged' or empowered group of people, because they participated in various committees and fora or worked in their communities and were involved in community or personal development groups. Having purposely selected the research sample, I was sufficiently aware that most of them experienced many of the challenges associated with living in communities affected by social problems and poor neighbourhood liveability. Through their work in the community those purposely selected did however provide valuable insights into their own and other people's experiences, and proved to be knowledgeable research participants.

6.15   Chapter conclusion

In this chapter I have described the methodology and research process employed in the study. I have also described the process for data collection and explication, as well as a profile of the participants who provided this data. In addition I have addressed ethical, verification and credibility concerns and have drawn attention to some of the obvious limitations of the study. Overall I believe the study's design, methodology and explication process achieved the study's aims and objectives and generated answers to the research questions which were sufficient for the purposes of the study. Despite the limitations noted a rich body of qualitative data was gathered, which enabled an in-depth analysis and discussion of a number of key themes identified. The methods and the respectful and participatory approach employed facilitated the active participation of participants, which helped to guide and direct the research process as well as the data generated.

Journeying through this research process has proved to be a deeply personal learning experience. Reinharz (1992: 194) maintains that during a study learning takes place on three fronts, i.e. on 'the level of the person, the problem, and method'. During this research I have learned much about myself through reflecting on 'how I was during the research process' (Higgins, 2008: 145). I also learned much from listening to the interview data and reading the literature. Having sought the perspective and views of those from communities often excluded from participation in public discourses, I find myself convinced that for Limerick to become an inclusive and thriving urban space those who are excluded must be facilitated in every way to meaningfully input to decision making processes affecting their lives and those of their communities. With these thoughts in mind I present in the next chapter the research findings.

7.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter begins with an outline of participants' experiences of primary and post-primary school. In the section voices 'from the back of the class' I describe accounts of bullying, maltreatment, discrimination and abuse of power, along with accounts of negative teacher attitudes towards children from the study site areas. This is followed by accounts of the symbolic significance and implications of being put to the 'back of the class'. For some participants being put to the 'back of the class' contributed to their leaving school early, which in turn had subsequent negative life impacts. Next, I present accounts of participants' positive school experiences, along with differences and similarities in experiences between the older and younger participants in the study. This is followed by an outline of participants' hopes and aspirations for their children's education. I then describe the main barriers to participants' educational participation, retention and progression. These include: economic hardship, family difficulties, the negative influence of peers, stigmatisation at school and discrimination in the classroom, the competitive nature of the education system and deficits in special educational needs provision. Next, I describe participants' views on the benefits of education and learning and document what they saw were positive developments in education, e.g. computers and new technologies, targeted supports and services, out-of-school time provision and community-based adult education. Subsequently, I document participants' views on the Limerick regeneration programme. This is followed by accounts of what participants perceived should be the educational priorities of the Limerick regeneration programme. Finally, I document participants' views on their participation in the study.

7.2 Voices from 'the back of the class': experiences of school

During data gathering participants described aspects of their primary and post-primary school experiences. For most this experience was characterised by bullying, maltreatment, discrimination and the abuse of power. However, positive experiences of school were also reported. The following sub-sections documents participants' accounts of their school experiences.

7.2.1 General experiences of school

Most participants reported negative experience of school, with some describing their time at school as 'hell' and 'hating it'. Some reported that post-primary was particularly difficult. However, the general experience of school (primary and post-primary) was so negative that a number of the participants decided to drop out of school early, some as young as 12 or 13 years of age.

> 'Hated it, I just never got on with the teachers' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'It was bad as the nuns used to kill us' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

> 'Confidence, nobody has given you confidence, you get no praise' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'I didn't like school and I wasn't getting on with the teachers and that. So it was either go or just get thrown out' (Male Southside, 20).

> 'I couldn't wait to get out the door' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'In the first year it was hell because the teacher was a sadist, he didn't want to seem to educate us. All he would do is just sit down and talk to us, there was no kind of education, he didn't give a shite if we did no homework' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'It was only in secondary school that I found it tough. In primary school it was perfect, I was a great student. In secondary school I just never liked it' (Male Southside, 19).

'It was different in secondary school than in primary school. Because you can always go to the teacher in primary if you have a problem. Whereas in secondary school who are you going to?' (Female Northside, early 50's).

7.2.2 Maltreatment at school

A number of participants reported examples of maltreatment while at school which included slapping and beatings, either with the hand or objects such as the wooden spoon or leather[48]. These experiences left lasting memories which poignantly came across in their accounts, leading some to describe their memories of school as characterised by fear, whereas others reported receiving little encouragement by the classroom teacher or not been supported in their learning. For some participants some teachers actively discouraged and made little of them.

'You got slapped if you were late and if you said anything out of the way' (Male Northside, early 50's).

'It was the wooden spoon for the girls and the leather for the boys' (Female, Northside, early 50's).

'You got slapped for nothing and if you got slapped in school and went home and said it, you were probably told you deserved it or probably got a box[49], so you weren't going to win' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

'Picked on for everything in school, which didn't help children's confidence' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

'I remember once a teacher threw a ruler at me and said "at the end of the day I will have my job and you will be on the dole"' (Male Southside, 19).

'I remember one day a teacher picked up my bag and fired it at the door. They are getting away with it too much; they can't be doing things like that' (Male Southside, 20).

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[48] A piece of leather used to hit students with.

[49] A 'box' means being hit with a clenched fist.

'They [teachers[50]] taught you through fear. You weren't talked to you were shouted at, it was horrible' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

'They knocked the confidence out of us, when we were kids it wasn't confidence they taught us, it was fear' (Female Northside, early 60's).

'You are treated like a child in school [referring to post-primary] and this makes you behave irresponsibly. It is all about if you are treated properly' (Male Southside, 19).

One participant considered he was lucky to get through school 'without being boxed and thumped'. The reason for this he believed was 'because I wasn't troublesome' (Male Northside, mid 50's). Another participant remembered the classroom teacher telling him that he was never going 'to amount to anything' (Male Southside, mid 40's), while another reported remembering going home from school and being fearful about returning to school the next day.

'You went home from school and you were afraid of your life thinking about going back the following morning, because the minute you got through the door they were waiting to hit you' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

Throughout the interviews the maltreatment of 'certain' children in school by members of religious congregations were also reported. Those 'certain' children came from the study sites and were perceived by participants to be from families with low socio-economic status. The following accounts document the way in which participants were maltreated by members of religious congregations. These experiences were predominantly those of the older participants in the study.

'I found the nuns very, very vicious' (Female Northside, former resident of Central Limerick, mid 60's).

'They [teachers and the religious] were so bitter. They didn't want to know, they didn't show any interest in the child's education and there was a responsibility on them to look after us as well' (Female Northside, early 60's).

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[50] From here on in this chapter these brackets [ ] denote the author's insertion.

'It was very bad, because I wrote with my left hand and I was made write with my right hand. We used to get slapped with the side of the ruler on the back of your left hand and you were told it is the devil's hand and you were the devil's daughter because you wrote with your left hand' (Female Northside, early 60's).

One participant reported an incident of a young boy in her class whose parents she believed suffered from alcoholism. As he was the eldest of his siblings he had the responsibility of looking after them and his parents, and so missed a lot of school. This participant remembered how outraged she was at the treatment he received by some of the teachers in the school.

'He got beaten in school for that and the teachers knew that that was why he wasn't in school' (Non-resident, late 50's).

While almost all of the participants attended city schools, one participant in one of the focus groups attended a boarding school not in the city.

'I thought the treatment of some of the pupils in my class was awful. There was an orphanage beside the school, the girls there were called convent children, they weren't shown respect at all they were very badly treated, except for the rich' (Non-resident, mid 50's).

In one of the focus groups participants were probed as to why they believed the poorer children were maltreated in school. A reason given was

'Because they [teachers and especially the religious] were all frustrated and if you said anything they would bate you' (Female Northside, early 60's).

It was also reported that the religious were responsible for creating social divisions in the classroom, especially between more affluent and poorer students.

'The nuns allowed it; they created a big divide in the schools years ago' (Male Central Limerick, early 60's).

7.2.3 Abuse of power, power and powerlessness

The maltreatment of children in school reflected Irish society of the time, where those in positions of power, in this instance the teacher, could get away with such practices unchallenged. This was because there was little legislative framework for the protection and the welfare of children, really up until the mid-1970s, early 1980s. Not being able to challenge incidences of maltreatment left many participants harbouring a deep sense of anger and frustration at not having been able to do anything about it, which poignantly came across in their accounts. The following quotations capture participants' perceptions of how those in positions of authority in schools abused their power. They also capture how children from poorer backgrounds felt powerless when confronted with this abuse of power. When probed as to why poor children were maltreated in school it was reported that this was because they and their families were often powerless and voiceless.

> 'The nuns and the clergy are on a pedestal' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'There was no scope for our parents, my parents never felt in the position to go and challenge, back then you couldn't open your mouth, never mind the child, even the parents couldn't' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

These accounts show that in unequal societies those from socio-economic marginalised backgrounds can be excluded from political power and lack a voice to influence change (Lynch et al., 2000; Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; McMinn, 2000). In such circumstances people often end up blaming themselves for their own status in life and often feel powerless to change it (McMinn, 2000). Freire (1970: 46) also posits that 'as long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they also tend to fatalistically "accept" their exploitation'.

There was likewise the view that some schools and teachers continue to operate from traditional power bases.

> 'Teachers have a huge influence on your life. They are basically choosing your life and have the power to ruin it' (Male Southside, 20).

> 'The teachers are like bouncers or guards who boss you around and that, and threatening you as well' (Male Southside, 18).

'There is a lot of keeping power and keeping control, even among the young teachers' (Female Southside, mid 30's).

7.2.4   The experience of discrimination in school

Stigmatisation at school was a theme reported by most participants as having been a barrier to their educational participation and progression. One participant reported that 'you were taught according to the area you lived in' (Female Southside, late 50's). Other participants reported examples of stigmatisation and how it was experienced in the school setting. This occurred when 'certain' students were blatantly favoured and privileged by teachers over others in the classroom. Blatant displays of preferential treatment by teachers towards some students were perceived to have been based on perceptions of social class and limiting and static views of their identity. Some of the older participants in the study believed that teachers and others involved in the life of the school were prejudiced against children who lived in the study site areas. So much so, that many of them felt socially excluded in their schools.

> 'When I reflect on it now many times I felt that because we were from Southill…. I remember feeling for the first time and I was only twelve, I could feel there was class distinction. I think that was my first experience as a child being discriminated against and it always stuck in my mind and actually made me a bit rebellious in school' (Female Southside, early 50's).

> 'You were pigeon holed into a section before you started and the teachers didn't give a shit if you were learning or not' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

> 'People just look at you as being from a troubled area and there is a judgment made before they even start. So once you put Southill or Moyross on it [application form for school] you are going nowhere with it, you may as well brand them on their back or forehead' (Male Northside, mid 50's).

One participant shared a story of how his family wanted him to go to a certain secondary school but his application was refused, which he believed was because 'of where I came from' (Male Southside, early 60's). Feeling stigmatised by one's address was found to have had limiting effects both on educational and life aspirations.

'If you were from an area like here you were normally gone from school by the time you reached your Leaving Cert., so they never really expected too much out of you. Therefore college education was out of your depth' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

'If you came from 'certain' areas of the city, and or 'certain' backgrounds, that is the norm. Your marker is set very low for you and if you grow up with your marker set very low you will never raise the bar yourself and the majority will stay in their box where they are put and never really come to expect much from yourself' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Another participant reported that the study site areas would always be perceived as

'Always having a kind of stigma, this was due not only to the feud[51] it's the address more than anything else' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

The perceived stigma associated with being from certain areas of Limerick city was seen to result in children being 'frightened to say where they are from' (Male Northside, mid 50's), because they might be 'treated like second class citizens' (Male Northside, mid 50's).

7.2.5   Teachers' aspirations for children from the study sites

As previously discussed a number of participants highlighted that their school experience was such that the teachers treated children differently because they were poor. Some participants reported that the 'brighter' children in their classes tended to be those from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds in Limerick who seemingly got all the attention from the teacher. It was also perceived that because of financial constraints in the family home, teachers' aspirations for them were low. In some cases instances of affective inequality was reported, with participants relating that some teachers actively disrespected and discriminated against them because of their family's socio-economic status and/or address.

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[51] The feud in Limerick refers to incidents 'when violence and gang warfare reached new crescendos' (Duggan, 2009: 17). According to Duggan the decades before 2000 saw some episodic violence, however, over time these incidents built up to become one of Ireland's most renowned gang wars.

'They treated people differently if you were poor. They just taught us sewing, cooking and religion I can't remember learning anything more than that' (Female Southside, early 60's).

'I would say in my whole time in secondary school I only found three teachers that had time for me out of all my teachers' (Male Southside, 19).

'If there wasn't money in one's family then there was no possibility of one going to college, so the thinking was 'what do you teach them'?' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

'The brighter kids received more of the attention whereas they should have spent the time with me to get my ability up to the standard' (Female Central Limerick, mid 40's).

'Certain people were being groomed for college and if you were from one area you were being groomed at best to become a labourer, you were prepared physically and psychologically to be a labourer and if you were fantastic you might become an apprentice' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

'Some teachers might not like the way you look or the way you talk, or you might just have a different attitude than them, or they might think they are of a higher class' (Male Southside, 19).

It was also reported that some teachers blatantly ignored, forgot about and even bullied some students.

'In certain classes they would avoid you and some teachers didn't care as they weren't there for the school, but were there for themselves' (Male Southside, 19).

'Looked down on you and put you down' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

As a result of these experiences some participants felt that some of those in teaching positions were inadequately trained and unsuitable for the job of teaching.

'I went to the Christian Brothers. First of all they weren't trained as teachers. So they didn't know what they were on about and some of them were mentally defective people' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Due to the fact that these practices occurred one participant was of the view that

> 'They [teachers] were left get away with it, because there was nothing much expected of you' (Female Southside, late 50's).

Favouritism shown by 'certain' teachers towards 'certain' students whilst at school was also perceived to have been a major barrier to some of the participants' success in education.

> 'In a school run by nuns they would have their favourites, the well to do, they compared us, you know. They would say this girl is better than us, she was the favourite she got all the attention. Whereas the more posh children were the perfect ones, they threw us there and those over there, "sure what were they doing here?" That was her attitude' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'The teachers' pets got the attention because of their parents. They still would have gotten on in life because of their parents, whereas the attention should have been given to the girls who would not have been from high families' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Not getting the appropriate support or attention in school by the classroom teacher was reported as having devastating consequences.

> 'Yeah you grow up being told you are thick, and the scars people have. It takes an awful lot for people to overcome that, some people never do and are convinced that they are stupid' (Female Northside, mid 40's).

Due to their family circumstances a number of participants reported that special efforts and compensatory measures should have been put in place for them. They also reported that this would have helped to level the playing field and enable marginalised students to participate more in school and achieve more equal educational outcomes.

> 'They should have treated us more equal, people in so called disadvantaged areas' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'They should have spent the time with me to get my ability up to their standard' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'There should have been more support there for children who were not bright or hadn't the means [from poor family backgrounds] and give them the opportunity to flourish' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

The findings in this section highlight failures in each pf the ecological systems, but especially the micro system, and supports Reay's (2002: 223) contention that despite the rhetoric of egalitarian and comprehensive education, schools continue to act as a process of class sifting and sorting. The findings puts forward the need for a 'radical rethinking' of the education system, while emphasising the importance of treating fairly all children in the classroom environment. The following statements also suggest the importance of teachers being equipped with appropriate knowledge and information on epistemological and child centred pedagogical practices.

> 'Change their mind set, stop roaring at children and start interacting more. Learn how to interact with the children and tap into children's talents, and ensure that each and every child is getting the same attention' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'Teachers need a little bit more training in how to engage with young people at their level, for by working with them at their level, it works out better in the end' (Male Northside, late 50's).

7.2.6 Leaving school early

The following participants reported feeling 'pushed' out of the education system by their teachers.

> 'The nuns were very hard they drove it in to you with a wooden spoon, because of that I hated school and couldn't wait to get out of it' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

> 'Do you know what drives me mad? I wouldn't have left school early; they [the teachers] drove me to it' (Female Southside, early 50's).

One participant shared how she 'loved learning' and liked school, but due to what she believed was a learning difficulty that went undiagnosed, she was unable to keep up with the work in school. Due to her inability to keep pace with the rest of the class she was 'humiliated a lot in school by the classroom teacher' (Female Southside, mid 30's). With the result that she felt she had no other option but to drop out of school early.

'I was very misunderstood in school, I wasn't really that great, I wasn't smart so I failed and the teacher just didn't support me. She never explained anything or spent time with me to help me. It got to the point where I felt so kind of stupid that I wasn't catching up, I just left school. I was too embarrassed to keep on going' (Female Southside, mid 30's).

Another participant related that he 'used to go to a place for slow learners' and used to get picked on by other students in the school yard. This resulted in him ending up in fights and then getting into trouble with the teacher, and so

'Wouldn't go in to school then, and would just go off' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

Leaving school early was however not solely the result of being maltreated or humiliated in school. Some participants suggested that their own behaviour and choices resulted in them leaving school early.

'I had a choice of leaving or get expelled, so I dropped out in 6th year' (Male Southside, 20).

'I never liked being told what to do or waking up early in the morning' (Male Southside, 20).

'Teachers wrecking your head and there is a lot of pressure on you, pressure to learn things off, I wasn't interested in that' (Male Southside, 19).

There were also expectations on some children to drop out of school due to economic constraints in the home.

'I had to leave school for circumstances as I was the oldest of eleven so I had to go and work, other than that I loved it' (Male Central Limerick, mid 60's).

'We hadn't a lot of money growing up so we weren't able to get things and I found the teachers embarrassed you if you hadn't a book or something. Then she would roar at me in front of everyone, kind of bringing it up and putting it on me rather than on getting on to my mother and father about it. I was made fun of, because I didn't have what the rest of them had' (Female Southside, mid 30's).

'I was the eldest of my family and I had to get work because of the way things were at home financially. I was happy to help my mother and happy to get a job' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Regardless of why participants left school early, some expressed deep regret at having done so, because they 1) missed out on an essential part of childhood, and 2) experienced negative consequences in later life in terms of life prospects and opportunities. As a result there was a clear sense of anger and frustration directed at themselves, their parents, teachers and the education system for having dropped out, been forced out, or for not having been encouraged in any meaningful way to stay on at school.

'I loved school, I absolutely loved it. I regret that I never stayed on in school, because I was quite good at school and was really into it' (Male Central Limerick, early 50's).

'If I had my time over again I would never have left school and would have learned more' (Female Southside, late 40's).

'I regret leaving school early just for myself, if I stayed on at school I would have had more opportunities in life' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

7.2.7   Being put to the back of the class and its impacts on participants

Being put to the back of the class is a significant sub-theme in the findings and being put to the 'back of the class' during their time at school was voiced by many participants, especially the older participants. A number of sub-themes relating to the experience of being put to the 'back of the class' are now presented. These include: the children most likely to be put to the 'back of the class'; reasons why a child might be put to the 'back of the class'; what it felt like being put to the 'back of the class'; and the impacts of having been put to the 'back of the class' during the time spent at school.

'If you messed they put you to the back of the class' (Male Southside, 19).

'There was fear in the classrooms and when you hadn't that kind of spark you were put to the back and they concentrated on the other kids that could perform and the favourites were put to the top of the class' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

'If you weren't quick enough or smart enough you were put to the back of the class' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

'The education system was grand I suppose I was just lazy, so they put me to the back of the class' (Female Northside, mid 20's).

'I was always in the front but when he came in [particular teacher] he would put me to the back of the class, he just didn't like me and I didn't like him' (Male Southside, 20).

According to one participant the children most likely to be put to the 'back of the class' were those from communities in Limerick city with high levels of social exclusion.

'I went to secondary for a month I will never forget it, because we were from Weston she started tormenting us from one day to the next. She would say go back there ye! And we were put to the back of the class. We didn't exist as far as she was concerned. It was class distinction, they only wanted people from the more posh areas, whereas they roared at us and talked down to us' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

Another participant shared that when she was in primary school she was good at school. However, she and other children were put to the 'back of the class' because of judgements made about them by the teacher based on their families socio-economic circumstances.

'I was always good in school but when we were young the classes were so big and those whose mothers and fathers were working were up at the front and those at the back were just forgotten about. So that was the mentality back then of the teachers or whatever, I don't know' (Female, Southside, late 40's).

'The nearest row inside the door all the girls from Corbally, the yuppies, and then the next row was for the girls from Garryowen, they were more popular than us. Then there were the girls from Mary Street and the surrounding areas, and the last row was for the people from St. Mary's Park, what we call the Island Field, which is like Keyes and Carew'[52] (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

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[52]   Keyes and Carew are estates in the Southill area of Limerick city.

Participants further described the experience of being put to the 'back of the class'.

> 'At the start we were in the front, really where we wanted to go and all of a sudden your place was in at the back "you go back there or you go back there"! I'd say I was at the front of the class about four times that was it. I was at the back then' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

> 'Like all schools the people who they thought was going to get something out of it and the fellows that don't, like me, were fucked to the back' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

> 'I was put to the back of the class because I wasn't picking up anything. I would just sit back and listen because that is the way I was taught' (Female, Northside, early 60's).

> 'The classes were much bigger and you had to keep up with it. If you were slow you were shoved to the back of the class, they forgot about you' (Female non resident, late 40's).

> 'I was good at school and so was placed in the middle row, so we were kind of ok and the swats over there are what we used to call them. But this third row they were treated utterly, looking back on it now they were despicably treated. She had no time for them, now they all came out and did well, well most of them did well, but literally she had no time for them. She was more interested in rows one, but two got a bit of time as well' (Female, Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'I was a tall person and all tall people were put to the back of the class' (Female Southside, late 60's).

Some participants described the experience of being put at the 'back of the class' as follows:

> 'I was put to the back so I couldn't hear what the teacher was saying and then she'd run down and give me a slap for why I didn't answer her' (Female Southside, late 50's).

> 'I had a page and a biro going into school that is all I had and I would be put to the back of the class and I think they would just let me doodle away at the back' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

As a result of being put at the 'back of the class' some participants reported that they came to believe they were failures.

> 'I was thrown to the back as well and forgotten about. I just breezed through the school and nobody checked on me' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

> 'People lost out in reading and writing when growing up' (Female Southside, early 60's).

> 'I was always at the back and I felt that I lost out in many ways, because sitting at the back, children can miss out on their education as they are not noticed any more' (Female Southside, late 60's).

> 'You didn't get the confidence or the education and you began to think that you must be stupid' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

The experience of being put to the 'back of the class' was symbolic of other maltreatments experienced by participants during their time at school. The impact of this on individuals was low educational aspirations, poor educational attainment, school estrangement, early school leaving intent and early school leaving. The symbolic significance of 'certain' children being put to the 'back of the class' highlights how the microsystem of some schools in Limerick city effectively failed many children from the study site areas.

7.2.8   Positive experiences of school

While most participants reported negative experiences of school this was not an experience shared by all. Some reported that the experience of education and going to school was a positive one. Positive experiences included: academic support, kindness and friendship from teachers and from members of the religious orders. Without this support some participants reported that they might never have progressed through the education system. However, in some cases these positive feelings were tinged with an awareness of being treated as favourites. There was also the awareness that not all children had this same status accorded to them. The findings show that the experience of both primary and post-primary school was positive for some children, but not for all children.

'My experience in the primary was quite positive we had great respect for our teachers and had no regrets on any aspect of my education' (Male Southside, late 40's).

'I couldn't be happier because we had good teachers, they didn't teach us an awful lot, but they were good to us and they were kind to us' (Male Central Limerick, early 60's).

'Teachers were nice and having the same teachers every day was positive, however going to secondary school was a bit overwhelming' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

'Some of the Christian Brothers were also good as well' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

'The school I went to in primary was a lovely school at the time' (Female Northside, early 50's).

Another participant shared an experience of how the nuns went out of their way to help her during her time at school.

'I had a great experience in secondary, great support from the Sisters and I would have had private evening tuition with the principal coming up to my Leaving Cert., cos there was a load of us in the family and you would get no peace in our house. I got to go to the convent in the evenings and studied for whatever. In the convent they fed me and gave me a room and then any of the sisters that used to teach would help me out with whatever I needed help with' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

One participant related how she 'would have been classed as poor' and because of that was eligible for the school bun and milk scheme[53]. She related fondly a story of a Principal who was a nun and who looked out for her and often kept her back from breaks to give her the bun and milk, so that nobody would know her circumstances.

'Every day to give me the bun and milk, supposedly no one was to know. But everyone knew why I was being kept back, and she in her goodness used to put honey on it for me' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

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[53] This was part of a School Meal Scheme rolled out nationally. Section 273 to 279 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1981 enabled County Borough Councils, Urban District Councils and Town Commissioners to make arrangements for the provision of meals for some children attending primary schools.

Despite the perceived stigmas associated with receiving the bun and milk another participant related that she envied those in receipt of the bun and milk as she was not entitled to it. She also reported that she could have done with it during her time at school.

> 'Those that didn't get it wanted it and those that did get it hated it' (Female non-resident, late 40's).

One participant reported that while he was treated well in school and some teachers were supportive, it was not the same for all students.

> 'I couldn't say that [positive treatment] for some of my co-pupils at the time as you were treated by your families means' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

The support received from a particular nun had a profound and positive impact on one of the participants.

> 'She saw something in me and we became great friends even until today. I was delighted with myself. She encouraged me and singled me out in a good way and I felt comfortable with her so that was a lovely experience I had' (Female Southside, late 60's).

Another participant considered he was lucky as he was

> 'One of those young people that got the favouritism in school and so I developed a love for education' (Male former resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

The same participant related

> 'I had teachers who clearly had a love of education and I actually got that from them. There were teachers who were just fantastic people and were challenging the mould of the stereotype abusive sort' (Male former resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

> 'One was a nun who was a fantastic teacher and a Christian Brother who was the finest teacher I have ever seen. I was just lucky enough when he arrived in school' (Male former resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

7.2.9 Hopes and aspirations of participants

A number of participants related that their hopes and aspirations for their children's education were:

> 'To go on further than I did' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'My hope is that they would go all the way through school and to college as well' (Female Southside, late 40's).

> 'As far as I am concerned they have done a lot better than I have done and I am grateful for that' (Female Northside, late 40's).

> 'Complete all their education and my hope is that I will live long enough to see that day as this would make me very proud' (Female Southside, late 60's).

> 'To have the knowledge for the rest of their lives no matter where they go' (Female Northside, early 40's).

> 'No more than doing their best, study for exams and be happy with that' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

Some participants expressed concern for when their children would finish school because 'there would be nothing there for them' (Female Northside, early 40's), and there are 'very few jobs out there' (Female Northside, early 40's). Nonetheless, completing the compulsory period of education was considered important because of the increasing importance of education for, 1) success in the labour market and, 2) for more successful lives as adults.

> 'For without their education children would be held back in their lives, as education is vital in the modern age. Without it the child will be left behind' (Female Southside, mid 60's).

> 'Education can improve your quality of life and the better you are educated the better it is for you, you can have a better life' (Female Northside, early 30's).

> 'It prepares you for life and it gives you skills for life' (Male Southside, 19).

7.3 Barriers to education

In sections 7.2 – 7.2.7 a number of barriers to participants' education were identified by them. These included: discrimination, maltreatment, poor teacher attitudes and low teacher aspirations for poorer children as well as the abuse of power. The following sub-sections presents further barriers identified by participants to their educational participation, retention and progression. These include: family difficulties, bullying and negative peer influences, economic hardship, a competitive education system and deficits in Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision.

7.3.1 Family difficulties

The critical importance of the family environment is highlighted in the literature for its impacts on children's educational and developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Conaty, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Galvin et al., 2009; Higgins, 2008; Humphreys et al., 2011; Tett et al., 2001). The findings in this section report that family circumstances and family difficulties presented barriers to children's education. The findings also show that some parents were unable to support their children in school, as they themselves were damaged by their own educational experiences. The following statements capture what participants had to say in relation to family difficulties, these include: parents' unwillingness or inability to support their children's education, putting pressure on students to succeed in examinations, together with the need for parents to model behaviours they wish their children to emulate.

> 'Some parents couldn't care less if the children went to school today or not' (Female Central Limerick, late 30's).

> 'Some parents I'd say couldn't be bothered getting up today to get them to school, so a lot has to be done with the parents' (Female Southside, early 50's).

> 'Parents can put too much pressure on children to achieve in school' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'Parents should take more of an interest in what the child is doing and help them out when they come home' (Male Southside, 19).

196

'It is a huge thing that the child turns up for school because of the day they might have had, or the week they might have had, as a lot of kids have a lot of baggage and this needs to be taken on board' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

'If the kids don't get support at home they are not going to show interest in school' (Female Northside, late 50's).

Regardless of their own experiences of school or the personal issues of parents, participants voiced that parental involvement in children's education was important and needed to be attended to.

'Parents are the primary educators and so must listen to and support children' (Male Northside, late 50's).

'Parents should be more supportive and take an interest in what the child is doing and help them out when they come home' (Male Southside, 20).

'Much of the responsibility for learning rests with the mother as she is the one you learn from mostly' (Female Central Limerick, late 30's).

'Encouragement for the child must come from the home, like getting them up in the morning, bringing them to school and helping children with their homework'' (Female Southside, early 50's).

7.3.2   Bullying and negative peer influences

The issue of bullying and the negative influence of peers (students of their own age group who lived in their community) were identified by a number of participants as barriers to their engagement in education.   For some it influenced their decision to drop out of school early.

'I loved school. It was the peers that I came up against that actually made me feel that I had no right to be there, so I up and I left' (Female Southside, early 30's).

Children calling each other names were seen to have had an influence on children's success in the education system.

'Friends who have left school are calling them nerds if they stay on' [in school] (Male Southside, 19).

'There is a bit of intimidation that they are being slagged off [taunted], and the other kids [those not in school but of their age group] are more streetwise than the kids who are in school' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

The problem of bullying was identified as intergenerational and was seen to impact on participants own children's experiences in their communities and schools. Bullying was reported as becoming an increasing problem in 'certain parts' of Limerick city, namely the study sites. While perceived as a problem in some school settings, it was considered reflective of what was happening in the wider community, with many of the perpetrators of bullying linked to criminality (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's). It was also suggested that bullying is often not reported because of fears of further attacks, etc., especially by those whose families are involved in criminality. To address this problem it was reported that systematic responses were needed at the community and school level. At the school level it was reported that teachers should include assertiveness training in the school curriculum and teach 'practical survival skills' (Female Southside, Mid 40's). When asked what the benefits of this might be one participant replied.

'To help children cope better with bullying, be confident and to be able to stand their own ground' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

It was also stated that

'Principals and teachers should follow up on cases of bullying in the school' (Male Southside, 19).

To address bullying behaviour at the community level, it was felt that this would require a comprehensive 'solution to this issue' from organisations such as the Gardaí, Local Authority, Estate Management, Community groups, etc.

7.3.3 Economic hardship

In the study the costs associated with education were identified by older and younger participants as having been one of the main barriers to their educational participation, retention and progression. Some of the costs identified included: school uniform (e.g. shoes, tracksuit, jacket), school books and materials, school snacks and lunches, exam fees (state exams) and study fees, transport to school, school activities (outings, extra-curricular) and school levies/contributions (school insurance, etc.), along with the cost of Holy Communion and Confirmation in primary school. While some children might have liked to progress in education, their aspirations were curtailed by a realisation of familial financial limitations and hardship. This is captured powerfully in the following quotations.

> 'It was money, because in my house my father didn't have the money to send the three of us to secondary school, for books and everything. You know free education, well the free word doesn't come in to it at all, it is more like costly education' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'The struggle in the family of trying to put you through school was a different story. I was surrounded by kids and it was very clear that there was money in some families and it was very clear that there was none in mine. I was bright and I was top of my class and I was getting the exam results, you got the attention then from the school, from the system, it is like they were going to mind him. I wouldn't have got through without that support, but it certainly wasn't universal' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

> 'You want to go and learn but you are being stopped because you don't have the correct clothes, and if some of these costs were taken away it would make it easier and that would help' (Female Northside, late 30's).

> 'Money was a big issue, the sooner we went out to work the better so that we could bring in some money as it was needed' (Female Central Limerick, late 40's).

> 'Very few went to college that was for more well off and affluent, rather than the ordinary working class families, like where I had come from' (Female Central Limerick, late 40's).

'It does cost money and it costs families to put children through school, and university is beyond the imagination of many because of the money that is involved and because of the area we were living in. We could never afford that kind of education' (Male Central Limerick, early 60's).

'Money is a big thing, to have to pay for insurance and books and things and the costs of going to college' (Male Southside, 20).

'In my house there were many of us and the cost of books and trips and everything, and secondary school was more expensive than primary, because in primary there exists the book rental scheme' (Female Northside, early 30's).

'The cost of uniforms and sports clothing you want to go and learn but you are being stopped because you don't have the correct clothes' (Female Northside, mid 20's).

While many participants considered education to be 'the way forward' (Female Southside, late 50's) for social and economic success; the financial realities confronting them as they grew up meant that their family were unable to support their on-going participation in education. This would limit their educational aspirations and/or progression to further or higher education.

'Your family wouldn't be able to maintain you in school and if you came from a certain area you would be above your station if you aspired to go to college, it wasn't an expectation in the family either. Once you realised you could go you were gone [leave school early] because they never had a notion that education was going to be part of your life' (Female Southside, late 50's).

'Once your family could not afford to pay for college or university then educational progression was not an option for you' (Female Northside, Mid 20's).

As a result of economic hardship and family financial constraints there was a strong sense of apathy towards school and a sense of hopelessness and despair, especially among the younger participants who voiced concerns about their future life prospects. They also voiced the daunting prospect that the only future in sight was welfare payments as the primary source of income. These concerns were heightened by the prevailing period of economic recession at the time of data gathering (2011-2012).

'The way schools are now they are not offering anything really are they?' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

'Even with a good education you are not guaranteed anything are you? Except the dole' (Male Southside, 19).

The findings show that financial constraints militated against staying on at school or progressing further in education. This finds support in the literature which states that limited economic resources can dictate the spending priorities of households, with the efforts to 'make ends meet' taking precedence over optional goods such as education (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998: 472). Lynch and O'Riordan (1998: 472) also note that economic constraints can influence the plans and priorities of students while they are still in second level education. However, students in such circumstances do not give up on the education system, instead they 'negotiate and inhabit the education system with an eye to the opportunities which are open and those which are not' (ibid: 472). Interestingly, all participants in the study undertook or were currently engaged in community adult education programmes. The perceived importance of community-based adult education programmes are presented later in the chapter.

7.3.4   School as a pressured and competitive environment

During the research a number of participants reported that school was becoming an increasingly pressured and competitive environment. This was attributed to the emphasis placed on scoring points in reading and maths assessments in primary school and achieving points and grades at secondary level, especially in the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations.

> 'It either encourages or discourages because it is all about numbers, targets and the whole lot. This type of system doesn't work for some children' (Female Non-resident, late 30's).

> 'Too much writing went on in school and that doesn't help students to learn and the fact that you fail Maths or English in your Leaving, then you fail the whole exam, that is wrong' (Male Southside, 18).

According to some participants the system of education, especially at post-primary level, discriminated most against those who were not academically inclined or who experience socio-economic exclusion. A competitive education system was likewise seen to exert pressure on parents and families; many of whom worried about their children's welfare and their ability to cope with the pressures of school.

> 'There is a lot of pressure on young people particularly during the puberty years when they are coping with developments within themselves. They are too young to be struggling with those things' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

The emphasis on results and grades in State examinations and points for University were considered detrimental to the holistic development of the child. Therefore it was suggested that schools and the education system should place more of an emphasis on developing the whole person with due respect for their individual talents, abilities and capacities.

> 'The whole person and ensuring that children get an all-round education' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'Individualise education and encourage them, as all children are not going to be academically the same' (Female Southside, early 40's).

> 'Include more physical activities like hands on learning, where children are not sitting in the classroom for up to six hours at a time looking at a board' (Male Southside, 20).

It was also voiced that education in schools should focus more on what people have to face in life, rather than competition for points and grades. The types of education participants identified included: sex education, health and relationships education and programmes which develop students' confidence and self-esteem.

> 'They should focus on what you have to face in life, sex education, health, relationship education and skills development' (Female Southside, late 30's).

> 'They should be trying to change people's vision and the way they look at things, instead of trying to force subjects that is no good to them' (Male Southside, 20).

Horses were seen to be part of the culture in each of the study site areas, while boating was seen to be part of the culture of students in the St. Mary's Park study site area (probably due to its location near to the Shannon river). One participant stated that the culture of home and the community should play more of a part in the curriculum of schools.

> 'Ensure that children's own environment is always part of it' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

It was also stated that mainstream education needed to reconfigure many of its current assessment[54] procedures, while seeking to develop more creative ways to assess students' ability and learning across all subject areas.

> 'The only piece of knowledge that seems to be valued is the Leaving or the Junior Cert. results. These seem to be the only measurements these days' (Male Northside, late 50's).

Forms of educational assessments which are on-going and incremental were perceived to ameliorate many of the pressures associated with a competitive system of education.

> 'These [educational assessments that are on-going and incremental] would enable children to achieve more and up the child's chances and give them the feeling that they can do it, which would result in a higher rate of people going through' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

One participant suggested that learning and assessment should be active and on-going and should acknowledge and reward informal learning as well as formal learning.

> 'There should be a two strand education system. One that measures your formal education and an equally valuable one which measures your informal learning, where one can get brownie points up along the way and maybe at some stage you could cross them over so that everything doesn't depend on you getting Irish and Maths. So that if you want to do a particular course and you have enough brownie points from your informal learning that you can add to your formal learning' (Male Northside, late 50's).

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[54] The process of gathering, recording, interpreting, using and reporting information about a child's progress and achievement in developing knowledge, skills and attitudes (NCCA, 2008: 6 -7).

Participants also stressed the need for forms of assessment which recognise ability and achievement in areas other than those formally recognised in the current education system, i.e., the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate and the variations on these (e.g. Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied or Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme). The system of assessment 'like the Gaisce[55] or FETAC[56] awards' (Male Northside, late 50's), were proposed as a means of providing an appropriate accreditation route for children struggling academically to succeed in a competitive education system.

7.3.5   Deficits in special educational needs (SEN) provision

Deficits in special educational needs provision (SEN)[57] was regarded by a number of participants to have been a major barrier to children's education, though not necessarily to have been a barrier to their own education, possibly because they were never assessed. However, with special educational needs increasingly receiving greater acknowledgement, participants spoke about the broad provision of SEN supports in the Irish educational system, namely speech and language therapy, psychological assessments, resource hours and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). They also reported how trying to secure SEN services to meet the educational needs of a child can be a long and arduous process with many parents having to 'fight the system' (Male Northside, late 50's) to acquire the necessary diagnosis or care.

> 'I have a grandson who has Asperger's and he was nearly put out of school for being bold until we got him diagnosed. Even now trying to get him the help he needs, they talk about support being readily available. In theory the supports are there but the further down the chain you are the harder it is to get the supports' (Male Northside, late 50's).

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[55] The Gaisce award is conferred by the President of Ireland and is considered one of the most prestigious and respected individual award programmes.

[56] A modular awards system conferred by the Further Education & Training Awards Council.

[57] SEN provision is provided for across government departments, i.e. DES (NCSE, NEPS) and HSE (CAMHS, Speech and Language therapy, etc.).

Some participants voiced their opposition to the much publicised proposed cuts in public expenditure by the Fine Gael and Labour coalition Government during 2011/2012, as announced in Budget (2011). According to the Child Poverty Coalition (2011) this has resulted in the reduction in the numbers of SNAs, Language Support Teachers, Resource Teachers and teacher numbers in DEIS schools, non-recruitment of Home School Community Liaison Coordinators and delays in psychological services in schools. Participants regarded these cuts to be 'a big mistake as those children are the ones that need the most help' (Female Northside, early 50's). Existing deficits in SEN provision, compounded by continuous public expenditure cuts in education, were perceived to have the potential to negatively impact on children already struggling in a competitive education system. These were also viewed as creating further barriers to children's education, resulting in more children underachieving in education or dropping out of the education system early. These observations find support in the literature, with some classifications of SEN associated with higher rates of early school leaving (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010; National Disability Authority (NDA), 2005). When confronted with economic hardship, many young people with a special educational need or disability can also be doubly disadvantaged (NDA, 2005). Given these concerns, participants suggested that a more comprehensive system of SEN provision should be available in schools, especially schools serving the study site areas as part of a regeneration programme. Furthermore, it was suggested that SEN provision should be allocated:

> 'In accordance with the needs of children rather than what the education system dictates' (Female Southside, early 40's).

Not having this provision in place was seen to have long term negative social consequences, with increasing costs to the State in terms of remediation and/or incarceration.

> 'Because those children [who leave school early or who are forced out of the education system because the school was not able to cope with their special needs] are the ones that are going to go into crime. Then they are going to end up having to put more money back into the communities and the Garda system and the jails' (Female Northside, late 20's).

7.4 The value of education and the benefits of learning

During the interviews participants were asked to identify what they believed were the value of education and the benefits of learning. Education was seen to provide specific skills in reading and writing and specific subject knowledge which could lead to educational qualifications and was necessary for employment. Education was also perceived to have personal and social benefits beyond economic gains, i.e. developing life-skills, personal and social competencies and moral development.

> 'It opens your mind and one's world is more broadened' (Female Central Limerick, late 40's).

> 'Helps you to get a good job and for getting on in society' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'Not only in school but also for life, where would you be without education? Whether it is in the home, the school or travelling the world, everybody needs some kind of education' (Female Central Limerick, late 40's).

> 'If a child hasn't got an education in this day and age they have nothing and they are lost and forgotten and can't go anywhere' (Female non-resident, late 50's).

> 'A broadening of the mind a better world view, tolerance' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

Participants considered educational qualifications to be very important as a stepping stone to improve life chances.

> 'Stepping stone for preparing you to get a proper job out of it, or go to college and to go further in life' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

> 'Surviving the course and getting a piece of paper, that's what gets you in the door and allows you to sell yourself' (Male Northside, late 50's).

Education was understood to contribute to developing self-esteem, equipping people with skills and making them more competent. Education was also seen to contribute to moral development, and in being educated people could participate more in their communities and society.

'Developing self-esteem and liking yourself' (Male Southside, 18).

'Equip you with skills for life that you can pass on to your children' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

'It breaks down barriers, challenges you and makes you more competent' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

'Teaching you for living your life in a moral and decent way where you know how to treat other people' (Female Northside, early 30's).

'Insofar as it shows that you have been through a process and that you are going to learn from that process and apply that in any area of your life' (Male Northside, late 50's).

'Education teaches you basic morals, respect and self-respect and helps you to stand on your own two feet' (Female Southside, early 60's).

'Serves to make our children more human, where they develop a love of learning which would have its place in their life beyond the idea of a career and that they would become better people and more involved in the life of their community' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

One participant related an experience of a person in her area who died as a result of a shooting incident. She reported how shocked she was at the seeming indifference shown to this tragedy by the people living in the area, especially young people who 'were going around as if nothing happened' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's). As a result she suggested that:

'We need to be educated to say that every life is as important as the next life, whether or not they are a toe rag, scumbag or the nicest person on earth that you meet. Every life deserves to be lived and education can bring that about, no matter what form of education it is' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Education was seen to have 'a major role to play in growing up and developing better functioning adults' (Female Southside, mid 40's). In being educated it was envisaged that children would come:

'Out of school and have respect for adults, know how to follow rules, know when to push boundaries correctly and that they are able to be happy within themselves and feel they are worth something' (Male Northside, late 50's).

It was recommended that schools should provide what seemed to be more SPHE classes.

'Classes about respecting other people's property and things, the rights and wrongs and showing them how things can affect them like drugs and what they can do to their families and when they are older how it is going to wreck their social life and how they are going to end up on jail, their duties on the streets and the consequences of their actions' (Male Southside, 19).

Education was also seen to have a major role to play in empowering people to speak up for themselves, participate in public discourses and have greater control over their own lives.

'It empowers you to speak for yourself, to ask and search for yourself' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

'Giving yourself confidence and you have a different way of thinking, and your world is more broadened' (Female Southside, late 60's).

'If you hold a conversation you can be up there with the rest of them' (Female Northside, mid 20's).

'It helps you with authority figures, the government and the media' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

'Brings you up to a par where you are equal with everyone else' (Female Southside, late 50's).

Due to the lack of education people from the study sites areas often let others 'walk all over them' (Female Southside, mid 50's), especially those in positions of power in society. Consequently, education was seen to be necessary for empowering people to participate in processes affecting their lives. Therefore by partaking in educational programmes people could develop:

'Confidence to make you who you are, so that no one can talk down to you' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

Having pride in one's community was also considered a desired outcome of education. However, the lack of education was seen to be a factor in the high rates of involvement in crime and drug-taking.

> 'The main reason why people engaged in drugs and crime was because of fear' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'Education can help to remove some of that fear and inadequacy, and leave you thinking I am as good as so and so down the road' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Consequently, it was stated that if more young people and adults were engaged in education or training programmes it would help them understand and counter their fears. This in turn would contribute to minimising many of the social problems in the study site areas.

7.5 Changes in the education system that have made a difference

A number of participants in the study reported that the current education system in Ireland had changed for the better from when they themselves were in school. These changes included more equitable teacher-student relationships, positive and friendly school environments, better communication between home and school and greater regard for students regardless of their background or socio-economic status.

> 'Today it is coming across better and better and young people are not afraid of the teachers' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'The teachers are talking to them in school like adults and not dictating to them that is such a changed system' (Male Northside, late 50's).

> 'Communication is better now than in our days like the parent-teacher and kids are treated better and actually have a great time in school' (Female Central Limerick, early 60's).

The following reflects an important change from the stigmatisation that resulted because of one's address.

'The world is their oyster and when they are finished that there is a place for them at University, regardless of whether you were from an area like Moyross, the Island field [St Mary's Park] or Southill. You are not asked that any more [where you are from]. All they want to know is that you are willing to learn' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

'Education today is not distracted by the background or the environment children come from' (Female Southside, mid 30's).

There was also a majority view that schools nowadays are more 'user friendly' (Female Southside, mid 40's) and are more positively disposed towards fostering relations with parents and the community, especially at primary school level. This is in contrast to many of the experiences and perceptions of some of the participants during their own time at school. It was felt that primary schools, especially in the study sites were making great efforts to be child centred and focused on the individual child and their learning needs. Due to better relationships between schools, teachers, parents and the community, it was perceived that schools in the study site areas were better at meeting the educational needs of children, which boded well for the future.

'There is hope now that due to the changes in the education system people are being looked on for what they are and not from where they come from' (Female Northside, late 30's).

One participant reported that with the abolition of Corporal Punishment (1982) schools 'have gotten a lot easier' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's). The introduction of free education at post-primary level (post 1966) and the opportunities for further and higher education thereafter, presented opportunities that were not available to many of the participants when they were at school.

'Being able to have the freedom to stay in school and stay straight there to 3rd level' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

As a result of these developments in Irish education it was felt that

'There is a lot more kids wanting to stay on in school than years ago' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

'Kids of today are not rushing away from it because of the attitude in there and they are more facilitated in there, the local school, which is very good' (Female Northside, early 30's).

210

'School is totally different these days. I now have a small one going to school and she loves it' (Female Northside, early 20's).

'I would love myself if I got a chance to be back in school' (Male Central Limerick, mid 30's).

Participants also identified a number of developments which they believed led to an improved educational system. These included: the abolition of corporal punishment, changes in pedagogical practices and legislative changes which provide for the protection and welfare of children and the promotion of children's rights. Younger and older participants related negative experiences of school, although physical violence seems to have been more of a reality for older participants, whereas psychological violence was evident for both older and younger participants. However, what comes across in the older participants' accounts was a sense of being unable to challenge unfair or harsh treatment at school.

'If you were reprimanded for anything you did in school you certainly would not go home and say so because you would get twice as bad at home for disrespecting the teacher and for drawing shame on the family' (Female Southside, early 60's).

In contrast the younger participants seemed more conscious of their rights as individuals and reported the ability to vocalise objections to maltreatment or unfairness and challenge any infringement of rights, should they have arisen.

'Teachers today cannot be doing things like that' (Male Southside, 18).

'I think if they did [slap the children] they would probably slap them back' (Female Northside, late 20's).

The contrasting experiences of school between the older and younger participants can be attributed to a number of factors. Namely, the changed nature of society and the many developments that have taken place in Irish education, particularly in relation to understanding how children learn and the belief that 'teachers today seem to be more accountable for their actions' (Female Southside, early 30's). Again significant in some participants' accounts was the abolition of Corporal Punishment in 1982 (and its subsequent status as a criminal offence in 1996). This would subsequently mean that teachers could no longer physically maltreat their students. Consequently, much of

the fear was taken out of school and schools became less physically violent places for children. In recent years legislation has also provided for the protection and the welfare of children and the promotion of children's rights (Children First, 1999; Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2011; The Referendum on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 2012).

7.5.1 The benefits of new technologies

In the literature new technologies are recognised for their increasing importance in personal and working lives and transforming the way in which we relate to one another (BECTA, 2001: 1-2; Warschaeur et al., 2004: 563). In this study participants voiced that new technologies were making education and learning more interesting, interactive and engaging for children, helping 'to bring subjects to life and result in greater student learning' (Female Northside, mid 50's), thereby enabling them to achieve better educational outcomes. These views find support in the literature which suggests that when Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are integrated into the school curriculum learning can be more enriching, gainful and accessible (Foreword to *Investing Effectively in Information Communication Technologies in Schools* 2008-2013). The importance of ICT as a learning tool is also recognised by *Investing Effectively in Information Communication Technologies in Schools* 2008-2013, as helping to motivate students to learn in new and interesting ways; provide improved aids for learning for students with special educational needs; while enabling students acquire independence and become self-empowered and self-sufficient in its usage (Foreword to *Investing Effectively in Information Communication Technologies in Schools* 2008-2013).

Even though new technologies were more of a reality in the lives of the younger participants than they were for the older participants in the study, participants nonetheless stated the importance of ICT, and reported that skills development in ICT usage should be encouraged and facilitated more in schools.

> 'Computers, DVDs and TV should be used more in schools' (Female Northside, mid 20's).

'Computers are now a big part of life. In primary I did computers two times a week. Even though secondary had the resources, but because of the way they were timetabled we rarely got to use them' (Male Southside, 19).

7.5.2 The benefits of targeted services and supports

The benefits of targeted supports and services were acknowledged by a number of participants for the part they play in supporting success and progress in the education system. Programmes and services like School Completion programme, Incredible Years Programme and After-school Clubs were noted as making a difference and enriching the learning experiences of those children who participated in them. The Home School Community Liaison scheme (HSCL) was seen to be an important service which was contributing to 'break down barriers between teachers and helping families' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

'When the Home school liaison person came out to the house they not only heard the gossip said by the other parents, but they could actually see where things were at and what struggles in life they had' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

Other supports such as psychological services and speech and language therapy were also seen as positive developments in education which help 'the child and the family who may be encountering difficulties' (Female Southside, mid 50's):

'More support services around special needs should be prioritised as many children are struggling with school' (Female Southside, mid 30's)

'More programmes should be put in place to support the parents so that they can help their children. It is no good the child coming home and looking for help and you don't have a clue' (Female Northside, early 40's).

One participant suggested that targeted services and supports in schools have 'increased from ten years ago' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's) and these were making a difference by helping many young people from the study site areas complete their education at post-primary level and/or progress to further or higher education. However, the impact of the economic recession (2008-2013) and the range of austerity

cuts, and the impact these were having on communities, led participants to voice that many of the supports now in place are in danger of being lost 'especially teachers and SNAs' (Female Northside, mid 20's). It was therefore stated that as part of the Limerick regeneration programme targeted services and supports for children and families should be 'managed and nurtured and invested in more' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

7.5.3   The benefits of community-based adult education

All participants who took part in this study were either engaged in or had participated in further education courses as adults, either in a community or college setting. The rationale given for undertaking such courses included: up-skilling and further training, qualifications accumulation, personal development, family and social purposes and educational progression.

> 'For jobs and that, everything now is about how good you do in school and the more education you do the better the job you can get. Also if you had young kids you could help them along' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

> We are trying to be a good example for the kids by going back to school and doing courses for ourselves' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

> 'Expanding their horizons and therefore are going to expand the horizons for their families as well' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

> 'To build up friendships' (Female Northside, mid 60's).

> 'Going back and doing something around my needs' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'For progression into further and higher education' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

Participation in community-based adult education programmes was reported as having been a positive experience, which for many was in sharp contrast to their experience of school. According to one participant the experience of school was characterised by the misuse of power, where 'power was always with the teacher' (Female Southside,

mid 40's) whereas in community-based adult education programmes power existed equally with the learner and the tutor. This is because adult and community education emphasises dialogue and common understanding and is underpinned by 'ethical considerations such as respect for difference and diversity' and is 'driven by the key players', as well as being 'devoted to growth and development, and fulfilling the potential of all participants' (Connolly (2007: 122). The following quotes shows how community-based adult education was a positive, nurturing and empowering experience for participants.

> 'Less threatening, more interesting and more comfortable' (Female Northside, early 50's).

> 'Brilliant! You are treated with a lot more respect and they don't treat you because of your ability' (Female Northside, early 30's).

> 'It is the same, everyone is treated fairly. We treat them like adults, they treat us like adults and there is respect there that is not in school' (Male Southside, 19).

As a result it was suggested that approaches to learning in school could learn much from the methodology and approach employed in community-based adult education programmes.

7.6   Participants views on Limerick's Regeneration

During the fieldwork (March 2011-April 2012) much discussion took place about Limerick regeneration, and I was particularly interested in learning from participants their views about the Limerick regeneration programme. The following is an outline of the hopes and disappointments of participants concerning the Limerick regeneration programme during the period 2008-2012.

With the announcement by Government in June 2007 much optimism surrounded the establishment of the regeneration programme for Limerick, especially among residents from the study site areas.

'With regeneration change would happen, that it would improve the lives of people within the community, and this is what people thought regeneration was brought in to do' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

'It would improve the society of the communities and the areas of Limerick that were neglected over the years by the government' (Female, Southside, mid 50's).

Some participants said that they believed the regeneration programme in Limerick would enhance their quality of life and develop much needed social infrastructure and opportunities in the study site areas.

'Regeneration is trying to make it better and get the people back together' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

'There would be a lot more opportunities out there and that there would be less crime and more facilities in the community' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

For a number of participants regeneration was seen as a catalyst that would

'Mobilise people together to address crime and poverty and anti-social behaviour, which is underlining everything' (Female Northside, early 60's).

However, around the time of data gathering (March 2011-April 2012) the hopes and the expectations that many residents had when regeneration was announced (2007) were waning. Participants reported that this had to do with Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) promising much, creating many expectations among residents of the study sites and the wider Limerick population, yet delivering little. Rather than bringing much needed improvements in the physical, economic and social life of Limerick and the study sites, four years into regeneration it was felt that the study sites were being 'degenerated rather than regenerated' (Male Southside, early 40's).

'There is still people here intimidating other people and all residents wanted was to be able to go home and sleep in peace, without worrying about something that is going to happen' (Male Southside, early 40's).

216

'People continue to live in fear and a lot of people just want out of the community as they can't see anything happening [in terms of buildings or social change] and the community is slowly disappearing in front of our eyes' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

Participants attributed their disappointments in the regeneration programme to the following:

- the absence of any substantial building programme;
- the re-housing of residents across and outside of Limerick city;
- the physical environment of the study site areas continuing to be characterised by boarded up, burnt-out and derelict houses;
- the lack of social change and the persistence of crime and anti-social behaviour.

These disappointments are reflected in the quotations below, with participants reporting feeling betrayed and let down by the State and its agencies, particularly Limerick Regeneration Agencies and Limerick City Council.

'I don't think regeneration will ever work, they are building nothing' (Female Northside, early 60's).

'Regeneration has an awful lot to answer for as does the City Council as well' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

Some participants voiced that 'regeneration' spoke about ensuring a better quality of life for those living in the study site areas (cf. LRA Master Plan, 2008: 10 & 29). From their perspective this was now not a reality. When probed why this was so, it was reported that:

'The Regeneration Agencies in Limerick have no real power' (Female Southside, early 40's).

'The regeneration in Limerick is fighting a losing battle as they can't deal with the structures that are there at the moment' (Male former resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

The following participant commented on the inertia of the State and stated that:

'The Law and the State agencies are dragging their heels over a lot of stuff going on in the community, which would not be tolerated in other parts of the city' (Male Southside, early 40's).

Despite the disappointments, those interviewed continued to have hope that regeneration in Limerick would progress. However, this was contingent on powers and funding commitments being granted to LRA, and on the various service providers working together to progress regeneration in Limerick.

> 'If the State Agencies put all their powers together, surely they could come up with something' (Female Southside, early 40's).

> 'If real power was given a lot of things could happen' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

7.7   Education and Limerick's Regeneration

From the establishment of the regeneration programme in Limerick education was included as an important sub-theme (cf. Chapter One 'Introduction', 1.1).   In this study participants were asked to identify what part, if any, education might play in the regeneration process. Participants reported that they believed education should be an important part of regeneration, because as they saw it, regeneration was more than just knocking and building houses.

> 'Social change has to happen and education needs to be major part of it' (Male Former Resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

The process of regeneration was seen to involve developing social awareness and social responsibility, and education was seen as a means by which people could acquire and develop the knowledge and the skills needed to realise these objectives.

> 'To regenerate the community without the learning piece or the education, without the integrated social piece which includes the education and the informal stuff, without that it is not regeneration, it is merely a building project' (Male Former Resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

> 'While the physical environment has to be done, the social stuff has to be paramount and that can be done through education' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

'There is no point building a lovely new place, like they done in the Alleys[58], put in fabulous houses and just stuck everyone in there and just didn't care. If they are doing that and putting them back in there in lovely new houses; sure they are still going to go around battering the houses, the same thing is going to happen, just newer houses' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

'The next generation can't make the same mistakes as the last generation did, they have to learn that the way of life now is to be educated. There is no way that the next generation can come up the same ways this one has' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

Education was viewed as part of the 'bigger picture out of which a person can go and make a life for themselves' (Female Southside, mid 40's). Education was also considered a means through which people could come to understand what regeneration means and involves. For one participant this meant mending the hurt perceived to exist in the designated regeneration communities and working to bring about healing.

'I think we forgot what we are doing it for, without the education we won't have a purpose for what we are building for, and I think that purpose is to bring healing' (Male Former Resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

Regeneration was also understood to involve developing individual capacity and community development.

'Without the people or the community or the way of mending the hurt in the community or helping people to develop in their own lives, regeneration without education isn't regeneration, it is buildings, and buildings on their own will never create vibrant and functioning communities' (Male Former Resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

One participant stated that education and training provision within the city was the responsibility of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the City of Limerick Vocational Educational Committee (CLVEC[59]), the Colleges and the University and not the Regeneration Agencies.

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[58] The Alleys were located in the housing estate of Clarina Park (now demolished) in Ballinacurra Weston. It is named so because there was once a Handball Alley there.

[59] On the 1st July 2013 CLVEC changed its name to reflect the changeover of the Vocational Educational Committees in Ireland to the new Education and Training Boards (ETBs), becoming the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB).

'The Department of Education has to do the teaching' (Male Northside, late 50's).

However, regeneration was understood to have:

'A role to play in creating the environment where kids want to learn and want to live' (Male Northside, late 50's).

In addition the Gardaí and Local Authority were seen to have an important part to play in the regeneration process. Their function was to provide the necessary resources and infrastructure to help:

'Stabilise the communities and enable services such as education to survive' (Male Northside, late 50's).

7.7.1 Educational priorities of participants

In this section I present participants' priorities and concerns regarding education. These are summarised as follows:

- supporting schools in the study site areas;
- addressing the problem of early school leaving;
- resourcing out-of-school time (OST) provision;
- supporting community-based adult education programmes and enhance the accessibility of such provision;
- creating opportunities for training, up-skilling and employment creation;
- providing education for parents and education for parenting;
- enhancing civic awareness through education.

7.7.1.1 Supporting schools in and serving the study site areas

Schools and education were seen to be important in the study sites.

'Schools need to be made part of the infrastructure of the community and you need to get the infrastructure working together, not competing' (Male Northside, late 50's).

Supporting schools was considered an important measure, because some of the study site area schools were understood to be struggling to survive.

> 'Schools are in jeopardy of closing and you are going to see kids going to school elsewhere' (Male Northside, late 50's).

This phenomenon was attributed to the loss of capitation as a result of population decline and a subsequent decline in school enrolments and the lack of funding sources from the community. This situation was seen to have been accelerated by Limerick Regeneration Agencies and Limerick City Council through, 1) the demolition of the housing stock and the re-location of residents to other parts of the city and the county, 2) residents leaving the study sites as a result of anti-social behaviour, and/or 3) poor estate management practices, etc. Due to the dwindling population numbers and consequent reduction in funding it was felt that schools were increasingly being undermined in their ability to deliver educational services and curriculum choices or provide the necessary supports needed for students. The impacts of regeneration practices, social problems and the failures of State services were seen to further disadvantage the study site areas. It was therefore stated that the Department of Education and Skills (DES) should be held accountable by the regeneration governing body to ensure that adequate resourcing was in place. It was also stated that the priorities for regeneration should not be:

> 'On roads and buildings that don't need to be built. But should be put into education' (Female Southside, early 60's).

But on:

> 'Making schools better and friendlier places where kids want to be' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

In view of these issues it was reported that when an area or a region is designated for regeneration, every effort should be made by State agencies and government departments to ensure that the necessary supports, services and resources are put in place.

> 'The government should ensure that the special needs assistants and resources are provided for in the schools' (Female Northside, early 20's).

221

While improving the physical environment of schools was required in some instances, schools were also perceived to be in need of resources for school administration, caretaking and maintenance, books, curricular materials and resources in ICT. Similarly, schools needed to be adequately resourced in terms of ensuring curriculum choices, adequate teaching and educational support personnel as well as SEN provision. Regeneration was considered a long term process that was building for the future. Therefore given the unique and special place a school has within a community (especially a community experiencing exclusion and marginalisation), it was felt that supporting schools and children's education should be a priority action for regeneration.

> 'Regeneration is not for us, it is for the next generation coming up after us. It is for the young ones going to school now' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'That each child comes to understand the role that they play in building their community, a process that would take ten to fifteen years before you see the change, the next generation' (Female, Central Limerick, mid 50's).

Therefore it was suggested that:

> 'Supporting schools and children's education should be a priority for regeneration, if regeneration is to be successful' (Male Northside, late 50's).

7.7.1.2   Addressing the problem of early school leaving

Earlier in the chapter the problem of early school leaving was presented and reasons were given as to why some participants left school early. In this section participants stated why this problem should be addressed; mainly because it would help prevent children from becoming involved in anti-social or personally destructive behaviours.

> 'It would stop children from hanging around and getting into trouble' (Female Moyross, early 30's).

> '15 to 17 year olds to stop them from hanging around the road' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

'You could get some kids involved from going the wrong way and you would feel like you caught him in time' (Female Northside, early 40's).

Early school leaving was perceived a contributory factor to many of the social problems in the study site areas; namely poor or no educational qualifications, unemployment, social exclusion, drugs misuse, anti-social behaviour and petty and serious crime. It was therefore perceived that for the transformations sought in regeneration, i.e. viable and sustainable communities, the problem of early school leaving should feature in social regeneration plans to be systematically addressed.

'Government will have to put the money into education to keep young people in the system' (Female Southside, late 40's).

However, given the educational experiences of participants and the failures of the microsystem of schools to meet the learning needs of students (cf. 7.2 - 7.2.7), the findings suggest that not only must young people be retained in the education system they must also be enabled to participate, achieve and progress in education. This would require a range of measures, i.e. changing the climate of schools, improving initial teacher education (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD), resourcing and supporting students who experience poverty and supporting students with special educational needs with a continuum of care. These measures will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

7.7.1.3   Resourcing out-of-school time (OST) provision

A number of participants were aware that children from the study sites, including some of their own children and grandchildren, were accessing OST provision through the School Completion Programmes, University of Limerick Access Campus LEDP, Southill After-School-Club, Barnardos, Garda Diversion programmes, OSCAILT[60], etc. OST provision was seen to provide positive activities with many benefits for children and young people struggling with their school work. OST was also perceived

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[60] OSCAILT is a network of Limerick city DEIS Schools and the DES, and is facilitated by the Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) project in Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick.

to meet a range of personal and social development needs of children, while helping to address social exclusion in education for children from the study site areas.

> 'I would put on homework clubs and that. I would give them more activities after school coz the children come home and ask how to do this and that and you can't help them' (Female Northside, early 30's).

> 'More facilities and more classes on things we are interested in and that are fun. Southill and the Island should have these and they should be open to those who can't pay for them' (Male Southside, 20).

It was stated that the DES and the Limerick regeneration programme should consider investing more in Out-of-School Time (OST) provision, because:

> 'Education in regeneration should stop looking at education as only in schools' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

> 'There is not much for children to do after school' (Female Northside, early 20's).

> 'It would be good if there were supports there in the subject areas like science and geography and especially maths' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

'Giving them an after school club or providing a building where children could go and be engaged' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's), was seen to be a concrete action which would support this form of provision. However, learning's from the literature suggest that a sustainable approach to OST provision requires a focused and coordinated system; adequate resourcing from the various strategic partners involved in the support and development of children and young people; (Downes, 2006; Harvard Family Research Project, 2015; OSCAILT, 2013; QDOSS, 2013; Wikeley et al., 2007) and be prompted by a desire to progress social regeneration for participating age groups.

7.7.1.4 Supporting community-based adult education

The benefits of community-based adult education were highlighted earlier in the chapter. During the interviews, a number of participants stated that they believed community-based adult education had an important part to play in their own development, that of others and the development of their communities.

> 'It [community-based adult education] teaches you that there is a better life there for you if you want it, and it can make your family and your community life better' (Female Southside, early 40's).

> 'It is brilliant and gives you a great sense of freedom. It shows you a new way of thinking within education' (Female Southside, late 60's).

> 'Community education would give you a sense of power and by having an education you would come to have more respect for the place you live in' (Male Former Resident Central Limerick, mid 40's).

Community-based adult education programmes were seen to provide opportunities for improving personal benefits for the learner, such as social and identity capital and creating a greater awareness of social issues in the community.

> 'Education can empower a community for starters. It can teach the community yes! This is where I live. This is where I can learn how to live and this is where I am proud to be' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

These benefits are echoed by a variety of research and report sources (e.g. AONTAS, 2003: 6; Connolly, 2003: 5-6; White Paper on Adult Education, 2000: 113). Community-based adult education was seen to contribute 'to breaking the cycle' (Female Southside, late 40's) of marginalisation and exclusion in education in the study site areas. For these reasons it was stated that community-based adult education should be supported and resourced accordingly as part of Limerick's regeneration programme.

7.7.1.5 Supporting training, up-skilling for employment and employment creation

Unemployment was perceived to be a major problem in the study sites and was seen to be a contributory factor to many of the social problems in these areas. It was therefore stated that more training, up skilling and employment creation opportunities were needed to, 1) improve the quality of life for residents, and 2) address social problems in the study sites.

> 'Put work back in there and create opportunities for employment, so that the young people can see their mothers and fathers going out to work and that is important' (Male Northside, early 50's).

> 'Regeneration should act as a tool to demonstrate to people that education gets people work and that there is a direct link between education and the work you are doing' (Male Northside, late 50's).

The 'idea of a scholarship' (Male Northside, late 50's) to support training for work in areas of relevance and interest to young people was also mooted.

> 'Learn and get skills and are actually starting to do the jobs' (Male Southside, 19).

> 'There needs to be more trainee programmes like hairdressing and make up or nails for the girls, or sports, mechanics and construction courses for the boys. Programmes are needed that would that take kids on and give them opportunities' (Female Northside, early 50's).

The importance of employment opportunities associated with the regeneration building programme for residents was also raised, and it was suggested that the building aspects of the Limerick regeneration programme should be carried out by those living in the study sites, capable of doing so and not by outsiders. This was perceived as having positive impacts beyond the life time of the current Limerick regeneration programme.

> 'Train up lads if they don't know it, or the fellows who are trained, give them a way to build back up Moyross' (Male Northside, early 50's).

> 'Get the skills and actually have them start to do the jobs such as the building work' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

'If regeneration is to start it should give people in the area some pride in the place and they will keep it up' (Male Central Limerick, mid 50's).

The importance of creating opportunities for training, new skills development and new employment was acknowledged in the LRA Master Plan (2008). These factors are also acknowledged in the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP) (2013). While acknowledged in these documents, participants stated that these goals must be actively pursued and implemented as a priority, if regeneration is to be successful and sustainable.

7.7.1.6   Education for parents and education for parenting

A number of the participants voiced that poor parenting contributed to many of the social problems in the study sites. These problems were perceived as consisting of a lack of social responsibility or regard for one's neighbours and/or one's community.

'It has to come from the parents. I mean they are doing the same things what their fathers were doing. The parents have a big say. But then again it is the way they were brought up as well. It is a cycle and it is non-stop' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

The importance of the role the mother played within the family was especially highlighted. Mothers, particularly young single mothers were perceived to be particularly vulnerable and needing support.

'Some of them have a lot going on in their lives and it is hard for them at times to link with school and learning' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

Consequently, it was suggested that parents and mothers parenting alone in the study sites should be provided with education and personal development opportunities. They should also be incentivised to take up education programmes on home management and parenting skills.

'They should get every chance to do things as a lot of them can't even read or write' (Female Moyross, early 30's).

'We come from a disadvantaged area and maybe they don't have the education to give them and that is what is lacking. So the child comes home from school and is not going to learn anything at home. Therefore there should be something there to teach the parent how to teach the child' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

'Some parents need to learn health and sex education and learning how to run a home and learn responsible behaviours' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

There was also the suggestion that in the social plan for regeneration special measures should be included which encourages and facilitates parents to participate in education, training and personal development programmes. This engagement and education would pay dividends, i.e. human and social capital development and lead to greater social cohesion. As a result education for parents and education for parenting would have positive outcomes for society, and by implication the process of regeneration in Limerick.

'An awful lot of work to do with parents who believe that the system has failed them. We need to be working with parents to move them beyond that. We need people to understand that their kids need a chance in life. The only way to do this is to look at what is expected going forward for the child and at least give them the basic tools to do it' (Male Northside, late 50's).

7.7.1.7 Education for civic awareness

Strong views were expressed by some participants regarding the perceived lack of civic awareness in their neighbourhoods and communities. The perceived lack of civic awareness was understood to have its origins in previous generations, where parents did not receive the necessary education or skills to pass on to their children. It was also stated that poor educational achievement levels resulted in people not acquiring the awareness, values or norms needed for living in cooperation with others.

'I mean you will only do what you are told and what you see and learn. You have to go to the parents because monkey does what monkey sees. So if they [children] see the parents doing something they are going to grow up doing the same' (Male Southside, mid 40's).

It was therefore highlighted that measures which promote civic awareness and instil in parents and children values considered normative for living in cooperation with others, needed greater investment. The suggestion was made that some parents, children and young people needed to be provided with education and training opportunities that would impress upon them the importance of civic awareness.

> 'People don't realise that they have huge responsibilities in relation to civic awareness' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

The challenges of delivering such education and training were also discussed, and it was noted that the community might need help to organise these opportunities.

> 'In areas like these, this should be taken on board, but that is an extra burden for this community' (Male Northside, late 50's).

One participant stated that parents should be able to provide the necessary guidance to their children and model the behaviours they wish their children to have, namely, respect for one's neighbour and respect for one's environment and community.

> 'They are who they are and that is it. Unless you can get a hold of them when they are young and get through to the parent that they have to keep an eye on them, or else they are going to go down the same road. If you could get to tell the parents that they are going to go down the same road and that it might sink into them. But I doubt it' (Female Northside, early 60's).

Other participants stated that should parents fail to teach their children how to be civilly aware, parents should then be held responsible for their children's behaviours.

> 'If they break someone's window and they know they done it the parent should pay for it out of their money. Then they wouldn't be long in getting a hold of their kids' (Female Southside, late 50's).

> 'If necessary pressurise the parent to get involved in their children's education and be re-educated about their responsibilities' (Female Central Limerick, early 40's).

One participant stated that those in authority (Gardaí, Local Authority, politicians, etc.) in Limerick city had effectively obviated its responsibilities in this regard, as social problems continue to persist, particularly in the study sites.

'They are doing damage and battering car and buses on the road. If they catch them the parents should be made pay for it. But they are not doing that, there is nothing happening to the parents. No wonder there are problems' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

The concerns noted in this section highlight the importance of developing civic awareness through education.

'Basic tools where each child understands the role that they can play in building their community' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

Developing civic awareness through education was seen to hold the potential to contribute to the creation of more positive social relations in the study sites, as well as creating a better environment for all to live in.

'Education plays a role in creating a balanced community, where people are treated equally with respect and dignity' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

'If more people went to school and bought into education then we wouldn't have the type of society we have today' (Male Central Limerick, mid 40's).

7.8 Participants views on their participation in the research

The purpose of the study was to learn about and subsequently describe the educational experiences of a sample of residents from the study site areas of Limerick city, as well as presenting their priorities and concerns for education in regeneration. During the research participants were invited to share their thoughts about participating in the study and to voice what their participation in the study has meant to them. The findings show that participation in the study provided participants with an opportunity to think about their time at school in a critical way. The findings likewise show that it was opportune and appropriate that those who took part in the study were asked about their views, priorities and concerns. It was also stated that such opportunities should be provided for more in communities, especially in the context of regeneration, even if some people did not see the value of participation in these processes. The following quotes capture what participation in the study meant to participants.

'I never really thought about my time at school in any critical way' (Female Northside, early 50's).

'It was grand yeah we got to think about stuff. We were telling the truth' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

'It was great to be part of the interview' (Female Southside, early 60's).

'It is about time we were asked' (Female Southside, mid 50's).
'It was a good topic, yeah some good questions' (Male Southside, 19).

'It was great to do it and to let people know that there are people out there that love Moyross' (Male Northside, mid 50's).

'I really enjoyed this actually, very comfortable about it' (Female Southside, late 40's).

'You should do this in schools what you did here' (Male Southside, 18).

'It would be good to have young parents in something like this' (Female, Northside, early 50's).

'This was fantastic it was very good and I just want to say it should happen more often. Wouldn't an interview like this be beneficial over in the parent's room in the school' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

'I enjoyed it actually. I think it is good to share ideas and it doesn't happen that often in community work; there was a good focus' (Female Northside, mid 50's).

'It is something that we didn't know much about and that was good, we could be here all day' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

'I feel comfortable with it great, education it is one of my pet things' (Female Southside, mid 40's).

'It was better if we were paid' (laughing) (Female Northside, early 30's).

'I think it is great to see all the different experiences and to share them and to see that things haven't changed, I hope they do change, though some things have changed for the better' (Male Southside, early 60's).

'I think it was a very valuable exercise' (Female non-resident, mid 50's).

'It was a good experience and it brought a lot of things to mind that I had forgotten about' (Female, Northside, early 60's).

Participation in the study highlighted the importance of education and showed differences between participants' own time at school and that of their children's time at school. During the research emotions were stirred in me the researcher and within participants, and some painful and happy memories of the time spent at school were brought to mind. Having done some training in counselling I felt comfortable with people expressing emotions and tried to reassure participants during the course of the interviews. However, I realise that I should have provided an opportunity for participants to debrief after interviews should they have wished.

On the whole participation in the study seems to have been an empowering experience, with participants reporting that they were glad to have had the opportunity to be part of a process where they could articulate their experiences and views. The interactive, participatory and respectful approach employed facilitated an opportunity for participants 'to speak their minds' and share ideas. This enabled voices to be heard, perspectives listened to and views considered. For some this was a healing experience.

'It showed us what life was like years ago and up to today. It shows us that you still need your education' (Male Central Limerick, late 50's).

'Now that my children are going through the process of secondary and I am looking at my own phase of secondary school and theirs, it is so very different' (Female Southside, late 40's).

'We were left speak our mind which is good' (Female Northside, mid 20's).

'I think the whole idea of sharing this is good, I just feel sad that there is not more people here to give more information' (Male Southside, early 60's).

'I am refreshed really to be honest, because it has brought back a lot of memories for me too, going back over my primary and secondary schooling and even remembering some of the courses I have done and forgotten about' (Female Southside, early 60's).

'No I can't say that I have taken part in something like this. You kinda brought up a few things as I think back' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

'What I am sorry about is that more people didn't turn up, it just goes to show they don't have interest and people just don't want to put themselves forward and that. Instead they want to cower in the shadows' (Female Southside, late 50's).

'It was great to be given the opportunity to have our voices heard' (Female Central Limerick, mid 60's).

'I loved it, I am after talking my guts out' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

'You are like a counsellor we are getting it all out' (Female Central Limerick, late 60's).

'It was very healing' (Female non-resident, mid 40's).

The findings in the chapter clearly show that opportunities for individuals and groups to share experiences, ideas, priorities and concerns should be fostered and nurtured more in communities. Talking about issues in a focused way which impact on the lives of people can enable those who do so to learn from one another, have their experiences and views challenged and validated, and learn that many of their own experiences, priorities and concerns are often similar to others. Those who took part in the study expressed that they were happy to be part of the research and reported that their participation was a good experience. In a demonstration of their own power a number of participants stated that they were happy to have the accounts of their experiences and views made public to a wider audience, and would like to see 'something' positive emerge from a study that their voices contributed to. That 'something' they articulated was a better system of education for them, their children and their communities as a result of regeneration.

'Best of luck with it' (Female Central Limerick, late 60's).

'Hopefully something will come out of it' (Female Southside, mid 50's).

'I thoroughly enjoyed it, I hope now that you got what you wanted out of it' (Female Central Limerick, mid 50's).

'Hopefully it will make a change for the future for the kids' (Female Northside, late 20's).

'If you could educate people through all this, it would be brilliant' (Female Southside, late 50's).

'I think it is a very valuable exercise. My hope is that the report wouldn't be just left on a shelf but that it would be put to some useful purpose' (Female Southside, early 60's).

'Thank you, we are here and we will wait for the visit from you again' (Female Northside, mid 30's).

Finally, in handling participants' expectations, I merely presented a number of questions, provided a listening ear and facilitated the opportunity for them to voice their views on their participation in the research in an open and non-directive way.

7.9   Chapter conclusion

This study has yielded a rich body of qualitative data from which research findings have been identified and are presented in the chapter. Being put to the 'back of the class' illustrates the failures of the microsystem of some schools in Limerick city, and this was shown to be symbolic of the mistreatment experienced by some participants during their time at school. The impact of negative school experiences resulted in low educational aspirations, poor educational attainment, school estrangement, early school leaving intent and early school leaving. Negative experiences of school were likewise shown to have contributed to negative adult life outcomes. However, contrasting experiences of school were also reported; characterised by supportive and nurturing relationships with teachers and those in the religious congregations. Participants likewise reported having had a positive experience of adult education programmes. The impact of positive experiences of school and education resulted in a love of learning and a desire to progress further in education.

The findings also identify a number of barriers to participants' educational participation, retention and progression. These included: economic hardship and poverty, family difficulties, the negative influence of peers, deficits in special

educational needs provision, stigmatisation and favouritism in the classroom and the competitive nature of education. A number of educational priorities were also identified, these included the need for more egalitarian relationships between teachers and students, teachers and parents, schools and the wider community. Furthermore, the findings identify the need for systemic changes in the education system, if children, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, are to achieve more equal educational outcomes.

Finally, the findings and the literature presented shows that education has implications for the lives of individuals, families and society. It can be a 'powerful agent in raising issues around social and cultural inequality, such as poverty, discrimination, neglect and other disadvantages' (Connolly, 2003: 4). Therefore investing in and supporting educational provision can have much to offer regeneration processes. Education can provide a route out of poverty and social exclusion. As a result of the cultural capital gained from being educated, individuals can direct services to better meet their needs on a more secure and sustainable basis. Education can also enable the development of civic awareness and thereby contribute to social cohesion and community development. The findings show that participants believed that education has the potential to equip people with knowledge and skills needed for participation in public discourse and processes affecting their lives. Therefore those living in marginalised circumstances must be actively facilitated to participate in and input to these processes. This behoves institutions such as education and urban regeneration to include and facilitate the voices of those for whom they purport to serve, both in consultation and decision making. In conclusion the findings in this chapter provides concrete recommendations from the perspective of those who took part in the study, as to how education and regeneration in Limerick might better serve participants, their children and communities, now and in the future. In the next chapter I discuss the findings of this chapter with reference to the literature.

8.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings of the thesis with reference to the literature on poverty and education. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and the socially critical perspective are employed to help interpret and discuss the findings.

The chapter is organised as follows: Firstly, I discuss the findings using Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and the socially critical perspective. The ecological model provides an integrated system in which to understand the course and the drivers of human development (Lerner, 2005: xv), i.e. proximal processes between individuals and the interconnected ecologies surrounding them.   This framework permits analysis across a range of levels, i.e. the micro (student), meso (institutional actors and structures) and macro (wider social, political, historical, and cultural policy environment) (Brosnan, 2013: 66). The socially critical perspective orients us to issues of power and is used to explore structural and cultural influences, power dynamics and attributions of identity, and how these were played out in the educational experiences of participants. Both frameworks illuminate educational processes at the micro level, i.e., relationships between teachers and students, the meso level, i.e. relationships between parents, school and community, and the macro-level, i.e. educational policies and how the education system is structured. When applied to the findings the theoretical frameworks provide a theoretical basis to enable an examination of contradictory practices in educational contexts. They also present the possibility of re-imagining an education system that is transformative and promotes a form of education capable of enhancing the lives, well-being and outcomes of all students in Limerick city, as a result of regeneration. Secondly, I discuss the barriers to engagement, retention and progression in education as perceived by participants. Thirdly, I discuss the educational priorities of participants and the implications of these for regeneration processes. Finally, I discuss how those

often excluded from participation in public discourses and social process, e.g. education and regeneration, can be facilitated to participate more in these.

8.2 Applying the theoretical frameworks to interpret the findings

Family and peer relationships were reported as having been significant to participants' experience of school. However, the microsystem of the student-teacher relationship was found to be most influential for students' aspirations, engagement and achievement in education. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979: 22) the *microsystem* is 'a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting, with particular physical and material characteristics'. For most participants the microsystem of the teacher-student relationship was largely characterised by bullying, maltreatment, discrimination, the abuse of power and animosity and/or indifference on the part of the teacher towards them. Participants also believed that 'certain' students were treated in this way because of negative teacher perceptions of them based on their family's socio economic status, i.e. working class. However, it is important to point out that positive relationships with teachers and of education were also experienced (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.2.8 & 7.2.9).

The 'back of the class' motif captures something of the dynamic which existed in the microsystem of schools, suggesting that the placement of students either at the back or front of the class was not just an expression of teacher-student relationships, but an embodiment of educational advantaging and disadvantaging. According to Tormey (1999: 45) educational disadvantaging can 'be described as a series of processes which combine to bring about comparatively low attainment and participation in formal education by working class children'. Therefore those who are affected by these processes 'are identified as the educationally disadvantaged' (ibid: 45). Being put to the back of the class was symbolic of the maltreatment and disadvantages experienced by many of the participants during their time at school, which illustrates how the education system in Limerick city failed many children from the study site areas. A contrasting experience of the microsystem of school is also presented, namely positive, supportive and nurturing teacher-student relationships, which were characterised by

academic and material support, friendship and encouragement (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.2.8). As a result of these nurturing proximal processes participation, retention and progression in education was encouraged and facilitated.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework posits that learning is an outcome of the interacting systems in which it occurs, i.e. the 'institutional, political and societal systems governing learning' (Smith, 2011: 2). The findings illustrate the power and importance of human relationships, while showing how processes within the microsystem of school influenced students' engagement with education and impacted on their educational and life outcomes. This is affirmed in the literature, especially the literature associated with attachment and social motivation theories (Bowlby, 1980; Hughes et al., 2012; Jennings et al., 2013; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009; Pianta et al., 2003). Attachment and social motivation theories posit that if students have nurturing relationships with their teachers they are more likely to make greater efforts at school and be more committed to school norms and rules. Healthy school relationships also promote a sense of school membership, autonomy and perceived academic competence (Ryan, 1995). For academically 'at-risk' students a nurturing and supportive teacher-student relationship can be an important buffer against behavioural disengagement and low-academic achievement (Hughes et al., 2012). However, should the teacher-student relationship be characterised by conflict or maltreatment, as was the case for many in this study, students are likely to have ambivalent and distrustful relationships with teachers, present with behavioural issues, have less control over their learning and are less likely to achieve academic outcomes (Fletcher and Vaughan, 2009). As they progress in education such students are more likely to disengage from school and eventually leave the education system (Blackett, 2002; Blaug, 2001; Boldt, 1994; Downes and Maunsell, 2007; Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010).

The findings also show that some parents' lives were largely characterised by economic hardship, negative experiences of school and seemingly diminished levels of social and cultural capital. As a result they did not want to or were unable to positively engage with teachers, and so were unaware or were unable to challenge teachers about the maltreatment of their children. Participants likewise reported that

parental involvement in children's education was important for the developing child, a view that finds much support in the literature (Conaty, 2002; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003, Galvin et al., 2009; Higgins, 2008). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework stresses the importance of supporting the primary relationships (microsystems) surrounding a child, i.e., the family and school, but also emphasises the importance of supporting and strengthening the mesosystem in order to better support microsystem processes. The mesosystem is the second stratum of the environmental layers in the ecological model and involves 'the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person' (Bronfenbrenner, 1994: 1645). When two or more microsystems, e.g., family or school are merged they create a mesosystem. For a student the mesosystem can include interconnections between home, school, neighbourhood or peer group. For adults the mesosystem can be the interconnections between the family, work and/or social life. The richness of the mesosystem for an individual depends on the number and the quality of its relationships and interconnections. A healthy mesosystem can create opportunities which provide social support and consistency to children in their daily routines and activities. A healthy mesosystem can also positively impact on parents, teachers, school practices and community dynamics; with practical and immediate benefits for them (Haynes and Ben-Avie, 1996; Higgins, 2008; Williams and Sanchez, 2012). For example parents having regular contact with the school allows them to better understand their child's school experience, as well as creating 'a checks and balances system that otherwise might not exist' (Williams and Sanchez, 2013: 635). Parents having regular contact with schools also enables 'school personnel to perform their jobs more efficiently' (ibid: 635). Parental involvement in children's education can likewise help to, 1) create a culture characterised by improved relations between those important in the lives of children (Higgins, 2008: 53), 2) motivate and support parents to learn 'new ways to help their children' and 'to further their own education' (Haynes and Ben-Avie, 1996: 45), 3) enhance the teachers' knowledge base of the 'socio cultural contexts of the communities served by the school' (Haynes and Ben-Avie, 1996: 45), and 4) better position teachers to bridge any barriers that may exist between the ecologies of home and school (Higgins, 2008: 53), while learning to adapt their pedagogical approaches so that the needs of students are better met (Higgins, 2008: 53). School can also serve as an important link, connecting families to supports and services as required, especially families in communities with high

levels of deprivation and marginalisation. By doing so schools become a potent force within a community (Haynes and Ben-Avie, 1996: 46). Therefore efforts to support and strengthen the mesosystem through developing mesosystem level partnerships between parents, schools and community agencies has the potential for better child, family, school and community outcomes (Cummings et al., 2007; Hinojosa and Lopez, 2015). It can similarly ease the effects of disadvantage and contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion (Conaty, 2002). Such considerations are important in the context of this study, especially when poverty and social exclusion are the main contributory factors in poor neighbourhood liveability and neighbourhood failure and decline (cf. Chapter Three).

For Bronfenbrenner (1979: 25) the *exosystem* is 'one or more settings which does not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that are affected by what happens in the setting containing the developing person'. The exosystem defines the larger social system in which the child does not directly function. However, the structures of the exosystem impact on a child's development through the interaction with some structure in his or her microsystem. Even though the child may not be directly involved at this level, they experience the positive or negative forces involved as a result of decisions made at this level. While it is difficult to identify a phenomenon which is influenced by only one system, in this study features of the school which reflect the influence of the exosystem include the social class context of the school and the socio-economic status (SES) of participants and how they were viewed by teachers and those in positions of authority within the school/education system. The findings show how the impact of the exosystem influenced student outcomes, i.e. participation rates, aspirations and learning outcomes, early school leaving intent and early school leaving. The findings also show that in the school setting power relations were affected by the microsystem element of individual relationships. However, the exosystem element of individual schools and how children and their SES were viewed suggests the need for collective action and positive relationships, along with creating a positive school climate[61] for all students,

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[61] School climate is the quality and character of school life based on patterns of school life and experiences. A positive school climate reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organisational structures, which includes norms, values and expectations that support people to feel socially, emotionally and physically safe, as well as being

regardless of their social class or background. The socially critical perspective posits that 'the structuring of knowledge and symbol in educational institutions is intimately related to the principles of social and cultural control in society' (Apple, 1990: 2). In this study the need for the active involvement of people from the centre of power in education namely teachers, to positively work on behalf of students was highlighted. To do this work effectively teachers must be provided with opportunities to reflect on their own development; to acknowledge the influences that have shaped their own values and views; and from there identify how they can 'structure more positively the effects they have on their students and others' (Giroux, 1988: 9). A supportive school exosystem exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted and positive behaviours and interactions are promoted. In such an environment principles of equity and inclusive education 'are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect' (*Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour, 2012, Policy/Program Memorandum no. 145*). To sustain a nurturing and supportive exosystem, every person involved in the life of the school must seek to promote and support behaviours which reflect a code of conduct based on equity and inclusive education, while being committed to human development (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2013: 2). Finally, a nurturing and supportive exosystem should foster meaningful educational partnerships and be open to members of the wider community being 'involved in this effort as part of the school community' (ibid: 2).

Bronfenbrenner (1989: 228) described the macrosystem as the cultural context for development which provides a 'blueprint' 'that partially determines the social structures and activities that occur in the more immediate system levels'. As a result of the influence of the macrosystem the quality of life for the developing person can either be hindered or improved. Features of the macrosystem which impacted on participants in this study included the embedded values, traditions and cultures in Limerick, which were reflected in the legislation and social policies. These were found to have contributed to social engineering that allowed for structural inequality in the form of 'persistent deprivation, social polarisation, poor environmental quality and

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engaged and respected (The School Climate Challenge: Narrowing the Gap Between School Climate Research and School Climate Policy, Practice Guidelines and Teacher Education Policy, 2007: 5).

demographic weaknesses'[62] (McCafferty, 2014: 17). The literature finds that many council estates and housing projects actively contribute 'to the reinforcement of class boundaries' by 'wresting working-class communities away from the old lifelines of work, families and friends and forging a new class of alienated and damaged, highly pressurised people whose links with mainstream society range from incomplete to tenuous' (Hanley 2007: 231). This study finds that the macrosystem facilitated a history of social engineering that eventually resulted in the need for regeneration in Limerick city. Macrosystem influences were also found to have reinforced negative perceptions of the study sites which often resulted in public service officials (e.g. local authority, Gardaí, etc.) excluding those living in marginalised circumstances (intentionally or by omission) from participation in public discourses and processes affecting their lives, and according to some were often unresponsive to their concerns or needs (cf. Chapter Five, 5.3.6.5 - 5.3.6.7). Moreover, macrosystem influences were found to have reinforced negative perceptions of students' and their family's social status (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.2.5 & 7.2.6), with the result that teachers had low aspirations for certain sections of the population in Limerick, i.e. those from the study site areas. Furthermore, the contrasting school experiences of the older and younger participants in the study likewise reflects the influence of the macrosystem but also shows many positive developments which have taken place in policy, legislation and services provision. These are acknowledged in the findings as having contributed to the protection and the welfare of children and the promotion of children's rights[63], as well as influencing positive changes in teaching and pedagogical practices. However,

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[62] Since 1996 the spatial pattern of demographic change in Limerick shows 'an association between high levels of interurban accessibility and population growth, and between rural peripherality and population decline', with the result that many areas in the city are 'demographically weak' (McCafferty, 2014: 17).

[63] Corporal Punishment was abolished in (1982) and became a criminal offence in (1996). Curricular reforms at Primary level (1999) and Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle levels have impacted on teaching and learning more children centred. Charting Our Education Future (1995), Education Act (1998), Education Welfare Act (2000), EPSEN Act (2004) and DEIS (2005) have made provision for evaluating educational policy and practices, reflecting a shift towards inclusivity, lifelong learning, educational reform, provision for the welfare of children and provision and supports for those with special educational needs and those experiencing the challenges of marginalisation and exclusion. The Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004, the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004; the National Disability Authority Act 1999 aim to ensure greater equity for all persons in the Irish State. Children First (1999); Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011); the Referendum on the Rights of the Child (Nov. 2012); Action Plan on Bullying (2013) and National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2010, '*Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*' (2014) makes provision for the promotion of children's' rights and welfare.

while policy developments contributed to positive changes, discrepancies were found to exist between the policy and the reality in the classroom, as some schools in Limerick were depicted as still operating from traditional power structures. Apart from this concern regional and national macro-level processes are acknowledged by participants to have contributed to making schools more supportive, nurturing and inclusive of students, especially for those experiencing economic hardship, marginalisation and/or social exclusion.

Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem to the ecological model to highlight that human ecologies change over time. Bronfenbrenner and colleagues also advanced that in every generation people and events influence and shape the course of history with impacts on development which are different from other generations. Examples of the chronosystem at work in this study can be seen in the developments noted by participants as having taken place in education as a result of new technologies for learning, the introduction of targeted supports, community-based adult education and out-of-school-time (OST) provision, new educational research, along with legislative and policy changes (cf. footnote[63] for examples). These have all contributed to making the education system more child and family centred, as well as influencing the way in which children and adults are taught and learn in schools and in community settings.

In conclusion to this section the hope of regeneration in Limerick is that the city will become a more inclusive and thriving urban space as a result of regeneration. This study finds that education can contribute to achieving these objectives. The recent DES *Statement of Strategy 2016-2018,* understands 'that no area of government's work is more vital than education in helping to support the development of a strong economy and a fair and compassionate society, while making children's lives better' (Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD, May 23rd, 2016). To meet this challenge schools and the education system will need to work at developing proximal processes between official policy and the implementation of change among teachers, students and parents, so that schools become more personally supportive, nurturing and inclusive. The ecological and socially critical perspectives provide a theoretical basis which can help to bring about this change, by urging policy makers

and educational practitioners to be committed to systemic changes and changes in the location and the exercise of power, while seeking to promote social justice in schools and in society (Procee, 2006: 252).

Having discussed the ecological and socially critical frameworks more generally, in the following sections these frameworks are employed to interpret the barriers to education for participants and the educational priorities identified by them. The theoretical frameworks are also employed to discuss how those often excluded from participation in public discourses and social processes can be facilitated to be included more meaningfully in these.

8.3   Barriers to engagement, retention and progression in education

In this section I discuss barriers to engagement, retention and progression in education as described by participants. These include: poverty and economic hardship, family difficulties, the negative influence of peers and bullying, the competitive nature of the education system and the lack of special educational needs provision. I then discuss how the recent economic recession (2008-2013) impacted on the aspirations and opportunities of some participants. As part of this discussion I also explore the phenomenon of fatalism and its impacts on some participants.

8.3.1   Poverty and economic hardship

In the findings the costs associated with education were identified as barriers to participants' educational participation and progression (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.3.3). While some participants might have liked to progress in education their aspirations were limited by the lack of economic capital in the home and the limitations imposed by economic poverty. This experience finds support in Lynch and O'Riordan (1998: 454) who contends that families who experience economic hardship are influenced by the pressures of day to day survival and 'making ends meet' and this can take precedence over optional expenses such as education.

In Chapter Four 'Education and Poverty', poverty was shown to originate from the unequal distribution of economic resources (Coote et al., 2015; Nolan and Callan, 1994), with those experiencing poverty more likely to become marginalised and be excluded from participation in activities and processes considered normative in society (Rise Up for Children, 2015; Swords et al., 2011, TASC, 2015). Chapter Seven 'Research Findings' reports how poverty and inequality negatively impacted on participants and led to a lack of agency to influence change. Riehl (2000: 27) argues that those who experience poverty must be provided with meaningful opportunities for participation and representation, so that policy makers and service providers can hear their voices and concerns, and as a result become more responsive to their needs. Due to the political nature of poverty discourses, the theoretical frameworks for the study suggest that poverty reduction measures and meaningful educational reform must be comprehensive and systematic, and include radical changes in social and economic policies (Anyon, 2005; Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC), 2005). At a macro level social policies must be guided by equity and social justice principles (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015; Procee, 2006). At a micro and meso level responses must be directed at improving the economic opportunities of marginalised families through material, social and community supports, while ensuring their availability for the duration of a child's time spent in education. It may also be necessary that demands are made by individuals/community groups on the political system to ensure that these supports are put in place (Raffo et al., 2007: 47).

8.3.2 Family difficulties

In the findings family difficulties were reported as presenting barriers to children's education and to parents' involvement with schools. When families experience difficulties it can be a major source of increased developmental risk for children (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, Humphreys et al., 2011). Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986 & 2005) emphasises the importance of supporting those settings most frequented by the developing person, i.e. the home and school (microsystem) and the local community, or parents' social networks and/or support structures (the mesosystem). Doing so can help diminish parental stress, improve parenting practices and enable parents experiencing difficulties to become more involved in their children's education

(Eamon, 2001: 263). Learning's from the DFES (2003) Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) in the UK recommend collaboration with other agencies and the hosting of various agencies on the school site to support parents and families in marginalised areas, where the demand for services are high and where traditional forms of service-delivery has been inadequate (Dyson and Todd, 2006: 1). FSES's have also been found to provide over and above the 'core offer' of teaching within the standard school curriculum, as well as many personal and social benefits for students, parents and communities in which FSES's are located (Dyson and Todd, 2006: 1). With the developing young person at the centre of all such efforts and agreement existing as to their purpose, risk factors for children and families in difficulty can be dramatically reduced and development opportunities increased (Higgins, 2008: 56). Finally, the ecological framework acknowledges the importance of work done on behalf of families at all of the system levels (macro, exo, meso and micro levels). In the context of the regeneration of Limerick, efforts made at all of the system levels to prioritise the needs of residents and families experiencing difficulties can help mitigate against risk factors, dramatically enhance developmental processes in the microsystem and increase human and social capital development in the mesosystem for students and parents. Therefore progressing these efforts as part of the regeneration programme can contribute to creating a more inclusive, supportive and participatory society in Limerick city, as a result of regeneration.

8.3.3 Bullying in schools and in the community

Bullying is defined as 'intentional negative behaviour that typically occurs with some repetitiveness and is directed against a person who has difficulty defending himself or herself' (Olweus, 2011: 2). The Department of Education and Skills (2013: 19) sees bullying to be part of a continuum of behaviour that can happen to anyone. However, vulnerable groups, i.e. children with disabilities or special educational needs, children from ethnic minority and migrant groups, children from the Traveller community, children of minority faiths or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) young people are most at risk of being bullied in schools (DES, 2013). Events which distinguish children or young people as different or special can also be a trigger for bullying behaviour (DES, 2013: 27). The impacts and the potentially tragic

consequences of bullying behaviour is copiously documented in the literature (DES, 2013; Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2012); Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010; Kaltialo-Heino et al., 1999; National Office for Suicide Prevention Annual Report, 2012; Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA), 2009; Olweus, 2011; O'Moore, 2010; Tippett et al., 2010).

In the findings, peer group influences had impacts on students' engagement with education. Bullying behaviour and the intimidation of those attending school by those who were not also had a bearing on engagement with education and was found to have contributed to early school leaving intent and early school leaving. In the findings parents were reported to have been powerless to protect children from bullying behaviour, either by other students or teachers and bullying behaviour was also reported to take place in the communities participants lived in, especially by those with links to criminality (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.2.2 to 7.2.4 & 7.3.2). Some participants reported having experienced bullying and feared that if it was reported to those in authority (e.g. teacher, school principal, Gardaí, etc.) they would be perceived to be 'rats'[64] and might draw attention to themselves and experience further attacks, or expose members of their families to attacks. Nonetheless, it was reported that bullying behaviour needed to be addressed in schools. Likewise it was stated that bullying needed to be addressed in communities as part of the regeneration process.

To address bullying in schools the DES (2013) recommends that a whole school approach is necessary to negate its potential negative impacts. A whole school approach involves developing a shared understanding of what bullying is, what its potential effects are, and what are the most appropriate and effective responses. Therefore all school staff (principal, teachers, resource and administration, care-taking and maintenance) should be provided with training in established evidenced-based intervention strategies to support them to combat this complex social problem in schools. Therapy and counselling can also help reassure children that their concerns are being addressed while providing important emotional support to victims of

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[64] Rats is a pejorative term denoting those who inform authorities such as the Gardaí about wrongdoings, etc.

bullying. The use of restorative practices[65], conflict resolution and mediation are increasingly being used to address bullying behaviour in schools and in communities (Braithwaite, 1989; Gellin and Joensuu, 2011; Fives et al., 2013; Mirsky, 2009; Wachtel, 2013). Mediation, conflict management and conflict resolution involve the support of an impartial outsider (a mediator) who helps the parties concerned (victim and perpetrator) to arrive at an agreement, end the bullying behaviour and restore relationships in a way that is satisfactory to all concerned. Restorative practices involves primary stakeholders (victims, offenders, teachers, parents and the wider community) coming together to resolve issues and plan for a better future (Wachtel, 2013: 3). The techniques employed in both approaches include group conferencing, restorative circles and mediation practices (Hopkins, 2003). Family group conferencing and restorative circles can be used to empower children and families to meet and talk about their futures. Wachtel (1999 & 2005) posits that such practices are most effective when they take place within the context of the restorative community[66]. In the restorative community the victims of harmful behaviours are supported at times of crises by other community members or service providers who initiate 'circles' when needed (Fives et al., 2013: 8). Commitments are also made to agree to work with one another to overcome the difficulties encountered in a positive way, instead of 'reproaching each other and apportioning culpability, efforts are made to heal relationships and to reintegrate people back into the community' (Fives et al., 2013: 9). Restorative practices are premised on the belief that an over reliance on punishment as a social regulator only shames and stigmatises wrongdoers and pushes them further into negative societal sub-cultures, while failing to change their behaviour (Braithwaite, 1989). Whereas the restorative practices approach offers the opportunity to reintegrate wrongdoers back into their communities in the hope that they will not reoffend.

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[65] Restorative practices have its roots in the justice practices of the Maori people of New Zealand. It employs strategies which involve participation, listening, respect, community learning and decision making (Fives et al., 2013: 7), so as to improve human behaviour, facilitate community leadership, repair harm done and restore community relationships (Wachtel, 2013: 1-2).

[66] A restorative community facilitates people to express their feelings in a safe and respectful manner, so that conflict situations can reach a quick resolution (Wachtel, 2005: 84).

For those who have been victims of bullying might argue that the perpetrators of bullying should not be engaged with. Instead they should be sent a strong and clear message that their behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It may also be simplistic or even naïve to think those who threaten or hurt others would engage in restorative practices, unless incentivised or coerced to do so by those in authority. Aside from these criticisms the restorative practices approach can help create a climate for the development of positive personal beliefs and more positive social relationships in the study sites of Limerick city, as part of the regeneration process. The effectiveness of restorative practices is recognised nationally and internationally, e.g. New Zealand, UK, US, Australia and South Africa have made use of restorative practices in various settings (Fives et al., 2013: 7-9). In Finland restorative practices have been successfully used to address conflicts between neighbours which involved name-calling, gossip, bullying, destruction of property and physical violence (Gellin and Joensuu, 2011). In the UK efforts to transform one of the UK's most deprived cities Hull into a 'restorative city' is well documented (Mirsky, 2009: 1). In Ireland restorative practices have been employed in the Greater Shankill Alternatives in West Belfast (which sought to alleviate tensions between Unionist and Nationalist factions). Restorative practices have also supported school development in Dunlaoghaire, Co. Dublin, where interdisciplinary and multi-agency working 'in favour of enhancing the provision offered to failing children and young people' (Wilson, 2011: 23) was developed. The Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) in Tallaght West, Co. Dublin has employed restorative practices for the resolution of conflicts and disputes in schools and communities (Fives et al., 2013: 12). In Limerick city efforts are underway through the Children's Services Committee (CSC[67]) to develop restorative practices in schools, welfare and youth work settings. In 2011 the Department of

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[67] In 2007 the Working Together for Children Initiative of the then Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA), now the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) established the Children's Services Committees (CSCs[67]). Initially four CSCs were set up in - Dublin City, Limerick City, Donegal and South Dublin on a pilot basis. Their purpose to explore the potential for interagency working in order to secure better developmental outcomes for children in their area through more effective integration and planning of services and interventions at local level. The age remit of the CSCs was from 0-18 years of age, with the new Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC), this age group has been extended to 0 - 24 years of age, and is aligned with *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020.* CYPSCs look to ensure a more connected and co-ordinated response by services to the needs and aspirations of children and young people. The Limerick City CSC brings together a diverse group of agencies to engage in planning of services for families and children at a local and community level.

Education and Skills (DES) (a key partner) secured funding to support training to introduce restorative practices in Limerick schools. Supported by a facilitator six DEIS post-primary schools and a Youth Encounter Project (YEP) participated in training and on-going supports. Since then a parallel process of raising awareness on the use of restorative practices has taken place across Limerick city. The DES and the Limerick Education Centre (LEC) have also provided restorative practices training and information sessions to over 320 people from schools, education, welfare and youth services. The next steps identified by the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) in Limerick is to embed and sustain restorative practices in schools and community settings across Limerick city.

8.3.4 A competitive education system

A number of participants stated that in their view primary and post-primary education in Ireland was very competitive. This was due to the increasing emphasis placed on attaining points in the Leaving Certificate examination and high grades at Junior Certificate level. To understand how the education system in Ireland developed to become so competitive, it is important to understand how current educational structures developed. According to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills (2010: 223) education in Ireland, especially at post-primary level developed from 'a Church run school system, where the foci centred on fostering linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence and educating the young for the Church, the professions and the civil service' (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010: 223). Such a system the Committee suggests inevitably gave 'rise to meritocracy' (ibid: 223). For Lynch (1987: 115-116) meritocracy is problematic because firstly, it 'helps perpetuate the existence of a hierarchical social order', as the meritocratic ideal 'suggests that those who do not have ability or who do not make the effort should be given lesser rewards'. Secondly, using meritocratic mechanisms, i.e. educational credentials to select people for occupations is likely to result in those from higher socio-economic groupings more likely to obtain valuable educational credentials than those from lower socio-economic groups. Thirdly, meritocracy assumes that talent is limited in society. But as Lynch (1987) points out in an unequal society like Ireland, many individuals and groups lack the opportunities to develop

their talents and abilities, and scarcity of talent is more a by-product of social inequality rather than the intrinsic characteristics of individuals. Fourthly, given the current structure of the labour market the meritocratic ideal 'is a logical impossibility'. This is because even if one has the talent and makes the effort, the proportion of prestigious and high paying jobs do not exist in large enough numbers to accommodate all of those 'technically eligible for them' (Lynch, 1987: 116). Finally, the individualism associated with meritocracy tends to represent 'the individual in abstract terms, rather than as a relational being'. In doing so it encourages 'educational solutions through changing individuals' rather than changing the 'social structures' surrounding them (ibid: 116).

Submissions from the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills (2010) have also put forward that the role and the contract of teachers and 'the locus of control of how classes are typically organised' (Joint Oireachtas Committee in Education and Skills, 2010: 223) is responsible for much of the inflexibility in the Irish education system. McCoy and Smyth (2005) argue that while the Irish education system has emphasised academic attainments, it has failed to develop important links between schools and the work place. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on education and Skills (2010) further states that despite much dialogue Irish educational structures remain remarkably resistant to change. Part of the reason for this Lynch (1989: 117-118) contends has to do with an oversimplified, consensual relationship between schools and society, and a presentation of students, teachers and schools as passive recipients of 'hidden curriculum' messages which fail to address the significance of the 'hidden curriculum' in the maintenance of social class. Differing perspectives on the 'hidden curriculum' were presented in Chapter Two, 2.3. However, given the school experiences of many of the participants in this study, a critical perspective on 'hidden curriculum' enables understanding of how schools function to 'reproduce and sustain the relations of dominance, exploitation and inequality between the classes' (Giroux, 1983: 56). In view of this Skelton (1997: 177) urges educationalists to revisit the concept of 'hidden curriculum', positing that while 'the initial wave of critical research into the hidden curriculum' helped to reveal 'covert political interference into the curriculum, the task

of enabling people to understand what motivates such interference' is important in a context 'where political control over the curriculum is explicit yet offered up as common sense'. Skelton (1997: 177) likewise asks does educational curriculum in schools today really prepare students for the world of today, or 'reflect and anticipate the challenge of living in a world which is rapidly changing and becoming ever more complex, fragmented and uncertain?' Skelton (1997: 177) therefore proposes further research into the 'hidden curriculum' in order to problematise 'the implicit and taken-for-granted rationality of most modern curricula and the totality and coherence of the belief systems which inform them'.

In this study a competitive education system was seen by some participants to discriminate against those who were not academically inclined in the traditional sense. Consequently, the education system was viewed by them to promote success for some and failure for others, with those most likely to fail in such a system coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and/or areas such as the study sites. This perspective finds support in Lynch (1989: 147-148) who posits that competition in society is fair 'if one competes in a world with equally privileged peers'. However, in 'a materially and culturally hierarchical society, competition between equals is impossible without either handicapping the privileged or compensating the relatively disadvantaged'. The findings of this study suggest that if children from areas such as the study sites are to achieve more equal educational outcomes radical changes are needed. This includes making school curriculum and assessments more relevant, beneficial and inclusionary. However, with schools disposed to upholding certain kinds of academic skills, i.e. mathematical and linguistic intelligences, while demeaning and marginalising the rest (Lynch, 1989: 52) this can prove problematic. Apple (1990) opines that hegemony in education is promoted through school curriculum, school routines and school processes and structures. Giroux (1983: 111-112) proposes that counterhegemonic practices are needed in education, because while the 'hidden curriculum' often functions to maintain the status quo (Eisner, 1985: 90) counterhegemonic practices helps to expose the hidden expressions of dominant interests in school curriculum, assessment and institutional practices (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1983; Lynch, 1989). Using a socially critical lens can contribute to discussions on educational reform and curriculum development, and their significance for human and community capital development. With education for workplace preparation becoming an increasing

concern of 21st century educational discourses (cf. DES *Statement of Strategy, 2016-2018*; *Europe 2020 Strategy*; *Further Education and Training (FET) Strategy 2014-2019*), social critical perspectives can also help focus educational debates, so that social justice in education and educational equality are to the fore.

Commenting on the curriculum of schools, the findings of this study suggest that teachers, schools and the education system must honour and accommodate the histories and cultures of students in schools, both in curriculum and assessment. A Foucauldian perspective enables a view of school curriculum and social change as 'local' affairs 'requiring particular strategies which may, in terms of their usefulness and appropriateness to change, be culturally and historically-bound' (Skelton, 1997: 189). Therefore much can be done at the local level to ensure that school curriculum is appropriate and relevant for *all* students. Some participants in the study stated that for education in schools to be more relevant and beneficial to students from areas such as the study sites, school curriculum must, 1) focus more on what young people are likely to face in their adult lives. Therefore topics such as sex education and health and relationships education should feature more in the curriculum, 2) include more practical subjects and practical based learning, and 3) include the culture of students and their communities in the school curriculum, e.g. horses and boating, etc. For Lynch and O'Riordan (1998: 471) honouring and accommodating the histories and cultures of students in schools has the potential to bridge the life-world of students and their teachers and facilitate greater harmony and learning in the classroom, while contributing to more equality in schools. Participants also reported that mainstream education should develop more creative ways to assess and validate students' ability and learning across all curricular and extra-curricular areas. In addition, educational assessments should be on-going, acknowledge and reward informal and formal learning, while acknowledging in some way students' non-academic achievements in sports, the arts, volunteering, etc. Added to these insights from the socially critical perspective underlines the importance of addressing unequal power relations in schools through developing a range of communication structures and the fostering of dialogue (Shor and Freire, 1987: 13). For Downes (2013: 347) developing meaningful communication structures and fostering dialogue in schools can contribute to paving the way for a questioning of the education system as to how it can be changed, while ensuring 'that children's voices are heard and their needs are met in the future'

(Downes, 2013: 347). Developing meaningful communication structures in schools begins with teachers building the capacity of their students 'to challenge the forces which maintain the unequal status quo' (Connolly and Hussey, 2013: 76). Such actions have the potential to promote educational equality, advance social justice in education and lead to more equal educational outcomes for *all* students; seen in greater levels of engagement, participation, retention, achievement and educational progression.

8.3.5   Deficits in special educational needs (SEN) provision

The provisions contained in the EPSEN Act (2004) outlined the commitments of government to provide an inclusive education for all children and give children with special educational needs the right to attend mainstream schools with appropriate supports. In October 2006 the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) forwarded plans to the DES with recommendations to complete and implement all sections of the EPSEN Act (2004) by 2010. However, Budget (2009) saw the announcement by government that the recommendations of the NCSE regarding SEN provision were to be put on hold. At the time of data gathering (2011-2012) participants were aware that cuts in public services expenditure were impacting on their communities and resulting in a reduction of educational resources in schools across Limerick city. According to some participants cuts in public expenditure would have negative consequences for children in the study site areas, especially those with SEN, who were already struggling to engage and progress in a competitive education system. Some participants also spoke about the difficulties some parents (including themselves) often encountered as they had to 'fight the system' to acquire the necessary diagnosis and continuum of care needed for a child with special educational needs. They likewise reported that if left unaddressed deficits in SEN provision could have long term negative social consequences. Drawing on findings from the literature these consequences include: increased exposure to risks, impoverished development (National Disability Association (NDA) (2005), underachieving in education (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010: 47-48), increased costs to the State because of non-retention in school and non-progression in education, with resultant losses in human capital potential, limited employment opportunities in

adulthood, a perpetuation of the cycle of poverty and an increase in the risk of social exclusion or entering the criminal justice system (Child Poverty: Ireland in Recession, 2011; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015; Social Justice Ireland, 2014).

The critique provided by participants' in this section and insights derived from the literature highlights the need to adequately resource schools while also supporting some of the most vulnerable children in the education system, i.e., students with SEN. Therefore macro level policies aimed at eliminating poverty and social exclusion must factor in a range of measures which actively addresses deficits in SEN provisions at the micro level. This concern is acknowledged in the DES's *Statement of Strategy 2016-2018,* as a priority area to be addressed as part of the government's efforts to transform the Irish education system so that it supports the development of a strong economy, while helping to create a fair and compassionate society.

8.3.6 Economic hardship and economic recession and their impacts on participants

In the findings some participants, namely the younger males, reported a sense of apathy towards school and hopelessness for the future. The basis for this was an awareness of financial constraints in the family home and the belief that their families could not afford to support them in further or higher education. For those with limited resources choice is often a secondary value and takes its 'place behind quality, affordability and access' (Lynch, 2006: 3). This is despite the existence of a myth in relation to free education, i.e., perceptions tied in to a meritocratic view that if one is good enough, one can easily progress to College or University, regardless of social class or socio-economic background (Higher Education Authority (HEA), 2005; Lynch & O'Riordan, 1998; Lynch, 1987 & 2006). As a result of financial constraints in the family home some of the younger participants stated that they did not want to put effort into school work nor did they want stay on in school. This was because they saw little or no point in investing time and effort into something, such as school and education, which they perceived had no 'real' benefits for them. Furthermore, they reported that their life options were limited and their future prospects bleak, as the only future in sight was welfare payments as the primary source of income. This

belief was heightened by the period of economic recession prevailing at the time of data gathering (2011-2012).

The findings therefore highlight some of the difficulties created by macroeconomic forces and economic recession and how these can impact on life opportunities and contribute to the development of fatalism and despair, especially among young adults. In the literature fatalism is closely associated with demographic variables, such as low levels of education and income (Shen et al., 2009). Therefore those with low-income and low-education levels are most likely to be fatalistic (Powe, 2001; Mayo et al., 2001). As a phenomenon, fatalism encompasses the following: (a) an individual's perceived lack of control over external events in his or her life, (b) notions of fate, luck, destiny and predetermination, (c) perceptions of powerlessness, hopelessness and meaninglessness, due to expectations of negative consequences (Scheier & Bridges, 1995; Powe & Johnson, 1995). According to Powe and Finnie (2003) fatalistic beliefs are correlated with lower intentions to change behaviours and come with a variety of negative personal outcomes. However, reducing or eliminating fatalistic beliefs can impact on behavioural change and reduce a range of outcome disparities both in health and education (Powe et al., 2005).

The recent global and national economic crisis (2008-2013) has brought into focus some of the difficulties faced by young adults as they attempt to access post-school educational opportunities and secure meaningful employment (McCoy et al., 2014: xi). Marcus and Gavrilovic (2010: ix-x) recommend that protective measures are needed, i.e. education and employment opportunities and emotional supports for young adults as they struggle to make successful transitions to adulthood in the context of economic insecurity and deprivation (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010: ix-x). Therefore involving marginalised young people in leisure activities such as sport, drama, community services, youth mentoring programmes, parenting and personal development programmes can help foster social capital development and reduce the attractiveness of gangs as a source of social and emotional support (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010: ix- x). These measures are also proffered as helping to prevent fatalistic and marginalised young people from being recruited into criminal activity or engage in 'at-risk' behaviours such as substance misuse (Downes, 2003: 52-53), commercial sex work, or experience violence, mental health problems and suicide

(United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World Bank, 2007; Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010). Failure to make successful transitions can disrupt transition to healthy, socially integrated, productive adulthood and increase the likelihood of intergenerational transmission of poverty and exclusion (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010: ix; OECD, 2009). Finally, as all participants in the study were engaged in or had engaged in community-adult education, further opportunities to access this provision can help young adults to 'create their own knowledge and value systems', (Connolly, 2003: 3), while strengthening their resolve to bring about a more just and equal society (Connolly, 2007: 126). Therefore in urban regeneration programmes, supporting education and employment opportunities for young adults, together with increasing their sense of citizenship and stake in society can have many benefits for regeneration processes, and so should receive more investment.

8.4 The educational priorities of participants for regeneration

During the interviews participants were asked to identify what part, if any, education should play in the regeneration process. Some reported that education was important to regeneration because regeneration was more than just the knocking and building of houses or building community facilities, but more about increasing social awareness and social responsibility and developing the community. It was also reported that in being educated people would be able to understand what regeneration means and involves. For one participant this meant mending the hurts which exist in the study sites. The findings also identify a number of educational priorities which participants voiced should be included in the Limerick regeneration programme. These include:

- supporting schools, especially those serving the study site areas;
- addressing the problem of early school leaving;
- resourcing out-of-school time (OST) provision;
- supporting and resourcing community-based adult education;
- supporting training, up-skilling and employment creation;
- education for parents and education for parenting;
- increasing civic awareness through education.

In view of these priorities, supporting education and enhancing learning accessibility for the life course (from pre-school to adult learning) were considered fundamental for regeneration. The responsibility for education and training provision within the city was however seen to be the responsibility of the various education provider, whereas those responsible for regeneration in Limerick (DECLG, LRA and Limerick City and County Council) were perceived to have responsibility for the development of the necessary social structures, so that services such as education can achieve their intended objectives.

8.4.1   Supporting schools

The importance of supporting schools, especially schools located in or serving marginalised communities was highlighted in the Delivering Educational Equality in schools (DEIS) programme, 2005. In *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS* (Smyth et al., 2015: 72) reiterates the importance of supporting schools, especially urban DEIS schools. The reasons for this are urban DEIS schools are often faced with a greater complexity of need, have disproportionate numbers of students with emotional-behavioural and learning difficulties, have higher proportions of non-English speaking students and those from Traveller backgrounds, and tend to have 'more challenging disciplinary climates and a greater level of negative interaction between students and teachers'; factors which are associated with poor school retention and 'the likelihood of continuing on to post-school education or training' (ibid: 72).

In this study, participants reported that some of the schools in and serving the study site areas were struggling to survive because of a decline in enrolments as a result of the demolition of the housing stock and the re-location of residents to other parts of the city and county as part of the regeneration programme. Another reason given was because of anti-social behaviour and crime. Participants perceived that due to dwindling population numbers some schools in Limerick were being undermined in their ability to deliver educational services or provide curriculum choices and the necessary care and supports needed for their students. For these reasons it was stated

that supporting schools should be a priority for regeneration, because of the unique role schools play in the development of children and the life of their communities.

In the literature schools are viewed to have an important contribution to make to area-based regeneration, but an opposing view is also proposed. Schools can contribute to regeneration processes, but under specific circumstances can also be part of the vicious circle of decline and thereby not contribute as a transformative agent. Arguments in support of each of these views are now presented. The first view posits that schools serving areas of concentrated disadvantage often experience some of the greatest difficulties, have the highest levels of pupil mobility and the greatest levels of disruptive behaviour (Smyth et al., 2015: 72). Accordingly it can be difficult to raise pupils' attainments at the same rates as other schools; resulting in students falling further behind their peers (Ofsted, 1993, 1996; Woods and Levacic, 2002). Schools serving areas of concentrated disadvantage can also find it difficult to recruit and retain staff and more often become unattractive to aspirational parents (Crowther et al, 2003: 1). Therefore instead of schools offering a path out of exclusion and marginalisation, they become trapped in a vicious circle where the decline of the area and the decline of the school reinforce one another (Power and Mumford, 1999). The second view claims that schools have an important part to play in urban regeneration processes through the contribution they make towards enhancing the human capital of the children they serve (Crowther et al., 2003: 43). Flint (2011: 4) posits that schools are one of the few public institutions with the capacity and the opportunity to generate social capital within the communities they serve. Schools are likewise an important source of bridging and linking capital[68] connecting families in difficulty to the wider community and support services where needed. For these reasons supporting schools in urban regeneration can facilitate the development and the capacity of the education system 'to respond affirmatively to all their pupils and the communities they serve' (Crowther et al., 2003: 43). In communities where full service extended schools are located, the evidence finds that there is 'improved school performance, better relations

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[68] Bridging capital involves connecting with people unlike oneself for getting on in life. Linking capital connects people to resources and knowledge from those of a higher social class status (National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), 2003: 3).

with local communities and an enhanced standing of the school in its area' (Cummings et al., 2007: 3).

8.4.2   Addressing the problem of early school leaving (ESL)

Some participants reported having left school early, some as young as twelve years of age. For these participants early school leaving (ESL) was precipitated for the most part by microsystem issues, i.e. family difficulties and negative student-teacher relationships. A number of participants also reported feeling 'pushed out' of the education system either by acrimonious relationships with teachers, bullying by their peers, the competitiveness of school curriculum and assessment and an education fraught with deficits in SEN provision. ESL was reported in the findings as having had negative consequences for some participants in terms of educational progression and later employment prospects and life opportunities. As a result of having left school early, some participants reported being angry at themselves, their peers, parents, teachers and the education system. The findings also show that early school leaving was a contributory factor to many of the social problems in the study site areas, e.g., the lack of educational qualifications, unemployment, social exclusion, drugs misuse, anti-social behaviour and petty and serious crime. Due to these concerns participants reported that ESL must be systematically addressed in order to break the cycle of poor educational outcomes and to achieve the transformations sought in regeneration, namely viable and sustainable communities (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.7.1.2).

In the literature certain sub-groups tend to have higher rates of early school leaving than the general population, for example, those who experience socio-economic exclusion, students with special educational needs, Travellers and students with mental health or emotional difficulties (Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010: 21-22). Marked gender difference in the rates of early school leaving between boys and girls are also noted. According to the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (2010) across the European Union (EU) 16.3 percent of boys are early school leavers, compared to 12.5 percent of girls. The European Commission (2011: 5) also reports that during the compulsory education period boys seem to experience more difficulties than girls in adapting to the school environment. As a result boys tend to have lower

achievement levels and are over-represented among students likely to show emotional and behavioural problems, have specific learning difficulties, and are over represented as early school leavers (European Commission, 2011: 5). While the literature notes gender differences related to incidences of ESL, the findings in this study submits that ESL was a reality for both male and female participants alike.

ESL is understood to arise from a range of variables, events and interactions, which combine to create a situation where a young person feels unwelcome or alienated in school, or sees no future in the education system. Therefore they decide to drop out or are forced out of school (Blackett, 2002; Blaug, 2001; Boldt, 1994; Boldt and Devine, 1998; Downes and Maunsell, 2007; Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills, 2010). In Irish society ESL is problematic because early school leavers (ESLs) are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than their peers, and are confronted with limited opportunities to develop culturally, personally and socially (Mallon and Healy, 2012; Barnardos, 2015). Given the complex and multifaceted nature of ESL (Boldt, 1994) and considering the school experiences many participants in this study had, addressing this problem will require a system level range of improvements (European Commission, 2011: 5-8) aimed at making schools 'personally supportive communities' (Downes and Maunsell, 2007: 40). This contention finds support in Smyth et al., (2015: 80) who claims that evidence exists to suggest that the nature of the school climate, i.e. the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students 'significantly influences a range of student outcomes, including early school leaving, academic achievement, academic self-image, stress levels, and intended and actual post-school pathways'. This suggests the importance of schools developing policies and putting in place measures which are inclusive and supportive of students and their families, especially those experiencing difficulties, marginalisation or poverty. Schools must also be proactive in changing the culture of school so that it is responsive to individual and diverse student needs.   This can be done by fostering positive links and developing meaningful mesosystem partnerships with the student's home and community. At the micro level schools must be mindful of the various needs of young people and the many difficulties often confronting them (Downes and Maunsell, 2007: 53-54). Riehl (2000: 64) posits that addressing the challenges of student diversity requires teachers to

> Honour different ways of knowing and sources of knowledge, allow students to speak and write in their own vernacular and use culturally compatible communication styles themselves, express cultural solidarity with their students, share power with students, focus in caring for the whole child, and maintain high expectations for all.

Schools must also be proactive in responding to these needs by providing meaningful opportunities for students to have their voices heard and to input to school improvement measures. Finally, as the findings in this study suggest schools should work to ensure that relationships in the microsystem between students and teachers are positive, nurturing and supportive (Hughes et al., 2012). Furthermore, there is a need for a perspective on the 'hidden curriculum' which encompasses 'all the ideological instances of the schooling process that "silently" structure and reproduce hegemonic assumptions and practices' (Giroux, 1983; 71). For Giroux (1983: 71) such a perspective can help to shift the emphasis towards a concern for 'cultural intervention and social action', while enabling a view of schools as 'important sites to wage counter-hegemonic practices' (ibid: 71).

8.4.3   Resourcing out-of-school time (OST) provision

While schools make important contributions to the lives of young people, young people also learn in a variety of contexts, i.e. the home, school and out of school settings (Downes, 2006; Daly et al., 2009; Harvard Family Research Project, 2015; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007; McCoy, et al., 2012; NESF, 2009; OSCAILT, 2013; Quality Development of Out of School Services (QDOSS), 2006 & 2013; Wikeley et al., 2007). A number of participants were aware that children from the study site areas, including some of their own children and grandchildren were accessing out-of-school activities. Out-of-school time (OST) provision was seen to provide positive activities for children and young people, while helping those struggling with school work. OST was also perceived to meet a range of personal and social development needs of children and young people. These perceptions find much support in the literature, with the Harvard Family Research Project (Lopez, 2015) finding that OST provision (e.g. after-school and/or holiday time programmes) can be a powerful influence in the lives of young people. Lopez (2015: 2) posits that OST

provision offers safe spaces where children and young people can receive personal attention, find academic support, form friendships, discover their passions and develop new talents. Lopez (2015: 2) likewise posits that research confirms that high-quality out-of-school programmes show positive outcomes for young people. These include: academic achievement, civic and social development, and reduced risk-taking behaviours. By offering enrichment activities that accommodate different learning styles and cultural preferences, OST provision can also play a key role in nurturing the mind set and skills of children and youth to succeed in a global, connected world. Furthermore, Lopez (2015) contends that the research shows that students who are the furthest behind in school can gain the most from OST services, such as tutoring and homework help, with OST provision contributing to reducing the achievement gaps between students. Wikeley et al. (2007: xiii) offers that the skills and the knowledge developed in OST settings are capable of being transferred across different contexts of learning, i.e. schools. By participating in OST provision young people can also gain a more sophisticated knowledge of themselves as learners, come to understand that learning can be active, while learning the importance of rules and roles, self-control and belief in oneself (ibid: xiii).

The further resourcing of OST provision has potential for positive benefits for children, families and communities. The recent announcement (May 23rd 2016) by Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton TD, to make school buildings available out of hours for afterschool care, homework clubs and other community activities forms a key part of three-year education strategy being developed (*DES Statement of Strategy 2016-2018*), is a welcome development. However, to maximise the effectiveness and accessibility of OST provision nurturing proximal processes between the various service providers (DES, HSE, Youth and Justice providers), together with fostering the development of OST provision in line with best practices in this area is required (cf. Downes, 2006; OSCAILT, 2013; QDOSS, 2013). Finally, by paying attention to the issue of engagement, Lopez (2015: 9) contends that policymakers and OST practitioners can be more effective in connecting OST accessibility, programming and funding, with the interests and the needs of children and youth.

8.4.4 Supporting and resourcing community-based adult education

During the research a number of participants stated that adult education, and in particular community-based adult education had an important part to play in their own development, the development of others and that of their communities. Some of the reasons given by participants for their engagement in community-adult education included social involvement and contact, acquiring specific knowledge and skills, a means for self-improvement, developing awareness, becoming empowered, and as a progression route to further and higher education. One participant stated that extending the range of and facilitating more opportunities for community-based adult education opportunities would help 'break the cycle of exclusion' in the study site areas and 'be important for regeneration' (Female Southside, late 40's).

In the literature adult education is defined as 'systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training' (White Paper on Adult Education, 2000: 27). Adult education includes aspects of further and third level education, continuing education and training, community education and other systematic learning by adults, both formal and informal (White Paper on Adult Education, 2000: 27-28). Community-based adult education however represents a movement within education to go out into the community, rather than the community coming to it (Share et al., 2007: 208). A distinguishing feature of this provision is that it is 'carried out in a wide variety of contexts' (Power et al., 2011: 19), e.g., schools, universities, community settings, work places and leisure contexts. Historically influenced by Freirean (1986) principles an essential component of community-based adult education 'is its political dimension', seen 'in the desire to bring about structural change' (Connolly, 2003: 5). Connolly (2007: 117) posits that community-based adult education 'embraces a view of education that is an empowering process of self-discovery and personal and collective development'. At a micro level community-based adult education can facilitate adult learning and enable participants 'to build up consciously or not their assets in the shape of human, social or identity capital[69], and then benefit from the returns on the investment in the shape of better health, stronger

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[69] The characteristics of a person which defines their outlook and self-image, as well as socially visible aspects, i.e. qualifications, self-esteem, self-confidence and critical thinking skills (Schuller, 2004: 20, cited in Power et al., 2011: 24).

social networks, enhanced family life and so on' (Schuller, 2004: 12). Attending community-based adult education classes can likewise lead to improved economic outcomes, which subsequently can secure better paid employment (McNair, 2002: 235). In addition to the acquisition of decision making skills, problem solving skills, leadership skills and improved communication skills (McNair, 2002: 240-241), participation in community-based adult education can yield positive health outcomes for learners, such as physical and emotional health and well-being (Power et al., 2011: 22). At a macro level community-based adult learning can help shape society culturally, socially, economically and environmentally, and enrich the cultural fabric of society by developing in individuals an appreciation and understanding of cultural and artistic forms, while helping to define national identity within an open, pluralist and globalising context (White Paper on Adult Education, 2000: 29). For these reasons community-based adult learning can be important for community development (Connolly, 1996; 2003 & 2007; DES, 2000). Congruent with the socially critical perspective, community-based adult learning can enhance our understanding of issues such as inequity, power and oppression, and through critique challenge traditional power relations in educational contexts (Leonardo, 2004). This can lead to the development of an education system that promotes social reform through individual and collective activism (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1983, McLaren, 2007). For those in marginalised contexts who participate in community-based adult education classes, this provision can equip them with knowledge and skills that enables and empowers them to 'take part in decision-making and policy-formation within the community' (AONTAS, 2000: 6). Such outcomes have the potential to disrupt traditional power structures in society and make society more inclusive and responsive to diverse needs.

In this study many participants reported negative experiences of the formal education system in school e.g. top-down decision making processes, prescriptive curricula, standardised assessments and structures which privilege some groups, while marginalising others. In contrast participants' experience of community-based adult education was reported as being more focused on them as persons, was practical and relevant and was characterised by more equal teacher-learner relationships. These experiences are similar to those suggested by (Jarvis, 1992 & 2010; Knowles, 1980 & 1984; Mezirow, 1981 & 2000), who posit that adult education (andragogy) is egalitarian, person-centred, intrinsically motivated, self-directed, practical, goal

directed and relevancy orientated. Owing to its many benefits community-based adult has relevance for regeneration processes, i.e. it can play a major role in nurturing and promoting cross community understanding, active citizenship, the development of positive and empowered relationships with social institutions, participation in local associations and networks and intergenerational awareness (Power et al., 2011: 51). Accordingly, enhancing the range and accessibility of community-based adult education programmes should be an educational priority for regeneration.

8.4.5 Supporting training, up-skilling for employment and employment creation

A number of participants reported that unemployment was a major problem in the study site areas and Limerick city generally, which contributed to poverty and deprivation. Others highlighted that there was a need for more education and training programmes to support employment. Therefore creating new employment opportunities and training and up-skilling for employment were considered important priorities for regeneration in Limerick. Such measures were seen to promote self-esteem, facilitate successful transitions to adulthood, engender personal and community pride and provide a pathway in further learning which would help to lead to meaningful and gainful employment opportunities should they arise. Early school leavers were noted in the findings as an important group to consider for employment opportunities, along with supporting the long-term unemployed to return to work as soon as possible. These concerns are supported by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (2012: 6), who asserts that such measures are critical to economic growth and to the 'stability of urban communities' (ibid: 2).

In the plans for regeneration in Limerick, education, training and up-skilling for employment are stated objectives of the economic pillar of Regeneration (cf. LRA Master Plan, 2008: 9 and LRFIP, 2013: 11). In this study participants stated that these measures should be actively pursued and implemented as part of the Limerick regeneration programme. They also stated that the building aspects of the Limerick regeneration programme should be carried out by those living in the study sites

capable of doing so and not outsiders. Positive discrimination in favour of local residents was seen to not only create important employment opportunities (albeit temporary), but also have the potential for positive impacts beyond the life time of the current regeneration programme in Limerick city; namely community pride and ownership and commitment to place. Therefore promoting and progressing employment and opportunities for training and up-skilling for work, along with fostering community pride and ownership and commitment to place, should be priorities for regeneration. Such actions were identified (cf. theoretical framework for regeneration in Chapter Three, 3.4.5) as helping to reverse the 'spiral' of decline and simultaneously creating a 'virtuous spiral' of improvement leading to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration (Page, 2006; Wilson, 1987; Wilson and Kelling 1982).

8.4.6   Education for parents and education for parenting

A number of participants stated that poor parenting practices contributed to many of the social problems in the study sites, such as early school leaving, drugs misuse, anti-social behaviour, a lack of social responsibility and/or regard for one's neighbours. Concerns surrounding behavioural problems in children and youth have accelerated public debates on this issue and prompted debates on the support needs of parents as to how best they can raise their children (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 1). Humphreys et al. (2011: 262-266) shows that the lives of some children and families in Limerick 'paints a picture of a much poorer quality of life, poorer experiences of childhood, and much worse outcomes across a wide range of indicators for children living in the most deprived neighbourhoods of Limerick city', i.e. the study sites, and disturbingly the depth of these problems 'are widespread and pervasive' (ibid: 262). Humphreys et al. (2011) also found that children in regeneration areas in Limerick are more likely to experience specific traumas, including separation from parents, bereavement in the family (including the death siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.) and consequently are less likely to feel secure. Humphreys et al. (2011) further found that such children were also more likely to be exposed to accidental and intentional harm in the family context, compared with an average child population. The same report asserts that 'the prevalence of emotional, conduct and behavioural problems in

children from Limerick's regeneration areas are well above the rates that would be expected statistically in a child population' (ibid: 262). Part of the reason for this has to do with parents in the study sites more likely to experience multiple problems in the family, including domestic violence, addiction, family members in prison, severe financial pressures, including owing money. In addition behaviours such as aggression, violence in the home were often normalised in the regeneration estates (i.e., they are not unusual and, as such, not considered particularly to be a problem for those affected), which suggests that these normalisation processes may be connected with conditions on the estates, including incidences of various forms of anti-social behaviour (Humphreys et al., 2011: 264). The realities presented here highlight the extent of the challenges facing some parents in Limerick's regeneration communities. They also highlight the need to support parents in their parenting role.

The concern to support parents in their parenting role is affirmed in the policy literature e.g. (Report on the Commission of the Family (1998); Children First (1999); The National Children's Strategy (2000); Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014), etc.). With family conflict and family stress often the main causes of reduced child well-being, reducing the levels of these can positively impact on child, family and community outcomes (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 2). Family friendly policies together with supportive community structures are therefore needed if long-term childhood and social problems in the study site areas are to be avoided and addressed. The ecological perspective further proposes that macro and meso systems must be made work to ensure that the microsystem of the family is better supported, and parents are provided with the necessary skills to support their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the microsystem the child rearing practices of parents are an important part of the dynamic to address and prevent behavioural problems in children, because parent behaviours usually set 'the stage for children to develop and use coping skills that make them more resilient' (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 13). Education and personal development programmes can help parents to better manage their child's behaviour, while facilitating their own social and personal skills development (Bradley and Hayes, 2007; McKeown et al., 2003; Ralph and Sanders, 2003). Bradley and Hayes (2007:

30) outlines a number of parent education programmes[70] which have proven successful in reducing children's levels of aggression and decreasing their overall internalising and externalising behavioural problems. Parent programmes, specifically programmes which target home management, parenting skills and parental personal development can also positively impact on long-term childhood and social problems. Hawthorn et al., (2003 cited in Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 32) further suggests that if child behavioural problems are to be effectively addressed the support needs of parents, together with a parallel response to the needs of children who exhibit such behaviours are needed. Given the potential positive benefits of education for parents and parenting, such measures should be provided for and resourced as part of urban regeneration programmes.

8.4.7 Education for civic awareness

Some participants expressed strong views about the perceived lack of civic awareness in Limerick's regeneration communities, especially among young people. The perceived lack of civic awareness was seen to underlie many of the social problems in the study site areas, i.e. vandalism, anti-social behaviour, petty and serious crime. Accordingly, it was suggested that some parents, children and young people needed to be taught 'right from wrong' and learn civic awareness. The lack of civic awareness was considered to have its origins in previous generations, where perhaps people felt disenfranchised by society or did not receive the education or learn the skills needed to live in cooperation with others. As a result they were/are unable to pass this awareness onto their children.

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[70] *Webster Stratton's Incredible Years* is aimed at children 2-12 years of age to help parents support their children's education and deal with challenging behaviour. The Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) provides guidance to parents and parenting skills to promote positive behaviour and emotional adjustment to children in the Middle childhood (adolescence). The *Mellow Parenting Family* programme aims to help parents whose relationships with children are under stress and focuses on the mother-child relationship. Strengthening Families *Programme* is aimed at families with children between the ages of 3-17 years of age and is designed to reduce risk factors for substance abuse, aggression, depression and delinquency. *Multi Systematic Therapy* is an intensive clinically significant anti-social behaviour parenting programme involving therapists who are available to families 24 hours a day to help parents set rules aimed at improving different aspects of children's behaviour (Gomby et al., 1999).

Kinlen et al. (2013: 6) argues that a healthy civic society is promoted through education, namely through providing information and teaching basic skills related to various forms of civic and political activities. The teaching of civic awareness can provide young people with the skills needed to participate in public life (Shaw et al., 2012). In schools civic education usually takes place through the teaching of SPHE[71] at primary level and CSPE[72] and Transition Year[73] at post-primary level. Kinlen et al. (2013: 39) contends that the teaching of civic awareness in schools can often take place within a limited timetable and not be necessarily linked to other curricular areas in an integrated approach. Furthermore, civic awareness in schools can encounter poor perceptions of the subject, with limited opportunities for civic engagement activities within the school or the wider community (Kinlen et al., 2013: 39).

Some participants stated that should parents/guardians fail to engender in their children civic awareness or how to have basic respect for their neighbours or community; then authorities in society (Gardaí, Courts, Local Authority, etc.) should hold parents/guardians responsible and accountable for their children's behaviours by putting in place punitive measures or sanctions and/or education programmes. While seeming to address the problem of the lack of civic awareness, punitive measures and sanctions can further alienate parents who may already be struggling to manage children with challenging behaviours (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 25). The Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2006: 1) recognises education to be crucial for developing civic awareness, but also accepts that civic skills development and the development of values and behaviours acceptable in society must be 'caught' rather than 'taught'. While this has implications for schools it also has implications for parents and parenting, with parents needing to model the behaviour they wish their children to

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[71] SPHE is social personal and health education.

[72] Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) is a course in 'active citizenship based on human rights and social responsibilities' and is underpinned by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the UNCRC (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2012). It covers the concepts of rights and responsibilities, democracy, stewardship, interdependence, development, law and human dignity (Department of Education, 1997: 1).

[73] In the fourth year of post-primary education (age 15-16) students may be offered a 'transition year' between the Junior and Senior Cycles. During this year students engage in projects which involve research on specific topics related to citizenship, democracy, the environment and human rights, and emphasises developing social awareness, increasing social competence and promoting self-directed learning (Department of Education, 1993). .

emulate. For parents the teaching of civic awareness could take place in community-based adult education settings, for example a family programme involving parents and children. Due to the many benefits of having a more civically aware society, programmes which foster civic awareness should therefore be supported and resourced in schools and in community-based adult education settings as part of urban regeneration programmes.

8.5   Participation in public discourses and processes affecting people's lives

In the findings participants reported that they were satisfied at having their voices heard and their views listened to. One participant reported that 'it was about time we were asked' (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.8). Others suggested that opportunities to have their voices heard on issues should happen more in communities, whereas some reported that they would like to see something come from a study which they had contributed to. The findings therefore highlight the importance of people being actively involved in processes and discourses affecting their lives. For Foucault (1977: 27) discourses produce knowledge through language, and while discourses can create 'regimes of truth' which influence how ideas are put into practice and regulates the conduct of others, it is through discourses that issues get meaningfully talked about and discussed. However, Foucault (1982: 208-212) cautions that discourses tend to construct subject-positions from which they alone make sense. Consequently, those excluded must identify with those positions the discourse constructs and subject themselves to its rules and become the subjects of its power/knowledge (Hall, 1997: 80). Cognisant of this it is nonetheless imperative that consultation and participation in public discourses are upheld as fundamental rights of citizens, with citizens meaningfully facilitated to input to and influence those decisions that ultimately affect them (DFID, 2000: 25). Consultation and participation are however not straightforward processes, rather they are distinguished by the level of power involved (Muir and Rhodes, 2008: 499). Consultation usually takes place before a decision is made and occurs when people are asked their views by decision makers. Yet there is no guarantee that views will be taken into account. Participation according to Arnstein (1969: 216) is 'the redistribution of power that enables the 'have-not' citizens presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the

future'. This implies a more equal social relationship and involves a more sustained and engaged association between the parties involved, with an element of power to agree or veto initiatives (Muir and Rhodes, 2008: 499). Participation in social processes represents 'an expression of human agency in the political arena' (Lister, 1998: 228) and participation of the governed in their government is a cornerstone of any democracy (Arnstein, 1969: 216).

In area-based urban regeneration programmes governments are often be keen to promote community consultation and participation, as it can enable agreement and legitimisation for approaches to planning and the delivery of services (Muir and Rhodes, 2008: 499). Consultation, participation and partnerships in regeneration (between local authorities, local government and local residents) were promoted as desired outcomes of regeneration processes (cf. Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) Master Plan, 2008: 7; Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP), 2013: 18). Muir and Rhodes (2008: 499) however contend that consultation, participation and partnerships in regeneration can be tokenistic. This is because 'the language of partnership is often glossed over by the reality of differentials in the distribution of power' and 'the degree of freedom of action is more often determined by the socio-cultural context and the relative strength or weakness of civil society' (Corcoran, 2006: 419). According to Arnstein (1969) a strong civil society enables the 'have-nots' to have a greater role to play in inducing social reform so that they can share in the benefits of an affluent society. To help address social exclusion and facilitate individuals and communities to be included more meaningfully in public discourses and regeneration processes, a model for citizen consultation and participation is offered by Arnstein (1969: 217) (cf. Arnstein's Ladder in Appendix X). This model consists of eight steps: Steps 1 and 2 are considered substitutes for genuine participation and is premised on a belief by power holders and officials that they know best. Steps 2, 4 and 5 involve informing, consulting and placating, and are considered tokenistic gestures of participation. Steps 7 and 8 involve delegated power and citizen control, which means citizens having an influence over decision making as well as having elements of managerial powers.

Sceptics of Arnstein's model contend that consultation and participation in public discourses can undermine democracy and be a distraction from the 'real' business of

politics, i.e. elected officials framing public policy and making decisions on behalf of others (Kane and Bishop, 2002). Consultation and the participation of local residents can likewise be viewed as undermining the role of organised or expert groups, and the role they traditionally occupied in public services planning and delivery (Hendriks, 2002). Arnstein's model can likewise appear too simplistic a mechanism to effectively engage people in processes impacting on their lives. Acknowledging these criticisms Arnstein's model nonetheless highlights 'gradations of citizen participation' (ibid: 1969: 217) and draws attention to the increasing demand for participation from the 'have-nots', while highlighting the often confusing responses given to people in marginalised circumstances, by those in positions of authority and power, who try to justify or legitimise their own interests and actions (Arnstein, 1969: 217). However, to adopt Arnstein's model for consultation, participation and partnerships in regeneration a balancing act is required, between being heard and getting what one wants, with potentially limited resources and timeframes, etc. Partnership arrangements in regeneration must therefore be premised on the parties involved agreeing to compromise and accept and support the decisions that eventually get made.

Arnstein's model (1969) is also useful for educational settings and contexts. Issues in education have many similarities with other contexts, i.e. power between students, teachers and parents, colleges, universities and schools and people desiring to be consulted and participate and use their power 'to make target institutions responsive to their views, aspirations and needs' (ibid: 217). In educational contexts the purpose of consultation and participation must be to develop and conduct better communication with families so that students can succeed (Epstein, 2001: 42). Galvin et al. (2009: 27) emphasises that effective partnerships in education arises from stakeholders having a shared understanding of how power is shared, how decisions are arrived at and made, and how and why educational resources are allocated; a view which is consistent with the socially critical perspective. Engaging parents and students in meaningful partnerships and dialogue can be an important mechanism for educational change; dramatically revising the role of the teacher, challenging traditional power bases in schools and contributing 'to the development of more effective environments in which children grow and learn' (Galvin et al., 2009: 30). Developing and sustaining meaningful partnerships in education however requires boundaries between schools, parents and the community to be low and a community development approach taken

(Tett et al., 2001: 19). According to Connolly (2007: 17) a community development approach entails members of a community, identifying their needs and collectively working together to meet those needs. The Harvard Family Research Project (2015) recommends a number of standards to be employed so as to foster better functioning home-school-community partnerships. These include: encouraging parents to be regular visitors to the school; developing two-way communication structures based on mutual respect; facilitating opportunities for parents to input to and provide feedback on school activities, planning and policy decisions; supporting parents in their efforts to support their children's education (Hinojosa and Lopez, 2015: 3). While not without its challenges, i.e. funding and personnel to lead and drive these measures and engage in outreach to families who might be hard to reach; practical ways to do this could include: coordinating parent workshops, family events, classes, and home visits 'to serve all parents and families in a community' (ibid: 6).

Finally, with school communities becoming increasingly diverse, the need for democracy in education and creating opportunities for authentic dialogue are coming to the fore. The socially critical perspective suggests that authentic dialogue is exploratory and focuses on inquiry, while seeking understanding (Brown, 2004: 94). It also posits that all members of the school community should be included and participate in such processes, not just the privileged few. The outcomes of authentic dialogue in schools can be seen in the development of a range of school improvement measures and greater levels of inclusivity (Ryan and Rottmann, 2007: 9-23). For this to happen students, parents and teachers must be included in decisions that affect them and be facilitated to communicate effectively with one another. This can present many challenges such as members of the school community finding it difficult to communicate with those whose cultural backgrounds and life experiences are different to their own. While language may be an obstacle, problems with communication goes beyond language, extending to differences in worldviews and values, and to the differences in power that accompany diversity (Ryan and Rottmann, (2009: 478-479). A socially critical perspective posits that if schools are to work towards democratic practices, they will need to deal with these challenges, while finding ways to communicate across differences along with helping others e.g. teachers, parents, students and the wider community to do the same (ibid: 479).

8.6   Chapter conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of this research with reference to the literature. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and the socially critical perspective were employed to interpret the findings. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework enabled analysis of the various ecologies and their impact on participants, i.e. teacher-student relationships, institutional actors and structures and the wider social, political, historical and cultural policy environment. The socially critical perspective was useful for exploring structural and cultural influences, power dynamics and attributions of identity, and how these were played out in the educational experiences of participants. The findings show that the microsystem of school emerged as particularly important, as many participants were failed by the education system, largely as a result of negative processes within that microsystem. Positive experiences of school were also noted, and the findings suggest that this was due to positive, supportive and nurturing relationships had with teachers. The findings and the literature therefore illustrate the power and the importance of human relationships, especially for students' engagement with and progression in education.

The study finds that many of the difficulties experienced by participants during their time at school were added to by barriers such as economic hardship, the absence of a socially equitable education system, bullying, the competitive nature of education and deficits in supports needed to participate in and complete one's education, i.e. SEN provision. The findings also presented a number of educational priorities which participants identified were important to them. The discussion in this chapter has shown that investing in these priorities as part of urban regeneration programmes has benefits for human, social and identity capital development, as well as fostering social inclusion and cohesion (Power et al., 2011: 27). These benefits are acknowledged earlier in the thesis (cf. Chapter Three 'Urban Regeneration') to be important for neighbourhood liveability, improvement and renewal. Therefore progressing these priorities in urban regeneration programmes possess the potential to positively contribute to Limerick city becoming a thriving and more inclusive urban space, as a result of regeneration.

Finally, the findings acknowledge the importance of individuals and communities having meaningful opportunities to have their voices heard or their views listened to on issues affecting their lives. The literature offers that to address inequities in society, existing patterns of social exclusion must not be reinforced or tolerated. Therefore individuals, groups or organisations must not be allowed to dominate or exclude those who experience marginalisation or exclusion to be excluded from processes which ultimately impacts on the lives (Arnstein, 1969; Carley, 2000; Lister, 1998). This study facilitated an opportunity to have voices heard and views listened to. The findings in Chapter Seven and the discussion in this chapter shows the unique contribution made by participants; which yielded a rich body of qualitative data from the perspective of 'cultural insiders' (O'Sullivan, 2005). Their contribution highlights the importance of including those traditionally excluded from participation in educational discourses and processes such as regeneration. Furthermore, it draws attention to the need to include those traditionally excluded to be included in the future in ways which adequately represents them and meets their needs (Arnstein, 1969; Carley, 2000).

9.1   Introduction

In this chapter I present a set of recommendations based on the findings in Chapter Seven, the discussion in Chapter Eight and insights from the literature. The recommendations are formulated with a view to informing policy and reforming practices. The recommendations are presented under the following general headings: recommendations for education, recommendations for regeneration and recommendations on the research method and process. Under these broad headings the recommendations made are organised thematically.

9.2   Recommendations for education

In this section I present the recommendations for education. I begin by presenting recommendations on the theme supporting schools in and serving a population living with the challenges of poverty and marginalisation. This is followed by recommendations on themes relating to: addressing the problem of early school leaving, supporting and resourcing out-of-school time (OST) provision, supporting and resourcing community-based adult education, supporting training and up-skilling for employment and employment creation, education for parents and parenting and education for civic awareness. Subsequently, I present recommendations to address bullying in schools and in the community. Finally, recommendations are presented which deal teacher education, ongoing teacher professional development and the challenge of student diversity, along with recommendations relating to school ethos and developing a positive and nurturing school climate.

1) *Supporting schools in and serving a population living with the challenges of poverty and marginalisation*

A number of participants reported that some of the schools serving students from the study site areas were under-funded and under-resourced compared to other schools. While schools serving a population living with the challenges of poverty and marginalisation in the past have been able to avail of several schemes of support, e.g. School Capitation, DEIS, etc., because of declining school enrolments (as a result of population dispersal and relocation under regeneration and neighbourhood failure) the schools referred to have lesser student numbers and so are in receipt of less capitation from the DES. In addition some participants reported that funding for schools was negatively impacted upon by limited financial resources available in communities, due in part to the high levels of unemployment and deprivation in these areas and the impact of economic recession on public expenditure and educational support services. As a result some schools in Limerick were perceived by some participants to experience difficulties in trying to maintain acceptable levels of service and maintenance compared to other schools. In view of these concerns the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation (1a): As schools have an important role to play in human and social capital development and area-based regeneration, supporting schools should be a priority measure for urban regeneration programmes. Therefore schools in Limerick city, especially those serving communities and families with high levels of deprivation and social problems should be resourced with sufficient teaching staff. There is also a need for easy access to important support services such as speech and language and occupational therapy. Furthermore, there is a need for adequate funding based on the needs of the school to provide for: school administration, caretaking and maintenance, books and curriculum materials, ICT resources and technical support, as well as funding and provisions made for continuous teacher professional development.

Recommendation (1b): A key finding from the *Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS* report (Smyth et al., 2015: viii) suggests that while DEIS has made provision for 'additional funding and multi-faceted supports' to schools experiencing disadvantage, it is 'difficult to disentangle which elements of the programme work best' and it is likely 'that any effects reflect the comprehensive package of supports put in place'. The same report finds that due to the continuing concentration of disadvantage, especially in DEIS urban Band 1 schools, the supports provided by DEIS are much needed. In Chapter Four of this thesis 'Education and Poverty', poverty debates were shown to be politically laden. In view of these concerns a socially critical perspective offers that policy discourses should be guided by the principles of social justice. Thus social justice principles should be the primary focus of the DES when deciding on how best to support and fund schools serving populations with concentrated levels of marginalisation and exclusion.

2) *Addressing the problem of early school leaving*

Early school leavers (ESLs) are recognised to experience reduced success in education and as a result are confronted with limited opportunities to develop culturally, personally and socially (Healy and Mallon, 2012) and as a result are at a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion (European Commission, 2011). According to some participants ESL was a contributory factor to many of the social problems in the study site areas. For the transformations sought in regeneration, i.e., viable and sustainable communities, addressing the problem of ESL was voiced as another priority area for education in regeneration. In view of these concerns the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation (2a): While complex and multifaceted, insights from the literature suggest that ESL should be addressed through investment in school retention, prevention and compensation measures (Council Recommendation, 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving). There is also a need for a range of actions to improve educational outcomes at all levels (pre-school, primary, post-primary, vocational and tertiary) 'within an integrated approach' (European Commission, 2010: 13).

Recommendation (2b): It is recommended that a strategy is developed and implemented at a national level (macro) and adopted at local levels (micro) to make school curriculum, especially at post-primary level more relevant and meaningful for students who are not academic in the traditional sense. This strategy should dovetail with the proposed National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) new Junior Certificate short courses, and involve personalised and flexible learning arrangements for students who prefer 'learning by doing' and are motivated more by active forms of learning. While this recommendation can present ideological, practical and time challenges for principals, teachers and the education system; implementing this strategy has the potential to contribute in the long-term to promoting positive school engagement and achievement, while impacting positively on ESL intent and levels of ESL. As part of this strategy there is also a need for more immediate and short term responses, such as greater levels of provision in other/further education or training or the provision of more second chance educational places in Youthreach[74] or Youth Encounter[75], for those who have dropped out of school early or who have been 'pushed' out of the education system before having completed the Junior Cycle.

Recommendation (2c): In addition to the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), it is recommended that the repertoire of assessment methods in post-primary schools is broadened to include short term modular type programmes or Quality Assurance Ireland (QQI[76]) programmes, or as participants stated the Gaisce award (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.3.4). With QQI set to play an increasing role in the development of the Further Education and Training (FET) sectors, QQI could also play a greater role in the post-primary sector. These

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[74] Youthreach is a DES official education, training and work experience programme for early school leavers aged 15 – 20. It offers young people the opportunity to identify options within adult life, and provides them with opportunities to acquire certification. It operates on a full-time, year-round basis.

[75] Youth Encounter projects (YEPs) are non-residential alternatives to mainstream schools. They provide a structurally and pedagogically different approach to mainstream schools, with personalised education and flexibility in teaching and programmes. They were developed in the 1970s to provide education and care for young people at risk of coming into conflict with the authorities or dropping out of school.

[76] The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Boards (IUQB) are being amalgamated into a new single agency – Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQI).

approaches to assessment could help engage more young people in learning and enable them to achieve higher educational outcomes and credentials, and as a result foster more opportunities for educational participation, retention and progression.

Recommendation (2d): As a result of negative processes within the microsystem of schools, namely negative teacher-student relationships, it is recommended that all school personnel work to ensure that the experience of primary and post-primary school is such that young people feel welcome and want to stay on and achieve, while being encouraged to do so. To support this measure pastoral care teams should be encouraged and supported by school Boards of Management and Principals. Developing pastoral care teams in schools can contribute to creating a community culture characterised by improved relations between those important in the lives of children.   With the young person at the centre of all such efforts, collaboration and interactions between teachers and education support personnel (e.g. Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Resource Teachers, Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL), School Completion Programme (SCP), National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS), National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB/TUSLA), Incredible Years Facilitator, Restorative practices Facilitator, etc.) can help maximise a student's time spent in education. Pastoral care teams could likewise help to foster a more nurturing and supportive school environment and support the development of positive relationships with teachers, while strengthening the mesosystem.

Recommendation (2e): With cuts in public expenditure (2009-2013) many schools have experienced a loss in guidance counselling and the non-replacement of post holders (on retirement or on moving to another school). These have impacted on school management responsibilities and structures, and has made the task of developing pastoral care teams and student support structures all the more difficult. The Institute of Guidance Counsellors reported on the 16th May, 2016 that DEIS schools bore the brunt of austerity cuts to guidance counselling in schools, and claims that there is a socio-economic hierarchy in the provision of hours for guidance counselling; where those who can afford to pay for it (Fee Paying /Private Schools) have received the greatest benefit. Given the importance of guidance in post-primary schools, it is imperative that in a post-recessionary Ireland the Departments of Finance and Education and Skills look to reverse these cuts. Alternately special arrangements

and provisions should be made to safeguard guidance counselling, education support services and posts of responsibilities for primary and post-primary schools serving areas undergoing regeneration.

3) *Resourcing out-of-school time (OST) provision*

In the findings the benefits and value of OST activities were highlighted. OST was shown to have an important part to play in nurturing a variety of academic, social and civic skills and competencies in children and youth. However, in Ireland there is currently no quality framework or integrated funding policy for OST provision (QDOSS, 2013). Therefore the following is recommended.

Recommendation (3a): OST provision must be valued and recognised, this places an onus on all involved in this provision to highlight the contribution it can make to children's personal and educational development. To maximise the benefits of OST provision in Limerick city, it needs to be overseen by the DES, with the relevant service providers working together to enhance its accessibility. Furthermore, it is important that an integrated funding policy is developed for OST provision as well as for school holiday provision (as this can be a time when students experience losses in their academic skills). In addition OST and school holiday provision should be developed with the needs of children and youth in mind and rolled-out in line with best practices in this area (cf. Downes, 2006; Harvard Family Research Project, 2015; OSCAILT, 2013; QDOSS, 2013). Finally, OST and school holiday provision should be developed within an integrated quality framework and include on-going monitoring and evaluation. The purpose of this is to ensure that the achievements and the difficulties of this provision can be identified and assessed, while enabling organisations to build on their successes and good practices. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation can enable OST providers to justify to funders and stakeholders, that monies spent and resources allocated, represent value for money and is a good investment (Gitlin and Smyth, 1989).

4) *Supporting community-based adult education*

Community-based adult educational opportunities were considered important by all participants in the study. The reasons given for this included: the development of skills, beliefs and competencies, educational qualifications, social interactions, enhanced health and well-being behaviours and family functioning. Community-based adult education was likewise seen to possess benefits important for regeneration processes; namely community cohesion and development, economic growth, equality and democratic participation (Connolly, 2003 & 2007; Feinstein and Sabates, 2008; Jarvis, 1992 & 2010; McNair, 2002; Power et al., 2011; Schuller, 2004). As a result of the potential benefits of community-based adult education the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation (4a): Community-based adult education should be recognised for its many benefits and be actively supported at a national, regional and local level by government Departments and bodies such as the DES, Education and Training Board (ETB), Social Protection, Health Services Executive (HSE), employer bodies and organisations, as well as community groups. In order to develop this provision further in the context of Limerick's regeneration, a locally based overseeing group, with representation from these organisations should be convened to, 1) coordinate this provision, 2) identify ways in which the respective departments, organisations and community groups can resource this provision, and 3) facilitate ways in which this provision can be made more accessible, especially for hard to reach individuals or groups.

Recommendation (4b): Having its origins in the critical model of adult education (Power et al., 2011: 18), community-based adult education is driven by the key players involved and is 'devoted to growth and development, and fulfilling the potential of all participants' (Connolly, 2007: 122). An important feature of community-based adult education is its approach, i.e. dialogue and a common understanding which is underpinned by respect for difference and diversity (Connolly, 2007: 122). With education increasingly linked to labour market needs and driven by labour market agendas (*DES Statement of Strategy, 2016-2018*; *Europe 2020 Strategy*; *Further Education and Training (FET), Strategy 2014-2019*)

providers of community-based adult education should strive to ensure that adult education classes are empowering, lead to self-discovery and contribute to personal and collective development. It is therefore imperative that the critical dimensions of community-based adult education are safeguarded and promoted. There is also a need to ensure that a 'communicative domain' is built in to such programmes with 'spaces' provided for free and informed debates and dialogue which enables critical thinking (Mezirow, 2000: 11).

5) *Supporting training and up-skilling for employment and employment creation*

The government's *Pathways to Work 2016-2020* strategy sets out to increase the numbers at work in Ireland to 2.2 million by 2020. It proposes to do this by:

- improving the quality of engagement between the Intreo[77] service and jobseekers;
- assisting the long-term unemployed into work and increasing the employment focus of activation programmes and opportunities;
- providing targeted and responsive locally and regionally adapted opportunities for work placements, education and training;
- incentivising jobseekers to work through the tax, welfare and employment policies of the State, acting to encourage take up of employment;
- incentivising employers to offer good quality and sustainable employment opportunities for jobseekers and the unemployed;
- building organisational capability to deliver high quality services to the unemployed;
- expanding apprenticeships and continue the roll-out of JobPath[78] and First Steps[79] work experience and training programme for marginalised young people;

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[77] Intreo is the Dept. of Social Protection's (DSP) point of contact for all employment and income supports. It aims to provide a streamlined approach, practical and tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers and employers.

[78] JobPath was introduced in July 2015 as an approach to employment activation, catering mainly for people who are long-term unemployed (over 12 months) to assist them to secure and sustain full-time paid employment or self-employment.

[79] First Steps is part of the EU Youth Guarantee. It offers those aged 18 to 24, with little or no experience of working, the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills while on placement in a real work situation. Similar to the JobBridge Internship scheme, it provides more structured support (on 23rd May, 2016 the Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar TD, announced that JobBridge in its current format would cease and be replaced by another programme in Sept. 2016).

- extending the activation approach to single parents, carers and people with disabilities;
- increasing the frequency of case officer meetings with jobseekers; and
- ensuring that strategic reforms under way in the education and training sectors are aligned with the needs of employers and jobseekers.

The social impacts of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion were discussed in the previous Chapter (cf. 8.3.6) as to their effect on young people's ability to successfully transition to adulthood. In the findings participants emphasised the importance of creating new employment opportunities and the importance of providing training for the unemployed and those about to enter the labour market with limited educational credentials. However, for young people living with the intergenerational impact of poverty and unemployment, low educational attainment and living in areas which experiences stigmatisation, there is a pressing need to ensure that the *Pathways to Work 2016-2020* strategy is carried through and implemented. In view of these concerns the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation (5a): For unemployed adults and young people ready to move into the world of work JobPath and First Steps should be actively supported and rolled out so as to create employment opportunities, assist with up-skilling and enable job seekers to move into more stable employment. However, the literature notes that adults from marginalised communities can often be hesitant to leave their own communities in order to avail of education and training opportunities (Murphy, 2009: 10). The challenge that then presents is how to make training and education for employment attractive and accessible to this cohort. Citing work undertaken in the UK on access to Higher Education, Brosnan (2013: 51) suggests that cross-sectoral partnerships between education, training and employer bodies can be an effective mechanism to facilitate access to and take up of further and higher educational opportunities. In addition information through advice and guidance, relevant and attractive course choices and academic skills development programmes, can all help to make education and training accessible, while enabling marginalised adults to avail of these opportunities more (ibid: 51).

Recommendation (5b): Participants reported experiencing stigmatisation because of their address, which impacted on them in the microsystem of school. During the course of my work with School Completion Programme and LRA I regularly heard young people and adults say that they were reluctant to put their home address on a CV or job application, as they felt employers would discriminate against them because of their address. This points to a perception that because of where one lives, life opportunities and potential for upward social mobility is limited. To counter this it is recommended that a forum is created in Limerick between employers and the Local Development Companies[80] (LDC), particularly because the LDC has a specific remit to work to foster economic development in communities experiencing marginalisation and exclusion. This forum should then be proactive in expediting employment and training for employment opportunities for people in Limerick from such communities.

Recommendation (5c): Regeneration in Limerick together with the DES, ETB, Dept. of Social Protection and HSE, employer bodies and organisations, LDC and community groups should sponsor more education and training programmes which increase young people's stake in society and promotes their social inclusion and citizenship. At a practical level this could include the establishment of more programmes in the following areas: leisure activities, sports, drama and the arts, community and youth services, mentoring and parenting programmes for parents and carers of children and adolescents. Such programmes have the potential to provide progression routes in training and employment for young people, while also fostering bridging and linking capital to enable young adults achieve social and economic gains beyond their immediate community, through a system of social networks. Such programmes likewise have the potential to support transitions into adulthood and help young people overcome the effects of fatalism, hopelessness and despair, while at the same time reducing the attractiveness of gangs as a source of identity and/or social and emotional support.

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[80] Local Development Companies (LDCs) also known as Local Area Partnerships, LEADER Partnerships, Integrated Development Companies, share common features, i.e. bottom-up approaches to working with communities to develop local solutions to local issues, such as: promoting local economic development; addressing inequality and social exclusion. LDCs are governed by a voluntary multi-sectoral partnership structure, with representatives from the community/voluntary and statutory sectors, social partners, Local Authority and not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee.

6)   Education for parents and education for parenting

Poor parenting was considered a contributory factor for many of the social problems in the study site areas (Hourigan, 2011; Humphreys et al., 2011; Power and Barnes, 2011). Humphreys et al. (2011:262) found that behavioural problems in children from Limerick's regeneration areas are well above the rates expected statistically in a child population. The reasons for this had to with parents in the study sites more likely to face multiple challenges within the family. The same report found that some behaviours, e.g. aggression and violence were often normalised in the regeneration estates, suggesting that these normalisation processes were connected with conditions on the estates. In the context of these challenges and the need to support parents and guardians the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation (6a): Those who have a remit to support the development of young people and children, specifically the DES, TUSLA[81], Department of Social Protection and even SOLÁS[82], should develop programmes which encourages and facilitates parents to participate in education, training and personal development. Such programmes have the potential for positive outcomes for parents in terms of developing their parenting skills, and as a result have positive outcomes for children and families and social cohesion, with positive outcomes for society in Limerick, and by implication the process of regeneration. For 'vulnerable' parents to want to participate in such programmes some form of incentivisation might however be required, such as payments, free transport, free crèche facilities, meals or prize draws (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 23). A more assertive approach might also be needed, i.e. home visits, family meetings, written contracts and problem solving measures. However, when recruiting and engaging parents in education and personal development/support programmes, it is important to keep in mind how diverse a group parents are. It is also important that courses/programmes do not focus solely on the

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[81] On January 1st 2014 the Child and Family Agency TUSLA became an independent legal entity, comprising of HSE Children & Family Services, Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board as well as incorporating some psychological services and a range of services responding to domestic, sexual and gender based violence. TUSLA is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children and providing family support.

[82] SOLÁS is the Further Education and Training (FET) Authority for Ireland.

problem area, e.g. anti-social behaviour, aggression, etc. (Vellerman et al., 2000, in Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 23). The mechanisms employed to recruit and engage parents should also vary according to need, location and programme type (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 23), while making provision for parents who may need assistance from active networks such as: schools, local agencies and community groups. Staff on these programmes should possess relevant skills, personality, persistence and empathy, while likewise being able to provide on-going worker-parent contact and flexibility, so as to fit in with parents' commitments and needs. Finally, the use of familiar environments for courses/programmes should be considered, along with opportunities to have the whole family involved.

Recommendation (6b): Learning's from the Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) initiative in the UK (Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003) shows that programmes which support parents and children together have many immediate and long-term benefits for children and families facing the greatest difficulties, as well as representing a good investment (Cummings, et al., 2007: 3). These programmes can help reduce risk factors for substance abuse, aggression, depression and delinquency, while promoting positive behaviours and emotional adjustment in children. The parent support components of these and other programmes have likewise been found to result in parents experiencing increased confidence, reduced stress, improved health outcomes and improvements in the overall well-being of the family microsystem (Cummings et al., 2007; Heckman et al., 2014), which in turn can have benefits for society through lower expenditures in emergency care and health costs, etc. (Economics of Early Childhood Investments, 2014: 10). Due to the potential benefits of services and programmes such as Full Service Extended Schools or Incredible Years, Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) and Strengthening Families, they should be promoted, supported and resourced in Limerick as part of the regeneration programme. The roll-out and development of these could be overseen and coordinated by the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC).

7) *Education for civic awareness*

In the findings strong views were expressed about the perceived lack of civic awareness which had come to characterise the study sites. The lack of civic awareness was perceived to be causative of many of the social problems in these areas. As a result participants stated that civic awareness should be developed through education at home, in schools and in community groups. In the literature opportunities for young people to be involved in civic engagement programmes and activities can help nurture 'civic skills relevant in the context of positive youth development, empowerment and citizenship' (Brady et al., 2012: 28), and can benefit much the communities where this engagement takes place. In view of these potential benefits the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation (7a): It is recommended that opportunities are provided for marginalised youth to be involved in civic engagement activities. This engagement can enable them to develop trust, experience safety and identify support networks and information from which they derive 'a greater sense of belonging or stake within society' (Brady et al., 2012: 13). However, for marginalised youth to want to become involved in these activities they must be: action-oriented, involve experiential learning approaches, have built in reflective practice to enable them to reflect on aspects of their participation, be relevant to young people's personal situation and interests and provide a wide range of skills i.e. leadership, communication and interpersonal and team working skills development (Brady et al., 2012: 28; Lopez, 2015: 9). However to develop civic engagement opportunities, concerted efforts must be made by parents, organisations, agencies and groups who advocate for youth engagement, personal and community development and social change (e.g. community development programmes, youth work providers, youth justice and restorative practices providers, scouts and guides, drama and sports groups, etc.). Representatives from these organisations, agencies and groups must also be committed to supporting a youth-led model which encourages youth empowerment and ownership, while building adult mentoring into such programmes (Brady et al., 2012: 28).

8) *Addressing bullying behaviour in schools and in the community*

The issue of bullying was identified as a factor that constituted a barrier to engagement in education. For some participants it influenced their decision to drop out of school early. Bullying behaviour was seen in Chapter Seven and Eight to affect people in a variety of ways, with serious impacts and potentially tragic consequences. Therefore systematic and comprehensive responses to this problem in schools and in communities are recommended.

Recommendation (8a): Addressing bullying at school requires a whole school approach and a shared understanding of what bullying is and what its impacts are. Teachers and school personnel must therefore be provided with relevant opportunities for CPD and become skilled in best practices and established evidenced-based intervention strategies concerning bullying. Increasingly bullying related to sexual orientation, transgender issues and cyber bullying are coming to the fore, with teachers needing skills to be able to support students and their families who experience this. Examples of successful anti-bullying programmes to be considered for both primary and post-primary schools include: BeLonG To, 2006; Cool School Programme, 2005; Erris Anti-Bullying Initiative, 2009; the US Safe Communities-Safe Schools Model, 2002 and Restorative Practices in schools in Limerick. Finally, teachers and school personnel must also be provided with on-going training and support to be able to deal with bullying related violence in the community and violence and bullying in families, which can transfer into the school and impact on the well-being of the whole school community.

Recommendation (8b): Peer support programmes, mediation skills development, conflict resolution strategies and the delivery of restorative practices sessions/training to victims of bullying and those who bully, can help create a safe and supportive environment in schools. The development of these skills is recognised in the literature to have potential for longer term impacts on the wider social environment. In order to facilitate students, parents and teachers to develop these skills, government Departments such as the DES, HSE and Justice should invest in having this education/training available to teachers and the wider community. Alternatively

facilitators should be trained and employed by these Departments to deliver peer support programmes, mediation skills development, conflict resolution strategies and restorative practices, both in schools and in community settings.

Recommendation (8c): Addressing bullying behaviour at the community level (especially in Local Authority housing estates) was highlighted as a particular concern. Learning's from the literature suggest that an assertive community wide outreach anti-bullying strategy involving punitive measures (where needed) and restorative approaches (where appropriate) can help address participants' concerns on this issue. Punitive measures could include actions taken against someone for wrongdoing by organisations such as the Local Authority's anti-social behaviour prevention unit for social housing estates and the criminal justice system, e.g. the Gardaí and the Courts. However, to contribute to strengthening civil society, restorative practices should also be employed. Restorative practices allows wrongdoers to be part of a community, in the hope that human behaviour will be improved and social capital and social discipline fostered. Through employing restorative practices conflicts between neighbours can be addressed, harm done to individuals can be repaired and community relationships restored. Developing and resourcing a community wide outreach anti-bullying strategy along these lines, as part of the Limerick regeneration programme, has the potential to address satisfactorily the concerns voiced by participants regarding bullying behaviour in their communities, in the short, medium and long-term.

9) *Teacher education, teacher ongoing professional development and addressing the challenge of student diversity*

In the findings students' experience of school was strongly influenced by processes in the microsystem, i.e. relationships with their teachers, which for most were negative and acrimonious. This impacted on participants and resulted in unmet educational needs which led to low educational aspirations, poor attainment levels, internalised oppression, school estrangement, ESL intent and ESL. However, positive experiences of school were also reported and some participants were aware

of positive changes in schools since when they themselves attended. The following recommendations are presented in two sections. The first section looks at ways in which to support and nurture the microsystem of schools and focuses on teacher recruitment, initial teacher education (ITE), on-going teacher professional development (CPD) and the challenges of student diversity. The second section looks at school ethos and ways in which a positive and nurturing climate can be developed in schools.

Recommendation (9a): The composition of the teaching force in Ireland is largely middle class, thus many teachers may not easily comprehend the socio cultural contexts of the communities served by schools. The HEA (2016: 42-43) highlights 'that students from lower socio-economic groups can often have a less smooth transition to higher education, when compared to their more affluent peers'. The HEA (2016) also suggests 'that more needs to be done to support the transition of educationally disadvantaged students from second level to higher education'. Therefore to ensure greater equity of access, Higher Education Access programmes must be further resourced (Brosnan, 2013: 2). Colleges with teacher education programmes must also make greater efforts to facilitate the recruitment of people into the teaching profession from diverse backgrounds. A case is therefore being made for positive discrimination in favour of more persons from marginalised backgrounds being facilitated to take up initial teacher education programmes. Such a measure could help enrich the teaching profession and lead to better outcomes for children in schools living with the challenges of poverty and marginalisation.

Recommendation (9b): The Teaching Council (2012) emphasises the importance of teachers having an empathic and supportive attitude towards students, especailly those from marginalised backgrounds. Given the school experiences of most of the participants in this study, it is recommended that the development of empathy, social conscience and a commitment to social justice are made an integral part of ITE and are part of on-going teacher CPD.

Recommendation (9c): To help inform teaching practices and enable teachers to be sensitive to and adapt their pedagogical approaches so that they better meet the needs of students from marginalised backgrounds, it is recommended that student and practising teachers are provided with meaningful opportunities to be exposed to the 'voices' of those who experience marginalisation and/or exclusion. So as not to be tokenistic this measure should be undertaken in a systematic and structured way. While the mandatory elements of ITE states that the curriculum for ITE must include: inclusive education, e.g. Special Education, Multiculturalism and Disadvantage, (Teaching Council, 2011: 14), opportunities should be provided to learn about structural and societal imbalances and inequality, and how to critically reflect on these. A possible way to support this recommendation is to present student and practising teachers with regular opportunities to hear the voices of those who have lived with such inequalities and their experiences of school. Rather than having this measure an elective module in Teaching Colleges, the Teaching Council could mandate that such learning is an integral part of ITE and features in on-going CPD.

Recommendation (9d): In recent years significant growth has taken place in policies and strategies to address issues of diversity and difference and the challenges of marginalisation and exclusion in education e.g. (DEIS, 2005). The school experiences of the younger participants in this study indicate that some of this policy is getting through. However, some questions remain as to how it is being put into practice, as the microsystem of some schools still operates from traditional power structures. However, given the many difficulties confronting young people, teachers also need support to develop positive working relationships with students who may be disaffected and/or who are acting out. Opportunities should therefore be provided for teachers to become up-skilled and be supported in their work by programmes such as the National Behavioural Support Service (NBSS) (now subsumed into the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). While the Teaching Council (2011: 14) mandates that ITE should inlcude learning behaviour management (Teaching Council, 2011: 15), learning how to teach positive behviours to students should be included in ITE and teacher's ongoing CPD.

Recommendation (9e): The experiences of children in Ireland are now considerably different to those of children in years gone by (Bradley and Hayes, 2007: 1). Children today face challenges such as drugs misuse, bullying, school drop-out and pressures due from social media usage, etc. While many developments have taken place in education to meet the needs of students of today, equality of outcomes does not exist for all students. However, as learning institutions, schools are sites where change can be nurtured and developed, and teachers can have an instrumental role to play in leading change towards the creation of a more inclusive education system. Therefore as part of teacher CPD the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) should provide more opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills in school self-evaluation and support teachers to learn how to work more collaboratively and strategically with statutory and community/voluntary organisations, while supporting community engagement with schools.

10)   *School ethos: developing a positive and nurturing school climate*

Recommendation (10a): Improving the social-emotional climate of schools necessitates policies and provisions to address the various social and emotional needs of young people and the many difficulties confronting them. The basis for this comes from findings in the literature and from participants' own accounts. These measures should include greater provision of counselling and therapeutic supports in schools and in local communities, but be distinct from career guidance and not be limited to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Instead therapeutic supports and services such as music and art therapy, mindfulness, play therapy, speech and language therapy, suicide awareness, conflict resolution/mediation, restorative practices and bereavement counselling, etc. should be made available in schools and in communities. However, to progress these commitments are needed by those who have a remit around children's welfare and development, to work together in a collaborative and coordinated way, so as to make best use of limited resources, while maximising their effectiveness.

Recommendation (10b): Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSCs) should be extended to all secondary schools, as needed, with the possbillity of BSCs being rolled out for primary schools in and serving a population living with the challenges of poverty and marginalisation. This is because schools serving communities with these challenges usually have higher levels of disadvantage and 'greater complexity of need' (Smyth et al., 2015: x), and so might need these supports.

Recommendation (10c): Developing a positive school climate should include providing students with opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the school's development. The *Pupil Participation Good Practice Guide* in Wales (2011: 30) emphasises that the views and ideas of children and young people should be sought in all schools (primary, post-primary schools and special schools) when planning, developing and reviewing policies and procedures which might affect students. The same report posits that inclusive consultations should be well advertised, happen in a timely manner and a variety of methods be used; such as consulting through pupil bodies, e.g. school council reps.; group or class discussions; circle time; questionnaires or surveys; focus groups or workshops; suggestion boxes; electronic mailboxes or the school web-site. To avoid tokenism students must know what will happen as a result of their input and receive timely feedback about how their views have influenced outcomes. Schools should also provide opportunities for students to develop the skills needed to, 1) express their opinions, 2) reflect on their experiences, 3) be empowered to empathise with others and learn to appreciate different points of view, 4) develop problem solving skills, 5) develop a sense of responsibility to the school and the wider community through taking on areas of responsibility in school suited to their age, ability and stage of development, and finally 5) provide feedback on how to improve the quality of teaching (Rankine, 2009: 2-3). Such actions can enable students to meaningfully contribute to life at school and input to the school's development, while also ensuring that their own needs are better met (Downes, 2013).

Recommendation (10d): Finally, to contribute to an inclusive ethos in schools consideration should be given to how parents/guardians might be supported to play a more active role in their children's education. Therefore creative ways must be identified so that parents/guardians can bring their skills, culture and aspirations to the services of their children, the school and the local community.

9.3 Recommendations for regeneration

The recommendations for regeneration focus specifically on the importance of resourcing the study site areas and the importance of positively promoting the study site areas and the capital individuals in these communities possess, together with developing the capacity of stakeholders for participation and engagement in regeneration processes. The recommendations are presented under the following thematic headings: resourcing and promoting the study site areas and meaningful engagement and effective partnership working in regeneration.

11) *Resourcing and promoting the study site areas*

Recommendation (11a): Participants articulated that the study sites had experienced high levels of deprivation, had complex social needs and were under-resourced in terms of much needed provisions and services, particularly in areas such as community policing, estate management, tenancy enforcement, educational and welfare services and opportunities to foster social and economic capital development. The lack of these resources were perceived by participants as having contributed to the development of social problems and the social decline of the study site areas. In response, it is recommended that greater investment is made into the study sites areas as part of the regeneration process in Limerick city. Government and State bodies and community organisations should therefore work to develop the study sites physically, socially and economically; through prioritising adequate investment in the study sites and ensuring that the needs of those living in these areas are better catered for. Attending to these concerns can help improve neighbourhood liveability (Norris, 2014) and lead to

neighbourhood transformation and renewal (Page, 2006; Wilson and Kelling, 1982 and Wilson, 1987.

Recommendation (11b): Portrayals of the study sites by the media and/or public officials has contributed to the stigmatisation of these areas and contributed to negative 'neighbourhood effects'. Stigmatisation of these areas has likewise resulted in the strengths of these communities often being overlooked. Therefore an important task for the regeneration process is to consistently highlight, promote and support the capital these communities possess, i.e., resilience, community pride, bonding capital and commitments to place, etc. It is also imperative that all who play a role in the social, cultural, academic and economic life of Limerick city ensures that portrayals of the study site areas and Limerick city generally are positive, as with events associated with Limerick city of culture (2015 and 2016) and Munster rugby, etc.

12) *Developing the capacity of stakeholders for participation and engagement in regeneration processes*

In a society facing a crisis of civic apathy and political disengagement, consultation and participation in public discourses is becoming an increasing concern. To ensure that consultation and participation in regeneration processes are genuine and meaningful, they must include and be representative of ethnic, socio-economic, gender, age-related and other groups; regardless of the difficulties and challenges this presents (Brackertz et al., 2005: 16). In Ireland much of the emphasis on community participation in regeneration was prompted by the EU's suggested model of 'good urban governance' (Haidar, 2005: 19). This reflects a shift away from bureaucratic 'top-down' and 'market' driven approaches which featured in regeneration practices during the 1980s in the UK (Atkinson and Cope, 1997) and the 1990s-2000s in Ireland. While consultation and participation in regeneration processes are emphasised in the literature (DECLG, 2012; LRA, 2008; LRFIP, 2013; Norris et al., 2014), the reality suggests that local communities are often not engaged meaningfully enough (Arnstein, 1969; Bissett, 2008; Carley, 2000; Corcoran, 2006; Muir and Rhodes, 2008). To address this concern Carley (2000: 287) offers valuable insights as to how meaningful

engagement can be attended to, while presenting ways in which effective partnership working in regeneration can be achieved.

Recommendation (12a): Developing strategic capacity in regeneration requires integrating plans and programmes with the various perspectives, resources and activities of the public, private and voluntary sectors. It also requires dealing constructively and creatively with the tensions involved in including those living in neighbourhoods designated for regeneration. Achieving these objectives should involve: deliberation and negotiated decision making, supporting community development measures, empowering residents and encouraging their participation, while facilitating them to be part of planning developments and redevelopment projects. However, for organisations to expect residents to work in this way it is not enough to just provide opportunities for engagement, the organisations concerned must also offer practical supports to assist with this engagement and its development.

Recommendation (12b): To develop strategies for more effective participation in regeneration processes and partnership working, the responsibilities for leadership, agenda setting and management must be shared between the various partners. In addition the culture of the lead partner must not be allowed to dominate (i.e. regeneration professionals). There is likewise a need for different stakeholders to be facilitated to participate in their own way and at their own pace. Opportunities should therefore be provided for agencies and partners to come together to, 1) reflect on their capacity for partnership working, 2) identify ways in which changes can be made to their own structures and culture. In this way more effective participation in regeneration processes and partnership working can be achieved.

9.4   Recommendations on the research method and process

The qualitative research paradigm was employed for the thesis and the phenomenological research method employed for data gathering and data explication. A superficial reading of phenomenology suggests that its concern with content and meaning offers little to research that has a practice and reform agenda, i.e. this thesis. A more thorough reading of phenomenology however shows that phenomenological inquiries can be effective in bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspective, which can be a powerful tool to challenge 'structural or normative assumptions' (Lester, 1999: 1). Furthermore, adding an interpretive and critical dimension to phenomenological inquiries can lead to the development of constructive theories with practical implications for everyday living (Lester, 1999: 1). The recommendations in this section are thematically presented under the following headings: the merits of the research methods for data gathering and data explication and important skills needed for researchers when undertaking qualitative research inquiries.

13)   *Merits of the research methods for data gathering and data explication*

Recommendation (13a):   The instruments employed for data gathering (long-interviews with semi-structured open ended questions and interview probes) were useful in this study and provided a context where participants could share their experiences, priorities and concerns, while considering aspects to their lives in a critical and reflective way.   I therefore recommend that these same instruments are employed by qualitative researchers who seek to study people's perspectives and experiences. This is because employing these instruments can enable those who wish to learn from others, to 1) get quickly to the heart of issues, 2) cut through 'the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom and complacency' (Lester, 1999: 4), and finally, 3) provide new insights and understanding, with the potential for new possibilities for living (Langdridge, 2008: 1137).

Recommendation (13b): Phenomenology guided data gathering and data explication. A limitation of this method is that it can tend to make detailed comments about individual situations, which don't lend to direct generalisation, but to the development of general theories which are often based on researchers' own interpretations (Lester, 1999: 2). Despite this limitation the phenomenological research method can be a powerful tool for social researchers, enabling them to reflect on 'the personal meaning of the concept of power' and 'its effects on the lives of people' (Selvi, 2008: 45). This method is also useful for facilitating inclusion, by tapping into aspects of people's lives and experiences, while considering their perspectives and views, and subsequently communicating these to wider audiences, thereby ensuring that their voices are heard (van Manen, 1990). For these reasons phenomenology can be a particularly useful and effective research method for educational researchers.

Recommendation (13c): In the limitations of the study I noted that the thesis would have benefitted from a larger and more inclusive research sample (cf. Chapter Six, 6.14), particularly the inclusion of a different age cohort. It is therefore recommended that at another stage, a similar type research project is undertaken with a different age cohort (e.g. students currently enrolled in school), and the experiences reported are compared. The purpose of such a study would be to see if the DEIS programme; school improvement measures or other initiatives aimed at addressing exclusion in education were having any major impacts. Of particular interest would be to see if participants in another study would have the same sense of, 1) being treated differently because of their socio-economic status, 2) experience more equal educational outcomes.

14) *Important skills needed by researchers when undertaking qualitative research inquiries*

Recommendation (14a): During the research a number of participants expressed a variety of emotions and feelings as they recalled their experiences of school (e.g. anger, sadness and happiness, some of which was expressed in sarcasm, blaming, aggressive tone, negativity and tears). Hochschild (1998: 3) submits that emotional expressions can be a way of seeing for researchers, sensitising them to the existential reality of a person's life and their experiences. When a research project encourages

respondents to 'open up' about sensitive issues, researchers must then possess strategies and skills to manage and be comfortable with these, but also to manage and be comfortable with their own emotions (Hubbard et al., 2001: 134). An omission on my part during the research was I did not provide opportunities for participants to debrief[83] after the interviews. I therefore recommend that researchers undertaking qualitative inquiries afford research participants the opportunity to debrief after research, should they so desire. Researchers must also develop the knowledge to be able to direct research participants towards a relevant service or support, should it be required. Furthermore, researchers should possess and/or develop the skills necessary for conducting debriefing sessions.

Recommendation (14b): It is recommended that those undertaking qualitative research inquiries should learn skills and develop capacities such as empathy and congruency[84]. This is because empathy and congruency in a study can help address unequal power relations, enable research participants to feel more at ease during the research process and thereby facilitate more active participation and sharing by participants, which has the potential to yield a richer body of qualitative data and result in better research outcomes. However, in order for researchers to develop these important capacities and skills they could/should undertake basic courses/workshops in counselling skills.

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[83] Debriefing provides an opportunity to understand what has happened and to find out what a participant learned. It also provides an opportunity for the researcher and participant to identify what they need to do and how to go about achieving that (Lederman, 1992: 148).

[84] Empathy is an attempt to understand how a person feels from the perspective of their own frame of reference (Rogers, 1958: 6-16). Congruency involves individuals being receptive to what is shared and not hindered by artificial concerns, or worried about the image they are trying to convey, or defensive about what people might choose to share (O'Farrell; 1990; Rogers 1958; Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

9.5   Chapter conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a series of recommendations for education, regeneration and the research method and process. In making the recommendations a preamble is provided which explains the rationale for making the particular recommendation. While the order in which the recommendations are presented indicates their relative importance, they should be considered as an integrated set arising from the study as a whole. The recommendations relating to education and regeneration should be viewed as part of an overall long-term strategy, aimed at bringing about systemic changes in education and urban regeneration in Limerick city; so that education and regeneration are more responsive to the views, needs and aspirations of those often excluded from participation in processes affecting their lives. The recommendations concerning the research method and process are presented as a guide to enhance the skills of research inquirers in their work as qualitative researchers. Finally, in making the recommendations I am mindful that ample documentation exists to guide policy development in education and urban regeneration. However, I am also mindful that many of the recommendations in the chapter emerge from the perspective of those not normally listened to or heard. This makes them unique and attributes to them a certain cogency.

| Chapter Ten |
| Conclusion |

10.1   Introduction

This thesis provides unique insights from the perspective of those from communities in Limerick city who have often been excluded from participation in public discourses and social processes. The thesis sought to discover how education served those who took part in the study as research participants in the past, and how educational policy might better serve those living in Limerick's regeneration communities, presently and in the future. The thesis likewise sought to discover what part education might play in regeneration processes. As part of the discovery process a number of important learnings were identified and comparisons across contexts were made, which can be applied to the Limerick context.

In this chapter I conclude the thesis, but first I revisit my research questions and the aims and objectives of the study. Next, I summarise the study. Then I outline the unique features of the study and present the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge. Finally, I share my final thoughts and conclusions.

10.2   Research questions, aims and objectives

The study set out to access participants' experiences, perceptions, beliefs, priorities and concerns about education and subsequently create knowledge based on these. The core research question aimed at gaining and understanding of how the education system in Limerick city served residents living in Limerick's regeneration communities in the past and how it might better serve them in the future. The aims of the study were to gain an insight from the perspective of a sample of adult residents from the study site areas about their school experiences. Another aim was to identify the educational priorities and concerns residents might have. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1) Gain a greater understanding of the educational experiences of those who took part in the study.
2) Elicit perspectives and views as to how education and the education system might better serve participants, their communities and the next generation.
3) Identify ways in which the education system can contribute to breaking the cycle of marginalisation and exclusion, while also contributing to regeneration processes.

The approach take to achieve these purposes was a qualitative research approach and this was guided by phenomenology as the central research method. The study methods and approach were central to the research process, as they helped facilitate participants' reflection on their experiences as well as facilitating them to identify their priorities and concerns; from which a rich body of qualitative data was generated for phenomenological analyses.

10.3   Thesis summary

In this section I summarise the process of discovery which took place as a result of having undertook this study. The discovery process is comprehensively documented in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. The earlier Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five provide a background and a context to the discovery process and are supported by rich literature reviews.

In Chapter One, 'Introduction', I presented the background to the study and the rationale for the establishment of the Limerick regeneration programme, i.e. the horrific petrol bomb attack carried out by young people from their locality and the Fitzgerald report (2007). I also set a context for education being included in the Limerick regeneration programme. I then described the purpose of the study and my own rationale and motivation for undertaking this research. Next, I outlined the theoretical frameworks and subsequently presented the core research question and the embedded questions of the study. This was followed by an outline of the research methodology and the approach employed for knowledge creation. Finally, I gave an overview of the structure to the thesis. In Chapter Two, 'Theoretical Frameworks', I outlined and critiqued the theoretical frameworks employed in the study.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and the socially critical perspective were presented as providing a theoretical basis from which to examine the relationship between individuals and social systems (society, education, the education system and regeneration), and how they might best benefit one another in the context of Limerick's regeneration. In Chapter Three, 'Urban Regeneration', I reviewed the urban regeneration literature. I began by defining the term regeneration and then presented an analysis of how the concept regeneration developed in the urban policy literature. I also presented a theoretical framework for regeneration, consisting of 'broken windows' and 'neighbourhood effects' theory. This was followed by a discussion on two recurring themes associated with modern urban regeneration programmes; gentrification and sustainable-development-sustainable-communities. I then presented an overview of the Irish urban regeneration experience and subsequently presented and critiqued examples of some of the high profile urban regeneration programmes which took place in Ireland, especially during the Celtic Tiger period. Having analysed these examples of regeneration a number of important learning's were identified, which were then presented. Finally, I presented an overview of the Limerick regeneration programme during the period July 2007 to 2016. In Chapter Four, 'Education and Poverty', I explored the relationship between poverty and education and the potential of education to impact on regeneration processes. I began by outlining how poverty is understood in the literature and explored the root causes of poverty; namely inequality and the unequal distribution of societal resources. I then examined the extent of child poverty in Ireland and explored how poverty impacts on the lives of children. Next, I examined the relationship between poverty and education. I subsequently presented ways in which economic poverty and inequality might be addressed. This was followed by considering ways in which inequality in education might also be addressed. Finally, I presented some of the wider benefits of education and considered the potential benefits of these for regeneration processes. In Chapter Five, 'Area Profiles', I presented a social profile of Limerick city and the study site areas. Two contradictory views of Limerick city were documented, 1) presented a view of Limerick with high levels of social, retail, environmental, historic and cultural infrastructure and a developed higher level education and industrial sector, 2) presented a 'brand' image of Limerick characterised by gangs, feuding, drugs and serious crime. As part of the profile I outlined some of the difficulties and the challenges experienced by those

living in the communities designated for renewal as part of the Limerick regeneration programme (2007-2023), along with documenting those factors that contributed to the social and physical decline of these areas. The profiles of the study sites shows that these areas experienced generational levels of inequality, poverty and social problems; factors which arguably prompted the need for regeneration in the city. I also provided an outline of the national context during and after what has come to be known as the Celtic Tiger period (1994-2007). In presenting the national context I drew attention to some of the dramatic and profound changes that took place in Ireland during this period. The national context also provided a context in which to understand some of the challenges that confronted regeneration in Limerick in the period October 2008 - 2013.

In Chapter Six, 'Methodology and Research Process', I outlined and described the research approach, the methodology and the data collection and data explication processes. I again revisited my rationale and motivation for undertaking the study and outlined the study's purpose, aims and objectives, and described how the study was scoped and designed. I then outlined the research methodological framework, its philosophic underpinnings and the how the methodology was employed in the study. Next, I presented an outline of the study sample and the study site areas and described how these were accessed for the research. I then described the ethical and reflexive approach adopted for the study and discussed how the challenges encountered during the course of the research were dealt with. I subsequently presented the verification procedures employed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of this research. I then reflected on my own transformation as a result of having undertook this study. Next, I discussed the generalisability and transferability of the findings. Finally, I presented what I perceived were the main limitations of the study. In Chapter Seven, 'Research Findings', the main findings of the research are presented. The chapter began with an outline of participants' accounts of their experiences of primary and post-primary school. Next, I described some of the main barriers to participants' engagement, retention and progression in education. This was followed by participants' accounts of the value and the perceived benefits of education. Subsequently, I presented participants thoughts on Limerick's regeneration and then outlined the educational priorities of participants. Finally, I

presented participants' views on their involvement in the study and what that involvement has meant to them, while considering the implications of this for participation in public discourses and processes affecting people's lives. In Chapter Eight, 'Discussion', the main findings of the study were discussed and developed with reference to the literature. In interpreting the findings Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework was employed, together with the socially critical perspective. The chapter consists of a discussion on participants' experiences of school, followed by a discussion on barriers to engagement, retention and progression in education. I then discussed the educational priorities of participants. Finally, I discussed ways in which those often excluded from participation in public discourses can be facilitated to participate more in these processes. In Chapter Nine, 'Recommendations', I presented a set of recommendations based on the findings in Chapter Seven and the discussion I undertook in Chapter Eight. The recommendations of the chapter are broadly organised under the following headings: recommendations for education, recommendations for regeneration and recommendations on the research method and process. Within each of these broad categories, the recommendations are presented under a number of thematic headings.

10.4   Unique features of this study

This study employed a synthesis of diverse disciplinary frameworks and methodologies which traverse psychology, philosophy, education and sociology. The study also presented and critiqued a number of some of the high profile examples of urban regeneration in Ireland dating from 1982 (the Gregory Deal) to 2008 (St. Michael's Estate) and then the Limerick regeneration programme (2007-2016). The processes involved in progressing these examples of regeneration included Local Area Plans (LAPs) Integrated Area Plans (IAPs) and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. As part of the study extensive literature reviews on education and poverty and urban regeneration were undertaken. Specifically the study sought to gain an insight into how education and the education system might better serve residents in Limerick regeneration communities from their own perspectives. Emerging from these perspectives and from insights gained from the literature, recommendations were made for education, regeneration and the research process.

10.5   The study's contribution to knowledge

The contribution this study makes to knowledge is as follows: It gives a unique perspective on education from the perspective of residents from the four designated regeneration communities in Limerick city.   It demonstrates that many of the problems in Limerick's regeneration communities developed over time and were caused in part by poverty, social exclusion and hegemonic interests, of which the education system in Limerick city was found to have played a role. The microsystem of school emerges in the study as particularly important, and the study finds that many of those who took part in the research were failed by the education system in Limerick, largely as a result of negative processes within that microsystem, i.e. negative and acrimonious teacher-student relationships. The study however also affirms the power and the importance of human relationships for teaching, learning and developmental outcomes. Aside from the concerns noted, the study reveals that the field of education possesses the potential to play an active part in the transformation of individuals and communities. Therefore education must not only be seen as a means of overcoming poverty, but as a means to ensure that society is oriented towards a more equal and just society.   For these reasons supporting education across the spectrum of life-long learning should be a priority measure in urban regeneration. Finally, the study finds that meaningfully including those who are often excluded from participation in public discourses and processes affecting their lives, contributes to social inclusion, addresses unequal power relations and has the potential to lead to educational and societal change; so that education and urban regeneration better meets the needs of those whom both purport to serve. Insights from the writings of Foucault offer a theory of power which is useful here. Foucault proposes that rather than needing the expertise of public officials, individuals and communities can constitute themselves through their own efforts. However, the technologies of power (Foucault 1997: 281); in this case the education system and policy decision makers, can through their efforts contribute to individuals and communities becoming 'self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society' (McNay 1992: 4), thereby averting the potential harmful impacts of exclusion and the lack of agency and voice to influence and bring about meaningful change.

10.6   Final thoughts

This research journey came about as a result of my work with Limerick Regeneration Agencies (Oct. 2007-June 2012). Reflecting on this journey and on regeneration in Limerick I am brought back to when regeneration in Limerick was first established. From the outset there was much local and national media hype and coverage of regeneration. There was also a lot of excitement and anticipation, especially among residents in the study sites. Much of this expectation centred on having the various social problems which had come to characterise the study sites addressed. There were also expectations that a regenerated Limerick would be more socially inclusive, enhance the quality of life and well-being of all citizens in the city, and showcase Limerick as a progressive and dynamic urban space, which in turn would attract further inward investment and lead to improvements in the economic and social life of Limerick city and the Mid-West region (Fitzgerald, 2007). Unfortunately many of these expectations were not realised in the time frame of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (July 2007-June 2012). A major reason for this had to do with the downturn in the Irish economy as a result of the collapse of the building industry and the crisis in the national and international banking sectors (from September 2008 onwards). Like many government initiatives at the time the Limerick regeneration programme had to adapt to the changing economic and social environment and to the range of imposed cuts in public expenditure. While commitments continued to be made to some of the social aspects of the Master Plan (2008), emphasis was very much on progressing plans around the built environment, particularly housing (Appendix VI Timeline and overview of the Limerick Regeneration Programme from June 2007 - 2016); reflecting a practice consistent with urban regeneration programmes in the Irish context (cf. Chapter Three). However, despite the grand plans and the many promises made, the scale of outputs was minimal, and due to the slow pace of regeneration many residents became disillusioned and angry and reported being 'let down' by the State and its agencies (cf. Chapter Seven, 7.6). While the LRFIP (2013: 4) proposes a robust, workable and measurable *Plan* to ensure that regeneration in Limerick is finally delivered, the task of regeneration must be conceived as a long term, comprehensive process which aims to tackle social, economic, physical and environmental issues in places where markets have failed (Roberts, 2000).

Having worked with Limerick regeneration and from the many insights gained as a result of this study, I believe that traditional regeneration practices are in need of change. Consequently, I propose that urban regeneration should not be the sole responsibility of a singular government Department such as the DECLG, but instead be progressed by a specially set up expert multi-agency body comprising of individuals from the various government departments (e.g. Environment, Justice, Health and Welfare, Education, Training and Employment, together with local community champions from areas designated for regeneration). Furthermore, the priorities for regeneration should be on social inclusion, with the expert multi-agency body mandated with executive decision making powers and provided with an independent, ring-fenced budget to progress regeneration measures. Concerning the role of education in regeneration, I advance that the vision and plan for education in regeneration should be devised in consultation with residents from designated regeneration areas, and then be presented to educational decision makers and educational service providers as a template to be rolled-out and progressed. In addition to these, this study posits that the lessons learned from previous experiences of regeneration must be taken on board and learned from, otherwise subsequent urban regeneration programmes may have limited success.

Finally, this study has contributed to the practice of engaging those often excluded from participation in public discourses and processes affecting their lives as active research participants. Throughout the thesis voices from 'the back of the class' feature and their contribution has yielded rich insights from the perspective of 'cultural insiders' (O'Sullivan, 2005). In concluding the thesis I wish to acknowledge the achievements of those who took part in the study as research participants. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution they have made to extend and enrich the subject of this research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Participant Information Letter and Invitation to Participate in the Research

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Declan Blackett and I am a part-time student at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, studying for a PhD in education. In this study I am looking to gain a residents perspective on the role of education in regeneration. I am really interested in learning about how education has served you in the past, how it can better serve you in the present and in the future. I would also like to learn if education and learning has anything to contribute to the programme of regeneration in Limerick city.

If you agree to participate in this process, I ask that you take part in a focus group discussion with others, who have also consented to be part of the process. I may also ask you to take part in a one to one interview after the focus group interview is done; at a time and place that best suits you. I would like to record the interviews so as to make sure that the accounts gathered may be accurately represented. The interview should last around one hour. If you agree to be interviewed you may choose not to answer some or any of the questions put to you. Also should you prefer the interview will not be recorded, and please feel free to withdraw from the interview process at any stage without feeling compelled to give a reason.

I promise to protect your anonymity by ensuring that no one will be able to identify you in any way throughout the interview process and subsequent final thesis report. If you wish to have a copy of the interview when I have written it out I will be happy to make this available to you. After transcription the recording will be destroyed. In the meantime all data gathered during this process will be secured by me under lock and key. Should you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent about your concerns, please feel free to contact: MIREC Administrator, Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick, 061-204515, mirec@mic.ul.ie. If you are happy to be part of the focus group and interview process can you please sign the attached form *Consent for Interview*. I look forward to listening to your views and learning from your experiences and insights. Your participation in this study will help to make a valuable contribution to educational research.

Finally, I wish to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for giving of your time and for considering being part of this study.

Yours sincerely,

Declan Blackett.

APPENDIX II

Participant Consent Form

**Please tick if you consent to be interviewed for this
PhD research.**

☐ I consent to be interviewed for this PhD research.

☐ I have read and understood the information letter provided to me.

☐ I am eighteen years of age or older.

☐ I understand what the research is about and what the information
provided will be used for.

☐ I understand that no else other than the researcher will have access
to the interview and focus group transcripts.

☐ I am aware that the researcher currently works for the Limerick
Regeneration Agencies.

☐ I know that my participation in this study is totally voluntary and that
I may refuse to answer any question I so wish.

☐ I know that I can withdraw from the interview at any stage without
providing a reason.

☐ I have had sufficient time to read and consider this consent form
and the information included in the letter.

☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study.

☐ I am happy that I received satisfactory answers to all my questions
and any other concerns that I may have had.

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interview Schedule and Questionnaire

Section 1: General introduction and community context

1. What area of Limerick city do you live in?
2. How long have you lived there?
3. Can you describe for me the area you live in?
4. What is good about your community/neighbourhood?
5. What do you not like about your community/neighbourhood?
6. The area you live in has often being categorised by the media as 'disadvantaged' – What do you think this means? How do you feel about this or similar type statements?
7. Is 'disadvantage' whatever it means an issue for families living in this area?
8. Does crime or anti-social behaviour in your community / neighbourhood affect you or people you know? Please explain in as much detail as you feel comfortable with (highlighting that anonymity is assured).
9. In your opinion what are the main needs for your community or neighbourhood?

Section 2: Regeneration

10. Are you aware that your community/neighbourhood is earmarked for regeneration?
11. Why do you think this is so?
12. What do you think 'regeneration' means or involve?
13. Do you know those working in the regeneration programme?
14. What do you think they are trying to do / or achieve?
15. Do you think they have been to date or not?
16. Much of the Regeneration Plan talks about 'social regeneration' - what might this mean?
17. In your opinion what kind of programmes, activities or initiatives should be included in the regeneration programme?

Section 3: Education and its transformative potential

A) Participants' childhood experience of school:
18. Did you like school when you were younger?
19. How long did you remain in education?
20. How would you describe your experience of school?
21. Could anything have been done to make your experience of school 'better'?
22. From our own experience what barriers exist to children's education?

B)   Participants' aspirations for their children and the next generation:
23.   What hopes do you have for your children and their education?
24.   What kind of school experience do you wish for them to have?
25.   What do you think would enable them to have this school experience?
26.   Do you believe this can happen?
27.   What stops children from achieving in school or completing their education?

C)   Participants thoughts on the current system of education:
28.   How does school today differ from when you were at school? Explain?
29.   In your opinion is that experience better or worse? Explain?
30.   What pressures exist today for children and families regarding education?

D)   Participants' engagement with further education & learning:
31.   Have you started or completed any courses or further training since leaving school?
32.   Why did you undertake such a course?
33.   Has your experience of adult education been different to school?
34.   How would you compare this?

E)   Education and its place in regeneration:
35.   Education is thought to be an important part of regeneration? Why?
   -   Can achieving in education make a difference to a person's life?
   -   Can achieving in education make any difference to family life?
   -   Can achieving in education contribute in any way to making your community a better place to live in?   Please explain?

Scenario: In the morning you have being given full responsibility for education in Limerick city, what would you do to -1) ensure children participate more in their learning and learn more at school, 2) that young people would remain on in school to complete their education, 3) what would you say to teachers to ensure that children can have a better school experience, 4) what advice would you give to parents so that they can better support their children's education?

37.   Is there anything further you wish to add as part of this interview?

APPENDIX IV

Length of Focus Group and Individual Interviews

Table 1   Length of Focus Group and Individual Interviews

Focus Groups *Area / Code*	Length of Interview	Individual Interviews *Area / Code*	Length of Interview
Southside B1	64 mins, 41 secs.	Southside B1	34 minutes
Southside B2	74 mins, 22 secs.	Southside B2	29 mins, 43 secs.
Southside B3	51 mins, 52 secs.	Southside S1	40 mins, 13 secs.
Southside S1	1 hour, 42 seconds	Southside S2	45 mins, 32 secs.
Southside S2	58 mins, 10 secs.	Northside M1	59 mins, 33 secs.
Southside S3	0	Northside M2	35 mins, 39 secs.
Northside M1	67 mins, 13 secs.	City Centre 1	64 mins, 35 secs.
Northside M2	1 mins, 51 secs.		
Northside M3	70 mins, 13 secs.		
City Centre 1	56 mins, 28 secs.		
City Centre 2	63 mins.		
Other 1	61 mins, 21 secs.		
Other 2	40 mins, 35 secs.		

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model
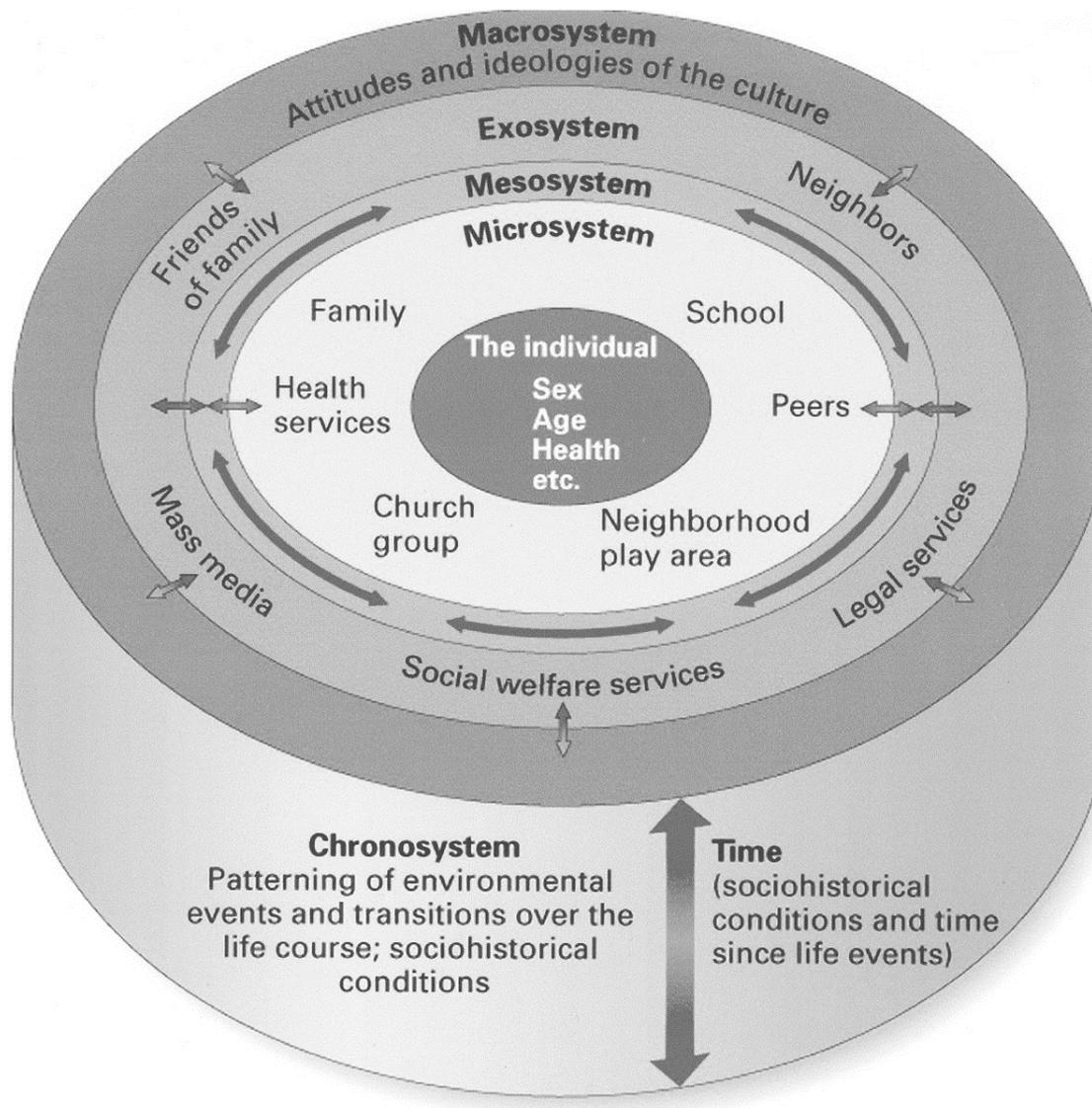
Source: uk.images.search.yahoo.com [accessed 23rd July 2014]

APPENDIX VI

Timeline and overview of Limerick Regeneration from June 2007-2016

Table 1   Timeline and overview of Limerick Regeneration from June 2007-2016

September 2006	Petrol Bomb attack on a car with two young children inside on the estate of Moyross in Limerick city which attracted local and national media coverage and acted as a catalyst which prompted Government to make a response.
November 2006	John Fitzgerald former City Manager of Dublin was invited by the *Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion* to assess the situation in Limerick and prepare a report on crime, disorder and deprivation in the estate of Moyross. Fitzgerald identified that to address these issues additional local authority estates in Limerick city would need to be included in any subsequent plan for Limerick.
April 2007	The Fitzgerald report was published. It highlighted the complexity of the problems in Limerick city, together with identifying the inability of existing services to address these problems. Fitzgerald (2007: 8-13) also made a number of recommendations, which included establishing structures for regeneration.
June 2007	Ministerial Order SI 275/276 of 2007 formally established the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (LRA) as legal entities, 1) for the Northside of the city and 2) for the Southside of the city. Brendan Kenny was appointed as CEO and John Fitzgerald appointed as Chairperson. A Board of Directors was also established, comprising of statutory agencies and local and community directors.
June 2007 –Nov. 2007	Staffs were recruited to progress the Limerick regeneration programme. Initially a total of eighteen staff was directly employed by LRA. Staffs were also indirectly employed, to support LRAs regeneration measures; these included Estate Management and Limerick City Council workers.
July 2007 – Jan. 2008	Intensive consultation with stakeholders re: the *Vision* for Regeneration, taking the form of meetings with strategic partners in all the areas to be progressed under the 'Pillars' of Physical, Social and Economic regeneration. Consultations also took place with residents in the form of calling to homes and holding and attending public meetings around housing and community concerns, etc. Structures were also devised to include interagency and resident groups meetings, e.g. Regeneration Committees, Social Regeneration Committees and Residents' Fora (except for the Social Regeneration Committees these fora were on-going for the term of the LRA).

	During Sept. 2007 - October 2008 much consultation took place in preparation for the vision document and Master Plan for regeneration.
January 2008	Vision Document *Our Community, Our Vision Our Future* was launched in on the Northside and Southside of Limerick by the then President of Ireland, Mary McAleese.
October 2008	Limerick Regeneration Agencies *Master Plan* was put before Limerick City Council and the DoEHLG for approval. It was subsequently accorded the status of a Draft Plan.
October 2008	Downturn in the national economy and an ensuing period of economic recession.
January 2009 - June 2010	Period of expectation by residents and those who contributed to the vision document and Master Plan that the regeneration Plan would be rolled out and implemented.
June 2010 - 2014	*Phase One Implementation Plan* was announced by the then Taoiseach Minister Brian Cowen TD. The Master Plan (2008) was pared back with a reduced number of targets identified to be achieved during the period (July 2010-December 2014). The projects to be progressed included a number of physical and social projects. The cost of these measures was estimated at c. €337 million. As part of *Phase One Implementation Plan* Limerick Regeneration Agencies supported a range of social inclusion measures across the city.
Early 2011	Senior members of the various statutory agencies at a national level, e.g., (Health Services Executive, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Justice, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government) regularly met with senior regeneration staff to coordinate efforts in Limerick, particularly in relation to the social aspects of the regeneration programme. This forum was called the Programme Development Group (PDG) and was replicated at a local level with a similar focus and features. The PDG continued to meet for the remainder of the term of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies (ending June 2012). A Community Consultative Forum was also established during 2011 and met on a monthly basis. This comprised primarily of community representatives and residents living and working in each of the study site areas.
February 2012	Announcement in Limerick by the then Minister for Housing Jan O'Sullivan of the plan to disband the Limerick Regeneration Agencies.
June 2012	Limerick regeneration was then subsumed into the combined Local Authority of Limerick City & County Council. Its name changes to Limerick Regeneration.

March / April 2013	Public consultations on proposals for redevelopment were undertaken by the new regeneration body with residents and stakeholders.
April to July 2013	Proposals for redevelopment were amended to reflect community feedback.
September 2013	Launch of the *Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan (LRFIP): Delivering Safe and Sustainable Communities*. The plan sees a commitment by government of c. €280 million over the next ten years to 're-invigorate and re-vitalise communities that have witnessed considerable neglect and breakdown over decades' (ibid: 4).
September to October 2013	Observations and submissions were invited from the general public to adopt the LRFIP.
January 2014 – remainder of 2014	Two housing developments were completed 1) on the Northside at Cliona Park, Moyross, 2) on the Southside at Colivet Court, Southill. Community improvements on the Northside and Southside were undertaken, along with the demolition programme. Commitments were also made to continue providing funding support to a range of social inclusion projects across the city, i.e. the Social Interventions Fund, 2014. The Public Participation Network (PPN) is established in Limerick. As part of a national reform process, the PPN proposes to enable communities to have a say on issues which concern them, while enabling enable the Local Authority to make better decisions as a result of engaging more effectively with communities.
February 2015	Commitments again made to funding support for a range of social inclusion projects across the city (Social Intervention Fund, 2015). In 2015 Six Themes – Education & Learning, Health & Wellbeing, Ageing Well, Employability & Work, Families and Youth at Risk, Community Participation and Empowerment were considered for funding. In education examples of projects supported include: Afterschool Clubs, Learning Hubs, Literacy programmes, Music Generation 'Sing Out with Strings', Summer Camps, Incredible Years Programme and early school leaving prevention programmes, e.g. Youthreach, Coiscéim, etc. Limerick Community Development Project - OST supports and 3rd level Bursary support. Limerick City & County Council was also part of a consortium which oversaw the development of Le Cheile education campus on the Southside of the city.

April 2015 – 2016	In Health and Wellbeing examples of projects supported include: Bluebox therapy service, PALLS probation, Northside FRC 'Saoirse' Drug Addiction and Counselling Service, HSE Mid-West Regional Drug Coordination Unit. Services for the elderly were also supported, e.g. Connectedness of Older People (PAUL), Saint Mary's Aid Chiropody Service Care and Repair North side FRC, along with maintenance and repair service for small jobs for the elderly.

In employment projects supported include: Moyross Summer Work Programme, FAI Development Programme, CDP Hairdressing and Training Programmes, Hospitality and Skills Training (LEDP & LCETB/ SOLAS) and Community enterprises.

Support to Families and Youth at Risk was extended to Northstar Family Support Programme, Le Cheile Restorative Justice, Bedford Row Family Project, Extern, Janus and Time Out Programmes and Early Years Child & Family Supports.

Community participation & empowerment measures also received support.

A 10 unit development comprising of three-bedroom homes at Waller's Well, Janesboro was also delivered by the Local Authority under the LRFIP. Additional homes were scheduled for delivery at the Churchfield Site in Southill, Cosgrave Park, Weston Gardens, Carew Park and Kings Island, with c. 1,500 Regeneration area houses to receive thermal upgrades & 300 homes in various stages of this project.

Flood emergency support at Kings Island Youth & Community Centre was also provided. |
| February 2016 | Further commitments to provide funding support to a range of social inclusion projects across the city (Social Intervention Fund, 2016) and to continue the housing thermal upgrades to 2018.

A new Production and Digital Skills Academy in the Biblical Centre is also in the process of being developed.

It is envisaged that later in 2016 a full report of the implementation of the LRFIP so far will be published. Also published will be the Plan for Regeneration for the next five years (Limerick Leader, August 13th, 2016: 6). |

APPENDIX VII

Statistical Profile of Deprivation in Limerick

At the beginning of regeneration in Limerick city (2007) the Mid-West Region was considered the fourth most deprived region of Ireland, and Limerick city was considered the most disadvantaged Local Authority area in the Mid-West region (CSO 2006 & 2011). The levels of deprivation or affluence of an area is measured according to deprivation index scores. The deprivation index was developed to track changes in deprivation levels over time, and takes into account dimensions of social class disadvantage, labour market deprivation and demographic decline. In August 2012 Pobal announced the HP Deprivation Index as a new method for measuring the relative affluence or deprivation of a geographical area using data compiled from various census (Haase and Pratschke, 2012). The HP Deprivation Index is based on Small Areas (SA) which replaces all other measures, namely Electoral Divisions (EDs). Percentage data for an SA is given under the following categories: population change; age dependency rates; single parent rates; primary education only; third level education rates; male and female unemployment rates; and the numbers of people living in local authority rented housing.

Within Limerick city significant degrees of variation exist between affluent areas and areas suffering extreme levels of deprivation. In 2011 the city had some of the country's most disadvantaged urban areas. Prior to 2011, 38 Electoral Districts (EDs) existed in Limerick city, 12 were considered marginally below average in terms of deprivation, 12 were deemed disadvantaged and 06 considered very disadvantaged. The most affluent and deprived areas within Limerick city can be seen in Table 1. Below. In 2011 the most affluent EDs in Limerick City are Shannon A (13.0), Castle C (12.0), Castle D (11.2) and Ballinacurra A (10.2), all of which are in the 'affluent' category. The most disadvantaged EDs in Limerick city are John's A (-28.5), Galvone B (-26.6), Kileely A (-21.6), Ballynanty (-21.2), Glentworth C (-20.8) and Rathbane (-20.6). These six EDs all fall into the category of 'extremely disadvantaged' (Engling, and Hasse, 2013: 1). It is within these EDs that the study site areas are located. Table 1 below illustrates the levels of affluence and deprivation in Limerick city.

Table 1   Relative Deprivation (RD), Limerick City Electoral Divisions (EDs) (2011)

EDs	Community	RD Score
John's A	St. Mary's Park / Island Field	-28.5
Galvone B	Southill	-26.6
Kileely A	St. Munchin's	-21.6
Ballynanty	Moyross / Ballynanty	-21.2
Glentworth C	Our Lady of Lourdes – Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect	-20.8
Rathbane	Southill	-20.6
Prospect A	Our Lady of Lourdes	-18.9
Prospect B	Our Lady of Lourdes – Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect	-18.1
Singland A	Garryowen	-18.0
Abbey D	Garryowen	-17.1
John's B	St. Mary's	-16.9
Galvone A	Queen of Peace	-16.1
Kileely B	St. Munchin's	-16.0
Glentworth B	Queen of Peace	-14.7
Abbey C	Watergate / Clare St	-14.5
Glentworth A	Queen of Peace	-13.0
Ballinacurra B	Our Lady of Lourdes	-11.1
St. Laurence	Ballysimon Road	-11.0
Singland B	Childers Road Area	-5.6
John's C	St. Mary's	-5.2
Market	Garryowen	-4.8
Custom House	Watergate/City Centre	-4.4
Dock A	City Centre	-4.1
Castle A	Farranshone Area	-3.9
Limerick North Rural	Caherdavin / Coonagh	-3.2
Coolraine	Clareview /Ennis Road	-1.9
Farranshone	Mayorstone	-1.6
Dock C	Ballinacurra	-1.3
Shannon B	City Centre	-1.2
Dock B	City Centre	-1.0
Abbey B	Rhebogue	0.2
Castle B	Clancy Strand	0.4
Abbey A	Corbally	1.1
Dock D	South Circular Road	4.7
Ballinacurra A	South Circular Road	10.2
Castle D	North Circular Road	11.2
Castle C	North Circular Road	12.0
Shannon A	City Centre	13.0

(Source: CSO, 2011)

Table 2 below shows absolute and relative deprivation levels in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole, from 2006-2011.

Table 2   Absolute and relative deprivation levels in Limerick city compared to
           Ireland as a whole (2006 - 2011)

Area	Absolute Index Scores 2006	Absolute Index Scores 2011	Change in Absolute Index Scores 2006-2011	Relative Index Scores 2006	Relative Index Scores 2011	Change in Relative Index Scores 2006 - 2011
Limerick	-7.42	-13.66	-6.24	-7.42	-6.66	0.76
Ireland	-.23	-6.78	-6.77	-.23	0.24	-0.47

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

The deprivation level of an area is calculated with reference to a score with a national average of zero and ranging from -35 (being the most disadvantaged) to +35 (being the most affluent). When making comparisons over time absolute index scores are used, whereas when making a statement about a particular SA at a particular point in time, relative index scores with the following categorisation are used: extremely affluent; very affluent; affluent; marginally above average; marginally below average; disadvantaged; very disadvantaged and extremely disadvantaged (Haase and Pratschke, 2012: 4).

APPENDIX VIII

Statistical Profile of Limerick city, the Study Sites and Ireland as a whole

1. Statistical Profile of Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole

In the 1981 Census the population of Limerick city was recorded at 65,593 persons, in 1986 it was recorded at 62,785 persons a decline of 4.3 percent. The Limerick population had further declined to 59,331 by 1991 and to 59,141 by 1996. In 2002 the population increased to 60,955 but was again in decline by 2006 when the census recorded a population of 59,788 for the city. By 2011 the population had fallen to 57,106, an overall decline of 8,487 persons between 1981 and 2011. Tables 1 & 2 below show both the population trends and five year percentage interval population changes in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole, between 1981 and 2011.

Table 1   Population trends in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole (1981-2011)

Area	Pop. 1981	Pop. 1986	Pop. 1991	Pop. 1996	Pop. 2002	Pop. 2006	Pop. 2011
Limerick	65,593	62,785	59,331	59,141	60,955	59,788	57,106
Ireland	3,443,574	3,540,643	3,525,719	3,626.087	3,917,203	4,239,318	4,588,252

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 2   Five year percentage interval population change in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole (1981- 2011)

Area	Pop. Change 1981-1986 %	Pop. Change 1986-1991 %	Pop. Change 1991-1996 %	Pop. Change 1996-2002 %	Pop. Change 2002-2006 %	Pop. Change 2006-2011 %
Limerick	- 4.3	-5.5	-.3	3.1	-1.9	- 4.5
Ireland	2.8	-.4	2.8	8.0	8.2	8.2

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 3 below shows a profile of the age dependency rates in Limerick city compared to the Irish State in the period 1991-2011. According to the CSO (2014: 16) age dependency rates is defined as a percentage of the population of working age between the ages of 15 -64 years. The Census data in the above table records age dependency

rates in Limerick to be consistently less than the national average in the period 1991 to 2011.

Table 3   Profile of age dependency rates in Limerick city compared to the Irish State in the period 1991-2011

Area	Age Dependency Rate 1991 %	Age Dependency Rate 1996 %	Age Dependency Rate 2002 %	Age Dependency Rate 2006 %	Age Dependency Rate 2011 %	% Change in Age Dependency Rate 2006 - 2011
Limerick	35.2	32.9	30.8	29.8	31.1	4.4
Ireland	38.1	35.1	32.3	31.4	33.0	5.1

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 4 below outlines the rates of single parent households in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole in the period 1991-2011. Single parent households as a proportion of all family units with dependent children under the age of 15 years in Ireland is shown to have almost doubled between 1991 and 2011, growing from 10.7 percent in 1991 to 21.6 percent nationally in 2011. In Limerick a similar trend is recorded in the same period, growing from 15.8 percent in 1991 to 37.5 percent in 2011. The EU *Survey on Living and Income Conditions* (SILC) (2010) found that single parent households tend to have the lowest disposable income of all households in the Irish State and experience the highest rates of deprivation. Consequently, single parent households are consistently considered more likely to be at risk of poverty in comparison to other social groupings.

Table 4   Single parent households Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole (1991-2011)

Area	Single Parent Rate 1991 %	Single Parent Rate 1996 %	Single Parent Rate 2002 %	Single Parent Rate 2006 %	Single Parent Rate 2011 %	% Change in Single Parent Rates 2006 – 2011
Limerick	15.8	21.9	31.8	38.6	37.5	-2.8
Ireland	10.7	13.8	16.7	21.3	21.6	1.3

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Tables 5, 6 and 7 below presents a profile of housing in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole in the period 1991-2011. CSO data 1991-2011 shows 1) continuous decreases in the number of people renting from the local authority in Limerick, decreasing from 19.3 percent in 1991 to 12.5 percent in 2011, 2) that privately rented housing in Limerick and the State has risen consistently since 1991 with the number of people privately renting in Limerick city higher than the national average by 6.4 percent in 2011, and 3) that the number of people in the private rented housing sector has more than doubled nationally as well as in Limerick. From 2002 onwards the Census data also shows a decrease in home ownership nationally and in Limerick city.

Table 5   Housing profile of Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole - Local Authority Renting (LA) (1991-2011)

Area	LA Rented 1991 %	LA Rented 1996 %	LA Rented 2002 %	LA Rented 2006 %	LA Rented 2011 %	LA Rented % change 2006 – 2011
Limerick	19.3	15.8	12.8	13.1	12.5	-4.5
Ireland	9.8	8.3	7.1	7.5	7.9	6.5

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 6   Housing profile of Limerick city compared Ireland as a whole - Privately Renting (1991-2011)

Area	Privately Rented 1991 %	Privately Rented 1996 %	Privately Rented 2002 %	Privately Rented 2006 %	Privately Rented 2011 %
Limerick	11.2	14.5	17.3	20.2	26.1
Ireland	8.1	9.9	11.4	13.8	19.7

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 7   Housing profile of Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole - Home Ownership (1991-2011)

Area	Own Home 1991 %	Own Home 1996 %	Own Home 2002 %	Own Home 2006 %	Own Home 2011 %	Own Home % change 2006 – 2011
Limerick	68.2	68.5	68.9	65.6	60.2	-8.2
Ireland	80.0	79.9	79.8	77.2	70.8	-8.3

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 8 and 9 below shows male and female unemployment rates in Limerick city and Ireland as a whole in the period 1991 to 2011. Census data reports that in 1991 Ireland had a male unemployment rate of 18.4 percent and by 2006 had decreased to 8.8 percent. However, from 2006 onwards male unemployment rates in the State increased dramatically. By 2011 the male unemployment rate for the State was 22.3 percent, whereas in male unemployment rates were 32.7 percent in 2011, making Limerick's unemployment rate in 2011 10.4 percent above the national average. This dramatic rise in male unemployment both in Limerick and Ireland from 2006 to 2011 onwards reflects the impact of economic recession during this period. Similar trends are reported for female unemployment rates in the period 1991-2011. In 1991 female unemployment in Ireland was 14.1 percent, this declined to 8 percent in 2002. However, from 2002 onwards female unemployment rates begin to rise, and by 2011 it increased to 15 percent. In comparison the Limerick female unemployment rates were 19.5 percent in 1991 and decreased to 10.9 percent by 2002 only to rise to 23.7 percent in 2011.

Table 8   Male Unemployment rates in Limerick city and Ireland as a whole
           (1991 to 2011)

Area	Male Un-employment rate 1991 %	Male Un-employment rate 1996 %	Male Un-employment rate 2002 %	Male Un-employment rate 2006 %	Male Un-employment rate 2011 %	Male Un-employment rate % change 2006-2011
Limerick	27.4	23.8	15.4	15.7	32.7	108.6
Ireland	18.4	16.4	9.4	8.8	22.3	154.1

 (Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 9   Female Unemployment rates in Limerick city and Ireland as a whole
           (1991 to 2011)

Area	Female Un-employment 1991 %	Female Unemployment 1996 %	Female Unemployment 2002 %	Female Unemployment 2006 %	Female Unemployment 2011 %	Female Un-employment % change 2006-2011
Limerick	19.5	15.1	10.9	12.6	23.7	87.9
Ireland	14.1	12.0	8.0	8.1	15.0	84.5

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 10 below illustrates the sectoral employment structure in Limerick city in 2011 compared to Ireland as a whole in 2011. In 2006 17 percent of the Mid-West workforce was employed in manufacturing, compared to 12.6 percent nationally, with employment in the construction sector in 2006 at 11.3 percent (Census, 2006). In 2006 much of the employment in Limerick city and environs was in the 'vulnerable sectors of manufacturing and construction' (AECOM analysis, 2013: 21). With the collapse of the construction industry and the period of economic recession from 2008 onwards these sectors would be worst affected. In 2011 Limerick recorded a high percentage of employment in the restaurant and accommodation, transport and communications sectors at 16 percent, compared to the State at 11 percent, whereas 15 percent of the employment in Limerick city in 2011 was in the manufacturing and construction sectors, which is 1 percent lower than the national average. AECOM analysis (2013: 22) suggests that Limerick had a high percentage of the workforce employed in low skilled employment in the manufacturing, construction, wholesale retail, restaurants and accommodation sectors, which exposed it even more to the devastating impacts of recession.

Table 10   Sectoral employment structure in Limerick city in 2011 compared to Ireland as a whole (Census, 2011)

Sector	Limerick city %	Irish State %
Agriculture, mining & utilities	1%	6%
Manufacturing	12%	11%
Construction	3%	5%
Wholesale & Retail	18%	15%
Restaurants and Accommodation	9%	6%
Transport and Communication	7%	5%
Business Services	13%	15%
Public Sector	24%	31%
Other / Not Stated	12%	10%
Total	100%	100%

(Census, 2011 and AECOM analysis, 2013: 22)

In Chapter Five, 'Area Profiles', social class referred to designated differences in a population based on wealth, income, occupation status, group identification, level of consumption and/or family background. Tables 11 and 12 below shows the social class status in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole in the period 1991-2011.

Table 11   Social class status in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole
            (1991-2011)

Area	Professional Classes 1991 %	Professional Classes 1996 %	Professional Classes 2002 %	Professional Classes 2006 %	Professional Classes 2011 %	% Change in Classes Professional 2006-2011
Limerick	19.8	21.0	24.1	22.4	23.5	1.1
Ireland	25.2	27.3	31.6	32.9	34.6	1.7

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 12   Semi-Skilled Manual and Unskilled Manual workers in Limerick city
            compared to Ireland as a whole (1991-2011)

Area	Semi / unskilled classes 1991 %	Semi / unskilled classes 1996 %	Semi / unskilled classes 2002 %	Semi / unskilled classes 2006 %	Semi / unskilled classes 2011 %	% Change Semi / unskilled classes 2006-2011
Limerick	34.4	29.7	26.8	27.3	23.9	-12.5
Ireland	28.2	24.4	20.2	18.6	17.5	-5.9

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

The above tables show that from 1991 to 2011 there was an overall increase in the numbers of persons in the professional social class grouping in Limerick city and the Irish State. The tables also show that the numbers of those in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class groups in Limerick shows a decline in 1991, 1996 and 2002, and in 2011 the number of those in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class groups shows a decline to 23.5 percent, whereas for Ireland as a whole there has been a continuous decline in the number of persons in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class groups.

Table 13 and 14 below shows the educational attainment levels at primary level and third level education in Limerick city compared to Ireland as a whole in the period 1991-2011.

Table 13   Educational attainment levels (Primary Education only) in Limerick
            city compared to Ireland as a whole (1991-2011)

Area	Primary Education only 1991 %	Primary Education only 1996 %	Primary Education only 2002 %	Primary Education only 2006 %	Primary Education only 2011 %	% Change Primary Education only 2006-2011
Limerick	35.7	30.1	25.0	22.0	19.9	2.1
Ireland	36.7	29.5	22.2	18.9	16.0	2.9

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

Table 14   Educational attainment levels (Third Level Education) in Limerick city
            compared to Ireland as a whole (1991-2011)

Area	Third level Education 1991 %	Third level Education 1996 %	Third level Education 2002 %	Third level Education 2006 %	Third level Education 2011 %	% Change Third level Education 2006-2011
Limerick	12.1	17.3	22.2	23.9	23.1	0.8
Ireland	13.0	19.7	26.0	30.5	30.6	-0.1

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012)

The above tables illustrate a national decrease between 1991 and 2011 of 20.1 percent between 1991 and 2011 in the percentage of people with only primary educational level attainment. When compared to the national average Limerick reported a consistently higher percentage of those possessing only primary level education. The tables also show that 23.1 percent of the population in Limerick have third level qualifications; including higher certificate, degree or post graduate degree qualifications. These rates compare poorly to the Irish State where 30.6 percent have third level educational qualifications. With an increasing emphasis placed on a skilled and educated workforce those with fewer educational qualifications are deemed to be 'disadvantaged' in terms of their ability to access suitable and meaningful employment (McCafferty, 2005: 6). Poor educational attainment also has a 'cyclical effect', with children from low-income families likely to experience reduced success in the education system (Pirrie and Hockings, 2012).

2. Statistical Profile of the study site areas compared to Limerick city and Ireland as a whole.

Table 15 below illustrates the relative deprivation levels of the study site areas compared to Limerick city and Ireland as a whole in 2011. In 2011 the relative deprivation index of -6.66 for Limerick city was significantly greater than that of 0.24 for Ireland as a whole. The relative deprivation index for the study sites records deprivation levels way in excess of those for Limerick city and Ireland as a whole. The most disadvantaged EDs in Limerick city are John's A (-28.5), Galvone B (-26.6), Ballynanty (-21.2), Glentworth C (-20.8) and Rathbane (-20.6). These EDs all fall into the category of 'extremely disadvantaged', and is within these EDs that the study site areas are located. Interestingly the ED Kileely A is also classed as 'extremely disadvantaged' (-21.6), but is not included in the regeneration programme.

Table 15   Relative deprivation index scores in the study site areas compared to Limerick city and Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Relative Deprivation Scores 2011
Ireland	0.24
Limerick	-6.66
St Mary's Park - ED John's A	John's A -28.5
Ballinacurra Weston / Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	Glentworth C -20.8 Prospect A -18.9 Prospect B -18.1
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	Galvone B -26.6 Rathbane -20.6
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	Ballynanty -21.2

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre, 2013)

Table 16 below shows the population of the study sites compared to Limerick city and Ireland as a whole in 2011.

Table 16   Population in the study site areas compared to Limerick city and
            Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Population 2011
Ireland	4,588,252
Limerick	57,106
St Mary's Park - ED John's A	2,207
Ballinacurra Weston / Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	2,314
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	2,445
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	2,918

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and
Mediation Centre, 2013)

Population in the study site areas at the time of retention in Limerick was c. 10,000, which amounts to approximately one fifth of the total population of Limerick city, and this is evidenced in the above table. As outlined in Chapter Five 'Area Profiles' population rates can be an indication that an area is performing well socially and economically. Table 16 above presents a snapshot of the population in the study sites, Limerick city and Ireland as a whole.

Table 17 below reports the age dependency rates in the study site areas compared to Limerick city and Ireland as a whole in 2011. The figures show that all of the study site areas have age dependency rates higher that those recorded for Limerick city, with the exception of Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect, which has an age dependency rate less than that for Limerick city and Ireland as a whole. The table also shows that St. Mary's Park and Southill have higher rates of age dependency than both Limerick city and Ireland as a whole. As identified in Chapter Five 'Area Profiles' age dependency rates have implications for policy and service provision.

Table 17   Age dependency rates in the study site areas compared to Limerick city
and Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Age Dependency Rates 2011 %
Ireland	33.02 %
Limerick	31 %
St. Mary's Park - ED John's A, John's B & C	36 %
Ballinacurra Weston / Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	29 %
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	36 %
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	32 %

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and
Mediation Centre, 2013)

Table 18 below outlines the rates of single parent households in the study site areas
compared to Limerick city and Ireland as a whole in 2011. The above shows that
single parent households in each of the study site areas is almost that that for the rest
of Limerick and more than double that reported in Census 2011 for Ireland as a whole.
In Chapter Five 'Area profiles' single parent households are recognised as one of the
most vulnerable social grouping in society, with a higher tendency to experience
poverty and social exclusion. To address these social policy must prioritise supporting
single parent families as part of an overall anti-poverty strategy.

Table 18   Single parent rates in the study site areas compared to Limerick city
and Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Single Parent Rate 2011 %
Ireland	21.6
Limerick	37.5
St Mary's Park - ED John's A, John's B & C	64
Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	69
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	47
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	64

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and
Mediation Centre, 2013)

Table 19 below provides a profile of housing in Limerick city, the study sites and Ireland as a whole in 2011. The table shows that the percentage of owner occupied housing units in the study site areas is lower than the city average of 60.2 percent and significantly lower than the national average of 70.8 percent. A close examination of the table below shows housing percentages which are not included in any of the categories. A possible explanation for this is that they were not accounted for.

Table 19   Housing profile in Limerick city, the study sites and Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Owner Occupied 2011 %	Local Authority Rented 2011 %	Privately Rented 2011 %
Ireland	70.8	7.9	19.7
Limerick	60.2	12.5	26.1
St Mary's Park - ED John's A	48	27	19
Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B EDs	55	20	18
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	56	34	7
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	47	41	8

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre, 2013)

Table 20 below shows the rates of male and female unemployment in Limerick city, the study sites and Ireland as a whole in 2011. The table shows that in each of the study sites male and female unemployment rates it the study sites are significantly higher than those for Limerick city and Ireland as a whole. In the thesis unemployment was shown to contribute to a range of negative personal and social outcomes. It was also a contributory factor in neighbourhood failure and decline (e.g. Chapter Three). The findings of the study suggest that creating new employment opportunities should be a priority measure for regeneration, so as to address poverty and social exclusion, while helping to create sustainable communities in regeneration.

Table 20   Male and female unemployment rates in Limerick city, the study sites
            and Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Male Un-employment Rate 2011 %	Female Un-employment rate 2011 %
Ireland	22.3	15.0
Limerick	32.7	23.7
St Mary's Park - ED John's A	49	40
Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	53	34
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	56	42
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	54	40

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and
Mediation Centre, 2013)

Table 21 below outlines the social class composition in Limerick city, the study sites
and Ireland as a whole in 2011. The table shows that in each of the study sties those
in the professional social class group are significantly lower than both Limerick city
and Ireland as a whole, whereas the rates of those in the study sites in the unskilled &
semi-skilled classes are higher than the national average. However, with the exception
of Southill those in the unskilled/semi-skilled social class group are lower that the
figures recorded for Limerick city.

Table 21   Social class composition in Limerick city, the study sites and Ireland as
            a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Professional Classes 2011 %	Unskilled & Semi Skilled Classes 2011 %
Ireland	34.6	17.5
Limerick	23.5	23.9
St Mary's Park - ED John's A	11	21
Ballinacurra Weston / Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	9	22
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	7	23
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	8.5	20

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and
Mediation Centre, 2013)

Table 22 presents an education profile of Limerick city, the study sites and Ireland as a whole in 2011. In 2011 Limerick city had 19.9 percent of the population over the age of 15 years of age who had have left education at primary level, in comparison to 16 percent for the Irish State. The CSO (2011) figures show that the study sites possess high levels of the population over 15 years of with only primary level education. St. Mary's Park has 37 percent in this category, Ballinacurra Weston/Prospect has 42 percent, Southill has 41 percent and Moyross has 36 percent, who possess primary level education only Table 22 also illustrates that Limerick city records a lower level of numbers completing third level education compared to Ireland as a whole.

Table 22   Education profile of Limerick city, the study sites and Ireland as a whole (Census 2011)

Area	Primary Level Education 2011 %	Third level Education 2011 %
Ireland	16	30
Limerick	19.9	23.1
St Mary's Park - ED John's A	37	12
Ballinacurra Weston / Prospect - EDs Glentworth C, Prospect A & Prospect B	42	8
Southill EDs - Galvone B and Rathbane	41	6
Moyross - ED Ballynanty	36	6

(Pobal HP Deprivation Index, 2012 in the Limerick Community Law and Mediation Centre, 2013)

APPENDIX IX

Newspaper Articles (1 – 8)

Newspaper articles on aspects of the Limerick regeneration
Programme (2007-2013) which illustrate some of the challenges
and the hopes for regeneration in Limerick.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2007   LIMERICK LEADER   7   REGENERATION

Regeneration board is open to suggestions

Every resident to be asked to contribute to vision of the future

By PETULA MARTYN

MEMBERS of the regeneration boards set up to revitalise the most deprived estates in Limerick will meet next Monday for the second time.

A staff of 14 people, including four project managers, opened offices in Roxboro and Moyross earlier this week. They plan to consult every resident in the northside and southside estates before finalising a master plan for the areas.

Former Dublin assistant city manager Brendan Kenny is the chief executive in charge of both agencies.

"We will be demolishing probably most of the houses in Moyross and most of the houses in Southill. So what we're saying is, we will build modern new homes for the people who want to stay there."

"What we are hoping to do is change these areas from the worst areas to the best areas in the city," he said.

Community leaders fully support the radical plans to transform the sprawling estates. Moyross Community Centre manager Paddy Flannery, who is a member of the northside regeneration board said: "There is a sense of excitement and expectancy that something is eventually going to happen—people are expecting delivery on this."

On the other side of the city, Fr Pat Hogan appealed to his parishioners to support the plans. "If people put their faith and trust in it, this has the potential to revolutionise not only this side of Limerick, but also

the whole of Limerick city and surrounding areas."

Residents can rest assured that they will not need to move from their homes during the regeneration of the estates. The chief executive of the two State agencies, which opened for business earlier this week, moved to alleviate fears that people will have to relocate to different parts of the city or county.

Mr Kenny said "There's no reason why new houses can't be built first before others are demolished. There is plenty of land out here."

There was also widespread concern in private housing estates throughout Limerick that houses would be bought by the local authority to rehouse families as soon as demo-

lition began. "We have no objective to clear these areas. We will build as many new houses as is required for the people who require them. It doesn't necessarily mean people will be cleared out"

However, Mr Kenny did confirm that Limerick City Council has been buying houses in the county but this has nothing to do with the regeneration initiative. Many people have applied to the Council for social housing outside of the crime-ridden estates. The local authority has been buying houses in the county to respond to this need.

A spokesperson in the housing department at City Hall said a quantity of houses had been already been acquired throughout the city environs and in parts of the

county.

He added that "the City Council is particularly careful to ensure that the tenancies allocated in these areas are residents who will integrate successfully in to the new communities."

It is the objective of Mr Kenny to encourage people to stay and benefit from the biggest regeneration project the city has ever seen.

"We'd like to think that we'll raise the hope and confidence of people that they won't be anxious to move out. We want them to be confident that something is going to happen here and stay," he said.

Moyross and Southill will see a physical, social and economic transformation during the five years that the agencies will be in place. Mr Kenny

is leading a team of 14 staff with four project managers who are experts in their fields. The massive overhaul of housing is just part of the regeneration project.

"We'll manage the housing, we'll build the shops and we'll build the leisure and community services," said Mr Kenny "But unless we get at the hardcore social problems—and it is going to take a generation to do that—it is not going to be successful."

The public servant does not plan to be a faceless bureaucrat and is asking the people to tell his team what they want for their communities. Staff are in place and the IT system is up and running at offices which opened on Roxboro Road on Monday. The project managers will operate out of a temporary

unit in Moyross until offices at Watch-house Cross shopping centre are ready at the beginning of November.

Every man, woman and child will have their say in the consultation process and a "Vision for the Future" is expected to be ready by Christmas for consultants who will develop a master plan. The first new houses will be built in June 2009.

Mr Kenny envisages a Moyross and Southill that will rival the leafy suburbs of Limerick.

"That's what we're aiming for. That's our objective that in the years ahead, it will be as good as and better than any of the other so-called good suburbs of Limerick and that young people will be buying houses out here," he said.

The long road to preparing the key 'vision documents'

THIS Monday, January 21, the vision documents charting the regeneration of vast areas of the north and south sides of the city were launched by President Mary McAleese but the process leading to their production began in earnest in November 2006.

That month, former Dublin City Manager, John Fitzgerald, was asked to head up an initiative aimed at addressing social exclusion, crime and disorder issues in Moyross.

The results would then be reported back to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.

Mr Fitzgerald's aim was to work with relevant representatives; to identify both problems and actions to overcome them and to propose steps to drive regeneration in Moyross and other disadvantaged areas over a five year period.

The document that subsequently became known as the "John Fitzgerald Report" was presented to the committee in April 2007.

The 15-page core document mentioned the strong community spirit in Moyross and Southill, but also outlined vast problems in the estates.

These included an unemployment rate of five times the national average, "significant educational advantage", an influential and intimidating criminal element and extensive dumping and littering.

Its three key recommendations were dealing with the issue of criminality; economic and infrastructural regeneration/ to create employment/unlock value/improve access/create a better commercial and housing mix and to develop co-ordinated responses to social and educational problems in order to break the cycle of disadvantage.

The report recommended a minimum of 100 extra gardaí for a force "exclusively dedicated to the policing of these areas" as well as the setting up two regeneration agencies for the south and north sides with dedicated teams to address issues such as social and family problems and educational disadvantage.

Mr Fitzgerald also suggested improvements to infrastructure—an extension of the city boundary as one of the strategies to attract investment, addressing the drug problem and regenerating the housing stock by whatever means necessary.

The regeneration agencies were set up in September 2007 and based in the communities under CEO, Brendan Kenny.

Mr Kenny said that the aim was to finish the vision documents by Christmas for an official launched at the start of 2008.

With that aim accomplished, the next step in the process is to engage consultants by the end of February and have more concrete and comprehensive plans in place by June 2008.

It is hoped that building work will begin in January 2009.

Three strands of regeneration

by Jimmy Woulfe
Mid-West
Correspondent

THERE are three strands to the regeneration plan: physical, social and economic.

The first will see the biggest replacement of local authority housing ever undertaken in this country as part of a single plan.

In Moyross, 1,130 houses on the northside will be levelled; a further 900 in Southill and Ballinacurra Weston will be razed and another 400 refurbished.

When St Mary's Park, another big council estate on the northside, is brought into the regeneration programme, 500 houses there will be demolished.

Demolition work is already under way and it is intended houses will be knocked in clusters of 50 to minimise the displacement of residents while replacement homes are completed in the two new towns.

As demolition continues, the rebuilding operation will get under way early next year and will take an estimated five years to complete.

It is planned families will return to the same areas, but to totally transformed neighbourhoods.

Former Dublin city manager John Fitzgerald and author of a report to government on the regeneration plan said the scale of the plan is necessary as conditions in the Limerick estates concerned were as bad as he had ever seen.

Chief executive of the regeneration agencies Brendan Kenny said while they are not in a position to say how much this work will cost, it will not be in the hundreds of millions speculated.

"It should be looked on as an investment rather than a cost when you see the damage these areas are doing to Limerick and the wider region. The private sector will provide most of that investment as land values will rise dramatically in these areas."

The regeneration agencies say private developers will be eager to get involved in development in the regeneration areas, given their prime strategic locations on the north and southside of the city.

One of the strongest messages that came back during consultations with residents in the regeneration areas was the view that criminals and those vandalising the estates get away with it and know they can get away it.

The vision report says a "contract of accommodation" could be drawn up whereby people who vandalise property could be made pay the repair costs by reductions from any welfare payments they are in receipt of.

And while the estates are being built, families who persist in antisocial behaviour will seriously jeopardise their opportunity of getting a new or refurbished home in the towns.

Tenants moving into the regenerated estates will have to demonstrate a "clean bill of health" as regards criminal activity and certificates of eligibility will be required from the gardaí and the local council prior to any offer of housing being made.

Undoing years of neglect daunting

The work of transforming deprived areas of Limerick will take much more than just physical regeneration, writes **Carl O'Brien**

Large though the scale of rebuilding may be, the construction of thousands of new homes in Moyross, Southill and other deprived areas of Limerick could turn out to be the easy bit.

Trying to undo decades of social neglect, criminality and reforming dysfunctional public services within a short time-frame is a much more daunting prospect.

The scale of social problems in some of these areas is frightening.

Unemployment rates are about five times the national average, the proportion of one-parent families is one of the highest in the country, absenteeism is a major problem for schools, while educational standards are well below the national norm.

Some children are already disadvantaged and damaged by neglect before they even start school. For example, primary schools report high proportions of children who have severe problems with speech and language, communication and concentration at the age of four or five.

Although there are many State agencies operating in deprived areas of Limerick, it is clear that they have been operating in isolation from each other and failing miserably to reach the people most in need of support.

The Limerick Regeneration Agency report sets out a number of ambitious aims in this regard. It envisages State agencies across areas such as justice, education, health and employment working together, seeking to bring about better results for the people they serve.

Among the ideas are a monitoring service for teenagers who fall out of the education system; out-of-hours social work services for families in crisis; dealing with disincentives to unemployment; holistic health services at local level to meet the needs of the entire community.

The plan also includes some bold welfare reform measures. It questions whether payments should be made to people who engage in anti-social behaviour or who do not provide adequate care for their children.

This suggestion is bound to spark a flurry of heated debate but that's probably as far as it will go. It is fraught with difficulties and could become a legal minefield if the State attempted to implement it.

Under social welfare laws, for example, the State is obliged to provide social assistance to the most vulnerable in society, and withdrawing this protection might cause more problems than it would solve.

Similarly, the proposal to require individuals to obtain Garda clearance before they are allocated local authority housing looks good on paper but could be very difficult to implement.

While local authorities would relish being able to control who lives in certain areas, nowhere in the report does it suggest what would be done with applicants who are refused housing in the Limerick area.

Officials at a press conference yesterday were unable to shed any light as to where troublesome tenants would end up.

A more general concern is that we have been talking about "joined up" public services for years now, with little sign of progress in many cases. There have been repeated calls for an out-of-hours social work service, for example, but no sign that we will see it anytime soon.

There is nothing wrong in thinking big and trying to change the system – but it would be naïve to think that deep-seated structural problems underpinning much of our public services will be solved overnight.

The plan will, at least, provide focused attention on trying to get public services to work together more effectively.

It will look at practical problems which hinder this, such as legal constraints over the sharing of data regarding individuals, and changing the mindset of agencies used to working on their own.

If it can achieve successes in this area, it will not only help transform places like Moyross and Southill into vibrant and sustainable areas – it would also leave a legacy which the entire State could be thankful for.

for troubled community

Why this policy of demolition is flawed

SHANE DUNPHY

THE newly announced Limerick regeneration project, in which the troubled areas of Moyross, Southill and Ballincurra Weston will be demolished and rebuilt, is yet another example of the Government throwing money at a problem that requires a much deeper approach.

Along with creating three new towns to rehouse the residents, it has been proposed that anti-social behaviour will be managed by linking social welfare payments to local authority housing placements, so repairs to damaged houses will be paid for "at source".

Repeat offenders will be kept from the area, moving trouble-makers away from their comfort zones and criminal infrastructures.

This model of social integration is based on work carried out in Ballymun, Dublin and was launched in Limerick yesterday by President Mary McAleese.

Gangs

That the approach is deeply flawed seems to be a point nobody has yet recognised.

It is widely acknowledged that the social problems in Limerick are deep-rooted and severe.

Poverty and criminality are multi-generational in areas like Moyross. Gangs run vast areas within the network of local authority estates, and such is the fear they generate, the legal system has been powerless to make even small inroads into stopping them.

I have worked in Limerick and can say from experience that there is a sense of "otherness" about some areas.

Many of the young people I spoke to genuinely believe the normal rules of society do not apply to them, because society

'We should be under no illusions about the challenges that lie ahead for the State'

and stigmatise them? While it is clear that the changes that took place in Ballymun have met with some success, I know from residents that there is a sense, to a large degree, that the urban planners somehow missed the point.

In any community, even one under siege by thugs, there are people who have been working on the ground, trying to make the lives of everybody in the area better.

These community activists and local leaders have a long history in Ireland, dating back to the urban Liberties of the 18th century.

Yet little was done in the redevelopment of Ballymun to either harness or focus their energies and skills.

As Ballymun resident Barry told me: "My Ma has a nicer place to live, but then, the drug dealers have better maintained street-corners to work off now, too. All they did was move the problems to a nicer neighbourhood."

The same phenomenon is occurring in Limerick. Rather than channelling energy and funds into placing specially-trained professionals in the area to work alongside existing activists, the focus is on tearing down and starting again.

The simple truth that, for a group of people to move away from deeply ingrained problems, they must first be empowered to solve those problems for themselves, seems to have been wholly overlooked.

What has been proposed is not about empowerment – it is about a new form of containment, about creating a prettier cage in which to house the problem.

And those who cannot live under the set conditions of this new environment will be ejected from it.

It strikes me that the endeavour may actually create an even greater sense of siege than existed before.

The issues in Limerick require a process of reinclusion, of working in partnership, of listening closely to the stories and experiences of the population, of examining long-established patterns of social behaviour and presenting alternatives.

Demolition is an answer to a question no one asked.

Shane Dunphy is a child protection expert

Limerick Regeneration must 'Refocus'

Minister for the Environment Phil Hogan has said Limerick's Regeneration programme needs to refocus itself and concentrate on building new homes and physical regeneration.

Mr Hogan was in Limerick this morning to meet the Regeneration team and local community leaders about the project and its lack of progress.

Minister Hogan had been critical of progress so far and said there had been a lot of problems in delivering what was set out in the master plan.

He said it now needed to concentrate on its building programme this year, in line with the targets set out in that plan four years ago.

However, he said the Regeneration project would continue to have a strong focus when Limerick's city and county councils amalgamate in the coming year.

Minister Jan O'Sullivan, who sits at Cabinet and has responsibility for housing, will be taking an active role in speeding up the programme in the Regeneration areas.

She said a lot of money had been spent so far in relocating families out of the Regeneration areas and the emphasis now had to be on delivering new homes for people.

Regeneration revived: €253m over 10 years

Plan to be unveiled on Friday envisages 58 key projects

A €253 million package aimed at tackling the challenges facing Limerick's Regeneration areas over the next 10 years will be announced this Friday by Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan in Limerick.

The Limerick Leader can exclusively reveal that the 500-page Framework Implementation Plan includes a projected budget of €93.3m for Southill and Ballinacurra Weston, €51.4m for St Mary's Park, and €106.5m for Moyross.

"The journey we are now on is transforming Limerick. With lessons of the past taken on board, we now have the opportunity to lead the way in regeneration at both a national and European level," writes Minister O'Sullivan in a foreword to the implementation plan.

It is anticipated that €28m a year will be ring-fenced by Government in the upcoming Budget to safeguard the future of the programme up to 2024.

Seven years after the initial Regeneration plan was drafted – after the horrific petrol bomb attack on two Limerick children – Minister O'Sullivan has pledged to ensure that the 58 key projects in this plan meet their targets over the next decade.

Nearly 200 houses in Southill have been identified for demolition, 27 houses in Ballinacurra Weston, and 65 houses in St Mary's Park.

Limerick Leader Newspaper

ANNE SHERIDAN AND NICK RABBITTS

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 28 2013

While the work of the now defunct Regeneration agencies and Limerick City Council have in the past consisted of the demolition of thousands of homes and rehousing families, this plan highlights the need for the refurbishment of thousands of homes.

In Moyross, there will be 295 new housing units built, 209 in Southill, 49 in St Mary's Park and 40 in Ballinacurra Weston, as well as long-term plans to build 4,671 private units across all Regeneration areas, the majority of which will be concentrated in Moyross and Southill.

Replacement housing in Moyross alone is estimated to cost €37m, with a further €10.4m for the refurbishment of houses, and €7.8m for demolitions. Under the budget plan for St Mary's Park, €1.5m has been highlighted for some demolition and stabilisation works at the Opera Centre site in the city. A equestrian centre, to tackle the city-wide problem of stray horses, is also budgeted for €2m.

While there has been renewed criticism that the pace of the works has slowed, Minister O'Sullivan writes in the plan: "Regeneration is a live process and needs to be flexible and adaptable over the implementation phase. It will be monitored, measured and evaluated on an ongoing basis. I am conscious too that successful delivery will require a whole of Government approach, with all public bodies, the private sector and community organisations working in close collaboration," she writes in the foreword of the plan.

"We can look forward with confidence that regeneration will reinvigorate and revitalise communities that have witnessed considerable neglect and breakdown over decades.

City manager Conn Murray writes in the plan that the last seven years - which have seen only small inroads made into the ambitious programme announced in 2007 - can be seen as a "stabilisation period".

A 'pivotal' time for change and hope for Regeneration again

ANNE SHERIDAN

LIMERICK LEADER SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 28 2013

'THERE are pivotal times in the life of a person, or a place, when things will never be the same again'.

Minister of State Jan O'Sullivan made that statement in the foreword of the new masterplan for the next 10 years of the Limerick Regeneration programme.

And yet, in the past 10 years, countless numbers of people across Limerick's disadvantaged Regeneration areas have been affected for the worst, and truly scarred in some cases, by 'pivotal' moments in their communities - by murders, anti-social behaviour, threats, assault and ongoing fear throughout their daily lives.

There have been landmark moments in Limerick's recent history - the murders of innocent men, the burns suffered by children in a petrol bomb attack - that people would love to forget, or earmark as a turning point, but they'll never be forgotten.

"There is now a new energy and confidence in Limerick, something which I haven't experienced before in my years of public life," she said.

Now, the hope is that the next turn in the road will be for the better.

One such moment was in Cliona Park in Moyross in February of this year, when Minister O'Sullivan handed over the keys to the new residents of 13 houses and 21 apartments.

There was tears, and laughter and joy, and it showed the real hope and difference that Regeneration can bring - if it keeps going.

On the front cover of the 500-page implementation plan is an image of one of those families in Moyross who got their new home, and their youngest daughter is turning the key in the door of their new home - and new life.

Others who have yet to receive a new home, who are still mired in the vicious patterns of the past, are naturally cautious, hesitant and even sceptical about welcoming the plans - because we have been here before.

It is seven years this month since the Regeneration plan for Limerick was launched.

It is five years since former President Mary McAleese came down to launch the northside and southside vision plans.

It is three years since the then Taoiseach Brian Cowen announced 26 projects to be advanced, worth €337m.

Minister O'Sullivan said we are on a new journey now, and "the lessons of the past have been taken on board."

The plan is there, the commitment from Government is there and funding worth €28m a year for the next ten years is due to be ring-fenced in the next Budget.

At €280m, the revised plan could actually come in under budget at €253m.

A capital allocation of over €30m was also made this year alone.

"It will be monitored, measured and evaluated on an ongoing basis," assured the Labour minister of the plan.

This is not just about the Regeneration areas, the report notes. It's about improving Limerick as a whole, and making it a more attract place to live, work, and invest in.

"The revitalisation of the Regeneration areas so that they become more attractive neighbourhoods is vital to Limerick's overall success."

"What will be delivered is a city to be proud of, with connect and living neighbourhoods that people will actively want to live and work in."

However, they note that even the "best prepared" and most robust plan will be "meaningless" unless it's implemented holistically over time, as much from the ground up as it is from the top down.

APPENDIX X

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Table 1 below depicts Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. Each rung of the Ladder is described as follows. The bottom rungs of the ladder (1) *manipulation* and (2) *therapy* describes levels of non-participation, but may be seen as a substitute for genuine participation by those in positions of power. However, the real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or decision making, but to enable power holders to 'educate' or 'cure' would be participants, and is premised on the belief that power holders and officials know best (Arnstein, 1969: 217). For Arnstein rungs (3) *informing* and (4) *consultation* allow the 'have-nots' to hear and be heard. However when these are the total extent of participation, there are no guarantees or assurance or power to change the status quo, and so amounts to tokenism. Rung (5) *placation* is a higher level of tokenism, because the ground rules allow the 'have-nots' to advise, while power holders continue to retain the right to decide. Rung (6) *partnership* reflects a higher level of citizen power. At level (6) citizens can negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. The topmost rungs (7) *delegated power* and (8) *citizen control* sees 'have-not' citizens obtain the majority of decision making, along with full managerial power.

Table 1   Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

8	Citizen control	Degrees of Citizen Power
7	Delegated power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degrees of Tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Degrees of Non-Participation
1	Manipulation	

(Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, 1969: 217)