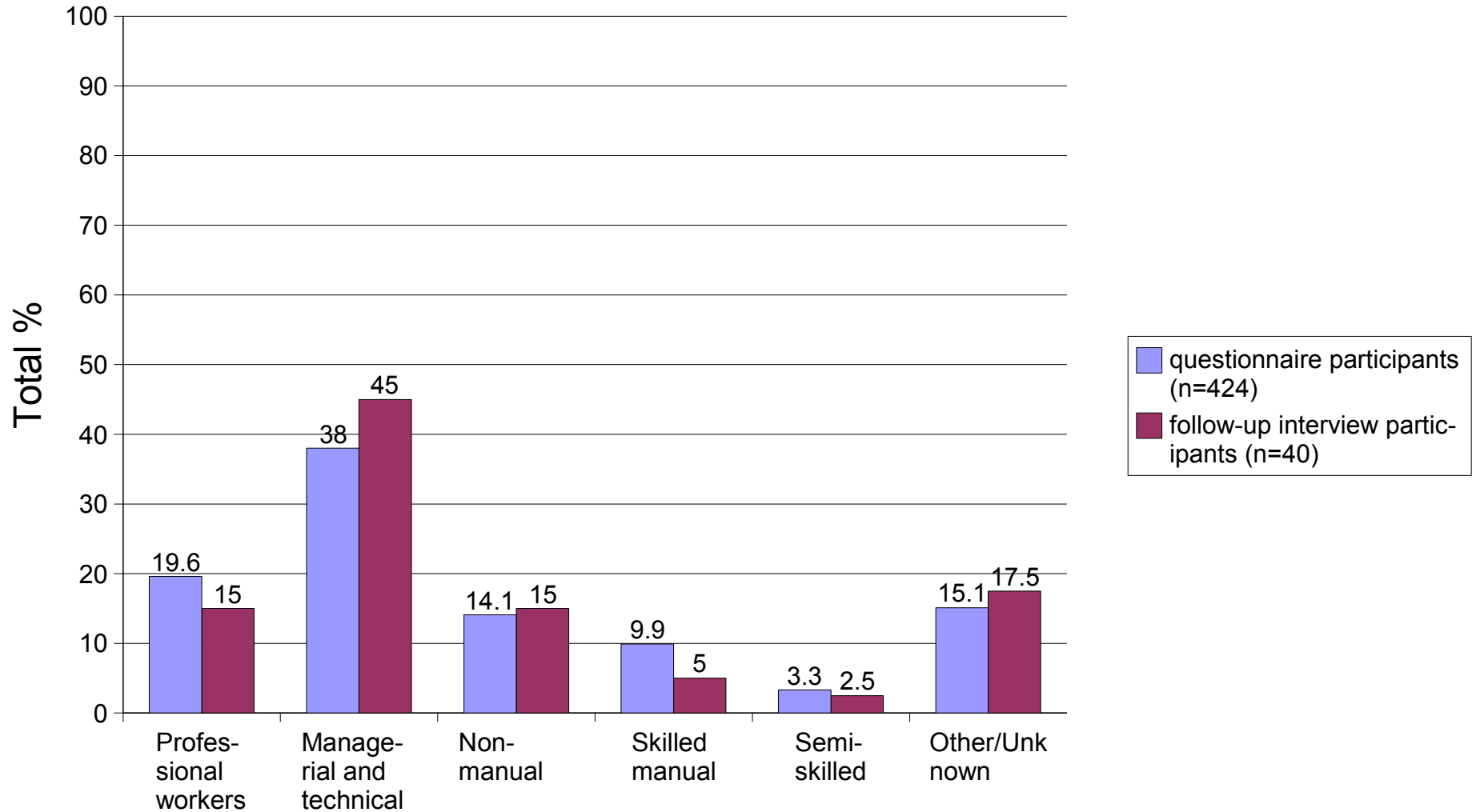


Parents' attitudes to the Gaelscoil as a school for the élite

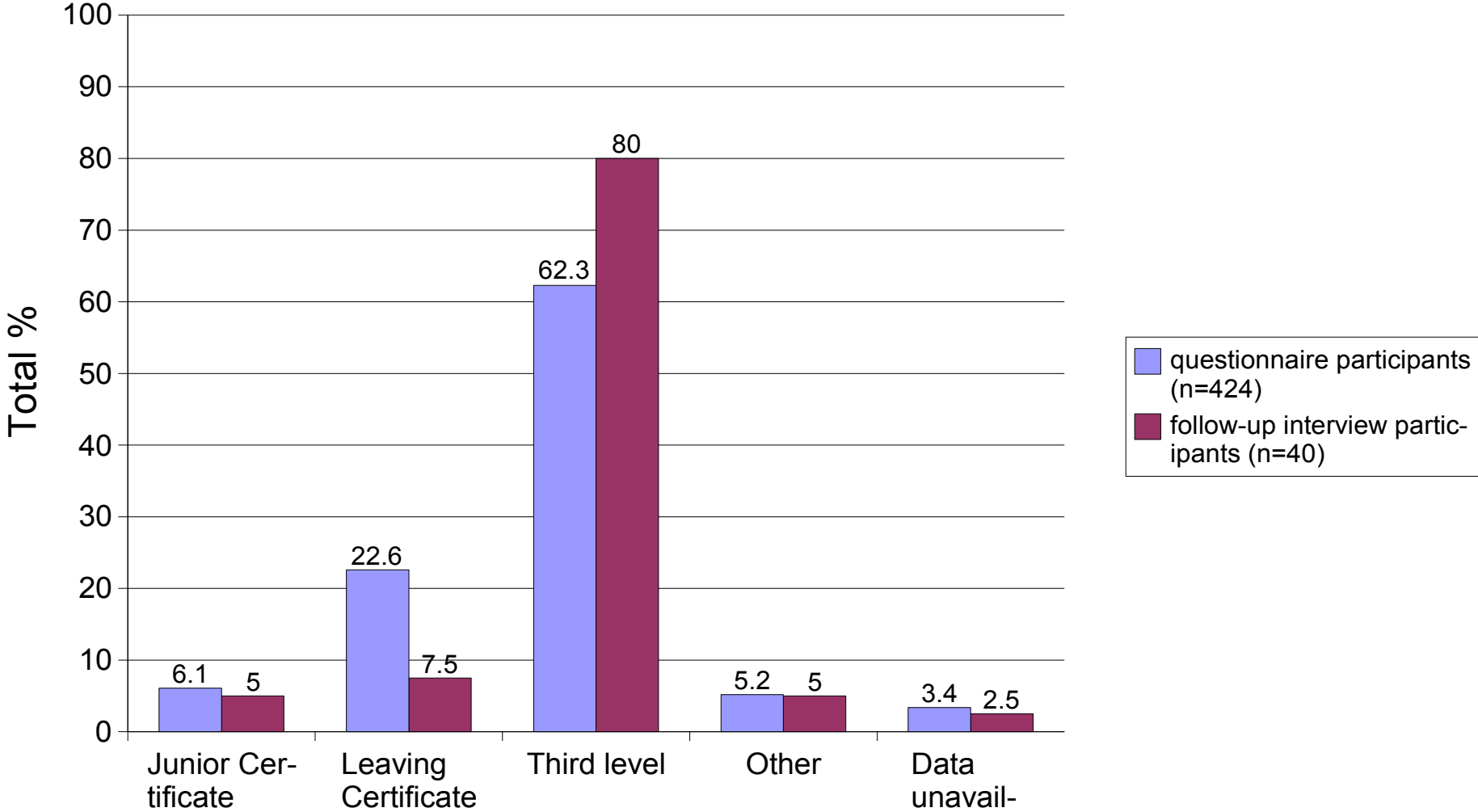
Seimineár Taighde - 17ú Eanáir

Vanessa Mas-Moury

Participants classified by social class



Participants classified by educational qualifications



- “It is the breeding ground for the new sophisticated elite.”

McWilliams, David. (2005). *The Pope's Children. Ireland's New Elite*. Dublin: Gill & MacMillan

- “it's a class issue. Whether the motivating force is middle-class liberalism or heartfelt nationalist ideology, you won't find too many immigrants and local ruffians at the Gaelscoil.”

Carey, Sarah. (2008). ‘Gaelscoil parents want to have their cake and eat it.’ *The Irish Times*, 24 December

Donaill O'Conaill can't understand the accusation of elitism (...) 'We are a body that accepts all kids from all backgrounds. We absolutely reject the suggestion that we are exclusive. We have schools in Ballymun in Dublin, South Hill in Limerick and in every county in Ireland. Not one of our schools, at primary or secondary level, is fee-paying. We accept every child, regardless of his or her cultural or social background. It's mischievous to suggest that we are cherry-picking.'

quote from "The rise of the gaelscoil - is this the new playground of the elite?" by Louise Holden in *The Irish Times*, 17 April 2007

“Irish-medium education is
for the middle classes”
(n=212)

Agree: 6%

Disagree: 87%

No opinion: 7%

Reasons why Gaelscoileanna are not elitist

| Reasons | Total (%)* |
|---|------------|
| Good social mix | 45 |
| Open door policy | 10 |
| Underfunded and accommodated in prefabs | 10 |
| Gaelscoil located in a working-class area | 10 |
| Non-fee paying | 7.5 |
| Choice based on the provision of a good education not on social grounds | 5 |
| Gaelscoil located in a middle-class area therefore no more elitist than other local schools | 2.5 |
| A large number of parents are former gaelscoil pupils | 2.5 |
| No fewer foreign nationals attending than in other local schools | 2.5 |

* These are exclusive and do not total 100% as a few parents gave several reasons.

Parents' view on the reasons for the perception that Gaelscoileanna are elitist

| Reasons | Total (%)* |
|---|------------|
| Gaelscoileanna may be elitist in some parts of Dublin due to their location in middle-class areas | 31 |
| Parents need to be committed and educated to be able to help their child through his/her education in Irish, which is sometimes associated with being from a certain social class | 23 |
| Gaelscoileanna are viewed as schools with smaller classes and/or with no foreign nationals attending the school | 23 |
| Gaelscoileanna are viewed as very good schools | 15 |
| Some schools teach “pure” Irish and are opposed to letting the language evolve | 7.5 |

* These are exclusive and do not total 100% as a few parents gave several reasons.

“Not only will your child be surrounded by mostly middle-class children and get 10 per cent bonus, but he or she will also be likely to have smaller classes, aiding performance in other subjects.”

Holmquist, Kate. (2008). “Language of educational apartheid”, *The Irish Times*, 9 December.