



Sr Annette in the COBET Street Children Project computer room, which she set up as part of a three-year accelerated primary school programme to teenagers and children who have never accessed school.

and running, the government take them over and fund them from then on," she adds.

Éilis shot a video to show the students and supporters the impact their donations have made - as well as offering an insight into daily life at a bustling school.

Even with a large campus, a student body of 3,000 means that not all pupils have a classroom; the pre-schoolers learn outside while their teacher corrects their work under the shade of a tree.

The exam class too has school desks in the open air, shaded under a corpse of trees as the pupils study for their big test.

Éilis describes Sr Annette as an inspiration - and clearly the Kilconnell nun who is now the Director of Holy Union Sisters Debrabant High School in Mbagala is a woman of influence in the country she has adopted as home.

She first arrived in Tanzania in September 1983 and she has been to the forefront of education development there ever since.

"There was a Bishop in Moshi Diocese who was interested in education so he applied to our congregation in Ireland for sisters who could come and help improve the standard of education in catholic schools," she explained recent to a local newspaper,



Sr. Annette Farrell addressing the students at Debrabant Secondary School, joined by Éilis Treacy last summer when she handed over footballs and basketballs to the students, donated by Galwegians Padraig and Barbara Smyth.



Sr. Annette Farrell (left) and Eyrecourt NS Principal Éilis Treacy with computer teacher Rodney and Liza, Head teacher of COBET.



Éilis Treacy with fellow mentors at the first Coderdojo teachers Paulina and Equillax, and volunteer Nelson.

the Citizen.

"So I started working at some of the diocese institutions, which later came to be among the best performing schools in the country," she adds.

For all of her time away from home she clearly hasn't forgotten her roots; Sr Annette photographed for the paper wearing a tee-shirt from Galway!

Assisted by Éilis Treacy in August 2016, she was the local driving force behind Africa Code Week, with the help of the Galway Education Centre's Brendan Smith, Bernard Kirk and Nuala Dalton, who spent the first week of June in Dar Es Salaam where Sr Annette's secondary school hosted

two days of 'train the trainer' sessions.

Sr Annette set up the COBET Street Children Project computer room, as part of a three-year accelerated primary school programme for teenagers and children who have never accessed school.

"She decided to install electricity and purchase 20 computers to give these children an extra chance for when they integrate into the government school for Form 4," explained Éilis.

"This computer room opened in July 2016 and I worked with Rodney - the computer teacher employed by the Holy Union Sisters - to set up a programme teaching basic computer

skills to the pupils.

"Many of these pupils - who were all between eight and 16 - had never touched a computer, TV or any type of electronic device," she added.

And that is the sort of lateral thinking that has earned her such widespread respect, prompting the Citizen to ask her for her views on the future of education in that country.

"The country's education sector is growing in quantity but not universally improving in quality. This is due to the fact that there are a lot of students but not sufficient planning and investment," she says.

"For example, you have one teacher doing the work of three. This is not uncommon, go to any school and you will see for yourself. We were hoping that schools would get more teachers, but that is not the case," she adds.

Sr Annette is particularly critical of the 'one size fits all' approach to education; she favours a version of the Irish system of Higher and Ordinary Level so that pupils can achieve their respective potential.

"We have children who have no ability in mathematics and no interest are forced to do the same exam like their counterparts brilliant in the subject. It's like every child who gets into secondary school is preparing to go to the university," she explains.

"This one programme could perhaps only suit about ten per cent and neglects the other 90 per cent. I ask myself, what are the curriculum planners doing in Tanzania?"

"We need comparative education system with various programmes to suit different levels of abilities. But in our schools today, there is no regards to drama, arts, music, little regard for sports, and it's all cramming," she adds.

But whatever about the bigger picture, she has helped to ensure that thousands of pupils have the chance of education close to home, not having to walk over an hour each morning and evening.

It's all thanks to the vision of an Irish nun, the enthusiasm of her brother-in-law and his pupils - complemented ever since by generous Confirmation classes and teachers who have all done their bit to share the gift of education across the continents.