



MAKING EDUCATION AN ELECTION ISSUE

Ahead of the general election, TUI posed a series of questions to seven political parties – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, The Green Party, The Labour Party, People Before Profit, Sinn Féin and The Social Democrats.

Responses were received from six parties and these are set out below.

GENERAL ELECTION 2020



Does your party commit to elimination, before the end of 2020, of the unfair, exploitative and inequitable discrimination that sees those employed since January 2011 being paid a significantly lower rate than their colleagues for carrying out the same work?



The ongoing issue of pay inequality for new entrants to the teaching profession has resulted in a recruitment and retention crisis for teachers and there are also major difficulties for schools in securing substitute teachers when required. Morale within schools is continuing to fall as more and more young people are entering the teaching profession on reduced wages.

Fianna Fáil has consistently raised the issue of pay inequality for teachers. Throughout the last Dáil term, some progress was made, but further action is required.

We are committed to the establishment of a pathway towards an end to pay inequality as part of our steps towards a new public service pay agreement in 2020.



For Fine Gael addressing the issue of the difference in pay for post 2010 entrants is unfinished business. We will resolve this in the context of the upcoming negotiations on a future pay deal. We have committed in our manifesto to negotiating a new public pay deal and to commencing it in January 2021. Unlike other parties we have made provision for this within our manifesto costings ring-fencing €2 billion from 2021 to 2025 for a new public pay deal.

We also want to reduce the tax burden on low and middle income earners by both raising the USC exemption threshold from €13,000 to €20,000 and increasing the point at which an individual hits the higher tax rate from €35,300 to €50,000.



The Green Party strongly believes in the principle of equal pay for equal work, and would eliminate pay inequality for all teachers who joined the workforce after 2010. We recognise that teachers, regardless of when they entered the profession, are highly skilled and specialised classroom practitioners trusted on a daily basis with huge and far-reaching responsibilities. Accordingly, a teacher should not be subject to lesser pay purely on the basis of when they began teaching. We would legislate to amend existing frameworks to ensure that this pay-scale inequality is addressed.



Labour will end the two-tier pay system for teachers and school secretaries.



YES. PBP is fully committed to pay equality and will support trade unions, in whatever way we can, in advancing the cause of pay equality.



The Social Democrats are committed to ending pay inequality for LPT's and seek such changes to be introduced as soon as possible.



Does your party commit to a restoration of funding to Institutes of Technology/Technological University and an urgent reduction in the student/academic staff ratio in third level institutions from the current high of 21:1 to, as a starting point, the OECD average of 16:1?



Competing priorities mean that higher education is often marginalised, and not given the focus it needs to develop and improve. Fianna Fáil is committed to ending this through the establishment of a Department of Higher Education and Research to drive the changes needed to ensure that our higher education system delivers on its potential. Through this Department, we are committed to building a new partnership with our higher education institutions which ends the under-resourcing of the sector.

Fianna Fáil is also committed to addressing the long-standing underfunding of our higher education sector. Fianna Fáil have committed to providing an additional €100 million per year to address the long-standing underinvestment in higher education.



Between 2016 and 2020 planned investment in higher education has increased by 25% to €1.88 billion. A €300 million Human Capital Initiative has been established and Project Ireland 2040 will invest over €500 million in upgrading campuses.

Last year the first Technological University was established and five more TUs will be established and €90 million has been provided to support this.

In our manifesto we have committed to invest further in higher education including earmarking money from the National Training Fund as well as making more exchequer funding available. On the basis of European Commission research underway a long-term funding model will be established. This will deliver more student places, good student experiences and prepare graduates for the future, improved student/staff ratios are part of that.



The Green Party believes in an education system to support all learners at all levels to meaningfully and creatively engage with the world. This cannot endure in a situation where lecturing conditions are not conducive for either lecturers or students, and we would increase investment to improve quality and ensure staff numbers are adequate to meet increasing enrolment numbers.



Labour will support the development of Technological Universities and deliver the long-awaited Technological University of the South-East.

We will work to progressively and sustainably reduce student:staff ratios to European norms.



YES. PBP has members, students and lecturers, across higher education who have reported on the effects of the funding crisis. PBP is well aware of the role of IoTs/TUs in widening access to education for students traditionally excluded from higher education. We are aware that such students need all the support they can get and that their success in higher education requires small class sizes which allow for real interaction with lecturers and focused support for students. The development of critical thinking among students requires that they have opportunities to discuss and debate, Small class sizes are essential to allow this.



The Social Democrats are committed to increasing funding for Institutes of Technology and Technological Universities and will engage with the TUI and other stakeholders on specific staffing ratios. Our manifesto proposes to increase the national Research & Development budget to 2.5% of GNP, including increasing university staff and investment in 'basic' research to balance applied research.



Does your party agree to lift the moratorium on the filling of posts of responsibility and to restore guidance counselling provision to its pre-2012 levels in the interests of student welfare and pastoral care?



Fianna Fáil has consistently driven the restoration of guidance counselling posts and will continue to do so. As part of the negotiations for budgets delivered under confidence and supply, Fianna Fáil will continue to deliver expansions to post in order to deliver an additional 100 posts.



Fine Gael understands the important and positive role that schools and school staff can play in the lives of children and young people. We have prioritised wellbeing in our schools. 500 guidance posts have been restored in recent years and we are working on the recommendations of the Independent Review of Career Guidance Tools and Information published last year.

In recent years a number of posts of responsibility have been restored as part of an agreed leadership model to support schools. In our manifesto we recognise the vital role played by school leaders and commit to supporting them.



The Green Party supports restoring the guidance counselling provision in second level schools, and view this as a vital aspect of creating a holistic, supportive environment for students on an ongoing basis as well as in instances of crisis.



Yes, Labour will work to achieve this as soon as possible.



YES. PBP is well aware of the effect these cuts have had on the running of schools. It makes no sense that Guidance provision should be cut given the concerns about the mental health of young people and the difficulties they have in making informed career choices post secondary education. Young people need all the support they can get so we would immediately reverse these cuts.



The Social Democrats will seek the lifting of the moratorium on posts of responsibility and the restoration of guidance counselling provision to pre-2012 levels so that all post-primary schools have a guidance counsellor.



Does your party agree to engage fully with TUI to ensure that further education, adult and community education is secured as a properly staffed and properly funded system established and protected for the public good, and further ensure that those employed in this sector are valued in the same manner as other public sector educationalists?



Fianna Fáil is committed to working with representatives of workers to support the development for further education.



We understand the importance of further and adult education and have outlined in our manifesto details of our intention to focus on and support lifelong learning while also expanding further education through growing the number and range of apprenticeships and traineeships.

We appreciate the hard work and dedication of those working in further and adult education and recognise the importance of staff and educationalists having appropriate career structures. Aspects of this issue have been referred to the Labour Court for consideration and a hearing is awaited but we hope this matter can be resolved in the near future and a positive outcome achieved



The Green Party supports lifelong learning as a public good, and recognises the importance of further education to prepare students for the society and economy of the future. This would naturally require appropriate levels of funding and valuing of employees in this sector.



Yes, Labour will engage with the TUI to ensure further education, adult and community education is sufficiently funded and staffed. We will ensure equality of employment rights and conditions for educators in further education, adult and community education.



YES. PBP is aware that adult education and the further education sectors have been treated as the Cinderella's of Irish education. They provide invaluable resources for life long learning and routes into higher education for those traditionally excluded. These sectors should be funded properly with proper rates of pay. Those in further education should be treated as lecturers as the work they perform is on a par with higher education.



Yes.