

**Teachers’ Union of Ireland**

**Submission to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills regarding** ‘**issues relating to recruitment and retention of teachers’ (April 24th, 2018)**

**Introduction**

# TUI represents teachers and lecturers (17,000+) employed by Education and Training Boards (ETBs), Community and Comprehensive (C&C) schools, Voluntary Secondary schools and the Institutes of Technology.

The TUI would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to make a submission on ‘**issues relating to recruitment and retention of teachers’**.

Ireland has an internationally acknowledged, high-performing education system. The OECD (2015) has made clear that an education system is only as good as its teachers. However, our education system is being undermined by a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention. The crisis has been documented in separate research carried out by the TUI’s Principals and Deputy Principals’ Association, a number of management bodies and national authorities and agencies - the Post Graduate Applications Centre (PAC), the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). It has also been referenced on a number of occasions by the Minister for Education and Skills and by the Teaching Council. Unless addressed properly, the scale of the crisis will increase further in the coming years as the number of students in second-level rises by approximately seventy thousand by 2025.

The research clearly indicates that the crisis has emerged since discriminatory pay scales were introduced in 2011 and was exacerbated both by cessation of payment of qualifications allowances in 2012 and the increase from one to two years in the duration of the post-primary teacher training qualification – the Professional Master of Education (PME) from 2013. The single most important element of any viable solution to the crisis is the elimination of pay discrimination against new and recent entrants to the profession. For post-primary teachers that involves:

* Removal of the two additional points on the teachers’ salary scale for those who entered the profession on or after 1 January 2011
* Restoration of the teacher training qualification (HDip/PME Allowance) and
* Reinstatement of incremental recognition for pre-service training

In September 2016, there was explicit recognition that pay is at the heart of the problem, when the Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI), the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO), the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) reached an Agreement to incorporate the value of the Honours Primary Degree allowance into the salary scale for teachers appointed since 2011 – one of the allowances that had been withdrawn in 2012. This was recognised as an interim measure; part of an ongoing process towards pay equality.

The key points made in the TUI submission are that:

* the cuts to pay and conditions inflicted on new entrants in 2011 and exacerbated by further cuts in 2012, have had the effect of sharply reducing the attractiveness of teaching as a profession with the result that the number of applicants for initial teacher education has dropped dramatically. The majority of applications for post-primary teaching are processed via PAC. Since 2011, there has been an alarming and unprecedented decline of 62% in applications. The output of graduates from these programmes has also declined by 27%.
* those same cuts have led to a rapid rise in the number of recently qualified teachers emigrating. Between 2008 and 2014, the emigration rate of recently qualified post-primary teachers increased steadily, from 4% in 2008 to 18%-21% in 2014. At a recent recruitment fair for soon-to-be qualified teachers in an Irish university, there were forty-two stands. Thirty-six of those stands were hosted by international recruitment agencies or groups of schools.
* service to students in schools is suffering severe disruption because of timetable changes and restrictions necessitated by the lack of qualified teachers, including teachers for substitution (with a resultant fracturing of delivery and absence of continuity for students)
* students are losing out on educational opportunities both inside and outside of school
* the absence of subject specialist teachers to cover for colleagues who are engaged in work for agencies related to the DES such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the State Examinations Commission (SEC), the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Special Education Support Service (SESS) and Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT)
* In many instances, schools cannot get teachers of Irish, Maths or Home Economics. However, the crisis is not restricted to a small number of subject areas; it is affecting a large and growing number of subjects
* There are more attractive opportunities in other graduate entry employments. The HEA (2018) found that graduates in the areas of natural sciences/maths/statistics, ICT, engineering/manufacturing/construction, and health/welfare are in a position to earn considerably more in other graduate entry employments than they would in teaching
* Short-term patches/fixes have failed in other jurisdictions. They have been suggested here such as restrictions on career breaks or changing the quantum of hours that a person on career break can teach. They will delay rather than provide a solution
* There are worrying trends in the age profile of the teaching profession. The average age of post-primary teachers is 41.1. Over 15% of teachers are over the age of 55 but only 7% are under the age of 25. The average age on first employment as a post-primary teacher, (generally on part-time hours in a temporary position) is now over 26 years.

**The Solution**

It is clear that the solution to the teacher supply crisis lies in a comprehensive plan for the abolition of discriminatory pay rates for new entrants. Stop-gap and ill-thought-out measures will not suffice.

**References**

HEA (2018), *What Do Graduates Do? The class of 2016*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority

OECD (2015), *Teachers Matter: Attracting, developing and retaining teachers*, Paris: OECD Publishing

Teaching Council (2017), *Striking the Balance*, Maynooth: Teaching Council