

**Green Party Response to Call for consultation  
Department of Education and Skills  
Statement of Strategy 2016-2018**

1. Prioritising Early Years
2. Tackling Disadvantage
3. Diversity and Choice for Parents
4. Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools
5. Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students
6. Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities
7. Special Needs Education
8. Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future

## **How Well does the Education service meet the Needs of children and students?**

We welcome the target of improving teacher-pupil ratios. We would like to see this linked to demonstrated increased opportunities for innovative teaching. The goal of improving pupil-teacher ratio should not simply be that a given class of nineteen students now has eighteen in it. The primary goal in reducing the pupil teacher ratio is to enable the more flexible use of alternative teaching experiences, such as one-on-one learning, and enabling small group peer-to-peer learning. These experiences may only represent a small number of hours in a student's learning year, but they can be critical in establishing new patterns of engagement and understanding among students and teachers. They also permit greater time devoted to active learning outside the classroom and school, where higher levels of student supervision are required and improve student and teacher motivation.

In the submissions below we have more detailed proposals to improve, develop and protect the quality of our education service.

### **1 Prioritising early years**

After rapid expansion in the provision of pre-school facilities, staff training and facility management are less than perfect. There is a need to **comprehensively**

**review pre-school childcare provision** across families, childcare, and creches. This will assess how parents can take an increased role in the management of pre-school facilities of all kinds, to ensure greater openness and better care. It should also investigate improving availability of more alternative child-care options in each geographic area: an increase in choice for parents can help drive better standards. There is a need to review how to effectively implement **stronger regulation of this sector.**

### **Pre-Primary to Primary Transition**

Evidence suggests that starting students earlier in 'academic style' education has negative, rather than positive, impacts on long term educational development. Preschool care in Ireland is poorly developed, and children are commencing in primary school very young (40% at age 4). This is in marked contrast to early education elsewhere in Europe. We need to reform this area in two ways. The plan to extend funding for pre-school from one to two years appears good in this respect, allowing more children to join primary school at a later age. Secondly, there is a need to reform the provision of Junior and Senior Infant classes, resourcing it sufficiently to bring it more in line with more flexible pre-school education than with formal schooling.

Progress can be measured in this regard, if needed, by surveys of child development in schools by educational psychologists, rather than by academic tests, which are inappropriate at this stage.

### **Information Flow from Pre-primary to Primary**

There is a need for regulations to enable a smoother transition from pre-school to primary. This will make sure that useful knowledge about an individual child's characteristics and needs will be communicated from the pre-school environment to the primary school. A report on every child needs to be completed on leaving pre-school care.

### **Resilience/mindfulness in Primary Schools**

According to My World survey which was a collaboration between Headstrong and U.C.D., 70% of 12-25 year olds say that with 'one good adult' in their lives they are 'connected, self-confident, future looking and can cope with problems'. One action that can quickly be taken to build on this is a reversal of the decision in Budget 2012 to remove the ex-quota guidance allocation in second level schools. This has led to a reduction of over 51% in the time allocated to guidance counselling services. Cuts to such services reduce the opportunity for young people to have crucial easy access to professionally trained counsellors. Research has shown that one-to-one counselling in schools has been neglected, and counselling has become a reactionary crisis intervention service. The ex-quota guidance provision in second level schools must be restored.

We should formally embrace at the highest level the evidence-based approach to mental wellness as well as treating mental illness. Some of the most vulnerable are vulnerable by virtue of the fact that they simply do not have the toolbox

of skills for coping with the inevitable challenges of life. We need to sow the seeds of mental wellness within our families and our schools.

**The Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health should work together on innovative ways to reduce the incidence of mental illness and in the promotion of happiness and mental resilience amongst our children.**

According to research 20% of children show symptoms of anxiety. And a recent survey by IPPN revealed that family issues, neglect and mental health difficulties are proving to be the greatest challenges faced by schools. The same survey indicated that 3 in every 4 principals feel inadequately trained to deal with such problems as they arise. Schools in different parts of the country are doing different things (Roots of Empathy programme, PAWS BE, to name but a few) but what is really required is a more **standardised approach** where all schools receive the same support and resources and where such excellent initiatives are formally adopted rather than squeezed into a very busy school academic year. School based counselling is the norm in many countries around the world. **At primary level we should explore the potential of providing school-based counsellors** to help with these problems as they develop (as in 32 of 50 states of US, 3 provinces of 10 in Canada and 1 in 6 states in Australia).

We need to explore the feasibility of providing such counsellors in schools in this country too.

We need to **establish research teams, design resilience building programmes, train teachers and create new posts for specialist teachers in this area.**

In some secondary schools we have excellent work taking place (i.e. Headstrong, Jigsaw) where vulnerable teenagers are targeted and their psychological needs addressed accordingly. Unfortunately, such programmes are sporadic and not available in every region. These programmes/initiatives must be further developed nationwide and properly funded. We need to consider designing and making similar initiatives available to primary school children. Alongside the full implementation of Vision for Change we need a Vision for Sustaining Mental Wellness

Research is emphatic about the benefits of mindfulness in alleviating symptoms of mental illness. Innovative and overly stretched teachers are teaching its practice in some of our schools. In many countries it has been integrated within their educational systems because of its potential to reduce vulnerability to mental illness. In the UK over four hundred secondary schools offer mindfulness meditation programmes. The Department of Education there has designated schools as pioneer schools for mindfulness teaching and have invested over £1m to help other schools benefit too. A more uniformed and formal approach is key where we move away from where mindfulness is squeezed into the day through the generosity of a teacher (who sought and paid for his or her own training) to a system that trains all teachers and supports all schools. Our young people's sense of wellbeing should be at the heart of education.

## Tackling disadvantage.

We strongly welcome the goal of tackling educational disadvantage, although the proposed changes described in the programme to alter current practise appear unclear. The one area that clear policy changes can make big strides is in the greater investment in Further Education, which disproportionately benefits disadvantaged communities, relative to other Third Level education provisions.

Lower access to and uptake of post-secondary education among those from disadvantaged communities needs to be tackled by **increased structured investment in the Further Education sector**. The OECD 2013 “Education at a Glance” report highlights the relationship between low youth unemployment in countries that adopt youth education within workplace-based formal apprenticeship training. We need to roll out **more extensive use of apprenticeship based training approaches** for 15-20 year olds such as that adopted in Germany. However, compared to other countries, we have less experience of such an apprenticeship based training culture in Ireland. Accordingly, we need to pilot investment in training programmes for workplace trainers, led by practitioners from companies with strong experience in this area. We need to support the recommendations of the McIver Report (2004) on Further Education to adequately resource this area. We need to provide stronger supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing FE educational routes. We need to maintain and develop a full range of courses across the sector, from technical to professional to arts education. **We need to reverse the recent government financial and structural downgrading of Further Education**, which effectively seek to replace the broader educational role to a more limited workforce training role. We need to:

- Lift the cap on student numbers for Further Education centres.
- Reverse changes to the Pupil Teacher Ratio that will allow specialist courses to be maintained with adequate teaching staff.
- Reverse cuts to guidance support.
- The current application of “section 30” regulations to Further Education sector is inappropriate. We need to ensure distinct registration of Further Education teaching by the Teaching Council or another body, including recognition of industry experience in evaluating teacher qualifications.

## Diversity and Choice for Parents

WE think that the programme for government’s proposals to continue as usual with faith based enrolment and gradual divestment fails to recognise that changes to patronage are not happening, because of majority parental choice in communities, that fails to meet the needs of minorities. Accordingly we believe that the priorities need now to shift to making every school partly funded by the state to be equally welcoming to all prospective students, as a way of addressing

a key minority concern, of lack of access to local schools in certain areas where demand exceeds supply.

The Green Party proposes very simply that no child should be discriminated on entry to a school receiving state funding, on the basis of religion, race, or special needs:

All schools receiving any state funding should be fair, transparent and inclusive in their policies and practices for entrance and expulsion of students. A key goal is to end the cherry-picking of students by certain schools. In the tradition of comprehensive and community schools, they should proactively welcome children of diverse characteristics, needs and abilities, cultures and socio-economic groups<sup>1</sup>.

A strong **admissions policy** aims to balance the needs of the environment, as well as the diverse needs of both individual students and communities. Long-term development of housing and education provision/admission policies will aim to minimise travel costs for students, parents and the community. Travel costs represent ecological costs, financial costs, and time costs. Minimising these costs is most easily achieved when everyone goes to the nearest school.

However, the Green Party supports the element of choice in the Irish school system, where students can apply to schools with an ethos that suits them. The varied kinds of ethos found in Irish schools is one of the strengths of the educational system. However, **we believe there should be an end to the practice where schools can discriminate against pupils in the admissions process, on the basis of religion, or of special educational needs.** The main determinants of who should be admitted should be the geographic range (to be established by each school in consultation with the department of education), a preference for students if an older sibling has previously attended, and finally a lottery system based on all the applications received before a certain date. While we recognize the concerns of certain minority religions regarding the inability of students to attend a school of their own ethos in certain circumstances, we consider that the rights of individual children to an education in a nearby school (which is mainly funded by all taxpayers, regardless of their religion), is paramount.

These two potentially conflicting needs can be met by encouraging students to attend schools nearer their homes and keeping religious activities of schools to after (or before) the core school day. This may for example potentially include simultaneous extra-curricular classes from different religious groups taking place alongside each other within the same school buildings. This change in approach will better enable the inclusion of the currently greater religious diversity in Ireland, and help reduce cultural isolation among different groups of children of diverse faiths and of no faith. This change in religious education may impact on the role that religious bodies wish to maintain in particular schools. Accordingly, we recommend continuing the work of the Advisory body on Patronage and Pluralism that represents patron bodies and parents. We would suggest expanding its remit to ensure that all schools are welcoming and inclusive, whilst still respecting their particular ethos. In particular there should

---

<sup>1</sup> A 2020 VISION FOR EDUCATION FÍS DON OIDEACHAS 2020 Post-Primary Education Forum (2013) The Post-Primary Education Forum (PPEF) is an umbrella group comprising representation from parents, trade unions, school leaders and management bodies involved in the post- primary education sector in Ireland.

be an ambition to work to prevent any pupil or group of pupils being separated from their peers during the school day based on their religious or cultural background. During core school hours there should be non-denominational instruction on morals, ethics and religions. This approach would provide all pupils in Irish schools with an education about a wide range of thought systems and cultures.

## Promoting excellence and innovation

We welcome the proposal for improved teacher training. The Green Party has outlined the following proposals to really invest seriously in upskilling and supporting our teaching workforce:

We welcome educational reform including that of the Junior Cycle, but careful attention needs to be paid to ensure that **teachers are properly trained and all schools properly resourced**, and the extra time required to develop teaching materials and lesson plans is factored into the roll-out plan. Without this extra investment, the reform will fail our students, since reform is futile unless resources to back it up are fully implemented and equality of education guaranteed. Training programmes for teachers in how to implement **innovative teaching practices** including peer-to-peer learning, more effective group learning, develop Junior Cycle short courses and target online learning skills should be funded by the Department. These methods are particularly well suited to ICT (information and communication technology) training and ICT based learning, where teachers need to facilitate the learning of constantly changing technology, without necessarily having learned it ahead of their students. The Department needs to ensure that teachers have received innovative ICT training to deliver the reformed Junior Cert in a confident and effective manner.

The system of **training and continuing professional development for teachers** after qualification should be reviewed and improved.

This needs to include:

- A survey of current professional courses available at primary and secondary level.
- Placements in schools identified as having 'very good' or 'excellent' teaching by the inspectorate should be part of ongoing teacher training as a cost effective, practical and contextual method of provision.
- Mentoring of trainee teachers ( similar to Droichead programme) by existing teachers at second level, similar to primary level mentoring, as called for in the Post Primary Education Forum "A 2020 Vision for Education" document
- Regular In-service training available for Transition Year teaching, since there is no training available, and the standard of delivery of this year varies markedly amongst teachers and schools.

- A fully resourced training in-service for the reformed Junior Cycle curriculum.
- Further training supports in (i) Special Education Needs (SEN) including the specific requirements to assist exceptionally able children, including the Special Education Support Services (SESS) (ii) team teaching, peer learning and project learning methods (iii) Nationwide ICT training for teachers under the National Centre for Technology in Education, so that ALL teachers have developed ICT skills relevant to teaching. The use of ICT in supporting those with Additional Educational Needs should be a component of all ICT training (iv) Further training supports in the teaching of English as a second language in mainstream classes (v) training for senior management in schools allied with probationary periods for senior managers.
- Ensure the provision and delivery of training for teachers on how to incorporate mental resilience and emotional awareness into their education programmes/classes and teach the skills of mental resilience and recognition of emotional states to their students.

**A likely predictor of educational success is a motivated teaching workforce,** and increased autonomy and responsibility for teachers will motivate them<sup>2</sup>. Motivated teachers can lead to motivated students. There should be a review of the curricular change to ensure that it is **increasing the autonomy of teachers** to adapt the learning environment both to their own teaching strengths and the aptitudes of their students. We recognise that teachers need support at a time of radical reform of the system alongside an increase in workload, including IT facilities for the teachers themselves and time for class preparation. The status of teaching in the community could be improved by providing supports (including fee supports) for teachers seeking more extensive further education at Masters or PhD level, and other forms of further study. Appointments to posts of responsibility should not be based on seniority but on experience, qualifications, and skills, including previous experience working in the private sector. Increasing the chances of promotion based on performance will increase teacher motivation. Closer attention should be paid to the suitability of entrants into the teaching profession. All teachers applying to enter teacher training or applying for teaching positions should have aptitude assessment in a live classroom setting. This will help determine their suitability for a teaching career. **Stress support/management for teachers should be introduced. Each school should be required to provide time and resources to regularly review and implement changes of practice to help teachers deal with stress, burn-out, and other mental health issues. Each school should set aside one staff day per academic year dedicated to the teachers' wellbeing and development of mindfulness/resilience skills for themselves.**

---

<sup>2</sup> Karabenick, S. A., & Conley, A. (2011). Teacher Motivation for Professional Development. Math and Science Partnership - Motivation Assessment Program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109; EEJ Thoonen, PJC Slegers, FJ Oort, THD Peetsma, FP Geijsell (2011) How to Improve Teaching Practices: The Role of Teacher Motivation, Organizational Factors, and Leadership Practices *Educational Administration Quarterly* 47: 496-536

**Teachers entering since 2011 will need to be restored to salary levels equivalent to those of pre-2011 entrants, otherwise long term disillusion, dissatisfaction and despair at not being valued will undermine and corrode the emerging generation of teachers.**

**Far less homework at primary level will benefit educational outcomes.**

The extensive use of homework in some primary schools is not based on any evidence that it is valuable at this age<sup>3</sup>. Too much homework too young may build a culture of fear, failure and boredom that damages future academic performance. Available evidence provides no indication that homework in primary school improves grades in tests, and some indication that it may actually reduce academic performance if used more than once a month per core subject<sup>4</sup>. The Department of Education should **seek to protect childhood** as a place **for exploration, play and discovery**. Primary school homework activities should centre on developing independence and creativity. We need to act on the 2010 Oireachtas submission proposal of the IPPN (Irish Primary Principal's Network) suggesting that homework in its current form in primary schools should be phased out. There needs to be a systematic review of actual practices in schools informed by the input of teachers, parents and international experts, and implement continued monitoring of actual practice in schools, to maximise benefits to children. Clear guidelines should be defined with age-appropriate and child-appropriate limits. These guidelines will clarify the goals of homework. These include encouraging the engagement of the parents/guardians with the child in more open-ended educational experiences, supported by the school. These guidelines will help parents and teachers to work together to encourage confidence in the growing child.

**Promoting creativity and entrepreneurial capacity in students**

We welcome this goal. The Current reform of Junior Cycle initiated needs to be brought to completion. However, the narrowing of the focus of education in the last few decades by excessive focus on the CAO points system at leaving cert has the exact opposite effect of promoting creativity, limiting teachers and students to focus on doing what is demanded of them by graders in a terminal exam, who are themselves limited by restrictive rules. To promote creativity we need to tackle the Leaving Certificate Culture.

**Leaving Certificate Examination Reform**

Far-reaching changes into the mode of Leaving Certificate assessment need to be introduced, to improve real learning skills rather than a focus on memory recall learning for a specific exam. This should include much greater use of unseen material in the examination process.

Developing critical thinking skills is vital for students to grow into effective citizens and workers. For this reason, we need to pay particular attention to the development of these skills within the Leaving Certificate syllabus. By placing the focus on assessment of critical thinking, we hope that teachers will devise useful

---

<sup>3</sup> Review of Educational Research , 2006, 76:1-62

<sup>4</sup> Homework and Attainment in Primary Schools (1999) British Educational Research Journal, 25, 323-341



approaches to teaching critical thinking, that are appropriate to their own students. To support this, we need to increase training in the teaching of critical skills.

There needs to be a thorough review of each Leaving Certificate subject examination. This will quantify how much each subject exam is assessing varied student skills (memory, lateral thinking, logical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, environmental awareness, visual, musical skills, critical thinking skills, independent project work). This review can form the basis for a reform and improvement of the examinations to provide a broader assessment of skills, and to communicate that information on different skills as part of the examination results. Changing assessment will allow teachers to broaden the range of teaching they can deliver to students. The benefits of a staggered examination of the Leaving Certificate over the final year should be reviewed, with 80% of exam results coming on-stream before students leave school. This would allow better counselling in choice of course prior to leaving school, informed by what grades students are likely to achieve. Poor choice of third level subjects represents a costly waste of taxpayers' money. The ex quota guidance allocation needs to be restored to ensure the support of students in their decision-making and the support they need in time of need..

A second approach to tackling the excessive focus on the points system for third level entry is to further diversify the existing entry mechanisms.

The Irish Universities Association has stated that, contrary to the often-stated opinion that the leaving certificate is currently fair, that it "promotes significant inequity through the capacity of the more advantaged to game the system."<sup>5</sup> There is a need to transform third level entry so that the competitive points race is greatly diminished, allowing deeper second level learning to occur with less emphasis on exam technique. This can be achieved in three ways.

(1) The various changes proposed by the Irish Universities Association to reform entry will be piloted in third level colleges and results of these pilot studies will inform further changes to entry. In addition to the proposals they suggested, we will investigate whether more specific matching of examined subjects to chosen courses would allow better matching of skills to courses, as is common in the UK and other education systems, which suffer less from the points race phenomenon, since the interchangeability of points across subjects creates a false sense in students' minds that very different learning experiences are somehow equal.

(2) Third level entry reform will markedly increase the proportion of students entering by non-standard routes.

(3) We suggest channeling entry into fewer more generalist courses, enabling students to make decisions after entry into college, and to compete at college level for places on courses with more highly restricted numbers. Thus, students will complete an initial general course semester or year at third level prior to entering into highly competitive courses, with progress to the more competitive courses dependent on third level assessment within the colleges themselves. This alternative approach is intended to improve course choices for students and

---

<sup>5</sup> The IUA (Irish Universities Association) August 2012 report on "Reform of Entry to University".

allow better selection of appropriate students, applying third level selection criteria for third level courses.

Progress can be measured over time by a gradual shift away from memory work in exams (a useful skill, but only one among many) towards a variety of skills.

## **Making better use of educational assets in communities.**

We welcome the call for more diverse use of school buildings at primary and third level. In addition, we need the locally dispersed third level education systems to intersect more seamlessly with the nationally distributed systems, allowing students to move more easily from a course started near home to transition to one further away, matching their specialist interests. This helps reduce pressures on accommodation costs and encourages more students to commence studies.

The Green Party propose as follows: A reform of funding models to benefit student access and mobility. In essence, under this approach, the state funding follows the student, not the institution. We suggest structuring and investing in the Further Education sector, spanning post-Junior Certificate stage to lifelong learning. There should be a reform of both the Further Education and Third Level sectors to allow greater mobility between relevant courses, so that a student starting after school in a local college may naturally transition at a later stage to carry forward credits to a more specialised centre elsewhere. The current HEA approach of trying to engineer strategic alliances among nearby Irish institutions offers little benefit to the students in those institutions, and may simply add layers of bureaucracy. Instead, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) should negotiate with third level institutes to set and monitor yearly targets for increased mobility, as judged by students transferring courses, and by students taking modules in other institutions. This pressure for improved mobility within the Irish third level system will prepare it to take an active part in the complex future of world class higher education, involving active international strategic alliances and collaborations between institutions. This mobility can be actively monitored by third level institutions compiling reports of student mobility into and out of their institutions. Priority outcome: students are more empowered to initiate studies in one geographic area and complete them in another.

## **Special needs**

We welcome the programme's focus on Special Needs, which needs urgent attention but respectfully suggest that no one specific special educational need should have been namechecked in the Programme for Government as all special educational needs should be treated equally. **Teaching Resource Hours** and the role of **Special Needs Assistants** in schools should be valued and protected.. All **Special Needs** Assistants must have a recognised appropriate qualification. We support strongly maintaining and improving supports for students with special

educational needs. We suggest using school expertise, in conjunction with parents, in allocating student access to learning supports. This will reduce over-reliance on costly assessments (National Education Psychological Service) and give more flexibility to schools. There should be a systematic review of the needs and welfare of students with special needs to create and ensure an integrated approach across our health and education systems.

## Skills Needs of the Future

### Primary level

See our comments above in relation to creativity in students to promote varied student skills (memory, lateral thinking, logical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, environmental awareness, visual, musical skills, critical thinking skills, independent project work, physical education). This broadening of education prepares students better for the future than excessive targeting of student training to market need. However, regardless of market need, it is useful as citizens to have some appreciation of certain skills, important in modern societies, and the Green Party seek to address the following at primary level:

- **ICT skills**, including but not limited to creative programming skills and internet research skills. This will be linked to upgrading ICT facilities in many schools, and integrated with expansion of the teaching of mathematics skills.
- **Greater physical activity** during the school week. We will further promote and reward schools for participating in the existing programmes to encourage movement such as the Active school flag, Fitness weeks, Community Health Weeks and for providing students with opportunities to be active - before, after and during the school day. Investment in schools which do not currently have proper indoor PE facilities needs to be prioritised to ensure that all students the facilities necessary to support this initiative. While fitness is not the primary responsibility of the schools, they need to play their part in helping children build lifelong patterns of physical activity to protect their health and reduce where possible the increase in childhood obesity.
- At Post Primary level we welcome the commitment in the programme for Government to introduce P.E. as a Leaving Cert subject but in order to ensure equality we recommend that the Department needs to identify the post primary schools which do not have P.E. Halls or access to community facilities and therefore would not be in a position to offer this subject to students. These schools should then be prioritised for provision of a PE Hall
- **Scientific enquiry skills**: observation and experimentation, primarily in the natural world, thus developing their scientific skills, numeracy skills, and environmental awareness.

- **Art, music and drama skills:** promoting creativity and confidence that are the basis of future academic performance.
- **English oral language skills:** Competence in oral language is the basis of literacy and success in learning.

Rather than rigidly giving each subject or skill a particular time allocation in each year, and to avoid over-loading teachers with more and more directed curricula to complete, school principals should devise a teaching plan that will enable flexibility for teachers with particular specialisations to deliver more material on those subjects in a year when the students are in their class.

### **Third level**

Third level needs more money. Increased funding is needed to cope with projected increased demand. Funding per student in Irish higher education is 30 per cent below UK levels (Economic and Social Research Institute, A Study of Future Demand for Higher Education in Ireland, 2012). Thus, the higher education system is providing good value for money. However, more money is needed, since that report also estimates that the number of students joining third level will increase in the next decade, and there are areas where improving the quality of the educational provision needs further investment. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (“Hunt report”) highlights that projected numbers of new entrants will rise to almost 50,000 students in 2015, and to almost 65,000 in 2025. Expensive fees in most of the UK will further accelerate the decline in the number of Irish students studying in the UK, while increasing pressure of UK students seeking to study in Ireland. Substantial additional funding will be needed just to keep up with the predicted growth in enrolment.

The Green Party are against raising student fees beyond the existing levels and therefore extra funding will have to be found from exchequer funding and taxation. If we do not invest, the decline of the third level system will impact on our economy’s long term prospects.

### **Increase in PhD Graduates.**

PhD level research helps drive innovation and economic growth. Companies are attracted to countries that invest in this level of training<sup>6</sup>. The proportion of those educated to PhD level in Ireland is only at OECD average, well below that of Germany. The Green Party proposes the following:

Increasing the proportion of the research budget to support quality training at research MSc and PhD levels, with a goal of increasing the number of graduating PhDs in 2020 by 20% versus 2012 levels. More ambitious targets should be set out for third level institutes in attracting EU and other non-exchequer research funding to Ireland, with greater supports for third level institutes that succeed in this. Company tax incentives should be revised to ensure that a greater proportion of the tax credits for research currently benefiting Irish industry are going into increased research training of company staff. This will include graduate research MSc and PhD level training. This will up-skill the research

---

<sup>6</sup> [Halse C.](#), Mowbray S (2011) Editorial: the impact of the doctorate. *Studies in higher education*. 36:513-525

capabilities of the Irish workforce and will improve Ireland's long-term competitiveness.

### **Online Education to Expand Education as an Export.**

The Green Party proposes to develop this area. This would build on the economic return of building a strong third level sector attracting students from abroad. Particular emphasis will be on developing distance learning/blended learning approaches that showcase our educational skills via e-learning platforms that attract new students worldwide. This investment will bring new teaching jobs into Ireland that brings income into the country. It will also attract international students to spend periods of study in Ireland. To develop this, Ireland needs to strategically grow the range and quality of courses relying on computer-delivered "e-learning". Online learning (e-learning) is creating a revolution in how people worldwide are gaining new skills and qualifications. We need to strongly position Ireland in this sector, building on our English language environment and educational track record. There is a need to:

- Review the long-term development of e-learning in Universities, Institutes of Technology and Further Education Centres.
- Invest in and **promote** a greater number and variety of **Irish third level e-learning courses**.
- Build Ireland's brand reputation for e-learning and "blended" e-learning/traditional learning, by regularly assessing course quality.
- Promote Irish e-learning offerings abroad using combined marketing teams from different colleges.
- A proportion of this programme should be dedicated to building online teaching resources appropriate for communities in developing countries that need them most.

### **Further Education** for skills needs of the future:

See above, in relation to proposals around tackling disadvantage, where we describe our proposals in the area of Further Education.