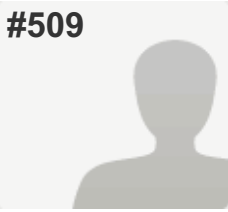


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**PAGE 1: Please complete this consultation paper in respect of your area of interest and/or expertise**


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**PAGE 2****Q4: 1(a) What improvements can be made within existing resources**

The first and essential point that must be made is that the existing level of resources is wholly inadequate to meet the needs of the system and maintain a high quality public education service for learners. The degree of inadequacy has been very significantly exacerbated by the cuts in resourcing and funding applied since 2008 and the steep growth in student numbers at all levels over that same period. The first requirement in logic and in practice is for a significant increase in funding with a view first to repairing and then enhancing the public education system. Therefore, while the TUI offers the following suggestions in terms of fairer and more effective use of existing resources, no inference can or should be drawn that adoption of these suggestions would at all obviate the need for increased resourcing.

What is proposed in the following would, in our view, improve the procedures, the quality and the effectiveness of the public education system.

- As a matter of urgency, measures to eradicate the casualisation that has undermined the teaching/lecturing profession in recent years should be aggressively pursued. In particular, new hours that arise from growth in student numbers and/or retirement of existing staff should be assigned to existing part-time teachers/lecturers. This is logical and fair, would have a very positive impact on the morale of teachers and can be readily effected by revision of existing circular letters (in particular CL 34/2009). Moreover, this would be cost neutral as all such hours would be within the teacher allocation determined by application of the standard metric, the pupil/teacher ratio (PTR). It would, also, be wholly congruent with the avowed aim of the Department, as set out in its current strategy, to have "teaching recognised as a high status profession". As matters stand, teaching is no longer recognised - either by those recently recruited or by undergraduates contemplating career options - as a high status profession, precisely because of the creeping casualisation that has occurred in the past decade. Having teachers in income poverty, as many now are, is bad both for the individual teacher and for the profession.
- Reinstate as standard practice the making of initial appointments on a permanent basis (be those appointments to full-time or part-time positions). Where part-time work affects income, fixed-term work negatively affects professional morale and personal creditworthiness. Teachers who are in fixed-term positions cannot make personal or professional plans with any degree of certainty. Following what is now, typically, a 6-year period of preparation, inclusive of a 2-year training-in-teaching component (the P.M.E.), it is simply unacceptable that new entrants to the teaching profession face into an extended period of financial and professional insecurity while they mark time in fixed-term positions. Permanent appointment, ab initio, was the norm and there is no good or compelling reason why it should not again become the norm. Once again, such a measure, given that it would transact within the approved teaching allocation, would be cost neutral. The impact on morale at an individual and collective level would be positive and significant. This applies not just in mainstream second-level teaching but also in the further and adult education areas where the transformative effect of second chance education for students, often from the most marginalised communities in our society, is acknowledged as hugely beneficial but where this beneficial effect is diminished by the current low levels of professional morale and the lack of professional security.

morale and the lack of professional security.

- Develop a genuinely collegial approach to decision-making and leadership in schools, colleges, centres and institutes. Such an approach is a prerequisite for effective, collaborative, innovative approaches to teaching and learning that generate a shared vision and goals and facilitate a coherent, strategic approach towards their achievement. There continues to be evidence, in too many instances, of an excessively autocratic and managerialist approach to school management and leadership which, inevitably, fails to engage the teaching community and leads to an impoverished experience for learners. In some cases the autocratic, heroic model of leadership is clearly and closely associated with practices that amount to the exploitation of part-time and/or fixed-term teachers whose contractual status is precarious and who are vulnerable as a consequence.
- Greater transparency and overt fairness is required in the appointment procedures for the posts of Principal Teacher, Deputy Principal Teacher and for posts of responsibility. The absence of the required level of transparency and, in the case of posts of Principal and Deputy Principal teacher, the absence of an appeals mechanism generates suspicion and tension. Greater transparency, on the other hand, would foster collegiality and reduce tension. Once again, there would either be no cost or no appreciable cost in making the necessary adjustments.
- A review is required of the decision to increase from one to two years the length of the training-in-teaching (P.M.E.) programme at second level. The opportunity cost of undertaking an additional year, in terms of income forgone, fees payable and living costs incurred, is a significant deterrent for any young man or woman contemplating a career in teaching. This is especially true if s/he is from a background of low or modest means. The TUI also believes that the extension to two years of the PME programme will reduce the number of mature students who will choose to commence a teaching career having spent some time in other employment. This will limit the ability of the profession to attract those who have developed leading edge skills in industry which would be of clear benefit to the public education system, particularly in the further and adult education sectors and also, specifically, in the context of development of a wider range of apprenticeships. It would be quite unacceptable that entry to teaching would, in effect, become dependent on family means and, thereby, for all practical purposes, become increasingly limited to those who follow an unbroken, linear route from Leaving Certificate to undergraduate studies to training-in-teaching to teaching.
- The matter of regulating teacher supply to a greater extent than heretofore, but without being fussily prescriptive, also needs to be addressed and can be done at little or no additional cost. In this regard, the freedom enjoyed by private providers of the P.M.E./training-in-teaching qualification to increase the number of their students is largely unconstrained whereas publicly funded providers operate within far stricter constraints. At second level there has been little or no effort to achieve even a broad match between what the system needs on a current or projected basis and what public higher education institutions and private providers release into the education employment market. It is hugely unsatisfactory that wholly foreseeable surpluses are generated and that equally foreseeable areas of shortage (in respect of particular subjects) are not addressed.
- The inadvisability of increasing the education system's reliance on private sector providers is manifest. The incontrovertible fact is that public sector provision is of a high quality and is subject to robust and frequent examination by statutory agencies (such as the inspectorate) that operate in the public interest and that must take full account of public policy. Of particular concern to the TUI at present is what we perceive to be a move towards privatisation of services in the further and adult education sectors, notwithstanding the track record of excellence in the service provided by public providers (largely, if not exclusively, through the Education and Training Boards). It will cost the state no money to maintain the current level of excellence but will cost dearly if there is a move towards privatisation and the inevitable diminution in quality of provision that this would entail.
- It may well be timely now to consider engaging/appointing teachers under revised, full-time contracts that would specify an ethic and ethos of public service and that might for an initial period of time involve working on a peripatetic basis. This would allow the deployment of such teachers in a manner that meets immediate need. It would afford teachers contractual certainty, full salary and an opportunity from the outset to become fully invested in teaching as a profession. In the context of subject specific shortages, it would enable schools that separately do not generate a full-time position (in Physics, for example) to provide the subject on the basis of each having a share of the time of the full-time, peripatetic teacher. In a town (or a town with a rural hinterland) where there is a number of small schools it would enable greater collaboration and interchange. This could have significant benefit in terms of school planning and school building programmes. It would also protect the public education system and the public purse against specious notions of autonomy and excessively granulated and precious notions of ethos.
- A further measure to ensure best usage of existing resources would involve adjusting the balance in the allocation of resources and staffing for students with special educational needs in order to give greater prominence to the teaching resource (as against assistive resources). It is acknowledged that the most significant determinant of the quality of education provision and of student outcome is the quality of teaching provided. However, it is also acknowledged that the quality of teaching is not the sole determinant and that its effect is diminished as class size grows. In recent years, a particular focus of the Irish education system – properly so – has been the inclusion in mainstream settings of students with special educational needs (SEN). A very great proportion of the attendant resourcing has been devoted to assistive measures of one sort or another. In our view, an insufficient proportion of the resourcing has been directed to expanding the teaching resource. The balance needs to be adjusted. We would, therefore, suggest that, as a first measure, there be a full and robust audit of the nature of the resources deployed towards special educational needs and of the extent to which those resources specifically enhance the capacity of schools and teachers to cater to the

educational needs of the students in their classes.

- A complementary measure that requires to be taken is the eradication of exclusionary practices by schools that, in effect, ensure that students with special educational needs do not enrol but are, rather, guided to enrol in a neighbouring schools that is represented as being better able to meet the needs of students with SEN. The use of such exclusionary tactics by schools is most pronounced in urban areas and the consequence, in some cases, is an excessive concentration in certain schools of students with special educational needs and their virtual absence from other schools. It is not uncommon that the schools with the greatest concentration of students with SEN are also schools that disproportionately cater for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, and of necessity, such schools provide a broader range of programmes including, for example, the Junior Certificate Schools Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied. Perversely, in turn, these schools attract the opprobrium of some media commentators who perceive such schools to be poorer than their exclusive neighbours by virtue of the fact that they cater to all of the children of a community rather than simply to a self-selecting tier from within that community. Robust and explicit statutory measures are required to deal with what is a form of educational apartheid.
- It is imperative that resources which are generated by and are for the purpose of attending to the needs of particular cohorts of students be used for those intended purposes. There is ample anecdotal evidence that, for example, resources generated by the attendance in schools of students with special educational needs are not in every case dedicated to the intended purpose and are used instead for other unrelated purposes. This is a source of particular frustration and anger and is clearly a serious misapplication of public funds and resources. There needs to be greater and more explicit accountability for the use of such resources for - and only for - their specified purpose.
- An associated requirement is that inclusion be understood as and practiced as an underpinning philosophy and not merely as a placement strategy.
- There needs to be a continuing focus on literacy and numeracy and a clarity in requiring that it be regarded and addressed as an intrinsic part of the role of every teacher irrespective of subject area.
- There are current gaps in key procedures that need to be filled. For example, section 28 of the Education Act 1998 requires that procedures be put in place to enable students (or their parents, in the case of students under the age of 18) to make a complaint about a decision of a school and to have such a complaint processed. The absence currently of such procedures gives rise to the use of ad hoc arrangements which are inevitably inconsistent, sometimes incoherent and always significantly bureaucratised. The Department has spoken of implementing a charter for parents and students. It is a matter of urgency that, irrespective of whether or not such a charter is put in place, appropriate and robust procedures under section 28 be devised and implemented.
- In curricular terms and at little cost, if any, there should be a greater focus on education for sustainable development. Curriculum and syllabi should be proofed for and informed by the requisite principles to ensure that this is the case.
- There should be a firm commitment to the gradual implementation of a more diverse suite of curricular provision for students in the senior cycle of second level. In particular, new vocational formation or apprenticeship strands should be introduced, the better to cater for those students whose talents and interests lie in that direction. In the context of introduction of such strands, it is imperative that they would, from the outset, enjoy parity of esteem with the more traditional and academic curricular strands.
- In further and adult education the artificial cap placed on student numbers should be lifted. The cap currently places an unnecessary and unwarranted brake on the development of new and innovative courses and limits the possibility for atypical and often marginalised student cohorts to return to education. This clearly contradicts the avowed national policy of developing a culture of lifelong learning.
- A besetting and growing problem in every sector and at every level of the public education service is increased bureaucratisation arising from statutory requirements, data demands from a variety of state agencies, inspection processes and the implementation of an array of procedures and accountability structures. The union has raised this issue with the Department on a number of occasions and has requested that there be a determined effort made to streamline and reduce the level of bureaucratic demand. As matters stand, teachers including principal teachers, state unequivocally that they are more and more deflected from their core teaching, learning and leadership functions in order to attend to paperwork and/or to make data returns. Apart from being labour and time-intensive, these demands are perceived by teachers as causing a reduction in the quality of service and attention to students.
- In regard to the National Strategy for Higher Education, the proposed statutory requirement that institutes merge to form a new legal entity before applying for Technological University status is considered by the academic staff of the institutes, as represented by the Teachers' Union of Ireland, as arbitrary, unnecessary and damaging. Specifically, there is a concern that the effect if not the intent of such mergers would be to have smaller institutes asset-stripped by larger institutes. This, in turn, would have a deleterious impact on regional capacity and infrastructure giving rise to greater geographical inequality than already exists and excluding from the possibility of pursuing a third level education many students from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds.
- Ireland lags significantly behind other EU and OECD countries in terms of participation in higher education by part-time students and/or by students with a limited record of prior academic achievement. The inadequacy of current financial supports for such students is clearly an issue and one that would, were it to be resolved, require additional resourcing. However, another issue that can be addressed at relatively low cost is the introduction of a robust and consistent system for the accreditation of prior learning, including experiential learning and learning in employment.

Neither at a system level nor at institutional level has this matter been sufficiently prioritised. There has been much empathetic handwringing but little action.

- There has been a significant focus - and incessant commentary - over recent years on the matter of school governance and patronage most of it centred on the notion of enhancing parental choice. In practical terms, it is evident that the exercise of choice – and, therefore, its relevance - is largely if not wholly confined to parents whose means allow them to exercise choice. Choice is rarely available to those parents in lower socio-economic strata. The provision of additional schools in order to create or chase choice has, it seems to us, in many instances, been wasteful of scarce resources, has suggested an inadequacy in existing schools which simply does not exist and can facilitate rather than ameliorate exclusionary practices. We believe that there should be a clear, unambiguous focus by the state on the provision of high quality educational opportunities for all of the students of a community, within that community. We believe that access should not be determined by ability to pay, religious persuasion, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity. The children of a community should learn together in the community; in high quality schools, funded and resourced by the state and subject to public policy and appropriate accountability through approved, including statutory, mechanisms. The “best schools”, if one were to use the term objectively, are almost without exception those that cater to the entire community in which they are located. These are also the schools in which values of social solidarity, citizenship and respect are most evidently inculcated. The state and the Department of Education and Skills should evince and greater confidence in those schools.

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**Q5: 1(b) What improvements can be made through new provision**

Casualised teacher employment and discriminatory pay rates are damaging morale, adversely affecting voluntary co-curricular and extra-curricular involvement and, in turn, affecting the quality of service available to children and students. It is vital that the discrimination be eliminated, as a matter of urgency.

New provision should be targeted with a view to addressing educational disadvantage. To this end, a preferential pupil teacher ration is required so that appropriately individualised and differentiated teaching and learning strategies can be utilised and the provision of an accordingly broad range of programmes facilitated.

In regard to Special Educational Needs, government acted with prudence in 2008 when deciding to delay commencement of particular sections of the EPSEN Act 2004. The decision acknowledged the reality that the level of resourcing needed was not available and would not be available in the immediate future. The position has deteriorated markedly in the interim, courtesy of the cuts applied. The TUI wishes to see full implementation of the Act but only on a properly resourced basis. Our members will not be complicit in a pretence that there can be successful implementation in the absence of such resources. Therefore, we would recommend that dedicated additional resourcing be provided incrementally to allow for full implementation.

The depletion of school capacity in terms of guidance counselling has been a feature of recent years and needs to be reversed by the re-institution of appropriate ex-quota provision.

In order to restore and enhance student support structures and distributed leadership within schools, a full and functioning post of responsibility structure must be re-instated as a matter of priority.

It is imperative that adequate funding and staffing be provided to Institutes of Technology. The current level are unsustainable low and are frustrating the best efforts of institutes and of lecturers to maintain the high quality of service to students that was customary. Institutes are also stymied by current constraints.

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**Q6: 2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

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**Q7: 3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?**

This matter is dealt with implicitly in previous commentary in this section.

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**Q8: 4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured.**

In respect of the quality of students' educational experience, no single definitive measure is available - or would suffice. Quantitative measures such as examination results, trends in subject choice, completion rates, destination analyses, PISA and PIAAC data and other such instruments have value but it is limited. Longitudinal studies probably yield richer insights but they are expensive and, as a consequence, thin on the ground. Inspection Reports are indispensable as a means of understanding the evolution of teaching, learning and management in practice.

Consumer/customer/client/stakeholder surveys - such as this one - often harvest tendentious responses (such, perhaps, as this).

A combination of measures and on-going dialogue with the relevant actors and agents is advisable if sense is to be made of the agglomeration of information, data and perspectives.

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**Q9: 5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise**

There is a significant gap between rhetoric and reality in relation to Lifelong learning. The system, despite pieties loudly sung, does not in practical terms evince much concern about or respect for those whose educational trajectory is atypical. Therefore, there has been very little progress in providing a customised blend of formal second level education and introduction to paid employment for a cohort (particularly of boys) who are demonstrably disengaging early from full-time, post primary education (if not actually dropping out). Similarly, the system in essence deems students in Youthreach to be ineducable, with all that such summary judgement implies.

There seems to be an unspoken assumption that education is something that happens to the willing or biddable between the ages of 4 and 18 - extended to 22 for those who in strictly linear fashion proceed to third level from second level.

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**Q10: 6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018**

The TUI regards education as a public good that is an intrinsic element of the social contract. We recognise and prize its transformative potential and its power to democratise. We also recognise that, in public discourse about education, demands for privileged provision sometimes masquerade as being driven by a desire to democratise. The current conceptualisation of parental choice is a case in point. If favoured and funded its effect in communities will as likely as not be to segregate rather than to include the children of the community.

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**Q11: 1(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

The programme acknowledges the importance of the early years in education. It is evident that deficits that are not addressed at this stage are stubbornly resistant to address at later stages.

The commitment to a second year of pre-school education will require significant investment in appropriate facilities and staffing. There is a strong case, where space allows, to locate extended pre-schooling provision alongside existing primary schools. Reducing the effects of education transitions which may be challenging for children/students would be a constructive spin-off of such co-location. Full pre-school provision linked to schools designated as socio-economically disadvantaged should be a particular focus.

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**Q12: 1(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?**

Not by means of inappropriate, unsympathetic standardised testing.

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**Q13: 1(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

In the first instance, there should be a keen focus - appropriately resourced - on enhancing provision in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

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**Q14: 2(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

Completion/retention rates have risen (possibly because of limited employment opportunities over recent years), compare favourable with other jurisdictions and are not at present a significant problem. As the economy improves this may change. In any event, curricular innovation is what is needed, the better to engage and inspire those students who find that the current programmes do not meet their needs. Blending part-time attendance with part-time introduction to paid work is one approach that should be considered. A broader range of apprenticeships is clearly necessary but it must be based on parity of esteem.

Mechanical adjustments to the minimum school leaving age of themselves achieve little.

In relation to DEIS schools, there is a focus in the programme on the possibility of additional measures/provision after school and in break periods. However, what is most needed is additional teaching allocation to facilitate differentiated teaching and learning strategies, small group provision etc.

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**Q15: 2(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantaged be measured?**

Any measurement must take full account of school context in all its complexity. The school does not and cannot operate in isolation from and as if impervious to influences from the home and the community. Treating educational disadvantage as if it can be separated from the economic and cultural disadvantage that begets it is dishonest. Root causes of disadvantage must be tackled but the programme seems to make very little concession to this reality. Schools must not be held to account for society's failure to address poverty, disenfranchisement and inter-generational unemployment - not to mention ghettoization mandated by public housing policy.

In this context, measures of progress need to look at how families and communities are progressing. Numerical measures are generally too crude and simplistic for this purpose.

**Q16: 2(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

As indicated above. Student support systems and middle management structures are of critical importance and the degradation of these and systems (by virtue of operation of the moratorium) must be reversed.

In relation to Further and Adult education, there needs to be a specific, resourced commitment that is driven by a desire to expand and facilitate re-engagement with the education system by adult learners and especially by those who, by virtue of family or economic circumstance, were not in a position to derive full benefit from compulsory education. Especially provision should be made to facilitate re-engagement by women who wish to develop/enhance skills for employability and for parents who wish to undertake programmes that will improve their ability to support their children's educational progress. In this regard, consideration must be given to the provision of no cost and/or low cost crèche/child-minding facilities.

The phenomenon of rural disadvantage and /or regional inequality is often overlooked. For example, in respect of the Technological Universities Bill, the requirement that institutes merge before applying for TU designation would have the effect of exacerbating existing regional/geographical disparities, as a result of the gravitational pull of the larger urban centres. The Bill and, where necessary, the National Strategy for Higher Education need to be recalibrated to ensure that there is no depletion of educational infrastructure in the more marginalised and disadvantaged regions.

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**Q17: 3(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

WE need to foster, prize and cater to diversity in our schools, rather than fund a diversity of school types. The challenge should be one of creating schools that can provide the new forms of multi-denominational, non-denominational and denominational education in an inclusive environment. The current policy is segregationist in effect. It leads to exclusion and exclusivity rather than inclusion.

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**Q18: 3(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?**

As set out above, the policy is misguided, if well-intentioned.

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**Q19: 3(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

The creation of schools that cater for all the children of a community regardless of ethnicity, religious persuasion, family income etc. should be the aim. The current priorities suggest that the current stock of schools is not capable of catering to the diversity within our communities and society. We believe this attitude and approach to be mistaken.

A logical and cost-effective alternative would be to develop community campus schools that are charged with meeting the needs of all.

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**Q20: 4(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

The approach suggested here appears to rely too much at various points on rash experimentation that has already failed in some neighbouring jurisdictions. Specifically, there is a strong suggestion that school leadership will be encouraged to act autocratically and unilaterally in "introducing reforms that drive up educational standards". This misses the centrally important point that improving the educational experience of and outcomes for students is the constant concern of all the staff of a school and is best achieved by engaging all through a collegial culture. If school management is given decision making power "to allocate ... resources" (i.e. capitation funding) to posts of responsibility, disharmony and industrial relations difficulties will inevitably ensue. The post of responsibility/student support structure has been hugely degraded by operation of the moratorium. Capitation grants have a clear purpose and it does not include funding posts of responsibility. To plunder capitation funding to create posts of responsibility would be wholly irresponsible. What is required is restoration of the PoR structure, by means of dedicated funding.

The recognition in this section of the need to support teachers, including principal teachers, throughout their career is welcome.

In general, there need to be a more explicit acknowledgement that the fundamental system need is for significantly increased investment. The notion of doing more with less is discredited. Excellence costs and it is as well to recognise the fact.

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**Q21: 4(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?**

Our previous commentary on appropriate measurement and accountability instruments applies. Any reliance on crude metrics would be misguided. Where such sound-bite metrics have been deployed, as, for example, in England and the US, their impact has been disastrous - ruinous in particular of any valid understanding of quality.

Qualitative research and longitudinal studies are important. So also is the fostering of the voluntary, additional dimensions than enrich school life and the experience of students. Attempts to coerce and codify what is voluntarily given are foolish and counter-productive. Much that is collaborative, inclusive, inspiring, innovative and creative takes place in the voluntary space, precisely because it is voluntary.

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**Q22: 4(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

Organic development and evolution of curriculum to meet emergent needs. This should centrally involve the teaching community.

The restoration of support structure is necessary to create the time for innovative practice.

The promotion of inclusive schools that demonstrably serve all the children/students of the community is important if innovation is properly to involve and reflect that broader community.

High quality, adequately resourced CPD for teachers and other school staff is a pre-requisite. Dedicated funding is essential in this regard. The current provision for teacher CPD is wholly inadequate and compares unfavourably with the CPD provision in other employments.



**Q23: 5(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

There is an obsessive focus on entrepreneurial education without a shred of clarity as to how this is to be conceptualised. There is an underlying, unchallenged and erroneous assumption that schools are arid in terms of fostering creativity, ingenuity and risk-taking.

Development of moral values, a sense of social solidarity, compassion, active citizenship and personal resilience are central to the curriculum and to the values of the teaching profession. However, the narrow, faddish conceptualisation of entrepreneurship that has come to dominate public and political discourse scarcely comprehend this social activism and seems instead to prize individualism above all else.

It is also a commonly uttered nonsense that schools, teachers and the curriculum fail to develop the capacity of students for critical thinking - a close partner of creativity and personal intellectual integrity.

We welcome the suggestion - however tentative - that the arts will be promoted. Schools are frequently not in a position to offer subjects such as music because of funding, staffing and infrastructural constraints.

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**Q24: 5(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?**

By reference to the extent to which student are enabled to engage in artistic pursuits/ performance, the extent to which the voluntary space is encouraged (in a practical manner, by lessening the bureaucratic burden that otherwise devours staff time), the degree to which opportunities for collaborative learning and appropriate risk-taking are facilitated.

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**Q25: 5(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

What is necessary in the first instance is the development of a more balanced understanding of what constitutes entrepreneurship and creativity.

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**Q26: 6(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

The programme is long on aspiration and short on details as to how the aspirations might be pursued. The ambition of using facilities throughout the day and throughout the year comes with no apparent appreciation of the cost and staffing implications of this and with little recognition of the limitations of schools in terms of their fitness for other use. What must be always borne in mind is that the school must be fit for purpose as a school on each school day, irrespective of what other use it is put to outside of hours.

The promise of additional capitation funding linked to afterschool care options needs to be treated with caution, given that there is no indication that this would be targeted at disadvantaged areas.

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**Q27: 6(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?**

*Respondent skipped this question*

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**Q28: 6(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

Investment in improving the quality of school buildings to enhance the experience for children/students should be and remain the priority.

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**Q29: 7(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

We have commented extensively on this elsewhere in our response.

In regard to Special Educational Needs, government acted with prudence in 2008 when deciding to delay commencement of particular sections of the EPSEN Act 2004. The decision acknowledged the reality that the level of resourcing needed was not available and would not be available in the immediate future. The position has deteriorated markedly in the interim, courtesy of the cuts applied. The TUI wishes to see full implementation of the Act but only on a properly resourced basis. Our members will not be complicit in a pretence that there can be successful implementation in the absence of such resources. Therefore, we would recommend that dedicated additional resourcing be provided incrementally to allow for full implementation

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**Q30: 7(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?**

There should be a full audit/census of enrolment, by school, of students with SEN.  
There should be clear verifiable evidence that schools that have employed exclusionary practices, overt and covert, have been given clear instruction that those practices must cease.  
Dedicated additional funding/staffing will be required if those elements of the EPSEN Act that relate to the IEP are to be commenced.  
The extent to which schools are transitioning to mixed ability, inclusive class structures should be monitored by the inspectorate.  
There must be an insistence that resources generated by and dedicated to students with SEN are used for their intended purpose.

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**Q31: 7(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

See previous commentary.

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**Q32: 8(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).**

It is beyond dispute that the current level of funding and staffing of third level institutions is inadequate and that reputational damage at institutional and national levels is being incurred. Therefore, significantly increased public investment is required. Without such investment, much of what the programme sets out will not be achieved.

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**Q33: 8(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?**

As indicated above, investment is required to grease the wheels of aspiration. The reference to competitive funding models is a matter of concern as it is replete with the threat of negative incentive and has tended to create an environment of reduced quality, compromised programmatic integrity, decreased provision in the arts and humanities, attenuation of academic freedom, casualised and low-cost employment patterns and a drift into de facto privatisation.

The same tendencies are apparent - and equally - damaging in the further and adult education sectors.

The absence of such tendencies would be an indicator of progress.

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**Q34: 8(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?**

A significant, multi-annual programme of public investment.