

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM OIDEACHAS AGUS SCILEANNA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Dé Máirt, 24 Aibreán 2018

Tuesday, 24 April 2018

The Joint Committee met at 3.30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Kathleen Funchion,	Senator Maria Byrne,
Deputy Jan O'Sullivan,	Senator Robbie Gallagher,
	Senator Terry Leyden,+
	Senator Lynn Ruane.

+ In the absence of Senator Robbie Gallagher, for part of meeting.

DEPUTY THOMAS BYRNE IN THE CHAIR.

BUSINESS OF JOINT COMMITTEE

Business of Joint Committee

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): As we have a quorum I wish to call the meeting to order. I remind members to turn off their mobile phones when attending the committee meeting. Apologies have been received from Deputies Josepha Madigan, Catherine Martin and Fiona O'Loughlin and Senator Paul Gavan.

It was agreed at our last meeting on 17 April that I would Chair this meeting. I propose that we deal with private business after the public business. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Teacher Recruitment: Discussion (Resumed)

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): The purpose of this part of the meeting is to resume our engagement with a number of different stakeholders in terms of the apparent shortage of substitute teachers throughout the State and issues related to the recruitment and retention of teachers.

On behalf of the committee I welcome Ms Joanne Irwin, president, Teachers' Union of Ireland; Mr. John Irwin, general secretary, Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools; Fr. Paul Connell, president, Joint Managerial Body and Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools; Dr. Seán Rowland, president, Hibernia College; and Dr. Anne Looney, executive dean, and Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir, deputy dean, Institute of Education, Dublin City University - St. Patrick's Campus. The format of this part of the meeting is that I will invite the delegates to make a brief opening statement which should be no longer than three minutes. I am prepared to give some latitude, but a conversation with members and answering their questions can be better. The opening statements will be followed by engagement with members. Apologies have been received from Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin who is unable to be present, like a number of other members of the committee. There is actually a long list of members who cannot be here, for which I apologise. Some of them are not in the building today.

By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the Chairman to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or an entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. I also advise that any opening statement made to the committee will be published on its website after the meeting.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I thank all of the representatives of the organisations before us for the time and effort they are putting into the meeting. It takes considerable work to prepare for and attend these meetings. I call Ms Irwin to make the first opening statement on behalf of the Teachers' Union of Ireland.

Ms Joanne Irwin: I thank the Chairman. The Teachers' Union of Ireland, TUI, represents more than 17,000 teachers and lecturers employed by education and training boards, community and comprehensive schools, voluntary secondary schools and institutes of technology. We welcome the opportunity to address the joint committee on this very important issue.

As members will know, Ireland has an internationally acknowledged, high performing education system. In 2015 the OECD made it very clear that an education system was only as good as its teachers. However, the education system is being undermined by a crisis in teacher recruitment and retention. That crisis has been documented in separate research carried out by our own principals and deputy principals' organisation and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools and the Joint Managerial Body. I will not go into the research carried by these organisations. I am sure they will do it themselves. It has also been referenced on a number of occasions by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Teaching Council. Unless it is addressed properly, the scale of the crisis will increase even further, given that there will be an extra 70,000 students in the education system by 2025. All of the research at which we have looked in that regard has shown that there is a direct link between the crisis in teacher recruitment and retention and the discriminatory pay scales introduced in 2011. For teachers and all workers in the public sector, there was a pay cut in 2011. Unfortunately for teachers, they were hit again in 2012 when they lost their qualifications allowance. In 2014 the honours diploma, HDip, which was a one-year programme became a two-year programme. All of these factors layered on top of each other have made teaching less attractive as a profession. We believe that, unless pay discrimination against those who entered the profession since 2011 is ended, the position will only get worse.

I make it very clear that for post-primary teachers, pay equality means not only removing the two additional points of the scale but also restoring the HDip allowance, particularly now that it is a two-year programme, as opposed to a one-year programme, and incremental recognition for pre-service training which teachers received prior to 2011. In September 2016 there was explicit recognition that pay was at the heart of the problem when the TUI; the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, INTO; the Department of Education and Skills; and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform reached an agreement to restore one of the allowances.

The key points made in our submission are the following. The cuts to pay and conditions for new entrants since 2011 have exacerbated the entire problem. The majority of applications for post-primary teaching are processed through the Postgraduate Applications Centre, PAC. Since 2011 there has been an alarming and unprecedented decline of 62% in the number of applications received. The output of graduates from these programmes has also declined by 27%. In 2011 there were more than 2,800 applicants through the PAC. As of today, there are 1,100 applicants and that is after the programme was extended. A total of 1,100 is not enough to meet the need.

There has also been a huge increase in the number of teachers emigrating. In 2008, 4% of teachers emigrated. According to the Higher Education Authority, HEA, that figure has increased to 21%. We hear daily that it is increasing even further. At a recent recruitment fair in an Irish university for teachers who were soon to qualify, there were 42 stands, 36 of which were hosted by international recruitment agencies or groups of schools. They are coming to Ireland to take abroad the teachers whom we train and educate here.

Most important is the service we can provide for students in schools. There is severe disruption because of timetable changes and restrictions necessitated by the lack of qualified teachers, including teachers for substitution. Students are losing out on educational opportunities

both inside and outside school. There is an absence of subject specialist teachers to cover for colleagues who are engaged in work for agencies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA; the State Examinations Commission, SEC; and the Professional Development Service for Teachers, PDST. Schools are now reluctant to let teachers go and work in these organisations because they cannot get substitute cover for them at home. In many instances, schools cannot get teachers of Irish, mathematics or home economics. However, it is not limited to these three subjects. Our own principals and deputy principals carried out a survey in March which found that 96% of schools were having difficulty in recruiting teachers across a range of subjects, not just the ones about which we hear a lot such as the science, technology, engineering and mathematics, STEM, subjects.

There are many more attractive opportunities in other graduate entry employments. This year the HEA found that graduates in the areas of science, mathematics, engineering, construction and health and welfare were in a position to earn considerably more in other graduate entry employments than they would in teaching. Teaching is no longer an attractive profession. One has to complete a three or four-year degree and then decide whether one can afford to stay on or to attain a two-year teaching qualification. The Minister has announced various short-term patches or fixes to try to resolve the issue, but we make it very clear that the only solution to the teacher supply crisis is the abolition of the discriminatory pay scales for new entrant teachers. It is very worrying that the average age of people entering teaching is now 26 years. We believe this is firmly linked with the cuts in teachers' pay in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I thank Ms Irwin. I ask Mr. Irwin, general secretary of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, to make his presentation. I did give Ms Irwin some latitude on time, but we aim for a statement of three minutes. The problem is that it all builds up. We have all read the delegates' submissions.

Mr. John Irwin: It is a pleasure to be here on behalf of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, ACCS, the management body which represent 96 post-primary schools across the country. The submission we made is quite dated at this stage because it would have been submitted a number of months ago. We welcome the initiatives which have been taken on board since such as the establishment of the teacher supply steering group by the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Richard Bruton. We also the work the Teaching Council has been doing in facilitating stakeholder meetings to identify difficulties in teacher supply and explore possible solutions. We are delighted to engage in this very significant work and will obviously continue to do so. However, over the course of the last year to 18 months, the most dominant issue raised by principals and management teams when we meet them which we do regularly at regional meetings across the country is teacher supply. The committee will note from our submission that schools have been experiencing difficulty in the past 12 months even in filling full-year regular part-time, RPT, contracts, while accessing qualified teachers in the relevant subject areas for casual substitutions is next nigh to impossible at this stage. It is very difficult.

The survey we conducted is consistent with others which have been carried out in identifying shortages in nearly all subject areas, but there are particular difficulties in areas such as home economics, modern foreign languages, mathematics and STEM subjects. It has been a concern this year that that shortage is beginning to spread into nearly all subject areas. The survey also highlights a significant fall in the number of applicants for positions advertised. On occasion it has been necessary to readvertise owing to a lack of any applicant. The obvious shortages are, for example, in the area of an Ghaeilge where 48% of positions in the past year

required readvertising. The figure for Spanish was 50% and the figure for mathematics was 15%. The number of qualified candidates applying for positions has fallen substantially. We acknowledge the work and the focus on targeting by the Department of Education and Skills under the Minister to address some of these issues since the submissions were made. That work is ongoing. We, as stakeholders, would also support that.

The problem now appears more pronounced in the east, or the further east one travels. There are obviously significant staff retention problems for schools in the Dublin area. There is the dynamic of higher living costs and the acute accommodation shortage. This, on occasion, has resulted in schools offering contracts that might be exited when an opportunity presents itself in a more affordable living space to candidates looking for positions.

I very much concur with what Ms Irwin said on the globalisation of the teaching market for graduates in Irish schools and Irish colleges. We can see that ourselves. In surveys carried out, it can be seen that there is an economic reason, with the introduction of the two year PME. While we understand the Teaching Council will say that this is predominantly to ensure and maintain standards, we would indicate that there could be an unintended consequence of reducing numbers applying and creating financial difficulty, particularly among those from less socially secure or socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The latter might not enter the profession, which in the long term is poor for the profession. There are many statistics that we have submitted that members can read and take on board.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I thank Mr. Irwin.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: I have to attend an interview but I will be back to ask questions. I apologise.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Deputy O’Sullivan informed us about that before the meeting. I thank her.

I ask Fr. Paul Connell of the Joint Managerial Body and Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools to give his take on the situation.

Fr. Paul Connell: On behalf of the Joint Managerial Body and the 380 voluntary secondary schools whose management authorities I represent, I very much welcome the invitation. We have been experiencing difficulties with teacher supply since 2014. The problem has been getting worse over the four years. We are delighted that this is finally being taken seriously, after four years. We have consistently surveyed the problem since 2014. In the area of Irish, modern languages, home economics and the STEM subjects, particular difficulties have arisen. In my case, for example, there was maternity leave by an Irish teacher at the beginning of the summer. After advertising for the third time in August, I got one qualified applicant. When I contacted the person, the reply I got was, “What can you offer me, Father?” Therefore, it is a difficult space. I ended up doubling up classes; I could not get a teacher. That has been replicated across the country.

The technical working group began its work and completed it in 2015. The report was not published for two years. As I said, we are delighted this is finally being taken seriously. I am not going to go over the ground of our submission. We suggest, however, a number of things that will help to alleviate the problem. The Minister has announced a number of initiatives. We welcome those, as my colleague Mr. Irwin said.

In the area of retired teachers, encouraging some involvement by retired teachers would

help to alleviate the situation in terms of abating the pension issue and so on. Some incentives could be given there. With regard to teachers now considering retirement, the retirement age is being raised to 70. Teachers on job-share are not allowed to do substitute work. Some would be available to do a small amount of substitute work, which would help greatly the schools that are in difficulty. That should be considered. Also, teachers on career break can act in a substitution capacity for up to 300 hours in the year. That could be extended. Again, that would help.

Another situation we find ourselves up against is the five-day rule. This was introduced to solve a perceived difficulty, particularly in the national schools, in which there were many unqualified teachers teaching. By restricting the number of days that unqualified teachers could teach, the objective was to solve that difficulty. It has caused a severe difficulty for us, however. Over the past two weeks we have had oral and practical examinations in our schools. We can on these occasions get hold of people who might not be qualified teachers but who have very good language skills. They could do very good work for perhaps ten days of the two weeks but cannot be hired for more than five school days. That is a matter that could be examined also.

The old higher diploma has now been extended to a master in education degree of two years. Serious consideration should be given to allowing conditional registration, which means those concerned could be paid for doing work in schools. If one considers apprenticeships in other areas, one notes there is payment for working, as in nursing and other professions. Therefore, I do not see why it cannot be extended in some fashion to teaching. This would really be a big help.

Mr. Irwin mentioned affordable living space, of which the committee has to be mindful. We find the problem with teacher supply is exacerbated in Dublin, particularly in areas of Dublin where it is very expensive to live and very expensive to travel owing to traffic and other factors. The pay issue was mentioned by the representatives of the TUI.

I acknowledge that the third level colleges say their remit is more than teacher training but they have a role in this. The whole mismatch of supply needs to be addressed urgently. There is an issue with having a huge supply of teachers in subject areas for which we do not need them and none in areas where they are needed urgently. Something has to give and something has to be done about that.

These are the areas I wanted to highlight. The committee has our submission. I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I thank Fr. Connell. I invite Dr. Rowland, president of Hibernia College, to make his opening statement.

Dr. Seán Rowland: I thank the committee for the invitation to be here today. I appreciate it. Hibernia College is almost 20 years old now. We have put approximately 10,000 teachers into the education system at primary level and, more recently, post-primary level. We have made a submission. I will just highlight the three main points we have made and drill down a bit in respect of each. We are recommending incentivising the teachers' careers, being more flexible and mobile in our preparation of teachers, and making more use of technology-assisted solutions.

With regard to incentivising careers, we ask for a return to the issue of pay. We all agree that paying less to people coming to the profession now is psychologically problematic. It is not even about money. It is about going into the classroom, having been recently educated with one's master's degree, and being told one is being paid less than the teacher next door. It is not

about blaming politicians, the Department or anybody; it is simply a matter of natural justice. We need to address it. I understand it is being addressed. It is time to put this to bed and finally bring parity on the issue of payment.

We also need to examine the qualifications and the recognition of qualifications in the teaching profession. Teachers are continually upgrading their qualifications, whether through formal degrees or continuous professional development. I am sure all providers of continuous professional development want it recognised for their teachers. It improves the quality of teachers in our classrooms and, as a result, our students do much better.

On the second point, on being more flexible and mobile, we are examining the idea of “subject knowledge enhancement”, whereby one would add to the qualifications of the teachers we have. It is a matter of asking whether a graduate-level course or recognised accredited education at third level can be offered by any provider for the person who comes to a school as the English teacher so that teacher might be able to teach two or three subjects at school level. It has happened recently in Ireland, and it certainly happens in other countries. One takes the science teacher and adds mathematics, or one takes the mathematics teacher and adds physics, making the teacher much more employable, for a start, and also much more valuable to the students.

We also recommend cluster panels. If one is a physics teacher in Mayo, where I am from, one might be teaching in three different towns but with no permanent job. One does not get travel expenses. One is basically moving one’s bag of tricks from one school to the other. It is not a professional way to treat a teacher. An ideal solution, which is quite successful in other countries, is to have a cluster teacher who would be recognised as a full-time permanent physics teacher in the region and be set to work full time each year. If a situation arises where there is no longer a full-time position, either relocate him or her or terminate his or her contract. I know that last suggestion sounds harsh, but we are in a situation where we need horses for courses. We need the proper teacher in the proper classroom. In addition, we need to look at where we are now-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I am sorry to interrupt. Can those in the committee room please switch their phones off completely because if the witness is saying something very important it will not be picked up?

Dr. Seán Rowland: Not at all. I thought my three minutes were up.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): They probably are, but I have not been watching the clock.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Perhaps the Chair can bear with me for a minute. When the taxpayer goes shopping for teachers, and let us say he or she wants six apples, six oranges and six pears, right now he or she buys 18 pieces of fruit. We do not know what they are. However, we want maths teachers, science teachers and physics teachers. Let us buy them in from the people who can provide them. We have plenty of people who can provide them. Are we spending money on teachers we do not need? I would highlight the idea of drilling down a step further into teacher recruitment, considering what we are actually purchasing with taxpayers’ money and making sure it is what we need rather simply meeting a number. We know the numbers. We have very good in regard to numbers compared to other countries. I suggest we drill down a little more there.

I refer to mobility and flexibility. We have hundreds if not thousands of unqualified degree holders abroad who could qualify in a distance learning programme, come back and become members of the Teaching Council. We can all bring them home. Many of them are not coming home because they are not qualified. Things have changed so much since they left. The Teaching Council has arrived, and it is a great arrival. It has brought a professionalism that has raised the level of teaching. However, these people are no longer included because while they have the degrees, they need to qualify, particularly in areas of pedagogy and teacher education in general.

Dr. Anne Looney: I will be delivering the statement jointly with my colleague, Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir. The clerk indicated that we might have four or five minutes as we are sharing the statement.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): That is no problem.

Dr. Anne Looney: I thank the Acting Chairman and the members of the committee for the opportunity to meet them today and to develop some of the points we made in the submission we were invited to make earlier this month. Dublin City University's institute of education is Ireland's newest and only university faculty of education. It is in its second year of operation. It was created through the incorporation of four separate institutions, all involved in teacher education, namely, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, the Church of Ireland College of Education in Rathmines, the Mater Dei Institute of Education and the DCU School of Education Studies. We now have more than 4,000 undergraduate and post-graduate students of education on the St. Patrick's Campus of DCU, along with almost 140 academic staff and some world class researchers. We cover all phases of education, from early years through to adult and community education. I should add that we have not experienced the fall-off in applications or demand that other people have reported here. The number of applicants to come into teacher education continues to exceed the number of places we have in our programmes. That includes all our programmes, whether it is English, history, science or mathematics.

The review of initial teacher education carried out in 2012 in Ireland said that we should prepare our teachers in university settings and move away from smaller colleges of education, so that those preparing to be teachers can work with staff who are also researching in their specialist field. Our students have opportunities to work with scientists, writers, mathematicians, musicians, social and business innovators and the wide range of expertise found in contemporary higher education institutions. That is a really important policy direction in the context of the supply issues we now face.

Our education system has committed itself to a highly qualified teaching profession and to high-quality teacher education. For some, the path to teaching can be six years long. It is a long time. It is about the same qualification period as for doctors. We have a shortage of doctors in the health sector and despite the many solutions proposed, no one has suggested that we should just get doctors trained faster. Teaching, like medicine, is a complex job, and it is harder than it used to be. We do not claim that our graduates are ready for every situation that a classroom will present to them, but we aim to provide our teachers with enough technical and professional knowledge and understanding to form a basis for further learning and sound judgment. It is salutary to remember that many of those who graduate as teachers in 2018 will still be teaching in 2050. We have to ensure that they are as ready to learn as they are ready to teach.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: What my colleague has described is a challenge for any system, but we consider it important to remind the committee that the Irish higher education

system continues to struggle in the aftermath of austerity and in the absence of a sustainable funding model. Additional places in teacher education programmes, new programmes and flexible modes of delivery are contingent on the resources to support them. Committee members have seen the facts, figures and tables about Irish higher education funding. Let us now give two very practical examples. One of our colleagues is the president of the European Educational Research Association and in that capacity hosted a recent meeting of the executive. The outgoing president leads the faculty of education in Utrecht in the Netherlands, with 600 students and 400 staff.

Dr. Anne Looney: My colleague meant to say 6,000 students.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: My apologies. I meant to say 6,000 students and 600 staff.

Dr. Anne Looney: That would be a really good ratio.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: I note that Utrecht has a ratio of ten students to one staff member, whereas in the institute of education we have 4,000 students and 140 staff which is about 28:1. The head of Utrecht does not know how we do it. He just wishes us luck.

The reality of that ratio hits home when we sit down to plan new programmes. The newest programme we are planning is a BEd post-primary concurrent degree in Gaeilge and modern languages, which is an area of heavy demand and heavy shortage, as outlined by other speakers. We hope have that on the books for 2019 to respond to the shortage of teachers in these areas in the post-primary system. This innovative degree will see students spend time in European universities and in the Gaeltacht, and will include modules taught in the target languages. It is already generating inquiries from students in fifth year and transition year. It draws on DCU's reputation for applied linguistics, Irish and education, but our biggest challenge will be funding the staff to teach it, providing classrooms and library spaces for students, and providing the administrative staff needed to support placements in international and Gaeltacht settings. We agree with the Department of Education and Skills that we need to expand our number of concurrent post-primary programmes, but we need to discuss how these programmes will be funded in the future.

In working with the Higher Education Authority and the Department on generating additional places for next year, we have signalled, as have other institutions, where additional places can be made available. There has been a positive response from applicants. These places will not be realised unless additional human and capital resources are provided and action is taken by the Department and the education partners to secure opportunities for school placement for the additional students.

Dr. Anne Looney: I have just come back from a conference on school leadership in Alberta in Canada that included speakers from a wide range of countries, all of which have chronic teacher supply issues. They simply cannot attract enough applicants into teacher education programmes, which is not Ireland's problem. However, all these countries can remember the good old days when teaching was highly regarded and teacher education programmes were over-subscribed, as they currently are in Ireland. If we want to avoid joining the very long list of countries with chronic teacher recruitment issues, then we need to take care when we describe our current difficulties. We need to draw on data rather than anecdotes, patterns rather than perceptions, and above all else we need to avoid taking actions that may curtail the enthusiasm of those preparing, or choosing, to teach. We need to avoid using language that might seem to blame those currently teaching for wanting to broaden their professional experience or save

money for a house by leaving the country for a period of time. Equally, we need to make sure that in every announcement made about system expansion or system development, account is taken of the impact on teacher supply and confidence therein.

We are confident that the new task force established by the Department has the appetite for this task, and for the longer-term goal of securing better data for workforce planning for the teaching profession in Ireland. Like our colleagues, we are working actively with it. For some of our students in DCU, however, it is too late. More than 300 students are preparing to teach religious education and either English, history or music in post-primary schools, on one of those oversubscribed and in-demand concurrent teacher education programmes. They recently woke up to an announcement from the Department that new arrangements for the teaching of religious education in ETB schools were to be put in place. The announcement sent them online looking for international options, as the jobs they expected to move into in the fastest growing sector in the Irish education system appeared to them to have been swept away. We wonder too, if those graduating next year as primary teachers may be more inclined to get international experience on graduating if the career break that has long been a part of the experience of the young Irish primary teacher may not be as readily available to them in the future.

If teacher supply issues are to be managed effectively, then all future system developments and announcements, whether about school places, new subjects on the curriculum, new arrangements for subjects, new policies, additional resources and even reductions in the pupil-teacher ratio, have to include consideration of the obvious and sometimes not so obvious impact on teacher supply. We are very happy to discuss the points made, and any others, with members of the committee.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I thank the witnesses. All of the submissions and statements were extremely useful and also challenging, both to the committee and I am sure to the Department of Education and Skills and the Minister as well. I will make a couple of points before I go to members.

DCU is on the record as saying it does not favour the quota system. Could Dr. Looney speak briefly about that? Could I also have her thoughts on Dr. Rowland's idea that we would have remote classes via video. I did a postgraduate course where that worked really well but it was never my vision of education. I would like to have a little to and fro discussion on that point which is not something I had envisaged coming in very quickly.

The statements by the Joint Managerial Body by Fr. Connell, John Irwin and also by Joanne Irwin speak for themselves. They are really stark. I do not have specific questions but that is not to say I do not take their submissions seriously. I am sure the other members will have questions but the statements were self explanatory. I might ask those speakers to address those points before I seek questions from other members.

Dr. Anne Looney: Will I address the quota issue first and then say a little about blended learning?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Yes, and then Dr. Rowland's point. He can respond to that and then I will take questions from Deputy Funchion.

Dr. Anne Looney: By the quota point I presume you mean the phrase used by my colleague that we should not produce teachers that we do not need and therefore control numbers in particular subjects in order to create spaces for others. The problem is that it is a completely

unnecessary measure. There is not a competition for places between subjects. We do not have a situation where I need to say to somebody applying for a programme in teaching: “Mick or Mary, congratulations, we are delighted that you are interested in teaching. It is a really important profession, but I notice you want to do English. Have you thought about physics?” In the post-primary sector it is really important that one has a passion for one’s subject. We need to provide our students with people who are passionate about their discipline and have an in-depth subject knowledge. We have no evidence that we are producing too many English teachers. We could do with producing more maths and science teachers but I do not think we need to penalise those who want to be English or history teachers on that basis.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Are we producing too many business studies teachers? I have had constituents come to me who have not been able to get jobs in that particular sector.

Dr. Anne Looney: There is no doubt business studies is a very popular area of study and it is one of the most popular areas in teaching. I do not have the data in front of me on whether there are people without full-time jobs in business or in any particular area but, equally, business is one of the areas within the professional master’s in education, PME, in which the numbers have been restricted for a number of years. There are controlled numbers in business and I think that is a recognition that we do produce a lot of business studies graduates. Overall, I think it would be taking a mallet to a nut. I am not sure it is the issue.

In terms of the technology, some of our teacher education programmes are blended in that we would have students who would be face-to-face and with new technology as well.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I think what Dr. Rowland was talking about is the provision of education to the children remotely, rather than in the institutions. That is what I wanted Dr. Looney to comment on as an educationalist - whether she would see that as an issue.

Dr. Anne Looney: We already have a track record in terms of when the curriculum and assessment innovations around mathematics occurred and we wanted to have more students taking higher level maths. Where there was not a higher level maths teacher available, many schools already took the initiative to connect a school to another school using the broadband service so the higher mathematics teacher in one school was supporting maths in another. Within the ETB sector there are teachers teaching physics who may be sharing with another school, and certainly within the post-primary level with good support I see no reason that could not happen.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Is Dr. Looney saying she sees no reason we would not show teaching videos to students if we cannot get a teacher for a subject?

Dr. Anne Looney: Just so we can be quite clear, that is not what I said.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I just want to clarify the position because that is what I took from Dr. Rowland’s point.

Dr. Anne Looney: No, it would mean that one would live stream the class.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Online live.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Live stream.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Would you like me to describe it to the committee?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): No. I have done it, but it was online recorded.

Dr. Seán Rowland: No, that is no good.

Dr. Anne Looney: You missed your chance, Acting Chairman.

Dr. Seán Rowland: We learned from that and advanced to the next stage.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): No, it was not in Hibernia College.

Dr. Seán Rowland: We are piloting an approach right now at second level. We have principals who are very keen to find teachers and are to the pin of their collar trying to find them, be it for Irish or maths. We have a supply but they are not local to where they are needed. We looked at the United States - some creative principals have done it here - where they found participation and co-operation with each other helped. If there is a good maths teacher in Cork who is qualified and is a member of the Teaching Council, schools can live stream her into a classroom in Galway to teach mathematics in fifth year for a maternity leave or a substitute position. We are piloting that right now in a small number of schools to see if it is what schools want. This is a warts and all analysis. We have a small pilot project which will be followed by a second pilot project and then we will discuss it.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I am sorry to interrupt but someone's phone in Dr. Rowland's vicinity is on and it is affecting his mic, or it could be a laptop connected to 4G.

Dr. Seán Rowland: No, I do not think it is me. We are looking at live streaming which will give each of the students an opportunity to ask questions of the teacher. What we highly recommend is that there is a teacher from the school in the classroom with the students. I have been in teacher education for a long time. One of my colleagues mentioned that we were in the same class so I will not mention that we are 40 years in teacher education. One just has to make sure that it is quality, it is productive, there is discipline and supervision and that it is fulfilling the requirements of the Teaching Council and that the teachers are Garda vetted. All the requirements have to be filled except the teacher is on the other side of the camera. The teacher involved must be a fully qualified teacher, not some teacher covering while students study maths.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I see Ms Irwin reacting so I will invite a response from her. I also invite Fr. Connell and John Irwin to respond.

Ms Joanne Irwin: I suppose, without trying to burst everybody's bubble, I think this would not work. We are dealing with teenagers aged from 13 to 18. You are an adult, Acting Chairman. You can sit down and watch. You are motivated. Some of our students are motivated. We have teachers in disadvantaged areas. We have teachers in Youthreach centres whose day-to-day task is to ensure that the student shows up for class every day. That cannot be done by a remote delivery. Who meets the parents? Who corrects the work? How can one teach materials, technology and woodwork via remote learning? It sounds great for a highly motivated student in a south Dublin school but that is not what we are dealing with.

We are dealing with schools all over Ireland. This is a resourcing issue. We would not have an issue with recruitment and retention of teachers if all teachers were paid the same. We have done a survey and found that 94% of teachers who started since 2011 would stay in the profession if they were treated the same as their colleagues. There are practical issues and health and

safety issues that are of concern. There are motivational issues involved. There is a lot to be considered here. We are not dealing with adults. Some students are very highly motivated but others are not and for some, the biggest challenge is ensuring that they are actually in school every day. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact we are dealing with a cross section of education, not just schools in south Dublin.

Dr. Seán Rowland: I would invite anybody who would like to come in to do so. We need to look at all of these questions. They are very valid questions that we have spent a lot of time preparing to answer.

Dr. Anne Looney: I am absolutely *ad idem* with my colleague that by far and away the best solution for any group of young people in a school is to have a highly qualified and motivated teacher. In a situation where one does not have such a teacher, as happened in mathematics, for example, schools can partner and, as Mr. Rowland said, there is a teacher in a room for some subjects, particularly for senior classes. That may be something that a school would want to do but it would not want to be doing an entire leaving certificate course in that way. Certainly in the longer term, schools would need to be looking to have a qualified person in the room for that age group.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Deputy Funchion is next.

Deputy Kathleen Funchion: I will begin by apologising for being late. I thank all of the speakers for their presentations. I would be completely opposed to any sort of live streaming of classes. As the mother of two boys, I would absolutely refuse to send my children to school if that was the level we reached. That is completely unacceptable. Students need to have a teacher to whom they can speak if they have a difficulty or problem. They need to be able to speak to teachers after class and so on. We all know that there is a recruitment and retention crisis in the education sector but live streaming classes is not the solution. That is not the answer to the problem. We need to figure out why people are not staying in teaching and why graduates are not choosing the profession and, as Ms Irwin has said, it has to do with the wages. There is nothing there to motivate people.

It really angers me to hear live streaming being proposed as a solution. We are failing students and their parents again here. Parents will have to pick up the slack in such scenarios and will end up paying for grinds when the virtual class falls apart. If we start settling for second best, which is what live streaming represents, then we may forget about ever getting any sort of equality for the newer teachers coming through the system. I am 100% against that and hope that we never see that developing. It is fine at third level or for mature students who know exactly what they want to study and who are totally motivated. However, it is not fine for students who are already having difficulties, such as those with learning difficulties, anxiety issues or issues with just getting in to school. We should not settle for that at all.

What we need to see is equal treatment for our teachers. They must all be paid at the same rate. It should not be the case that those who qualified in 2000 earn a better wage than those who are qualifying now. We need to make sure that we incentivise our teachers to stay here and to continue to teach. We need to ensure that they are not dragged into other professions or dragged abroad because of wages. At the moment that is happening because teachers' wages are inadequate. A lot of newly-qualified teachers simply cannot afford to stay here or to stay in the teaching profession. They would love to teach here but they will not be able to get a mortgage or to meet the general costs of living here. These are the issues that we need to focus on rather than coming up with get-out clauses for the Government in the form of virtual classrooms

or the live streaming of some subjects. I do not think that would be acceptable under any circumstances. It is also not acceptable that we have teachers teaching subjects in which they are not qualified. That is not fair to the teachers or to the students. That said, live streaming is not the answer under any circumstances. I feel very strongly about this.

I am like a broken record at this stage because at almost every meeting of this committee I say the same thing. The key issue in all of this is the impact on students. It is so unfair that the person who did the leaving certificate ten or 15 years ago has a better chance than someone doing it now. That is completely wrong. We must take a stand on this. This committee must be a lot more vocal about the fact that we cannot allow this situation to continue. Teachers are leaving the country in droves and leaving the profession in droves. It is clear that there is a crisis. I really want to support the unions on this, particularly the TUI. We need to see pay restoration; that is key in all of this. It is not the only thing, but it is one of the key things.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Does Deputy Funchion have any particular questions for the witnesses?

Deputy Kathleen Funchion: No, I just wanted to make those points.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): In fairness, a lot of what has been said speaks for itself. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan is next.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: I am sorry that I had to leave earlier but obviously we got copies of the presentations in advance. I missed most of the conversation on live streaming and am not sure exactly what was involved but I would agree with what Deputy Funchion has said on the issue. We are talking about young children with different levels of ability, different backgrounds and so on and they really need personal contact and interaction with a teacher. Learning is all about action and reaction. It is not about talking down to children and sending them a message that they are supposed to take in and pull out again at some point in the future. That is all I want to say on that because I missed the earlier part of the conversation.

In terms of the issue of salaries and teachers going abroad, this committee is supportive of the restoration of pay for teachers as soon as possible. That said, in Ireland teaching has been a very desired profession. It is an area into which young people still want to go and the points for teacher training courses are still high. We want to make sure that continues but the fact that so many are going abroad is a genuine concern. The cost of housing is contributing to that, along with a number of related issues but that is something that this committee cannot sort out. I am interested in hearing the witnesses' views on how we might deal with the issue, apart from addressing the pay inequality, which is the issue that Ms Irwin in particular has highlighted. Are there other things that can be done to encourage people to come back?

There are lots of non-Irish people living here now. Could they do conversion courses to become teachers of certain subjects, including foreign languages? I am thinking of people who have qualifications in their own country but who are working in restaurants or in other areas and not using their qualifications at all. I would welcome the witnesses' views on that.

I have some knowledge of the conversion programme for mathematics in the University of Limerick. I think NUIG is involved with the Irish or Gaelic side of it. I have been present at a few of the conferring ceremonies and the graduates come from all over the country. The course is delivered through local education centres, as well as in the two universities. It seems to be very successful in terms of enabling already qualified teachers to qualify to teach math-

ematics specifically. Could the same be done for other subjects? I am not sure of the statistics but if there is an over-supply of teachers in some subjects, perhaps they could be encouraged to upskill and qualify in another related subject. I am not saying that people should start from scratch on something about which they know nothing but is there some scope in that regard? These are all short-term responses, in some sense, but it is not that long ago that we had teachers who could not get jobs because there were not enough teaching posts. The current problem is relatively recent. Obviously, the population spike will happen soon. Actually, at primary level, we are beginning to work our way down again but the spike will hit at post-primary level in 2024. In that context, we need to have short-term responses as well as longer term ones. I am interested in hearing the views of the witnesses on those issues.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: I am happy to address some of the questions posed by Deputy O’Sullivan. One issue that colleagues of mine who work in the post-primary area would talk about is the fact that 700 post-primary schools is a relatively large number, given our population. In that context, school size tends to be smaller here. While upskilling teachers so that they are qualified in three rather than two subjects would give greater flexibility to school principals, it could give rise to issues around pay and contracts. I am sure Ms Irwin has exact figures but I know that over one third of post-primary teachers do not have a full-time contract. That is a serious problem. Conditions, as well as pay, need to be addressed. There are issues around flexibility of employment and the fact that we have smaller post-primary schools relative to other countries.

If language teachers from abroad have a recognised teaching qualification, they can register with the Teaching Council here. If there are any shortfalls in their qualifications, institutions like DCU and other universities would be happy to fill in those gaps. I was previously a member of the Teaching Council and am aware that it is just about to announce a scheme whereby teachers with qualifications can undergo an adaptation period or do an aptitude test for certain areas to make up for any shortfalls.

The maths conversion programme has been very successful. It was an incentivised programme, and Deputy O’Sullivan probably dealt with it when she was Minister. The same could be done in other areas where there are shortages. The programme we are launching on Gaeilge and modern languages is a way to address quotas, in the sense that the professional masters of education process tends to deal with general application and whatever subjects the applicants bring with them, whereas a concurrent four-year programme would be cheaper for the students to get fully qualified in two subjects, and the numbers could be controlled in those areas. This is part of the addressing it. There are a number of issues that could possibly be addressed through short-term solutions.

Dr. Anne Looney: One of the key features of the mathematics programme was that participants already had to be teaching mathematics. Some of them had mathematics as a first year or second year subject and the course was designed to get them up to degree level in mathematics. No fees were charged and it was a lot of hard work for the teachers involved. There were exams and essays. It was a serious course led by UL. It has delivered a situation whereby most second-level students in Ireland are now taught by a degree level qualified mathematics teacher. It does show that when the system gears itself up, puts the resources in place and works with the higher education institutions it can respond to a need that is there.

With regard to Deputy O’Sullivan’s observations on numbers and shifts in the population, the situation does change over time and it is very important that we take the opportunity now to put in place really good data collection measures so we know what we will need in future

and can plan better. We can never predict that something will happen to the property market that will incentivise people to go and get money for a house, but we need to be able to see those things coming and put in place measures early whereby we can keep the supply of teachers steady.

Our experience in DCU is that our teachers who are overseas want to come back. They do not intend to live a life or teach a career over there. There has been an established tradition of teachers taking career breaks and going overseas and working abroad. This has been part of what younger teachers in particular did, but now, because of the property market, there is a real incentive for people to move to earn, but they do want to come home and that is their plan.

Dr. Seán Rowland: I invite everyone to come and see the live streaming of our online auxiliary teaching services. Parents, teachers and lecturers need to see there is some value in it rather than writing it off. We were written off 20 years ago. All I ask is that committee members are open minded and take a look at how online services can help students. I totally agree that by no means should these services ever replace a teacher. It requires very disciplined approaches and it will not suit all children, all schools or all teachers. I invite committee members to come and see how it works because it works very successfully in some cases. It may alleviate our short-term problems and let us focus on dealing with the long-term problem, which is that today, every constituency has students with unqualified people in front of them in the classroom. We must ask committee members to help us because we cannot do it on our own. It will take time and energy, and the support of the committee, to get programmes that will create more teachers.

Bringing back teachers is an answer we can all help with. We need to qualify them, because many of them will not be qualified to tick all of the boxes for the Teaching Council, but this is very doable. Hibernia College is actively working on putting in place a programme. Five years ago I opened a college in London which focused on subject knowledge enhancement for teachers. It meant an extra subject for a teacher who was already registered with the Teaching Council and already teaching in, for example, Glenamaddy and needed another subject.

The mathematics programme introduced here and completed in Limerick is a successful model. The Irish programme is also a model. My colleagues here are from many institutions that can deliver for the State. We can get these teachers educated. It will be a matter of money and we all have to face this big elephant in the room. Everything costs, and this is a time when we have trolleys in hospitals and there are shares of the pie, but the committee is in a very strong position to state it is the Government's job to provide qualified teachers for each of our primary and post-primary students so let us start there and get this sorted.

I am old enough to remember when that happened before. At the time, the education committee, the Government and the Department ended up putting their shoulders to the wheel and getting everyone qualified. We went through a grace period and then we went through a period when we thought there were too many teachers and that Hibernia College was flooding the market with teachers. As far back as when Ruairí Quinn was the Minister, we were warning there would be a shortage of teachers. It is definitely cyclical. I ask the committee to focus on the now to get the short term sorted, with a view to putting systems in place for the long term.

Mr. John Irwin: There are two areas that must be looked at. I am delighted to hear about the additional concurrent courses addressing specific subject areas that have been announced in DCU. They will provide a medium-term solution. Obviously, it will take four years for people to be qualified and the course will begin in 2019.

The immediate issue we have is in two phases. The first is dealing with regular part-time contracts for an entire year. When we look for people to fill these positions, if we look at the overseas market, people chose to leave here for economic reasons at the end of completing a two year professional master of education, which is quite a costly process for teachers, and while there are people who want to come back we do not have the structures in place to bring them back easily and facilitate them coming back into the process. We know commercial companies are quick enough to be able to get them out, but we have to apply the same type of rationale and create return pathways, such as there are in some of the UK regions, to try to facilitate people coming back into the Irish system. An element of this is that they have to be able to access decent contracts, preferably 22-hour contracts for qualified teachers on full-time contracts. There are full-time vacancies that are very difficult to meet. We can look at the returning market.

We also need to look within Ireland, where there are people who may have gone into business and have experience of the private sector who would like to consider returning to or getting involved in education and bringing the experience they have into the classroom, which would also be valuable, but this quite difficult to do. It is hard to imagine giving up a salaried position for two years to do a professional master in education in order to return to the classroom. We do not make it easy for people, if they are not initial graduates, to come back into the teaching profession and bring their skills with them. We also have to look at the short-term vacancies that exist in schools. The survey we carried out highlights a particular problem, which is for the vast majority of short-term placements a qualified teacher will not be found. Recently, we have had oral exams going on in schools, which were facilitated by teachers leaving their own schools to conduct the examinations, but we cannot get qualified teachers to replace them in the classroom. To do this as a short-term measure, we have to consider, as Fr. Connell has mentioned, the five-day rule for people who have language skills. We also have to consider whether we can access people who have retired to come back in, and whether we access, which we cannot do at present, people who are job sharing in schools. Those on job-share in schools may be able for that period of time to take on additional hours but they are prohibited under terms and conditions from doing so. We can also look at teachers on a career break - that was a positive initiative - to try to see if they can come back in. Therefore, we have a number of different issues that we need to examine and we have a number of different ways that we can address it.

There are possibilities overseas. There are possibilities for people who are currently qualified to come back in. There are possibilities of some who are retired coming in for short-term vacancies. There are possibilities of those who are currently in schools, for example, on career break, who are prevented from doing additional substitution work. It would help to alleviate the immediate problem. The medium to long-term will depend on the concurrent courses.

I am delighted to hear that there is not a drop in applications for education courses. That is not what is being indicated. If one looks at the surveys that are coming back from schools, there does not seem to be an oversupply in certain areas. The reality is that certain areas are not indicating any problems filling posts while others are. Trying to increase the number of science and mathematics graduates coming into the profession is really important.

On terms and conditions, pay is an issue. It is the elephant in the room.

Ms Joanne Irwin: In response to Deputy O'Sullivan, a great deal of this is about the pay. The reason it is about the pay is because there are 70,000 teachers across the primary and post-primary sectors. In every primary and post-primary school in Ireland, there is somebody in that staffroom who is paid differently because of when he or she entered the profession. That has resulted in the conversation in every staffroom being about teachers being treated differently

from their colleagues.

Morale is now at an all-time low and that is not fair to students. It is not fair to teachers either but it is ultimately not fair to students. We recently compiled a survey and 95% of respondents told us that the status of teaching has fallen. Anybody who goes in to teaching does so because he or she loves teaching or has experience of having a great teacher in school. That is why I went into teaching. A teacher made a huge difference to my life and I would like to be able to make that change to someone else's life. However, we now have 70,000 teachers up and down the country telling their sons and daughters not to go into teaching because it is no longer an attractive profession. Some 52% of all new entrants since 2011 stated that they would not tell a younger relative to go into the profession because they are sitting in a classroom and being treated differently.

We are supposed to teach our students about equality. It is a very important issue. We are doing it at the minute. We have referendums going on. Equality is a big talking point in all of our schools yet teachers are not being treated equally. It is a major issue. The unions are not helping in this because we are saying that teaching is not an attractive profession, and we will continue to say it until we have pay equality across the board.

The committee will see a dramatic increase in the number of applicants to go into teaching if this issue is resolved. We know it will not be resolved overnight - we are realistic - but it needs to be resolved so that we can focus on the other aspects of education. Since 2011, the focus at every branch meeting, certainly those I have been at, is the fact that teachers are paid differently.

Some of my own family are in Dubai teaching. They ask: "Why should we teach here? Why should we be here to be treated differently? We cannot afford to live here. We are tax free in Dubai and get two flights home every year." They see it as a great life but it is not right that we are educating teachers to go abroad. That is a waste of taxpayers' money. It is not right that we would treat our citizens like that either.

People say it is not only a pay issue, that we need reliable data and other mechanisms. However, that is only kicking the problem down the road. It is only dealing with the symptoms, not the disease. If pay parity is finally restored, the committee will see a dramatic increase in applications. I am glad that DCU has not experienced a drop but the applications through the post-graduate application centre have dropped by 60% from the date that discriminatory pay scales were put in place. That is the major issue.

Finally, 22% or one in five of all new entrants do not get a full-time contract when they start out. Something that could be addressed straightaway is that they would get a permanent position, obviously, on probation. They are entitled to probation for the first year. It could be addressed that they would get full-time positions from the start. Even if it is not permanent, to get a full-time position from the start would solve the problem also. Teachers will not stay on three or four hours in a school to teach physics when they can get a job in industry and start off on €70,000 a year. It is a big difference. We need to address the core issue, which is the pay scales.

Fr. Paul Connell: I welcome some of the initiatives mentioned about the continuing courses, etc. It is important though that we incentivise them for teachers, and particularly that we fund them. Teachers have gone through an expensive process in graduating and getting through college, and if they are incentivised to go and do further courses, that will work.

We also have to come back to the skills mismatch. I note some our colleagues here have

stated there is no evidence of that but at school level, we are seeing the mismatch all the time. If one advertises for particular positions, one will get a lot of applications for certain positions and very few for the STEM, the modern languages and that kind of subject.

We should try to find some creative way of dealing with the substitute teacher. There is always a case that if one has too many teachers for permanent positions, there are substitute positions that will be coming up, for instance, for maternity and other leave. These leave types need to be looked at because it is not feasible for a teacher to hang around expecting to get work - six weeks here and seven weeks there. If there was some way of getting a substitute contract for the year where the teacher would have certainty about what he or she could expect, that would go a way towards solving some of the problems we have.

Finally, and I do not want to be in any way misunderstood about this, we also need to take account of the new initiatives, such as parental leave, paternity leave and unpaid leave. These pose a particular difficulty in secondary schools because it can be difficult to get a teacher in a particular language area or whatever, for example, for a three-week or a four-week break. In other areas of employment, it is much easier for people to cover for each other. It is not that easy at second level. We need to give some thought to that. I am not in any way saying such leave should not be availed of - of course, it should - but we need to make some provision for it within the system.

Senator Maria Byrne: I thank the panel for their comments.

To start with Fr. Connell, he referred to the five-day rule. Has he any suggestions as to how that can be changed or what should be proposed? I understand that the five-day rule is causing a problem for some schools.

We have referred a great deal to the shortage of substitute teachers. The fact that 5,000 full-time posts have been created over the past two years is probably having an impact on substitutes being available.

We referred to the fact that there is a shortage in the STEM subjects. Is there any data to show that there are shortages in any other areas?

We have incentives to encourage students, in primary school and then in secondary, to take an interest in the STEM subjects, for instance, the BT Young Scientist which encourages them to look at the STEM subjects in terms of teaching posts down the road. Is there anything we can do to start to encourage pupils at a young age, as they go up through their education, to be interested in some of the areas where there are shortages?

Some substitute teachers have one or two subjects. On how to add to one's portfolio, is there any way of fast-tracking or shortlisting or are there any subjects that are complementary to one another that we could put together?

Recently the Minister set up the steering group. How are they finding their input in relation to that?

We all support the issue of the different pay scales but my understanding is talks are to start shortly with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, DPER. My understanding is it will be in the next couple of days. The witnesses might comment in that regard.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I will start at this end, with Ms Joanne Irwin,

and work my way down. If witnesses do not want to offer, they do not have to. However, they are welcome to.

Ms Joanne Irwin: On the pay talks first, there is a meeting to be held on Friday of this week. The concern of teachers is that those pay talks will look at the length of the salary scales across the public sector because of all of the public sector had two additional points added to their scale. We are hopeful, but do not know, that it will deal with the fact that teachers were disproportionately hit in that they lost the HDip allowance. We do not know if this will be part of the talks. The new teachers lost incremental recognition for pre-service training. Will this be part of the talks? Although the talks are welcome, we do not know if they will address the full list. We hope they will because the three teachers' unions have a joint motion on this and we have action to take if the talks do not address the three issues.

On the evidence of teacher supply and other subject areas, our Principals and Deputy Principals Association, PDA, conducted a study of all our schools in February and March. They found that they cannot get teachers in the areas of biology, French and material technology - wood. This is as well as the Irish, home economics and maths areas, which we spoke of earlier.

With regard to the steering group, we welcome any initiative that will improve the crisis in the teaching profession. We also note, however, that there is no teacher representative on the group. There is also no representative from management bodies on the group. There are no plans that we are aware of to converse with us on that issue. For years we have said there will be a teacher supply crisis. The steering group has been established now but it is important that there is some sort of mechanism for the steering group to liaise with the management bodies and the teachers' unions to address some of the issues we have discussed today.

Mr. John Irwin: We have carried out a lot of research right across the 96 schools around shortages of teacher supply in different subject areas. Of the 96 schools, more than 70 replied. The response was consistent with what has been reported, but the problem becomes exacerbated as the year goes on. Now we find, in the context of short-term substitution, that it becomes very difficult because, if people cannot access contracts at the end of September, they are emigrating. These teachers are going further afield to get jobs and they can get those particular jobs. Obviously we are not involved in the pay talks, but we sincerely hope they are successful and that they can bring that issue to an end.

We are delighted that the steering group is in place. We hope it will drive the initiatives that are very much required in the coming year. I note that Dr. Seán Rowland, president of Hibernia College, is back.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Yes.

Mr. John Irwin: I fully agree that we need teachers in classrooms, but I would not undermine the use of technology as a collaborative tool for promoting collaboration between schools for excellent projects and for the idea that teachers and students from different schools can collaborate. I would not be massively in favour of the idea that technology is going to replace the teacher in the classroom.

Dr. Seán Rowland: It is not replacing. I said there would be a teacher in-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): We will take witnesses one by one and Dr. Rowland can come in again.

Mr. John Irwin: We need qualified teachers in each of our classrooms, but with collaboration between teachers and between students. There are excellent examples of collaboration between Irish schools and schools in foreign jurisdictions in the area of language learning. This is very valuable. Students can converse in the target language with native speakers. All of this is very valuable. I can understand the point around trying to access collaboration but we need teachers in our classrooms.

Fr. Paul Connell: I was asked about the 30 day rule - I am sorry, the five-day rule.

Mr. John Irwin: Fr. Connell wants it to be 30 days.

Fr. Paul Connell: We are suggesting that it be made. Obviously we do not wish in any sense to incentivise unqualified teachers in the classroom. That is an absolute. If, however, it were relaxed to allow for 30 days pending registration, this may help the situation.

A question was asked about what has particularly exacerbated teacher supply. There have been a number of issues. The increases in enrolments in schools and the growth in numbers form a big issue. There was also an unfortunate by-product of the new junior cycle and the way it was managed. We as the management bodies, including Education and Training Boards Ireland, ETBI and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, ACCS had suggested a different approach. The 40 minutes allocated for teacher training each week, which is very important and which we support, ended up having to put another 700 teachers into the system. If this had been done differently, it might have avoided that difficulty. A number of issues have come together to cause the crisis.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Put a teacher in the classroom and we will beam in the auxiliary teacher. We are not saying we will replace the teacher or the school. We would certainly not be in favour of the school that delivers to the child at home. I have seen this in the United States of America and I believe it does not work. My God, it is so antisocial and so bad in so many ways. Trust me when I say that I share anyone's fears that children's educational experience might be replaced by a laptop. That is not what is in question here at all. Young people in Ireland today and around the developed world are on their keyboards night, noon and morning. They are so ready and able to deal with this technology as a piece of a solution to a problem now. This is not the thin end of the wedge. Someone might say they are not going to have teachers and they will not have any play, but this would be nothing of the kind. This is an auxiliary teaching opportunity and it is at a pilot stage. Of those who were asked to take part we had a 100% "Yes". It is small currently and we will report back directly to the Department on it. We do not want surprises any more than anyone else. It will work if it is educationally sound and if it complements what is happening in schools, which I believe it will because I have seen it work so successfully in schools, especially in the United States of America and in the UK.

There are one-year programmes for upskilling teachers. These are one-year intensive, accredited programmes with good faculty that are delivered to every teacher who wants to take it up. This could be online, on a campus locally, or both. There is room for a massive upgrade. Where I have seen this operate in the United States of America and in the UK, there is no question that if one pays the teachers, they will do it. This is a guaranteed way for the State to get more maths or language teachers. It is going to cost some money but it is money very well invested. It is not a huge amount per teacher but it saves going back to the drawing board to put a teacher through a four-year or a six-year programme. This upskilling programme is a one-year programme that would enhance the teaching profession big time. In the two-year online programme we can reach out to every county across the State. We can also reach out to the

Middle East for teachers from Ireland. We are doing more than just looking at it. We are delivering teachers through this model. These are teachers who will join the unions of the witnesses present and these are teachers who will join the schools belonging to the representatives here. We benchmark against the best in the world. Our international partners in research at graduate level are Harvard University, which is ranked number one in the world, Boston College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Plymouth University in the UK. I would definitely urge the State to adopt the one-year programme. It has worked and the University of Limerick is an example of that. I believe that Deputy Jan O'Sullivan has been engaged in that regard and she may be able to speak on that better than I can.

The bottom line is that it is incumbent on all of us to use whatever means that are available to us and that we can afford so that we can get more teachers into the classrooms and before the children. They only have one chance at fifth year and sixth year to get through. It is a tough time for students and the least we can do is get a good teacher in front of them.

Dr. Anne Looney: Senator Maria Byrne asked about the STEM subjects. There are a number of initiatives in the early years system and the school system to encourage children and young people, especially girls, to consider courses in STEM subjects. When we consider the data from the Higher Education Authority relevant to teaching, we graduate three arts, humanities or social sciences graduates for every one STEM graduate. This is just how it is. There is an imbalance in the system anyway, so the number of science graduates that are available to go into teacher education is relatively low compared with the number of graduates in history or English who are available to go into teacher education. There are, however, a number of initiatives in that context and we do recruit a number of people who have gone into science and technology careers who, at a certain point, would like to consider teaching. We give them the option to come back. This is important.

There is a perverse positivity around the fact that we are losing some teachers internationally. They are in very high demand. My colleague from the TUI mentioned that. It is evident when one travels internationally. The quality of people whom we get into initial teacher education is exceptional, as is the quality of our graduates. It is why countries are queuing up to recruit them. We are doing a good job on that front and the taxpayer and people who are paying fees are getting bang for their buck. Unfortunately, we may be contributing to the improvement of the education system in Dubai more than we are to an improvement in Dublin. That is important to remember.

Something that we have not mentioned so far is that there are populations of people who are reluctant to move into teaching. In particular, students from backgrounds where there might not be a tradition of attending college will often believe that teaching is not for them. A number of initiatives in the system are giving students who would never have thought of teaching an opportunity to move into that field. We in DCU are proud that 14% of our undergraduate primary students come through our Access programme and that, through the programme for access to higher education, PATH, fund next year, we will be accepting students into teacher education from schools that have never sent such a student to us before. That is an untapped source of teachers. They are excited about entering teacher education and will be significant role models for their schools and the teaching profession in the future.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Does Professor Ó Duibhir wish to add anything?

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: What we know and the data were mentioned. The Teaching

Council prepared a report, entitled *Striking the Balance: Teacher Supply in Ireland*, in 2015. As a result, the Department has set up the steering group. From memory, the report made 16 main recommendations, one of which was on primary education. The needs in primary education are relatively straightforward to analyse because every primary school teacher is qualified to teach all subjects. Analysing post-primary is more complicated and complex. As Dr. Looney mentioned, we need good data. When there is a crisis like this one, nothing beats having good data, as it allows us to analyse and get to the root cause. Everyone will offer an opinion on what he or she believes is the cause and people will be inclined to speak in promotion of their agendas. Having good data is key and can help to avoid the cyclical nature of the crisis. The steering group set up by the Department needs to be supported and given the resources and time to produce data and implement the recommendations in the *Striking the Balance: Teacher Supply in Ireland* report.

Regarding complementary subjects, languages are a relevant area. If someone has French, perhaps he or she could upskill in Spanish since he or she has the methodology and knows how to teach a second language. I understand that some modern language teachers have a certain amount of Gaelige and could upskill to teach it. In upskilling teachers, though, we must be careful not to rob Peter to pay Paul and create a gap somewhere else. Maths and physics were mentioned by Dr. Rowland. There are complementary areas. The key is to incentivise teachers. If I as a teacher have a job teaching two subjects, why would I want to put myself through all of the pain and sweat of learning and getting another qualification? It could be a way for people to renew their enthusiasm, but we would probably need some incentives to get them to do it.

Senator Lynn Ruane: I am sorry for missing the start of the session. I had to give a presentation elsewhere. I wish to make a couple of comments and observations and perhaps ask one question. I am not completely set against the idea of live streaming classes. I support many schools that lack resources and whose classes I would love to see live streamed as opposed to how they are currently provided. I have told the committee of how my daughter's school did not replace an Irish teacher during the leaving certificate year for more than three months. That absence meant the class did nothing. In such a situation, there was an opportunity for another teacher's class to be live streamed. Rather than using it all year round, though, live streaming could be very useful in providing cover where crises or small gaps occur and where the only other option is to provide no education.

My next point might be tied to the issue of the teacher shortage, that being, how our young people are being failed by having teachers handle subjects that they should not be teaching. Are teachers in those positions because there is a shortage and they have to take the jobs? For example, if an entire Spanish or French class is failing, it is suggested that it has to be the children's fault, not the teacher's. Are teachers being shoehorned into classes that they are not qualified to give? I do not know whether this has always happened or whether it is because of the shortage. Has it always been the case that some teachers are just not up to a certain standard of quality or interest in the subjects they are teaching and that this has had an impact?

I agree with the points about pay scales and so on and I understand how we could transform this situation were we to improve teachers' conditions. In most of the schools that I have attended and visited, though, I have seen teachers giving classes to foundation and higher level students in the same room. Those kids are being dragged into having the same standard of teaching even though they are all at different levels. Virtual learning could play a role in this regard, but does the fact that these schools are not creating enough classrooms to meet the individual needs of their teachers have anything to do with the teacher shortage? Would it be

addressed by tackling the shortage?

Is the shortage of teachers causing them to be in classrooms where they should not be? Thinking back to my own education, which was nearly 20 years ago, I sat in many classrooms where we were just handed out a worksheet or workbook, especially where Irish was concerned. Regardless of whether there has been a shortage of teachers, there has been a deficit in the teaching of Irish in schools for a long time. Can we diversify the teaching profession in terms of how Irish is taught, particularly DEIS schools, and can we create more opportunities for the migrant community and kids from working-class communities to become teachers? Many of the people in those populations are rooted in their communities and would be less likely to move to Dubai, or they are mature students who have no education and do not have a standard of maths or Irish. Is there room to create targeted programmes to get them into teaching? For some, the maths and Irish requirements can be an obstacle to entering the profession. If we diversify the profession, can we address the shortage with that long-term view?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): The witnesses do not have many questions to answer, so I might also invite brief questions from Senators Gallagher and Leyden.

Senator Robbie Gallagher: I apologise, as I was tied up at another meeting and missed some of the presentations. There are many good ideas floating around and I compliment the witnesses on their contributions.

It is disappointing that this problem has been allowed to develop to the point of becoming critical. We have given Dr. Rowland a bit of stick about his plan. Everyone, including him, accepts that there is no substitute for a teacher in the classroom, but his plan is not something that I would dismiss as an idea to address the critical situation facing us.

Ms Irwin put her finger on the issue. We can dance around it, but the reality is that, if we are serious about solving this problem, it will take money. Yesterday, we heard a report about the capitation grant for primary schools and how parents were contributing approximately €46 million per year for basic services like light and heat just to keep our schools open. I will not be political about this, but it comes down to choices that Governments make about which services we value.

Dr. Looney referred to another matter. To use my words rather than hers, there seems to be a vacuum. Judging from the witnesses' contributions, the Department does not seem to be listening to what their organisations have been telling it for a long time. Be it in terms of junior certificate reform or, as Dr. Looney mentioned, religious teaching in former VEC schools, the Department occasionally throws stuff overboard without any consultation or warning. That exacerbates an existing problem, and it is very frustrating. First, do the witnesses believe they are talking to themselves when they are talking to the Department and how long have they been flagging that this problem was coming down the tracks? Second, regarding substitute teachers, what is their view of a proposal whereby a basic salary would be paid to a substitute teacher? Regardless of the hours they would work, they would be guaranteed a basic salary, which might encourage people to take up the position.

I have two brief final questions, and I thank the Acting Chairman for the latitude. First, if there is goodwill on the part of the Department, what do the witnesses believe is the period of time it will take to address this issue? Second, if each of the witnesses were given one solution outside the financial end of it, which we believe is the critical issue, what would be the key recommendation they believe would have the maximum impact?

Senator Terry Leyden: I thank the Acting Chairman for allowing me participate in today's meeting. We have had a tremendous exchange between the people who have given evidence, which is rather interesting. There has been great dialogue and clarification with regard to issues.

In regard to equal pay, I would say to Ms Joanne Irwin that Senators Lynn Ruane, Maria Byrne and Robbie Gallagher were elected two years ago. I was elected 16 years ago and they are getting equal pay. That is the standard we have here. Deputies who were elected two years ago are getting the same pay as Deputies, like the former Taoiseach and others, who have been here for a very long time. We set a standard here to which we should adhere. I am sure my colleagues here would be very disappointed if they were getting €5,000 or €6,000 less than what I am getting, yet I am participating in this meeting. I want to make that point.

I have knowledge of the training and recruitment work of Dr. Seán Rowland, president of Hibernia College, who is accompanied by Denis Cummins, the academic dean of Hibernia College, which has trained more than 10,000 teachers without any subsidy, to my knowledge.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Yes, without any.

Senator Terry Leyden: Well done on bringing in such a high standard of teachers to the classroom. I have experience of the work of some of the teachers. Initially, there was resentment and pressure from the primary schools and now the most sought-after teachers are those who were trained in Hibernia College because most of them want to be teachers and have a passion to be trained and educated. That is where the rigorous standards, assessments and masters courses come in.

There has been a misunderstanding about the issue of distance education. I picked up on that a long time ago. I refer to circumstances where someone with the required knowledge can give one hour per week or whatever. It is not a replacement or a substitution. It is an addition. To get somebody from Harvard University to give a one-hour lecture in a supervised class is a magnificent idea. It broadens the mind of young people to see the technology and the interaction between that lecturer and the classroom, but it is not a replacement. Let no one misrepresent the position. That is done only in the circumstances of enhancing the educational experience of the young people who want to be educated.

I have a question for Dr. Rowland. How can he increase the capacity to cope with the current demand?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Does Dr. Rowland want to respond to some of the questions put to him?

Dr. Seán Rowland: I thank Senator Leyden for the kind words. They are much appreciated. The main question is how we can increase the numbers coming in to Hibernia College. To be fair, Dr. Anne Looney and I had an exchange a moment ago and we are not experiencing drops in our numbers, so let us start from that point. How do we build from where we are? I will talk about Hibernia College but I am sure all the other colleges can build from-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): To clarify, and this has come up a number of times - Ms Joanne Irwin mentioned it also - the numbers doing professional masters in education, PME, courses have dropped dramatically from approximately 2,000 in 2010 to approximately 700 last year.

Dr. Anne Looney: Yes.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I will not go to Dr. Looney directly but she might address that point in her contribution.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Ms Irwin is correct. The numbers have dropped at least 50% in the past ten years, some would say even 70%. Of the 10,000 we educate, 8,000 are educated at our primary level. We have only started educating at post-primary level in recent years. Our numbers were always low. They are where they are, but to answer the Acting Chairman's question, if we needed to get another 100 mathematics teachers, we would pay them. It is that simple. Money is the answer, as awful as that sounds. If we pay the tuition fee for them, and we do not get any money from the Government, so it is highly unlikely that will change suddenly, and our students-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Why not?

Dr. Seán Rowland: Why not pay for 300 or 400 of them over the next two or three years and solve the problem? We will get qualified teachers. Is that unfair? It is very fair to the students who are sitting there this week without a mathematics teacher. The situation is that we will have to pay the piper. We cannot get teachers on the cheap, and we should not. Let us see if we can get the best people available who will say they are finishing a degree and they want to go to anywhere in the country. We should pay them and see how many we get. They should be given a three-year contract with whoever it is and set out exactly what is wanted. Find out what everybody wants within the scope of paying them. I am just saying we should pay for their tuition. If they are travelling to a college, they will then have to take care of that cost. If they are coming to us, they do not have to travel. They can stay at home. If they are travelling to a different college, they will need to pay rent, but if their tuition is paid, I believe we will get somewhere. That is the most obvious answer to this issue.

We have people running around doing four and six hours. That is not fair on them or on the profession, and it is certainly losing our applicants. We will go to where the United Kingdom went in terms of its applicants. Having been involved in it for a number of years, I would say they are not at the standard at second or primary level that all of ours have reached. They certainly have great people but they do not have as many going into teaching now who would be of the calibre of those we get to interview. We interview everybody - primary, second level and post-primary - and we turn people away who do not pass the interview. We are looking for traits like empathy, just a regular personality. The committee should look at that because it is very simple.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I thank Dr. Rowland. To continue that I will call Dr. Looney, if she is ready.

Dr. Anne Looney: Yes. I suspect when it comes to the magic question asked by Senator Gallagher about the two key solutions we would choose, the answer would cost money, so I will leave that side to my colleague. Some of Senator Ruane's points, particularly about the way classes are organised, might be better addressed by colleagues from the management body. I would say to the Senator that I mentioned in an observation I was making that we are trying to widen the population of people coming into teaching and that we are proud of our partnership. We have two hubs on Dublin's north side where we are working with young people and older people to enable them to come into teaching. We have experienced some success, and we will be welcoming them in September. That is broadening the base of people coming into teaching.

That is important in ensuring we get a more diverse teaching population, not just high quality but also from a wider range of families. Some of those are coming from non-traditional backgrounds and are the children of immigrants. That will be an important development within the teaching profession and we in DCU are very proud of that. Other institutions are doing that as well.

On the issue of data and the numbers, I would remind the committee that the PME used to be called the HDip, which took one year to complete. In 2012, a decision was made to lengthen the period of teacher education in Ireland. I mentioned some of the reasons for that but additional resources were not provided to the higher educational institutions, which meant that most of them reduced their numbers of students by half because they had to keep the students twice as long. This resulted in a reduction in the number of students and applications, but those numbers have steadily returned. Last year, DCU experienced a 10% increase in its post-primary PME places. We are up 25% this year on last year for those places. This year, on Central Applications Office first choices, education as an undergraduate choice is up just short of 10% overall. Therefore, the idea-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Is that primary education or the concurrent degrees?

Dr. Anne Looney: All undergraduate primary and post-primary degrees. For us in DCU, all our undergraduate places - that is, concurrent and primary concurrent - are up. We are very pleased with that. We went out actively promoting teaching as a career and we are looking forward to welcoming, as I said, that wider, diverse population.

Senator Gallagher asked the magic question: what is the one thing we would do? We had a quick consultation.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: I will keep the committee in suspense for a moment, if I may, to address Senator Ruane's question about the teaching of Irish. The type of concurrent programme we are developing in Gaeilge and languages is to address these types of issues in order to produce language teachers from the very first day of their four-year university programme, education and languages running concurrently. They will spend time abroad and in the Gaeltacht and there will be a strong emphasis on how to teach language.

Does the Department of Education and Skills listen to us? At primary level, the Department determines the numbers that go into primary teaching when it comes to the publicly funded colleges. The Department therefore determines our B.Ed. and professional master of education numbers. If there is a shortage, the Department can lift the cap or increase the numbers. It does not cost the Department anything to increase the numbers doing our professional master of education, the two-year postgraduate programme, because we get no subvention. While Hibernia does not get a subvention, neither do publicly-funded colleges for their professional master of education programmes, so there is no extra cost to the State. We currently have 60 students. The Department could up that to allow us to take in double that number and it would not cost a penny.

Senator Terry Leyden: Why does the Department not do so?

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: Perhaps it is not listening to us on that issue.

Senator Terry Leyden: The building is subsidised. It is not subsidised for the private colleges. The building is one's heating-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Deputy Leyden, we will just let-----

Senator Terry Leyden: Just for clarification.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: There is no subvention. If our numbers increased from 60 to 120, we would not get an extra penny from the State.

May I answer-----

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Of course.

Dr. Anne Looney: The two magic questions.

Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir: -----the two magic questions? Senator Gallagher referred to a salary for substitute teachers. In many jurisdictions - for example, the UK and many other countries - there is a supply panel on which there are a number of teachers for whom substitution is their role for the year. They are contracted to be supply teachers, so if a teacher is out sick or on professional development, a teacher from the supply panel comes in. There were two pilots in Ireland throughout the 2000s but they were ended with the advent of austerity. We and, I think, the unions would suggest that such a model needs to be implemented, although perhaps slightly revised from what was previously implemented because it seems the Department feels it was too expensive. The answer to the question of primary schools being able to get teachers is to have a supply panel to be able to get substitute teachers. That is one suggestion. At post-primary, we would suggest full-time contracts. As Ms Irwin said, 22% of new entrants do not get a full-time contract. That will not attract teachers to stay in the country. To a parent faced with his or her son or daughter having perhaps €20,000 a year versus €40,000 or €50,000, it is clear what the choice would be.

Ms Joanne Irwin: In response to Senator Ruane's question, there absolutely are teachers who are teaching outside of their fields. In fairness to the management of the schools, however, they must have teachers in front of the class. It all comes back to the issue of resources. If resources were put into a school, this would not arise.

Mixed ability classes suit some students. They can learn from one another in mixed ability classes. They do not suit all students. The reform of the junior cycle is moving to common level papers. That may alleviate the problem somewhat as well.

I could not agree more with the Senator's comments on the diversification of the teaching profession. Students relate to the teachers who are in front of them. The teachers in front of them need to be in reach of the students' own perspectives and where they are from. I work in adult and further education and we have programmes that can be done by students who are adults or for whom the second-level system just did not suit them. They come to us to overcome the shortfalls to be able to progress to third level. It might take them longer to get there but they get there in the end.

To respond to Senator Gallagher, we have been beating the drum on the issue he raised for seven years, since 2011. Lack of consultation is always the problem. We have found that things progress when we are consulted. We saw this when we worked with Deputy Jan O'Sullivan on the junior cycle. We see it in the technological universities project in that when we are involved and consulted, things move forward. The Department of Education and Skills, in fairness to it, is not our problem in this regard. The Department and the officials do what their political masters tell them to do. This is a political decision as to whether or not to fix the new entrant

pay scales for teachers, for example. All these issues are political decisions, so it is members across the table who can rectify them because it is they who tell the Department of Education and Skills officials what to do, essentially. Sometimes we speak of the Department of Education and Skills in this regard. Ultimately, it is not the Department but the politicians.

One of the key recommendations is permanent contracts from the outset. I agree with Professor Ó Duibhir on this. That only 22% are getting full-time hours is ridiculous when we have such a shortage of teachers. On paying substitute teachers, the Union of Students in Ireland, USI, recently conducted research in conjunction with ICTU, ourselves, the ASTI and the INTO. What we suggested is that in the second year of the PME, when the students are out on their work placements, they would get paid for that, rather than being out in the schools effectively teaching classes for free. This would alleviate much of the substitute crisis as well. These teachers could register with the Teaching Council, albeit conditional registration for their second year. They can register for further education and then be paid. They would not get the qualified rate, but they would be paid. That would alleviate some of the problem.

In response to Senator Leyden, I am delighted Senators are finally acknowledging that there is no two-tier pay structure in Leinster House. If all the politicians in Leinster House acknowledged this, I do not think we would have two-tier pay scales anywhere in the public sector. As a result, we absolutely welcome his comment on that.

To respond to the question that was put to my colleague from Hibernia, publicly-funded higher education institutions are effectively capped in what they can take in because of the budget cuts and staffing restrictions. Those restrictions do not apply to private for-profit organisations. They do apply to publicly funded education. The universities have seen their funding cut by 26%, the institutes of technology by 32%, and at the same time they have had a 10% cut in staffing. Hence, they have restrictions placed upon them that private for-profit organisations do not. I just wanted to make that point.

Fr. Paul Connell: I will respond to some of Senator Ruane's questions. She asked about the teaching of Irish. I suspect, and I would like to see some research done on this, that the success of getting Irish as a full EU language has helped to open up the world of work in many ways to Irish graduates in a way that was not the case before, except perhaps in teaching or the Civil Service. Regarding substitute teachers, it is a reality and has been for some time that there must be a teacher in front of a classroom. Put simply, on our level, we cannot get substitute teachers qualified to teach the particular subjects of an absence because one does not know from day to day what teachers might be absent. One knows about some that are flagged within the service but one does not know about others. I welcome the suggestion that a basic salary be looked at for substitute teachers. I think that would help.

If I had one choice, entry to the PME would comprise perhaps an interview as well as just an application. I concur with my colleague from the TUI: there is a subsidy to Hibernia in the sense that Hibernia is treated exactly the same in our schools as the State colleges are in that we provide the same service for the PME students at no cost to Hibernia. Therefore, there is a difference between a publicly-funded institution, such as a third level college or ourselves, and Hibernia, which is a private company.

Senator Lynn Ruane: Through the Chair, may I pick up on a small point there? I understand how, given the shortage of teachers, we will end up with someone who is unqualified to teach a certain subject taught by an absentee, but I am wondering about teachers who are actually permanent employees, who are three, four, five, six or seven years into their employment

in teaching a subject that they clearly should not be teaching. Is this a whole other problem?

Fr. Paul Connell: In fairness, we try to avoid that at all costs. I do not think that is a difficulty.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I will let Mr. John Irwin come back in and then Dr. Rowland very briefly at the end. Charges were made against the latter, so I will have to get his response to them as well as to queries.

Mr. John Irwin: On Senator Gallagher's question as to whether we believe we are talking to ourselves when we talk to the Department, the answer is "No". I would concur with Ms Irwin fully on that. The Department is quite open and I would say that a number of the initiatives which have been taken in recent times are through the dialogue that has taken place. That dialogue has been facilitated by the Department and by the Teaching Council. There are initiatives taking place. I would find the Department very open, to be quite honest, when meeting with it.

Going back to the teaching of Irish, Ms Irwin said that the Irish education system was a high-performing education system. Through the Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA, results, OECD comparisons and so on, we are performing very highly, but one area where the improvement has not been as dramatic as in other areas is in Irish but I think that has to do with a lot of historical baggage that has been attached to Irish at times. There has been a huge initiative and a lot of support is going in to try to improve the profile of Irish within schools. In certain cases, students resent having to study the language and that has been detrimental to the success of the language in schools at times.

Looking at key recommendations in terms of how we solve the immediate problems, we can look at the second year of the Professional Master of Education, PME, and how it provides the opportunity for second year PME teachers to teach in schools and to be paid. This will also assist in alleviating some of the costs they have in terms of achieving their qualifications.

We have to look at two other areas. I refer to return pathways for those who are away and how we encourage them back into our system and how we make it easier for them to come back and identify vacancies easily. I refer also to the entry of experienced people from the private sector if they want to become involved and bring that experience to education and making that access easier.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): I will let Dr. Rowland in to respond to questions.

Dr. Seán Rowland: Thank you, Acting Chairman. Hibernia College would be very strong on the teaching of Irish. This year alone our students will spend over €2 million in dedicated Gaeltacht areas. We would be very supportive of our Gaeltachts and of them being of the highest calibre. Arising from this meeting, all I can say is that we would all agree that we should pay teachers equally and then move on from there. Our model must evolve. Our returning teachers are vital. The budget shows that the State sector has been crucified, with which we certainly empathise. Our State budget is zero. However, as pointed out, schools are extremely helpful when it comes to teaching practice, or TP as it is called. In some cases over the years, we have been told we are sponsored because the Department provides us with candidates who already have primary and secondary schooling. That is another way of looking at it. The bottom line is that we are providing a substantial number of teachers. We are doing the very best we can to make sure they are the best teachers for children and young people in this country.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Taking shots about whether one is private or public really does not matter. Some of the best institutions in the world, and which are in the top rankings, are private. We try to do our best and we do a very good job with a very modest budget. We should all be able to work together, whether private, religious, public or State, as long as we are doing accredited honours work.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas Byrne): Go raibh maith agat, Dr. Rowland. Ba mhaith liomsa mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le gach duine a tháinig anseo inniu. Beidh an coiste ag scríobh tuarascáil maidir le gach rud a bhí le rá sa choiste agus na moltaí atá curtha os ár gcomhair inniu agus ag na cruinnithe eile. Beimid ag plé leo go príobháideach agus ag scríobh na tuarascála sin.

I thank everybody for coming here today and for their extremely valuable contributions. I am not allowed to put down a motion without giving three days notice, but I would like to wish the unions and, indeed, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform the very best of luck this week as the talks start, pursuant to the clause in the public pay agreement on newly-qualified workers, which includes teachers but not solely teachers. From what members of this committee have said, I do not believe anybody disagrees with the proposal that teachers and, indeed, all public sector workers should be on identical pay scales and that pay scale equality should be brought in. We certainly hope there is a positive outcome. I believe I am expressing the view of the committee - looking around there is no dissent - that we support the talks this week and we wish and expect them to reach a successful conclusion.

It is proposed to go into private session to deal with a number of housekeeping matters. I thank the witnesses again.

The joint committee went into private session at 5.35 p.m and adjourned at 6.19 p.m. until 3.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 1 May 2018.