Election 2024 Briefing

EDUCATION



The present situation

On Educational Disadvantage

- ➤ The achievement of pupils in schools with concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is still well below that of other schools despite steady improvements since 2007.
- Family poverty remains one of the largest determinants of educational outcomes.
- ➤ The children of parents with low levels of education have significantly lower proficiency than those whose parents have higher levels of education.

On Early Childhood Education

- ➤ The most striking feature of investment in education in Ireland relative to other OECD countries is its under-investment in early childhood education.
- ➤ Consecutive studies show Ireland has spent just 0.1 per cent of GDP on pre-primary education compared to an OECD average which has increased from 0.5 to 0.8 per cent.
- ➤ Early childhood education and care has a profound and long-lasting impact on individual lives and on societies.

On Higher Education

- ➤ Having a 3rd level qualification is closely linked with higher employment rates and income levels throughout life. Adults with a tertiary degree in Ireland earn on average 81 per cent more than adults with upper secondary education.
- ➤ The employment rate is 11 percentage points higher for degree holders than for those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education¹.

The benefits of investing in education, to the individual, to the economy and to society, far outweigh any initial outlay of resources.

➤ Education funding per undergraduate student (full-time, part-time, remote and FETAC) enrolled in 2019 was 50 per cent lower than in 2008².

On Adult Literacy

A very significant proportion of Ireland's adult population possesses only very basic literacy, numeracy and information-processing skills. The most recent OECD PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills found that³:

- ➤ 18 per cent of Irish adults have a literacy level at or below Level 1.
- ➤ 26 per cent of Irish adults have a numeracy level at or below Level 1.
- ➤ 42 per cent of Irish adults scored at or below Level 1 for problem solving in technology-rich environments.

On Lifelong Learning and Digital Skills

- ➤ Lifelong learning is essential to ensure Ireland can meet the challenges that automation and adaptation pose to the future of work.
- ➤ Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate is slowly improving 13 per cent in 2019.
- ➤ Those engaged in lifelong learning are more likely to be professionals rather than those with lower skills.
- Less than half of the adult population has at least basic digital skills and only 28 per cent of people have digital skills above a basic level.

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBu

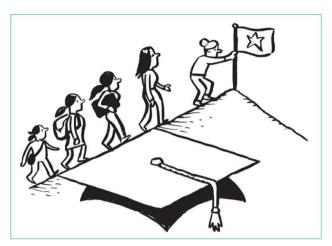
<u>dgetOffice/2019/2019-11-25</u> <u>an-overview-of-tertiary-</u>education-funding-in-ireland en.pdf

https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019 CN IRL.pdf

³ https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/

What type of education system does Ireland need?

An education system that provides relevant education for all people throughout their lives, so that they can participate fully and meaningfully in developing themselves, their community and the wider society



Things a new Government can do to develop a system that provides relevant education for all people throughout their lives

- ➤ Deliver a long-term sustainable, appropriately funded, education strategy that takes a whole-person, life-cycle approach to learning with due consideration to education as a part of the commons.
- ➤ Make the improvement of educational outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and disadvantaged communities a policy priority.
- Make addressing our high pupil teacher ratios and class sizes a priority.
- > Commit to increasing investment in Early Childhood Care and Education by 0.1 per cent of GDP annually to meet the OECD average by 2025.
- Implement a well-resourced and integrated Early Learning policy to ensure: (i) all children are provided with rich outdoor learning opportunities which are so vital to development; (ii) that all families and children are fully represented; (iii) that ongoing training and professional development is provided for staff, and (iv) that working conditions for staff in the sector are improved.
- > Develop a framework to deliver sustainable funding revenues for higher education over the next five years with a roadmap to 2028.
- Make better access to higher education for students from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, more diverse access routes for underrepresented groups and improving lifelong and flexible learning policy priority.
- > Set ambitious targets for levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills among adults and fully resource an adult skills strategy.
- > Set a more ambitious lifelong target to reach 20 per cent by 2026, ensuring sufficient resources are made available.
- Develop an integrated lifelong learning, skills development, digital transition, vocational training, apprenticeship and reskilling strategy.