

Budget 2008 displays 'total lack of understanding' of role of education, says IFUT

14 October 2008

The Irish Federation of University Teachers has expressed dismay at the range and extent of cutbacks affecting education in Budget 2008.

The Minister for Education, Mr Batt O'Keefe, TD, has displayed a lack of understanding and failed to impress on the Minister for Finance the importance of adequately funding education to promote economic and social development, IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings said.

"Apart from the continued massive underfunding of the educational sector, the Budget reveals new evidence of the Minister's lack of empathy with the sector.

"The anticipated massive increase in third-level registration fees, elimination of child benefit for students over 18 and the abolition of the Early Childhood Development Centre and Education Disadvantage Committee all point to a serious decline in educational opportunity for disadvantaged sectors of society.

"These cuts display a complete lack of understanding of the sacrifices of parents seeking to educate their children and, combined with increases in direct and indirect taxation, will serve to quickly exacerbate educational disadvantage.

"The government should immediately reverse these Budgetary provisions in light of the highly negative impact they will have throughout the education system. Otherwise recent statements by the Minister for Education in support of promoting a fairer education system will be revealed as mere platitudes and a gross failure on his part to represent the needs of education in the interests of our young people and the future economic and social development of this state," Mike Jennings said.

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