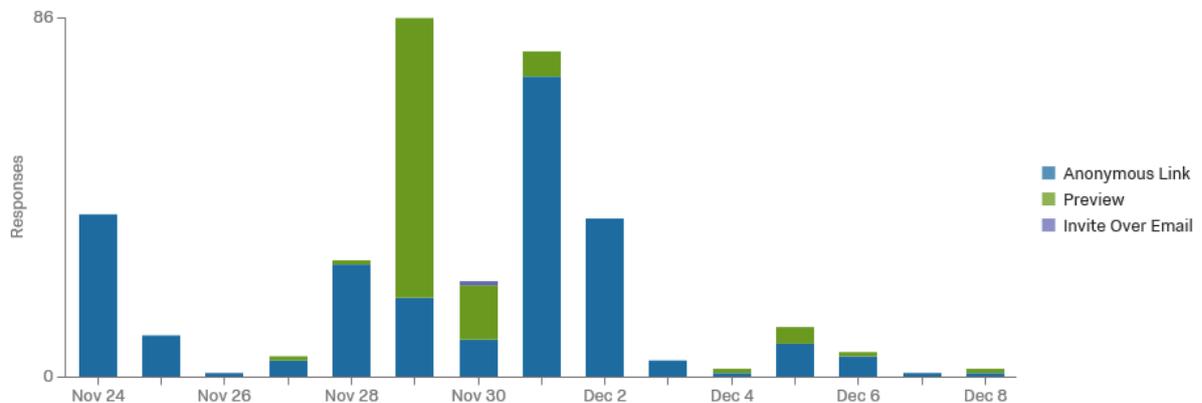


# Teaching Across The Divide

Quantitative Research – On-line Survey Interim Review

## Phase #2 Progress Report



## General Observations

Survey completion rates have been generally satisfactory. The target set for survey completion by the end of this second phase was 600 (i.e. slightly above the lowest acceptable figure within which statistical significance could be claimed – 582). The actual current figure is 546. With a further 12 day period to go before the originally envisaged end date (23<sup>rd</sup> December) it is reasonable to expect that the minimum required level will be achieved and surpassed.

The only previous similar investigation into this area (Equality Commission 2004) achieved an overview of approximately 1,629 teachers from 80 schools (with 75 or more pupils) representing the key categories in the educational system. The figures that they derived were provided by the schools rather than by teachers themselves and provided a breakdown of staff numbers by religious-community identity. It lacked the depth of insight that will be provided by this survey of individual teachers which will identify their community, ethnic, national identity, their educational paths from primary school to ITE, the sectors that they have taught in during their careers in education and their union membership.

It is my intention to ensure that the number surveyed in this research will exceed 5% of the population of teachers currently employed in mainstream Primary and Post Primary Schools in NI (i.e. 989 of 18,775) – as stated in the previous review, were a figure of 1,010 respondents to be reached then the margin of error for the findings would be reduced to 3% at a 95% confidence level.

To date respondents have reported no major practical difficulties in completing the survey; its brevity has been applauded. The strategies used to promote the survey (in addition to the mass circulation to schools) and encourage its completion have proven to be time intensive and appear to follow the rule of diminishing returns. To progress further there appear to be two main co-dependent challenges:

1. How to get past gate keepers
  - a. Or alternatively, how to get gatekeepers to act as advocates
2. How to get direct access to teachers

There is never an 'ideal time' for such a survey – teachers' annual cycles vary greatly between the various key stages. The period chosen for example is particularly problematic for those P7 teachers preparing pupils for transfer tests and for those teachers involved in the organising of school Christmas events or Nativity plays. This period has been further complicated by industrial action by NASUWT in Belfast and Newtownabbey and action *short of strike* by members of INTO, UTU and ATL. A number of principals have reported that, in accord with the *work to rule*, they are reluctant to ask teachers to do anything outside their essential core duties.

### Mass Circulation to Schools

Whilst the first circulation of the survey (15<sup>th</sup> November) to the info@... Email addresses of all mainstream schools in NI resulted in over 100 respondents completing and returning it on that day. Smaller numbers completed the survey over the next three days and four days after its release the numbers completing had dropped to virtually nil. The second mass circulation (28<sup>th</sup> November) produced only another 80 on its first day. It may therefore be expected that the third and final circulation (11<sup>th</sup> December) will produce fewer again – I suspect that those who received the email and were enthusiastic about the survey have already acted to complete it.

### Presence at Events

The recruitment of additional respondents has been a labour intensive task with varying degrees of success. My presence at the APTIS principals' conference and SELF conference allowed me to engage directly with teachers and their gate keepers (head teachers). Where I have been able to speak directly with teachers they have invariably gone on to complete the survey and have frequently commented on the need for such research (these remarks have been echoed by many of those who completed the 'any further comment' section of the survey). This is consistent with feedback given during the piloting exercise.

### Circulation to Individual Teachers

Individual teachers whose email addresses I already had, were contacted directly and invited to complete the survey; they were also asked to circulate it among their social/professional circles. Teachers who had in the course of completing the survey provided email contact details by way of consent for further involvement in the research (i.e. the interview phase) were also contacted directly and asked to facilitate the wider distribution of the survey in their social/professional circles. A series of phone calls to known principals on 28<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December boosted completion rates notably.

### Social Media

I posted a link to the survey on my own website and directed individual teachers towards it through use of business cards. ATL circulated an email request to all NI members. UTU and INTO put links to the survey on their website. The survey was also promoted (with a link) through my Facebook and Twitter feeds. It impossible to assess how this may have affected the completion rate.

### Bias Avoidance

The previous review had identified a number of key variables which needed to be balanced, in so far as was possible, within the sample in order to ensure that the sample reflected the overall population of teachers in NI and avoid skewed, biased and unreliable results:

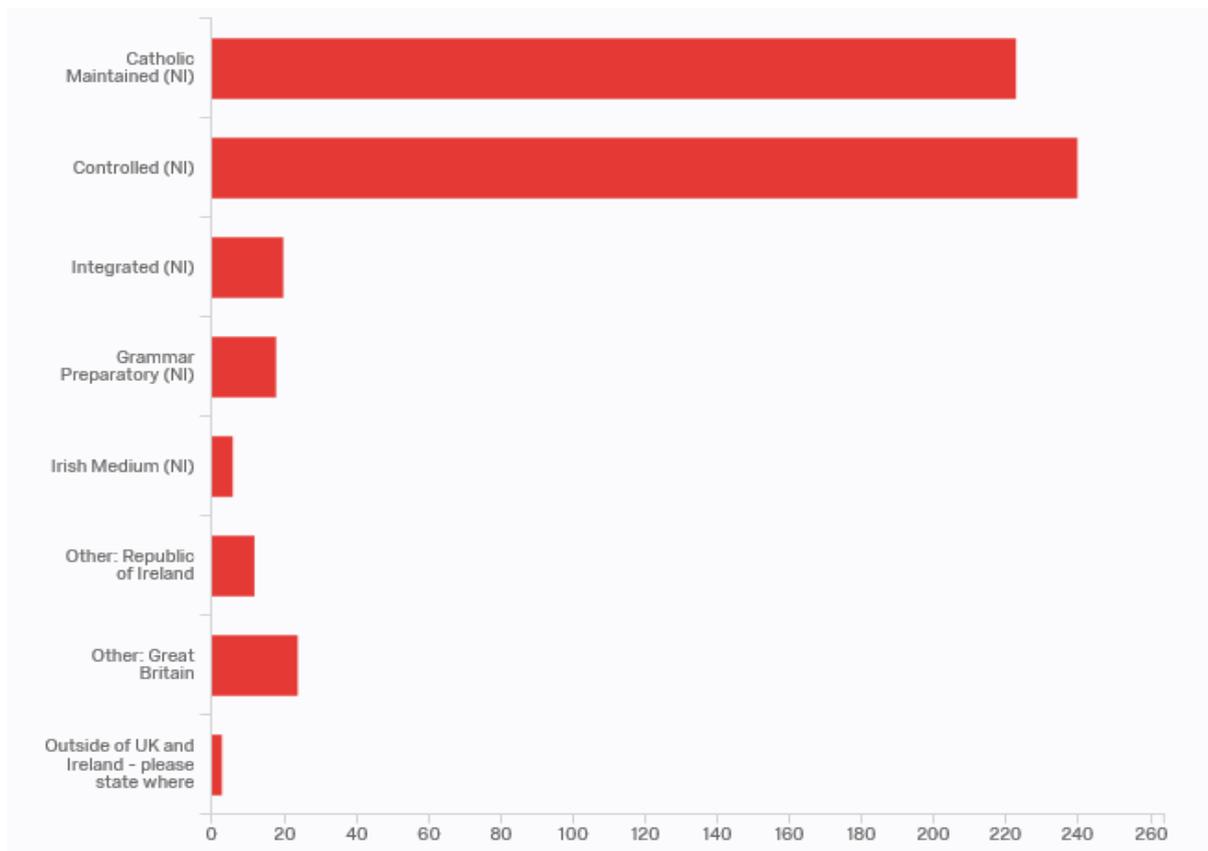
- Religion

- Gender
- Location
- Primary/Post Primary
- Community Sector

Qualtrics software allows for the ongoing monitoring of returns. It would appear that without direct attention and remedial action the results will show a significant imbalance with regard to some of the above categories.

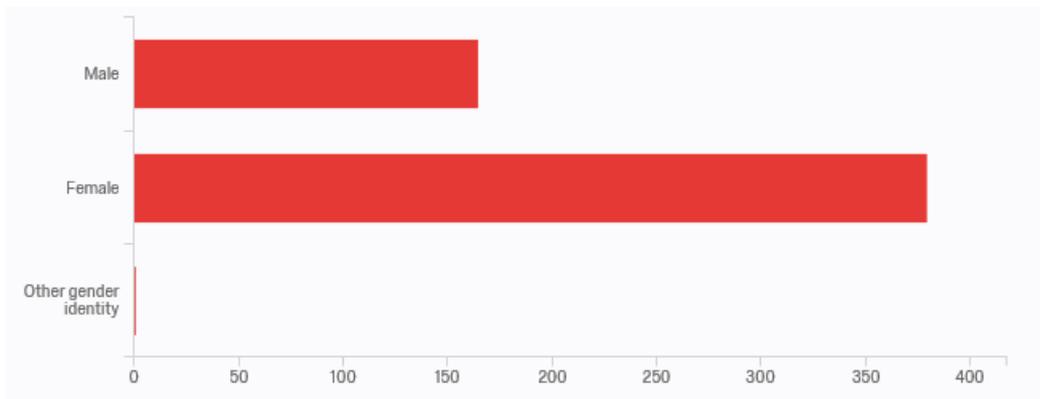
### Religion

No current figures are available to break the population of teachers down by religion – although the 2011 census recorded that roughly equal numbers of Protestants and Catholics identified their profession as ‘teacher’. The determinate for religion for the purposes of this research has been decided to be Primary School attended. The results for survey completions show no substantial imbalance between Catholic and Protestant teachers and at this stage no action is required – although this will need to be monitored throughout the period of data collection:



### Gender

DE statistics (2016) show that 76.8% of all teachers are female and 23.2% are male. The survey completion rates have a male bias – approximately 30% of responses to date have been from men. DE stats indicate that males are disproportionately represented in senior posts within schools – over 40% of principals and 35% of deputy principals are male. This may be an indication that principals, who receive the survey through the info@... address, are completing the survey but that it is not reaching and/or being completed by ‘ordinary’ teachers.

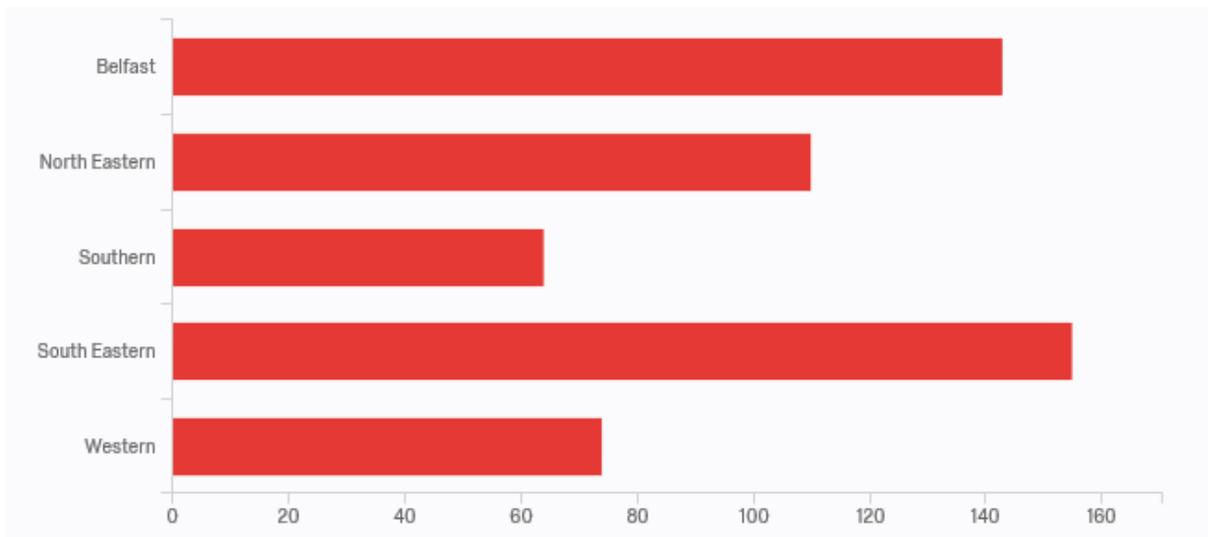


**ACTION:**

To ensure that the survey sample reflects the workforce a balance needs to be sought. If a 23:77 ratio is to be attained for a sample of 1,000 then a further 80 male teachers and 390 female teachers will be required – this may be attained simply by reaching ‘ordinary’ teachers rather than the school leaders who, as illustrated above, may be currently over-represented.

**Location**

DE figures show that the size of the teaching workforce in each of the five ‘old’ ELB areas is largely comparable. The uptake of the survey shows a notable bias in those areas where I am professionally better known and where I have most social connections (South East and Belfast).



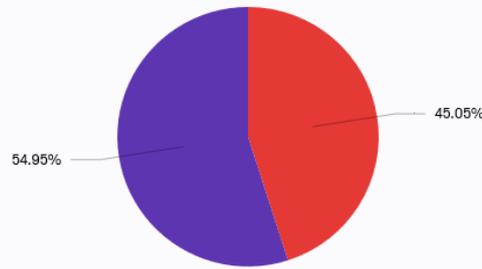
**ACTION:**

To ensure a geographical balance between these regions (within a sample size of 1,000) – each would require 200 teachers to take the survey. Belfast and South East are not far off this figure already but meeting this goal within the Southern and Western regions (and to a lesser extent North East) will require targeting.

**School Type**

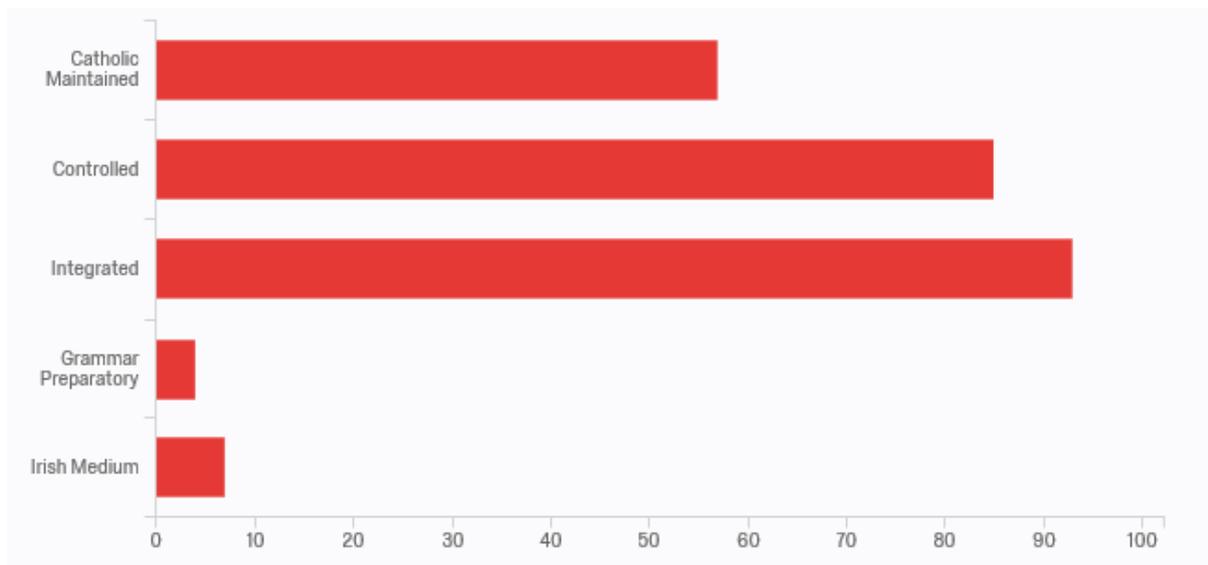
The survey has been completed by more Post Primary teachers than Primary (as below) 55% to 45%. This is comparable with the proportions employed in these sectors 53% and 47% respectively (DE

2016 figures). No specific action is required at this stage other than on-going monitoring to ensure that this balance does not slip significantly one way or the other.



### Primary Schools by Sector

It is evident that Integrated schools are particularly over represented in the numbers that have undertaken the survey so-far. DE figures would suggest that, to ensure balance, 45% should be from the Controlled Sector, 45% from the Maintained, 7% Integrated and 3% 'other' (from DE 2016 Figures<sup>1</sup>). As shown below the figures attained are currently 35%, 23%, 38% and 4% for these respective sectors.



### ACTION:

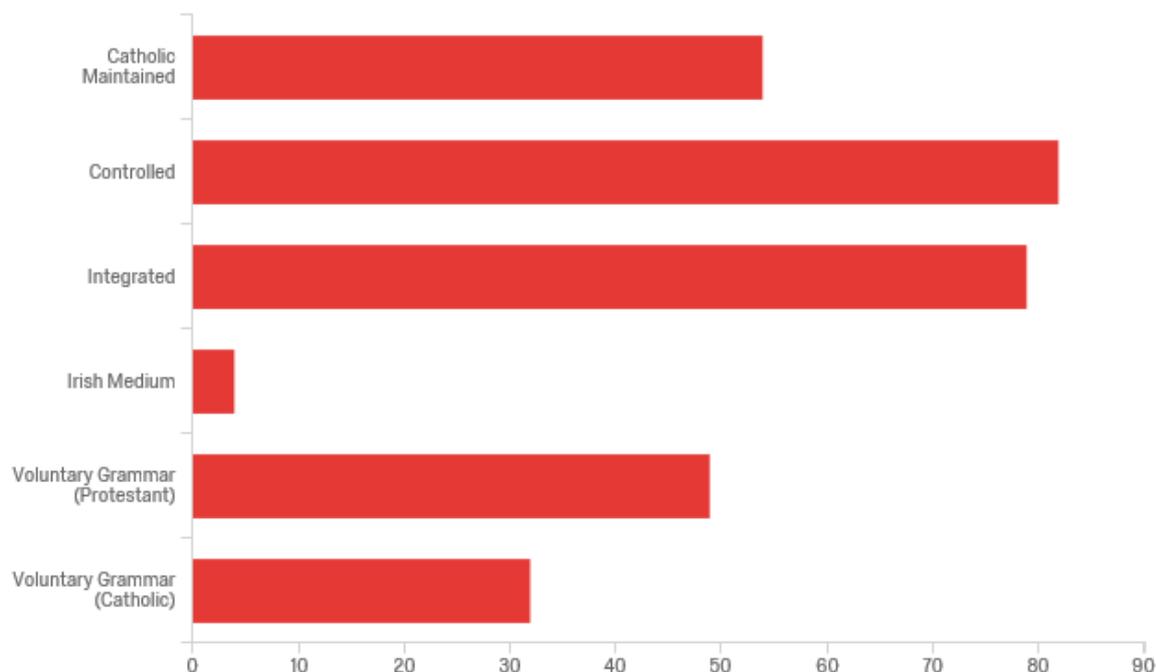
To ensure a sectoral balance within the Primary School sample (within a sample size for the Primary Sector of around 500) – it is necessary that the maintained and controlled sectors provide all of the additional 230 respondents between them, with a slightly larger proportion from the Maintained sector. Integrated has already passed their target and no further responses from Prep or Irish Medium schools are needed to obtain balance.

Significant (exclusive) targeting of survey completion by teachers in Controlled and Maintained primary schools is required in order that bias is avoided.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/FTE%20Time%20Series%2C%202006%2007%20-%202015%2016%20-%20revised%20Nov%2016.XLSX>

## Post Primary Schools by Sector

The issue of over-representation of teachers from the Integrated Sector in the completion of the survey is evident again for Post Primary schools. Current DE stats suggest that the percentages of teachers in each of the sectors should be in the order of 28% Maintained, 29% Controlled, 9% Integrated, 16% Catholic Vol Grammar 16% Protestant Vol Grammar and <1% Irish Medium. The percentages achieved so far 18% Maintained, 23% Controlled, 26% Integrated, 11% Catholic Vol Grammar 16% Protestant Vol Grammar and 1.5% Irish Medium. 300 post primary teachers have completed the survey to date – a further 200 respondents or so are required.



### ACTION:

To ensure the required proportions additional teachers need to be recruited from both Maintained and Controlled schools and the Grammar schools on both sides. The quota for Irish Medium has been fulfilled and it is already clear that, if the sample size of 1,000 is achieved, the Integrated Sector will be over-represented when the survey closes.

## Conclusions and Proposals.

Teachers in the following categories are currently under-represented in the survey:

- Southern and Western Regions (and to a lesser extent North Eastern)
- Female teachers
- Primary school teachers employed in Controlled and Maintained Schools
- Post Primary Teachers in Controlled and Maintained Schools, and Voluntary Grammar schools

If these gaps are not addressed, then the results of the survey will have an inbuilt bias – however unintentional. Steps need to be taken to actively address and offset this. The following steps are proposed.

1. The survey will be circulated again to all schools as planned on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December and responses will be requested up to 23<sup>rd</sup> December. Focussed reminders will be forwarded to schools in the missing categories.
2. The survey will close for submissions on 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec
3. After that date respondents will be collected by invitation
4. Appointments to meet with staff teams in schools that fit the identified target areas (regions, sectors) will be made during December '16
5. The month of January will be used to access school staff teams directly at staff meetings etc in the categories identified as being missing – external gatekeepers will be utilised to ease access e.g. University contacts, EA contacts, Unions, CRIS and others.
6. Schools in the South East and Belfast will not be targeted.
7. Integrated Schools will not be targeted.
8. Irish Medium schools will not be targeted.

With a concerted effort the survey will reach the target of 1,010 respondents and be able to be closed to all new respondents at the end of January 2017 – the process of applying cross-tabs and statistically analysing the data produced will be greatly enhanced by having conducted the entire survey procedure on-line. Initial results should be able to be made available within a few days.

There would appear to be considerable interest on the part of those completing the survey to discover what emerges from it. I therefore propose that the results are posted on my website (or the UNESCO pages of the UU website) and that an email is circulated to schools highlighting key findings and providing a link to the report as soon as possible after the survey is closed.