

## **Evaluation of Public Attitudes to the Teaching Profession** **Summary of Findings from iReach Market Research**

iReach Market Research was appointed by the Teaching Council in October 2009 to carry out attitudinal research on the teaching profession. The brief included questionnaire design, fieldwork, analysis and presentation of findings.

A list of questions is included in Appendix 1.

Fieldwork was carried out using an online methodology during the period 12-20 November 2009. The 1,000 respondents were drawn from an iReach panel of 15,000 adults built on a nationally representative model. Some 45% of respondents were parents while 13% were teachers or had been teachers. A full breakdown of respondents across a range of variables (economic, age, gender, region, etc.) is included in Appendix 2.

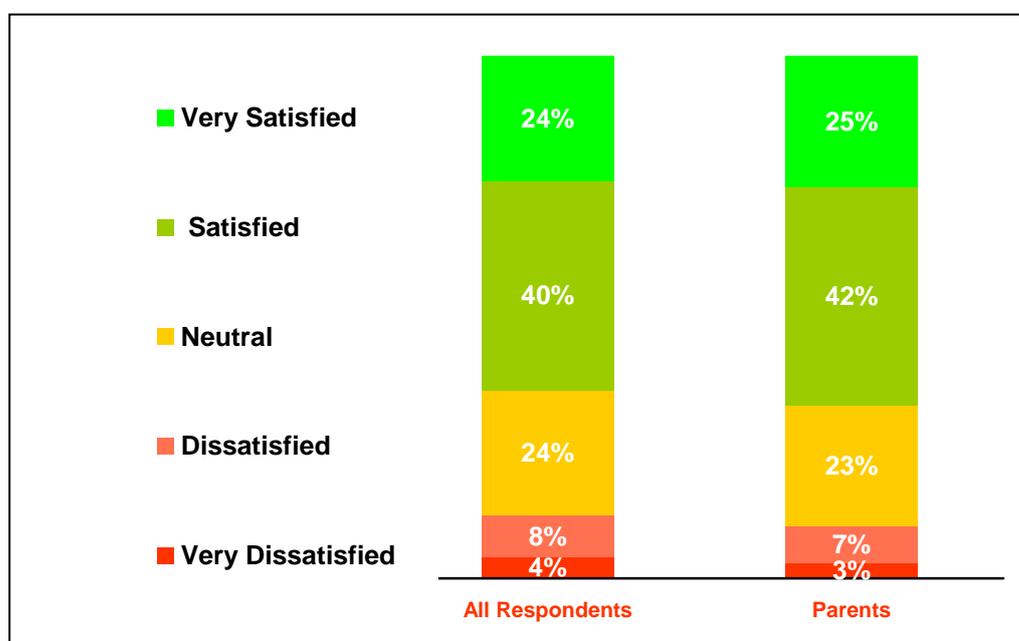
### **Key Findings**

#### **High level of satisfaction with the way teachers do their jobs**

Overall, there was a high level of satisfaction with the way teachers do their jobs with almost one in four (24%) very satisfied<sup>1</sup> with the way teachers do their jobs and a further 40% satisfied<sup>2</sup>. By contrast, only 12% were dissatisfied<sup>3</sup> or very dissatisfied<sup>4</sup> with the way teachers do their jobs. When compared with the other occupations and professions, they ranked second only to nurses.

The level of satisfaction was higher among parents than non-parents.

**Q: Please rate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the way the following people do their jobs – Teaching (n = 1,000)**



<sup>1</sup> Very satisfied = those who selected a 10 or 9 rating

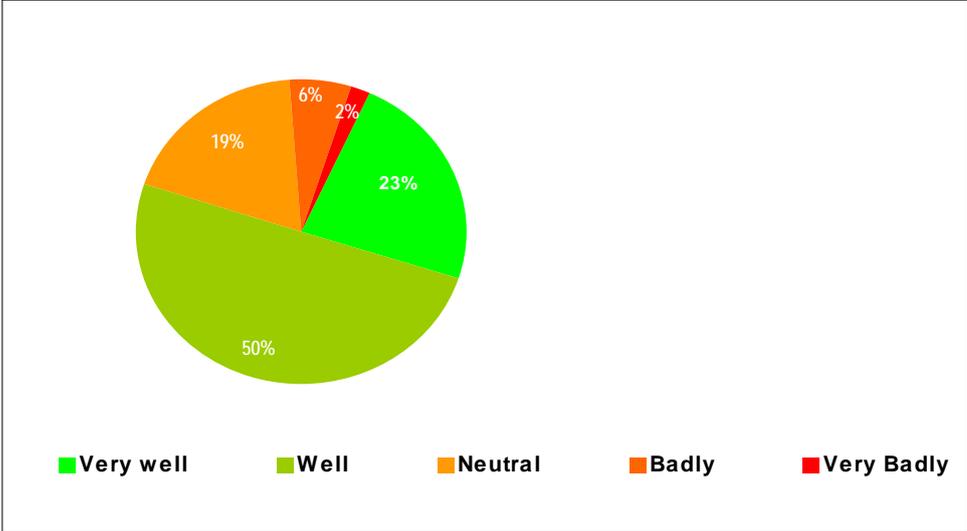
<sup>2</sup> Satisfied = those who selected an 8 or 7 rating

<sup>3</sup> Dissatisfied = those who selected a 4 or 3 rating

<sup>4</sup> Very dissatisfied = those who selected a 2 or 1 rating

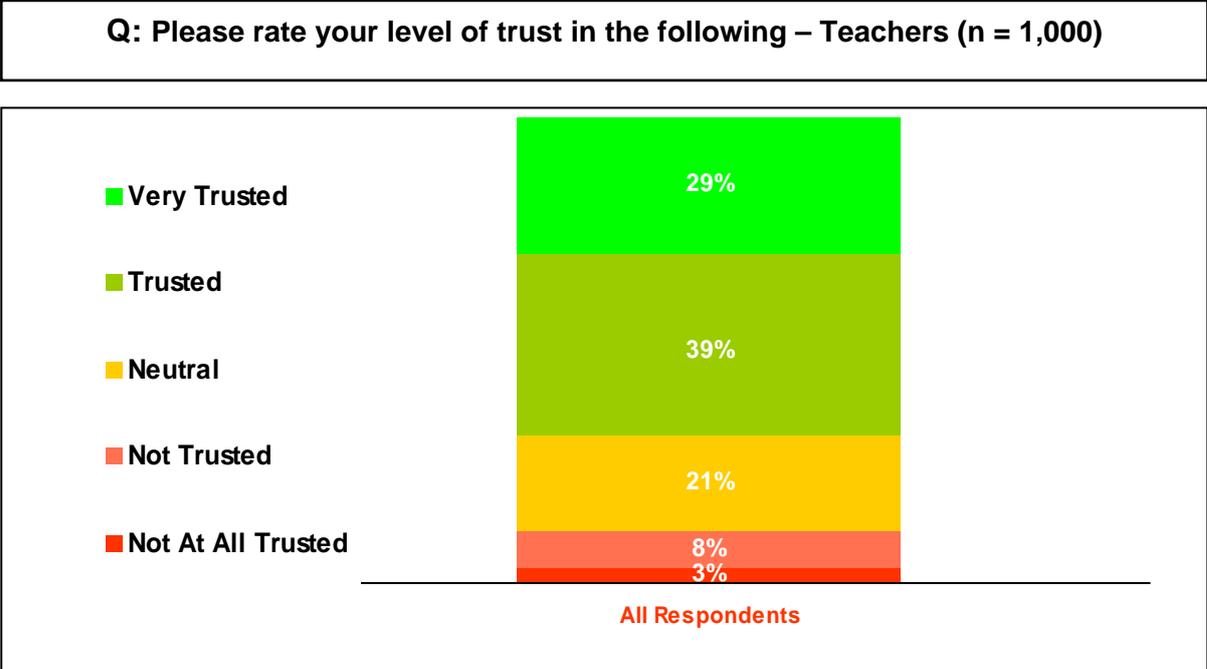
In a separate question, parents were asked “how well or badly” they think teachers do their jobs. Almost three in every four said that teachers do their jobs either very well or well, while only 6% said that teachers do their job badly or very badly.

**Q: As a parent or guardian, how well or badly would you say that most teachers do their job nowadays? (n = 453)**



**High level of trust in teachers**

There was a high level of trust in teachers when compared to other occupations and professions, with 29% rating teachers as very trusted<sup>5</sup> and almost a further 40% rating them as trusted<sup>6</sup>. By contrast, fewer than 11% rated their level of trust in teachers as not trusted<sup>7</sup> or not trusted at all<sup>8</sup>. When compared with 11 other professions and occupations, they ranked third after nurses and doctors.



<sup>5</sup> Very trusted = those who selected a 10 or 9 rating

<sup>6</sup> Trusted = those who selected an 8 or 7 rating

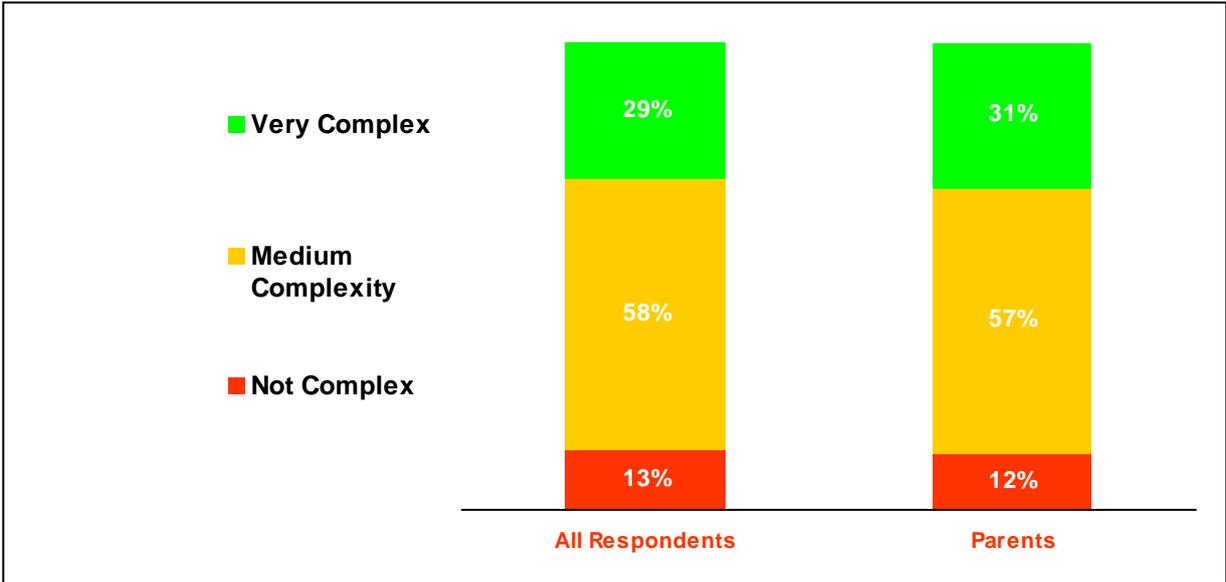
<sup>7</sup> Not trusted = those who selected a 4 or 3 rating

<sup>8</sup> Not trusted at all = those who selected a 2 or 1 rating

**Teaching perceived as a profession with a medium to high level of complexity**

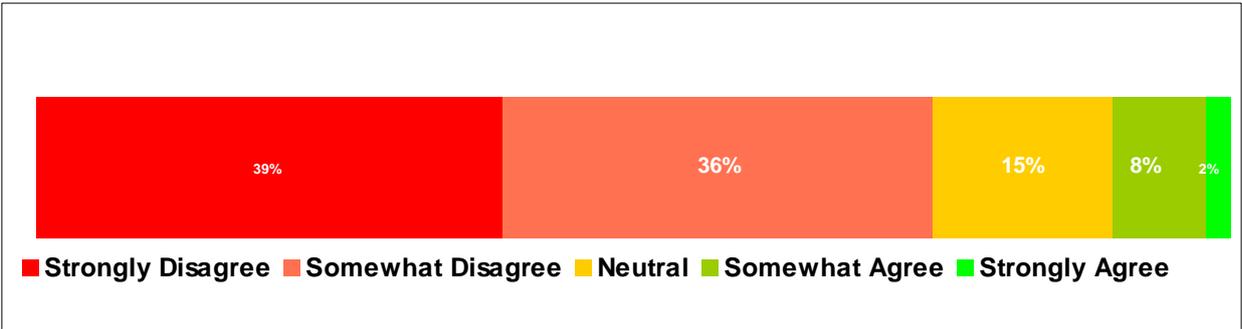
There is a public perception that teaching is a profession with a medium (58%) to high (29%) level of complexity, with parents appearing to have a slightly better understanding of the complexity of the role. Compared with other occupations and professions, the level of complexity required ranked above average.

**Q: How complex do you think is the work of the teaching profession?  
(n = 1,000)**



This is echoed in the response to a separate question in the survey when three in every four respondents (75%) disagreed with the statement that “teaching is an easy job”.

**Q: Please read the following statements carefully and state whether you agree or disagree with each of them – teaching is an easy job**

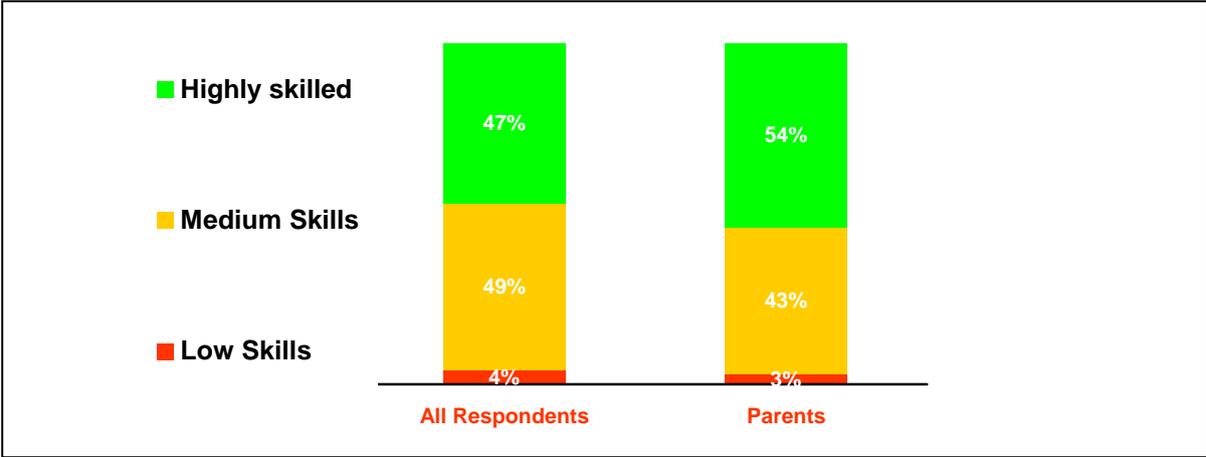


**Teaching perceived as a profession with a medium to high level of skill required**

Similarly, there is a perception that there is a medium to high level of skill required to be a teacher with 49% of respondents rating the role as requiring medium skill levels and a further 47% saying that teaching is a highly skilled profession. Compared with other professions, the level of skill required ranked above average.

Parents perceive the required level of skill to be higher than did non-parents, perhaps as a result of their closer proximity to teachers.

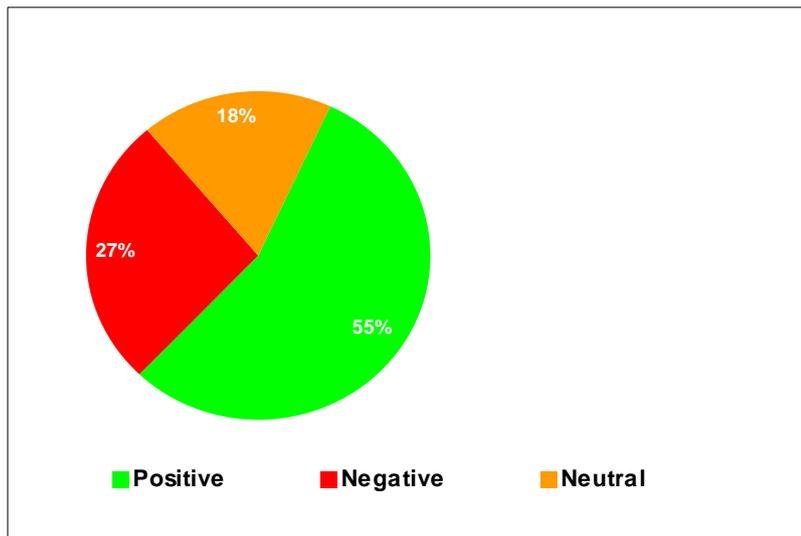
**Q: Please rate the following – teachers – according to the level of skill required: (n = 1,000)**



## Majority associate teaching with positive words

When asked to list the first words that come to mind when they think of the teaching profession, the majority (55%) listed words which were categorised by iReach as “positive”. Approximately 27% listed words which iReach categorised as “neutral”. Fewer than one in five respondents selected words which iReach categorised as “negative”.

**Q: What are the first words that come to mind when you think of teachers?**



## Characteristics of Teachers – Dedicated/Hardworking/Expert

When presented with a list of twelve characteristics, respondents selected “dedicated”, “hardworking” and “expert (knowledgeable)” as the ones they most associated with teaching.

## Attractions and Challenges Associated with the Profession

Work-life balance, the opportunity to work with children and the opportunity to make a difference are the most commonly perceived attractions that respondents associated with the teaching profession. On the other hand, the challenges of discipline together with class size and insufficient resources are perceived today as the most pressing issues associated with the teaching role. Four in every five respondents considered teaching to be a difficult job and almost the same number (78%) agreed that teachers should be given regular opportunities for upskilling.

## Various Prompted Statements

Almost eight in every ten (77%) respondents agreed that “in general teachers do a good job”.

A similar proportion (80%) agreed that “teachers play an important role in our society”.

Seven in every ten (70%) respondents agreed that “teachers make a valuable contribution to the community through their involvement in sporting, cultural and other activities” and that

“teachers play an important part in the development of values”. A similar proportion (69%) of respondents agreed that teachers work towards the achievement of a high quality education.

More than six in ten (62%) agreed that “teachers do a lot of out-of-hours work (e.g. class preparation)” and almost the same number (59%) agreed that “teachers are well paid for the job that they do”.

A majority (56%) of respondents agreed with the statement that “teachers act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work” and a similar proportion (54%) agreed that “teachers are committed to the highest standards of professionalism” and to “the rounded development of their students”. A similar majority (55%) agreed that “teachers are good at motivating students to learn” while 56% agreed that “teachers play an important role in the promotion of citizenship”. Just over half (52%) agreed that teachers play an important part in the development of the economy.

Almost half of respondents (49%) agreed that “parents/guardians expect too much of teachers”, while 28% agreed that “students expect too much of teachers” . Almost half (45%) agreed that “teachers work well with parents”.

48% agreed that teachers are experts in their field.

More than four in ten (42%) agreed that “teachers concentrate too much on academic results and not enough on other areas of student development”.

Only three in every ten respondents (30%) agreed that “teachers are sufficiently accountable for the quality of their work”.

Only one in four respondents agreed with the statement that “teachers pay too little attention to the rights and feelings of students”. Similarly, only one in five disagreed that “teachers respect the rights and opinions of parents and students”.

40% of respondents agreed that “teachers get a lot of unfair press”. When neutral answers are taken into account, fewer than one in three (29%) disagreed<sup>9</sup> with this statement.

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<sup>9</sup> Note

The proportions identified as having agreed include those who selected the “strongly agree” and “somewhat agree” categories. The proportions identified as having disagreed include those who selected “strongly disagree” and “somewhat disagree” categories.

## Appendix 1

### List of Questions

1. What gender are you?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
2. What age group do you fall into
  - a. 18-24
  - b. 25-34
  - c. 35-44
  - d. 45-54
  - e. 55-64
  - f. 65+
  
3. Please state whether you have children according to their stage in the education system
  - a. No Children
  - b. Pre-school children/infants
  - c. Children in primary school
  - d. Children in post-primary school
  - e. Children in third level
  - f. Children who have finished education
  
4. In which region do you currently live
  - a. Leinster
  - b. Munster
  - c. Connacht
  - d. Ulster
  
5. Where do you live
  - a. In the countryside
  - b. In a village
  - c. In a town (1500+ population)
  - d. In a city (including suburbs of that city)
  
6. Can you please indicate your highest level of education
  - a. Primary
  - b. Post-Primary
  - c. Third Level
  - d. Post Graduate
  
7. Can you please indicate your current working status
  - a. Working full-time
  - b. Working part-time
  - c. Self-employed
  - d. Unemployed/Job Seeking
  - e. Looking after family/Homemaker
  - f. Retired
  - g. Student
  - h. Other

8. If a, b or c are chosen , please tell us the sector in which you work:
- a. Financial Services
  - b. Business Services
  - c. Information Technology
  - d. Telecommunications
  - e. Media/Publishing
  - f. Entertainment/Culture/Sport
  - g. Retail
  - h. Wholesale
  - i. Transport/Distribution
  - j. Construction
  - k. Manufacturing
  - l. Energy/Utilities
  - m. Dairy Sector
  - n. Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing
  - o. Tourism/Hotel and Restaurant
  - p. Healthcare and Social Work
  - q. Government/Public Sector
  - r. Education
  - s. Other
9. Please rate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the way the following people do their jobs (1 – 10 where 1 is not at all satisfied and 10 is very satisfied)
- a. Accountant
  - b. Banker
  - c. Civil Servant
  - d. Doctor
  - e. Journalist
  - f. Lawyer
  - g. Nurse
  - h. Politician
  - i. Priest
  - j. Garda
  - k. Social Worker
  - l. Teacher
10. Please rate your level of trust in the following (1 – 10 where 1 is not at all trusted and 10 is very trusted)
- a. Accountant
  - b. Banker
  - c. Civil Servant
  - d. Doctor
  - e. Journalist
  - f. Lawyer
  - g. Nurse
  - h. Politician
  - i. Priest
  - j. Garda
  - k. Social Worker
  - l. Teacher

11. How complex do you think is the work of the following? (Not complex, Medium Complexity, Very Complex)

- a. Accountant
- b. Banker
- c. Civil Servant
- d. Doctor
- e. Journalist
- f. Lawyer
- g. Nurse
- h. Politician
- i. Priest
- j. Garda
- k. Social Worker
- l. Teacher

12. Please sort the following according to the level of skill required (Low skill, medium skill level, highly skilled):

- a. Accountant
- b. Banker
- c. Civil Servant
- d. Doctor
- e. Journalist
- f. Lawyer
- g. Nurse
- h. Politician
- i. Priest
- j. Garda
- k. Social Worker
- l. Teacher

13. Have you worked as a teacher?

- a. No
- b. I am a teacher
- c. I have been a teacher

14. Has any member of your family worked as a teacher?

- a. No
- b. Member of immediate family is a teacher
- c. Member of immediate family has been a teacher

15. What are the first words that come to mind when you think of teachers?

16. Which words or phrases would you associate with the teaching profession?

- a. Competent
- b. Decision-maker
- c. Dedicated
- d. Expert (Knowledgeable)
- e. Hard-working
- f. Motivated
- g. Professional
- h. Skilled
- i. Team-worker
- j. Understanding
- k. Well-qualified

17. Which of the following attractions would you most associate with being a teacher?

- a. The opportunity to make a difference
- b. The opportunity to work with children
- c. Job satisfaction
- d. Long holidays
- e. Short working hours
- f. Opportunities to work as part of a team
- g. Variety of work
- h. Good salary
- i. Job security
- j. Good pension
- a. Professional Status
- b. Other

18. Which of the following challenges and difficulties would you most associate with being a teacher?

- a. Class size
- b. Complexity of teaching
- c. Discipline problems
- d. Expectations of parents/guardians
- e. Expectations of students
- f. Insufficient parental involvement
- g. Insufficient resources
- h. Intensity of role
- i. Insufficient promotional opportunities
- j. Limited opportunities for professional development (upskilling)
- k. Other

19. Please read the following statements carefully and state whether you agree or disagree with each of them.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers are good at motivating students to learn	<input type="radio"/>				
In general, teachers do a good job	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers are committed to the highest standards of professionalism	<input type="radio"/>				
Many teachers make a valuable contribution to the community (e.g. through their involvement in sporting, cultural and other activities)	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers work well with parents/ guardians	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers work towards the achievement of a high quality education	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their work	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers are committed to the rounded development of students (e.g. emotional, moral, cultural, etc.) and not just their academic development	<input type="radio"/>				
The majority of teachers are experts in their field	<input type="radio"/>				

20. Please read the following statements carefully and state whether you agree or disagree with each of them.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers play an important role in our society	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers play an important part in the development of values	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers play an important part in the promotion of citizenship	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers play an important part in the development of the economy	<input type="radio"/>				

21. Please read the following statements carefully and state whether you agree or disagree with each of them.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers know how to recognise the strengths and weakness of pupils	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers have a difficult job to do	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers get a lot of unfair press	<input type="radio"/>				
Students expect too much of teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers respect the rights and opinions of parents/guardians and students	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers have enough resources to do their jobs well	<input type="radio"/>				
Parents/guardians expect too much of teachers	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers do a lot of out-of-hours work (marking lessons, preparing for class, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers should be given regular opportunities for upskilling	<input type="radio"/>				

22. Please read the following statements carefully and state whether you agree or disagree with each of them.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers are sufficiently accountable for the quality of their work	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers are well paid for the job they do	<input type="radio"/>				
Teaching is an easy job	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers concentrate too much on academic results and not enough on other areas of students' development	<input type="radio"/>				
Teachers pay too little attention to the rights and feelings of students	<input type="radio"/>				

23. As a parent or guardian how well or badly would you say that most teachers do their job nowadays?

- a. Very well
- b. Well
- c. Neither well nor badly
- d. Badly
- e. Very badly
- f. Don't know/No opinion

24. Thank you. Can you please explain why you think that today's teachers do their job *very well*?

25. Which of the following professional bodies have you heard of?

- a. An Bord Altranais
- b. Engineers Ireland
- c. The Bar Council
- d. The Dental Council
- e. The Health and Social Care Professionals Council
- f. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland
- g. The Medical Council
- h. The Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland
- i. The Teaching Council
- j. The Veterinary Council

26. Are you aware of the functions of the Teaching Council – yes/no

27. If yes to 24, what are the functions of the Teaching Council?

## Appendix 2

### Breakdown of Participants

# RESPONDENT PROFILE (Sample Size n = 1,000)

