

Statement of Solidarity with Striking Support Staff in Higher Education in the UK

To the leaders and members of UNISON in Higher Education and all striking higher education support workers,

Greetings and solidarity from the Korean Federation of Public Services and Transportation Unions (KPTU) and the KPTU Education Workers Solidarity Division (KPTU-EdSol). The KPTU is an industrial union federation representing nearly 150,000 workers in the public and transport sectors in South Korea. KPTU-EdSol represents over 20,000 precariously-employed workers employed a support staff in public elementary, middle and high schools.

We are aware that the members of UNISON employed as support staff in higher education will soon go on strike for decent pay together with their colleagues represented by UCU and Unite. We wish to express our full support and heartfelt solidarity for your struggle.

For several years now, UNISON members have in the higher education sector have faced increasing job insecurity and seen their real wages cut by 13%. More than 4,000 workers are now paid below the living wage. This is despite the fact that the higher education sector is recording surpluses and its highest paid employee makes more than £500,000 a year. We find this situation outrageous and commend your willingness to take action to change it.

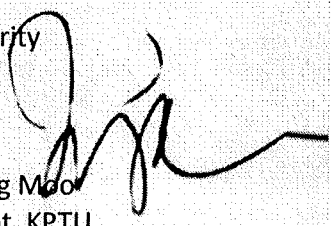
Like you, KPTU members employed in education support face job insecurity and vast discrimination in terms of wages and working conditions. Employed under individual contracts with school principals, we face easy dismissal especially in districts where we are not yet protected by collective bargaining agreements. The majority of us make roughly 1 million won (roughly 585 GBP) a month. Because we have no pay-scale based on years of experience the gap between our wages and that of permanently employed educators doing the similar jobs increases over time. We make roughly 70% the salary of permanently employed staff when we start work and less than 50% after ten years on the job.

This discrimination towards education support workers in South Korea stems from and reinforces a school culture which puts teachers on a pedestal while failing to recognize the essential role. We believe the situation in the UK is similar. Only when education support workers have the courage to stand up for their rights will this situation change. For this reasons your strike on October 31 is particularly important.

As you go on strike in the UK, we are also preparing for our own national strike for job security, decent working conditions and equal treatment in November. Knowing that in the UK workers are fighting to achieve similar demands in the UK gives us great strength for the struggle ahead.

Once again, we send you our heartfelt solidarity and support.

In solidarity



LEE, Sang Moo
President, KPTU



LEE, Tae-ui
Division President. KPTU-EdSol