

Launch of New Report

Mathematics and Gaeilge: A Report on the Influence of Bilingualism was launched recently by Minister for Research and Innovation, Sean Sherlock TD. Published by the National Centre for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and Learning (NCE-MSTL) at the University of Limerick, the report is based on a doctoral study completed by Dr Máire Ní Ríordáin, former Senior Projects Officer at the NCE-MSTL and currently Head of Education at St Patrick's College, Thurles.

The report reveals previously unnoticed advantages to a bilingual approach to mathematics education. The study found that learning mathematics through the medium of Gaeilge at primary level education may enhance long-term mathematical understanding and attainment in English-medium second level education. Bilingual students in 2nd and 3rd level education with high ability in both Irish and English outperformed their monolingual peers in mathematics, even when assessed through their second language of learning, English.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Minister for Research and Innovation, Sean Sherlock said; "This report adds new evidence-based analyses on language issues in mathematics education that are timely in terms of the national Irish language policy debate, formulation and implementation. A major finding of the study points to the advantages of bilingualism for education."

The aim of the study was to investigate Irish post-primary and undergraduate bilingual mathematics students' experiences of learning mathematics through the medium of English, their second language of learning.

Dr. Máire Ní Ríordáin, author of the report said; "The study noted some drops in performance in the transition from Gaeilge-medium primary level to English-medium second level; however these were only experienced in the initial transition and are specific to having English as the new language of learning. The advantages of being bilingual can outweigh the negatives once proficiency is developed in both languages."

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