

Immersion Education in the context of the Irish language and Irish-medium education

Joint Policy of the Steering Group on Immersion
Education Policy



Foras na Gaeilge

Gaelscoileanna 



Comhar na
Múinteoirí Gaeilge



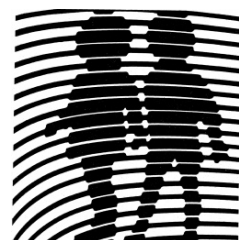
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COMHAIRLE
NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA



altram
guth na luathbhlianta



FORBAIRT NAÍONRAÍ TEO.

This Policy has been agreed by the above organisations

JUNE 2009

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Joint Policy of the Steering Group on Immersion Education Policy (SGIP)

Context

A. SGIP's Background

1. The SGIP was established in September 2006 to agree an immersion education policy between the participating organisations. The agreed aim of the group at that time for this work was that the group would have an agreed draft policy by September 2008.
2. It was recognised that such a policy was urgently required, especially in these contexts:
 - a. The Review of the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) on the issue of literacy in Irish-medium schools. This was up and running when the group was established. Since then, circular 0044/2007 was issued. This greatly increased the urgency to agree the policy.
 - b. The Review of Irish-medium Education in the north – the final report from that review is due soon.
 - c. Furthermore, the participating organisations have been functioning on the island of Ireland for a generation or so now, and it was agreed that it would be better to have an agreed all-island voice on this issue.

B. Seminar on immersion education, 28 April 2008

1. In order to help them develop the policy, and to gather advice and information as well, the SGIP decided to invite the recognised experts on the island of Ireland and from Wales to discuss issues relating to the policy agenda.
2. The following experts attended the seminar:
 1. An Dr. Gabrielle Nig Uidhir, St. Mary's University College
 2. Pádraig Ó Duibhir, St. Patrick's College
 3. Helen Ó Murchú
 4. Dónal Ó hAiniféin, Principal, Gaelscoil Mhíchíl Chíosóig
 5. Philip Sheerin, CCEA
 6. Muireann Ní Mhóráin, Chief Executive, COGG
 7. Áine Andrews, Chairperson, Altram
 8. Máire Ní Bhaoill, St. Patrick's College
 9. Treasa Ní Ailpín
 10. Meirion Prys-Jones, Chief Executive, Welsh Board
 11. Pádraig Ó Laighin, UCD

12. Treasa Ní Mhainnín, Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta
13. Deirbhile Nic Craith, INTO
14. Aodán Mac Póilín, Iontaobhas Ultach
15. Dr. Tina Hickey, UCD
16. Hywel Jones, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin
17. Máire Uí Dhufaigh, Co-ordinator, Séideán Sí
18. Máire Uí Bhriain, Chairperson, Na Naíonraí Gaelacha
19. Pilib Mistéil, Principal, Gaelscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh

The following attended on behalf of the participating organisations in the SGIP

20. Ferdie Mac an Fhailigh, Chief Executive, Foras na Gaeilge
21. Tomás Ó Ruairc, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Education Services, Foras na Gaeilge
22. Bláthnaid Ní Ghréacháin, Chief Executive, Gaelscoileanna Teo.
23. Clíona Frost, Chief Officer, Forbairt Naíonraí Teo.
24. Seán Ó Coinn, Chief Executive, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
25. Dónall Ó Conaill, An Foras Patrúnachta
26. Pól Mac Fheidhlimidh, Manager, An tÁisaonad
27. Anna Davitt, Director, Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge

3. To prompt and facilitate the seminar discussion, the participants were provided with a number of research documents beforehand:
 - a. “Young People and Minority Languages: Language use outside the classroom” le Pádraig Ó Riagáin, Glyn Williams, F. Xavier Vila i Moreno (Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, 2007) [Bilingual Version]
 - b. “An Tumoideachas / Immersion Education” by Dr. Eugene McKendry
 - c. “Immersion Education: An Overview of Theory, Research and Practice” by Dr. Eoghan Mac Éinrí, School of Education, QUB (March 2007)
 - d. “IMMERSION IN A SECOND OR ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE AT SCHOOL: A REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH - - SUMMARY” by Richard Johnstone, Scottish CILT (www.scilt.stir.ac.uk) (January 2002)

Immersion education in the context of the Irish language and Irish-medium education

Joint policy of the Steering Group on Immersion Education Policy (SGIP)

This is a policy document prepared as a result of discussions between the various organisations making up SGIP, North and South. It is based on the work of the SGIP and recommendations made at the seminar organised by the group in the Clarion Hotel, Liffey Valley, Monday, 28 April 2008.

The following organisations participate in SGIP:

- Foras na Gaeilge – Tomás Ó Ruairc, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Education Services
- Altram – Aisling Uí Dhughail, Manager
- An tÁisaonad; The Irish-medium Resource Centre – Pól Mac Fheilimidh, Manager
- Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta – Clíona Frost, Chief Officer
- Gaelscoileanna Teoranta – Bláthnaid Ní Ghréacháin, Chief Executive
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta – Seán Ó Coinn, Chief Executive
- Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge – Anna Davitt, Director
- An Foras Patrúnachta – Dónall Ó Conaill, Director
- Department of Education and Science – Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha, Inspector
- Department of Education (Northern Ireland) – Joe Labhraí, Inspector
- Education and Library Boards – Seán Mac Corraidh

Please note that this is not the immersion education policy of An Foras Pátrúnachta.

Definition of immersion education

Immersion education is education, wholly or in part, through the medium of the target language. For the purposes of this policy, the target language is Irish.

This definition is based on the SGIP's interpretation of what has been done to date in research on immersion education, including Baker, C and Pryce Jones, S., (1998), and Cummins, J (1999).

Aims of the joint policy

1. To lay out in writing the policy of the participating organisations on immersion education.
2. That this policy should influence the education authorities, north and south, so as to ensure that the highest standards of immersion education are met.
3. That this policy should guide the immersion education planning of the authorities from now on.
4. To raise and improve the awareness and understanding in the broader community of the concept and values of immersion education.

Mission statement

To provide each learner with an excellent education, with a graded system in terms of Irish acquisition, based on top quality teacher education at every level in terms of language acquisition, and a proper support system.

1. Aims and outcomes

a. The fundamental aims of Irish immersion education

- i. A fundamental aim of Irish language immersion education is to provide education of a high standard through the medium of Irish, from preschool to third level. To that extent the aims of Irish language education are the same as those of education in general as regards socialisation, transmission of culture and curriculum. Immersion education sees to it that every learner reaches the highest possible level in linguistic, cognitive, emotional and social development and in the acquisition of Irish. (see Baker, C. and Prys Jones, S., 1998; Cummins, J., 1999)

b. Other aims

It is an aim of Irish language immersion education;

- i. That the central role of the Irish language in the culture and identity of all the peoples of this island should be recognised in immersion education and that it should enrich the child accordingly.
- ii. That it should utilise the entire ability of the learner to acquire languages – a characteristic

particular to children from the cradle up, especially to seven years of age.

- iii. That Irish language immersion education should support additive bilingualism and dual literacy. (Bamford, K. And Mizokawa, D. 1991).
- iv. That it should significantly support the achievement of the European Union's language target – that each European citizen should speak two languages as well as their mother language.
- v. That it should support the development of the use of Irish in Ireland.
- vi. That it should consequently increase the number of people who use Irish regularly in their lives.
- vii. That it should support the development of an Irish-speaking community.

c. Expected outcomes

- i. Active high ability both in Irish and English. (Harley, B., 1984; Henry, A. et al, 2002; Horgan, S. E. , 1995)
- ii. Promote the learner's linguistic development in such a way as to enhance his metalinguistic awareness.
- iii. Give the learner an understanding of uniqueness of the Irish language and of its central place in the cultural life of Ireland; and
- iv. The learner having a sense of a wider world, of other languages and cultures and be open-minded to the world in general. (Johnson, K. and Swain, M. , 1997)
- v. Every aspect of education that is available through English, both curricular and regarding the learner's learning experience, plus the acquisition of the target language.

d. Opportunities existing for Irish language Immersion education

- i. The affinity for Irish-medium education among the general public – this should be nourished and a higher awareness of the vision of Irish language Immersion education be developed accordingly;
- ii. Development of an all-island educational vision – a vision rooted in our heritage but which will also be open and all inclusive. This could be promoted by the north-south structures.
- iii. The development and the growth of the Irish-medium schools network, north and south - this

- will increase the opportunities for the wider community to use Irish.
- iv. Early total immersion education recognized by the two Education Departments as the most effective model of immersion education in terms of acquisition of the Irish language. (Jonstone et al, 1999)

2. Immersion Education Models

a. Models

A model is the pedagogical framework from which appropriate teaching methods are selected from time to time to implement an agreed programme of education. This includes the objectives of this education, the values under which these objectives are selected, and the approach selected accordingly.

- i. Early total immersion education is the best approach especially in relation to acquisition of the target language. What early total immersion means is the approach in which the pupil is immersed in the target language from the start for a significant period of time so that he/she will reach a language level threshold with which he/she can engage effectively with the curriculum through the medium of Irish.
- ii. Nurseries have a special role in early total immersion education, i.e. consolidating the first steps in the acquisition of Irish at the age which children acquire a language most easily, and, accordingly, every support should be provided to ensure that high quality immersion education will be available in them. (An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta, 1985; Andrews, 2006; Goncz, L. agus Kodzopeljic, J. (1991)).
- iii. It is acknowledged that late immersion education is the only choice in the case of those learners unable to start immersion education system at a very early age. Suitable support, including intensive Irish courses, should be provided for such people so that they can rapidly achieve an ability threshold and take full advantage of immersion education from there on. (Carleton Board of Education, 1996)

b. Support for the various Models

- i. Where early total immersion education is not practised, or where a school does not have the means to offer full immersion education, it is recommended that an imaginative, cohesive approach be adopted to deal with these cases.
- ii. It is recommended that every support be provided to develop other immersion education models e.g. partial immersion education, medium immersion education and late immersion in schools where English is the medium. (Cf research by Harris et al)
- iii. It is recommended that guidelines on the practice of early total immersion education be developed as a practical resource for practitioners.

c. Opportunities that could be availed of between immersion education and the teaching of Irish

- i. Share learning skills and strategies with each other in a more organised fashion than is current. (Mac Corraidh, 2008)
- ii. Organise special courses to raise the Irish language ability of immersion education practitioners.
- iii. Develop CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology in the teaching of Irish.

d. Ensure Continuity from Level to Level

- i. There should be proper continuity, both in terms of educational provision and learning experience, from preschool to primary school and from primary school to post-primary school. (Hickey, T.,1997)
- ii. There is a need for continuity in the relationship between the home and the various educational levels so that Irish language immersion education will be cohesive from start to finish.

3. Immersion Education Good Practice

Early total immersion education is the best approach especially in terms of target language acquisition.

a. The Learner's Social Language and Academic Language

- i. Although learners acquire in the normal way social language naturally, gradually and progressively, immersion education plays a central role in developing the learner's social language although the family has a very important role. (e.g. cf "Ar bPolasaí Gaeilge", Gaelscoileanna Teo., 2005:
 1. Singing with repetition, for example, making songs out of simple sentences,
 2. Hiding and finding objects.
 3. Personal news as a story.
 4. Role play
 5. Great emphasis on starting time/break time/lunch time/home time.)
- ii. It is internationally recognized that immersion education programmes are extremely effective in developing the academic language of pupils. Therefore, with regard to best practice in immersion education, teachers have a central role in focusing on the social language of pupils as well as on the academic language. (Stein, M., 1999 pp 1-8)
- iii. Personal development is central to immersion education and therefore the corresponding functions of the language should be taught.

b. Irish language Immersion Education and the Family - recommendations

- i. Recognition is given to the central role of the family in the natural transfer of any language from generation to generation. It is recommended that the Irish-medium school should function closely with children's parents/guardians, as usual. The children, their parents/guardians, the teachers and those who manage and support the school are an integral part of the school community. (see Baker, 1995; Harding, E. and Riley, P. ,1986)
- ii. It is advisable that a start be made as young as possible in the acquisition of the target language and that the family is involved in the process.
- iii. It is recommended that the social register of the Irish language be woven into the curriculum in post-primary schools in particular.
- iv. It is recommended that the Irish-medium school avail of every opportunity for the children to use Irish outside school. Comhluadar, the Irish

language youth organisations and the summer Irish language Gaeltacht summer colleges, in partnership with the other organisations, have a central role in this regard.

c. Challenges and Opportunities outside the classroom/nursery

- i. Irish language immersion education should try to develop the social language of the learner so that he/she can use Irish without difficulty in his normal family life and outside of it. Community networks must be established around schools to organize events that will give opportunities of usage to pupils.
- ii. It is recommended that the Health and Educational Authorities give due recognition to the needs of immersion education, including the school community. This includes the delivery of services (e.g. psychology, speech and language therapy programmes) and policy development. (Downs-Reid, D. ,1997)
- iii. It is recommended that the virtues and the advantages of early immersion education be set before the public in a realistic, scientific and positive manner;
- iv. It is recommended that a module be available in the transitional year to develop skills involved in organising games through Irish, and such opportunities could also be availed of in the education system in the north. Senior students with such skills would be a valuable asset to the school and they could then use them in summer colleges.
- v. It is recommended that the importance of the development of a school community in the learning experience of the pupil in the immersion education system be recognised.
- vi. Irish language leisure and play opportunities must be made available for young people who are being taught through Irish.
 1. It is essential that the Irish language youth provision be of a high standard. Therefore, young people should have an incentive to obtain a youth qualification at degree level.

2. The emphasis should be on the use of the language among the youth in these activities. Activities required include:
 - a. The creative arts;
 - b. After school clubs;
 - c. Summer camps;
 - d. Creation of links between Gaeltacht schools and Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht;
 - e. Sports training courses in conjunction with the various sports Clubs and Authorities.
 - f. Singing and debating competitions.

d. Importance of staff proficiency in Irish

All Irish-medium staff should have access to practical guidance based on research in immersion education issues, for example Dr. S. Mac Corraidh's publication **Gearrchosáin Foghlama agus Teagaisc sa Ghaelscolaíocht ; Bitesize advice on learning and teaching in Irish Medium Education.**

- i. An Irish-medium school is almost completely dependent on the entire staff having a high standard of Irish (Harley, B. and Swain, M.,1984)
- ii. The school's teaching staff should have an opportunity to spend regular periods in the Gaeltacht in their professional life, including teaching periods.
- iii. In-service courses on immersion education should be available regularly to ensure that teachers can fulfil their professional responsibilities effectively (Cf. "Ár bPolasaí Gaeilge", Gaelscoileanna Teo., 2005, pp 20-29)
- iv. Training courses in Irish should be available for the administrative staff of Irish-medium schools e.g. school secretaries. Knipe, D., et al. (2004)

e. Other Learning Strategies

- i. Promote and encourage self-correction.
- ii. Examine and test conscious learning.
- iii. Major emphasis on correct spoken language. (Clipperton, R.,1994; Curtain, H. 1997; Hammerly, H. 1991)
- iv. Contact with native speakers e.g. collecting stories and folklore in the Gaeltacht.

4. The Way Ahead – Fulfilling the Vision

Mission Statement: To provide each learner with an excellent education, with a graded system in terms of Irish acquisition, based on top quality teacher education at every level in terms of language acquisition, and a proper support system.

- a. The State and those involved in Irish language immersion education need to be in continual dialogue about the needs and objectives of immersion education. The models of immersion education, accommodation, teacher training, teaching aids etc should be discussed and planned accordingly.
- b. The Education Departments should include Irish-medium provision from the start of preliminary provision planning. Parents have a right to easy access to Irish-medium education.
- c. It is recommended that a special unit be established within the Department of Education and Science to deal with Irish-medium education.
- d. European Union educational programmes (e.g. Comenius) should be scrutinised to see if they could be used to share special skills and experience in immersion education with other communities who speak lesser used languages.
- e. It is recommended that Gaeltacht schools and their particular needs be given special consideration.
- f. Every pupil should have the opportunity of spending a period in the Gaeltacht under the Summer Colleges scheme etc.
- g. It is recommended that the Department of Education and Science recognise immersion education as a concept and the Irish-medium education system as a system practising immersion education.

h. Cross-border Approach

It is widely recognized that opportunities exist for immersion education on the island of Ireland through dialogue with interested parties on both a north/south and east/west basis. Notice must be taken of the Review of Irish-medium education: Report (October, 2008), published by the Department of Education on this subject, especially in the following extract:

Opportunities for development and exchange should be developed, on an all Ireland and an east/west basis. (xvii)

- i. Devise a teacher exchange scheme.
- ii. Exchange and share resources and expertise between educationalists at all levels and in all

- organisations i.e. The Departments of Education, NCCA, CCEA, ESA, teachers etc., especially in the areas of ICT and special needs.
- iii. It is recommended there be a closer partnership between the institutions that are dealing with the Irish-medium education systems north and south, including the education colleges. Among the possibilities here would be an all island immersion education programme for those institutions.
 - iv. Develop a website or web pages, as an information and experience exchange resource, for Irish language immersion education. It could also contain a guide to resources for immersion education.
 - v. Provision of resources and facilities of the highest standard to immediately meet the particular needs existing at all levels.
 - vi. It is recommended that the Departments of Education explore the possibilities involved in further development of the provision for Irish-medium education on an all-island basis e.g. training, research etc.
 - vii. Sharing information and experience with other language communities – especially speakers of Gaelic in Scotland and Welsh speakers. This could be promoted through the British-Irish Council.
- i. Highlighting the value of Irish-medium Education to the Public.
 - i. A central aspect for highlighting the value of Irish-medium Education to the public is that the public should be made aware how every aspect of the education available through English, both in terms of curriculum and learning experience of the learner, as well as acquisition of the target language, are found through that system.
 - ii. There is a need to promote Irish-medium education to the public as a type of education which is futuristic, unique but, at the same time, very European (Cummins, J.,1977; Genesee, F. 1976)
 - iii. There is a need for additional information and marketing material on immersion education.
 - iv. There is a need to acknowledge pioneers and make full use of their talents to highlight the advantages of immersion education to the public e.g. parents, students, famous people.

j. Training Requirements

- i. There is a need to recognise the requirements and plan to cater for them. The education authorities north and south have a central role in this area.
- ii. There should be a recognised all-island qualification for Nursery Directors.
- iii. Special training, and recognition accordingly, should be provided at all levels, undergraduate, post-graduate and in-service, for student teachers who will be teaching in Irish-medium schools. (Bernhardt, E. and Schrier, L. ,1992)
- iv. The Ballyvourney Resource and Support Centre should be established and opened forthwith.
- v. Support should be provided for teachers in Irish-medium schools to help them develop and enhance their standard of Irish on an on-going basis.
- vi. Organise specialist pre-training and in-service courses for teachers in Irish-medium schools. The education colleges and the Departments of Education, north and south, have a special role in this area.
- vii. There is a need for organizing temporary teacher exchange between Irish-medium schools to enhance teachers' range of experience.

k. Research

- i. It is recognised that there is an urgent need for research of various kinds for the following reasons:
 1. To add to our knowledge about the particular circumstances of Irish-language immersion education in Ireland, in both jurisdictions.
 2. So that we can adapt our teaching and learning methodologies to the particular circumstances of the Irish language.
 3. So that we can take advantage of the best practice. In this way, carrying out proper, scientific research on the different immersion education models and the different methodologies will help to guide us in the direction of the best teaching and language practice. It is necessary that this research follows a scientific approach –

formulation of hypotheses or questions, selection of research design, collecting, recruiting and analysing data, as well as quantitative and qualitative interpretation of results. (Harley, B., 1998).

- ii. It is recommended that appropriate use be made of applied research in the area of immersion education.
- iii. It is recommended that particular recognition be given to teachers who gain their qualifications through the medium of Irish and that this be specified in the qualification awarded to them.
- iv. It is recommended that it be ensured that an up-to-date stream of information be maintained with teachers about developments in immersion education in other countries e.g. Canada, Wales, the Baltic republics, Catalonia, the Basque Country.
- v. It is also recommended that those interested parties prepare an all-island research programme on immersion education and commission work accordingly.
- vi. In relation to gaps in research, it is recommended that all the interested parties meet to commission work on this issue as a matter of urgency:
 1. The view of parents and children re Irish-medium Education
 2. It is recommended that models in Wales, New Zealand and in other countries be scrutinised to determine what their strengths and weaknesses are. (Laing, D., 1988)

It is recommended that the SGIP stay together for another two years to push forward the implementation of the policy. The policy will be reviewed at the end of that period.

SGIP

Appendix 1

Organizations participating in the SGIP

Foras na Gaeilge

Foras na Gaeilge is responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland. It was established as one of the cross border bodies arising out of the Good Friday Agreement 1998. It has a specific duty to support the teaching of Irish and teaching through the medium of Irish. It has responsibility for dictionaries and terminology as well, and it develops resources and reading materials for Irish medium education through An Gúm and through funding for the Áisaonad. Among the ways that it provides that support are:

- Séideán Sí – a joint project with the Department of Education and Science. An integrated Irish language course is being developed for Gaeltacht schools and gaelscoileanna in the south.
- Dialogue with and advice for the other interested parties e.g. the Education Departments, north and south, CNCM, CCEA.
- Funding for corefunded groups which are dealing with Irish-medium education – Gaelscoileanna, FNT, Altram, the Áisaonad.
- Giving assistance grants to projects that serve Irish-medium education – producing materials, establishing naíscoileanna, research projects, youth activities, summer camps.
- www.focal.ie
- Both CCEA and CNCM each have one post funded by Foras na Gaeilge. These two posts deal with the needs and issues of Irish-medium education, north and south.
- Money Raising Strategy – this is a three year scheme belonging to Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (the trust of Irish-medium education). Iontaobhas is funded by Foras na Gaeilge. The project has collected £1.7m to date for the Irish medium sector in the north.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), the council for Irish-medium education, is the representative body on behalf of Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland. It was established by the Department of Education in 2000 to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education. One of the main objectives of CnaG is to try to broaden the access to Irish-medium education to parents who want it for their children. To that end we have a strategic approach to ensure that schools are spread throughout the north, and that post primary provision is developed to serve the needs of children in primary education provision already in place

and in planned provision. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta provides practical advice and support to parent's groups who wish to establish Irish-medium education in their area.

At present Irish-medium education is provided in 81 schools altogether for more than 4,000 pupils at preschool, primary and post-primary level all over the north. In recent years there has been a steady growth in the Irish-medium sector and it appears, because of new schools opening every year, that this growth will continue. Irish-medium schools welcome children from every faith and background.

Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards

There is one permanent fulltime regional advisor employed by the Education and Library Boards since 2003 to give advice, support and assistance of a high standard to classroom teachers, learning area co-ordinators, mid-school managers, principals and school governors in Irish-medium education. It is in pre-primary education in statutory nursery schools, in primary education and in post-primary education that the duties and responsibilities of the advisor operate. As well as that, two regional advisory teachers are employed in the boards on loan. One of them has responsibility for literacy and language (Irish and English) and the other has responsibility for numeracy and mathematics. These two work closely with teachers and with co-ordinators in Irish-medium schools giving advice in their areas of expertise and they exemplify good practice in the classroom for teachers. The regional teams' aims are: to improve standards, to fulfil needs and to strengthen partnerships, do develop people and to increase resources, and to give advice for the development of a new curriculum and educational strategy for the 21st century.

Gaelscoileanna Teo.

Irish-medium education is one of the fastest growing areas of education and development in Ireland in the last 30 years and GAELSCOILEANNA TEO. is leading in this growth and development. At present there are **170** Irish-medium primary schools and **43** Irish-medium post primary schools in the 32 counties, outside of the Gaeltacht, with 139 and 26 respectively in the 26 counties. There are more than 37,000 children attending Irish-medium schools. The organization is funded by Foras Na Gaeilge.

Aims

The main aim of GAELSCOILEANNA TEO. is to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education at the primary and post-primary level throughout Ireland.

Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge

Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge (the Irish language teachers' association) was formed in 1964. The organization operates as a support and a source of guidance for every teacher in the country – who teaches Irish or teaches through Irish – in their efforts to increase their own professionalism and to improve syllabi and the learning of Irish.

To that end various resources are published and professional services are provided in the form of seminars and courses. Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge receives an annual grant from Foras na Gaeilge.

Forbairt Naíonraí Teo.

Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta (is a voluntary all-Ireland company that supports services, care and education through Irish for children from the cradle on.

Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta was established in 2003 as a successor of Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta Teo. (joint committee on pre-schooling). Altram, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Foras na Gaeilge, Gaelscoileanna and Na Naíonraí Gaelacha are represented on the board of directors of Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta.

Foras na Gaeilge and the Department of Health and Children give grants to FNT.

Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge Teo.

Foras na Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge is a national patronage system established in 1993. It was established to provide an alternative patronage to new Irish-medium schools which would be opening in the following years. The Foras is recognized by the Department of Education and Science as a patronage scheme and it is acceptable and appropriate for schools at the primary and secondary level. The structure of the Foras is that of a limited company without share capital. It is a democratic system and it has its own constitution.

One of the merits of the Foras Pátrúnachta is that this patronage system is open to schools of all faiths and to multifaith and

interfaith schools. Another merit is that it greatly strengthens the Irish-medium schools movement, being a national movement.

The number of Irish-medium schools under the patronage of Foras is increasing year on year with 57 Irish-medium primary schools under the umbrella of the Foras, plus 3 second level Irish-medium colleges.

As a patron, manager and educational organization, Foras believes in the mission it has concerning the Irish language and faith. That is, to give help and guidance to boards, principals, teachers and parents as necessary, and to support the ethos, development and growth of schools in its care.

Appendix 2

An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta (1985) *Lámhleabhar do Stiúrthóirí Náíonraí*, Baile Átha Cliath, An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta.

Andrews, A.M. (2006) *Two Windows on the World, Language Immersion Education: A Training Manual for Early Years*, Belfast: Altram.

Baker, C. (1995) *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

Baker, C. and Prys Jones, S. (1998) *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

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