

# An Analysis of Models of Provision For Irish-medium Education

## Research Report November 2017

Pádraig Ó Duibhir, DCU Institute of Education  
Gabrielle NigUidhir, St Mary's University College, Belfast  
Seán Ó Cathalláin, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick  
Laoise Ní Thuairisg, DCU Institute of Education  
Jude Cosgrove, Education Research Centre, DCU St Patrick's Campus



COLÁISTE MUIRE GAN SMÁL  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH  
MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK



An Analysis of Models of Provision.....	1
For Irish-medium Education .....	1
1. Executive Summary .....	1
1.1 Context .....	1
1.2 Main Findings .....	2
1.2.1 Factors influencing the use of Irish as immersion language among pupils .....	3
1.2.2 Breadth and depth of pupils’ overall experience of functioning through Irish in school life .....	4
1.2.3 Willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during playtime) and outside the school .....	5
1.2.4 Other differences in pupils’ opinions.....	6
1.3 Factors influencing pupils’ willingness to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during playtime).....	6
1.3.1 Factors influencing language and professional development opportunities for school staff .....	7
1.3.2 Effect of provision on the development of an Irish-speaking community in the vicinity .....	8
1.3.3 Analysis of Irish language support provided by schools to parents of Irish-medium pupils.....	9
1.3.4 Most effective leadership support structures for management and organisation of units .....	10
1.4 Conclusion.....	11
2. Introduction.....	12
2.1 Definition of all-Irish stream and unit.....	13
2.2 Structure of schools and areas .....	14
3. Literature Review.....	15
3.1 Role of the education system in language revival.....	15
3.1.1 Advantages of bilingualism .....	16
3.2 Immersion education .....	17
3.3 Immersion education in Ireland.....	17
3.4 Wales.....	18
3.4.1 Models of immersion education and bilingual programmes in Wales .....	19
3.4.2 The education continuum in Welsh-medium education .....	20
3.4.3 The Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project in Wales .....	21
3.5 Scotland.....	24
3.5.1 Models of Gàidhlig-medium education .....	25
3.5.2 The education continuum in Gàidhlig-medium education.....	26
3.5.3 Academic attainment of pupils learning through the medium of Gàidhlig .....	27
3.5.4 Reasons for choosing Gàidhlig-medium education .....	27

3.6	The Basque Country.....	29
3.6.1	Models of bilingual education in the Basque Country.....	29
3.6.2	Teacher education in the Basque Country .....	30
3.6.3	The attainment of pupils in the Basque Country .....	31
3.6.4	The education continuum in the Basque Country.....	32
3.6.5	Use of Basque among pupils.....	33
3.6.6	Fostering a Basque-speaking community .....	34
3.7	Research on various models of immersion education in Canada.....	34
3.8	Parental involvement in immersion education .....	37
3.9	Summary .....	39
4.	Methodology .....	42
4.1	Introduction .....	42
4.2	Principals' questionnaire .....	42
4.2.1	Questionnaire design.....	42
4.3	Case studies .....	43
4.4	Pupil questionnaire.....	43
4.4.1	Background .....	43
4.4.2	Structure of the questionnaire .....	44
4.4.3	Participants.....	44
4.4.4	Reliability testing .....	46
4.5	Parent questionnaire .....	47
4.5.1	Structure of the questionnaire .....	47
4.5.2	Parents' demographic background and language .....	48
4.6	Interviews with principals .....	49
5.	Results.....	51
5.1	Preface.....	51
5.2	Interviews with principals .....	51
5.3	The units' perspective .....	52
5.3.1	Advantages reported by unit heads .....	52
5.3.2	Challenges reported by unit leaders .....	54
5.4	Perspective of stand-alone schools.....	57
5.4.1	Use of Irish.....	58
5.4.2	Critical threshold.....	58
5.4.3	Pioneering role .....	59
5.5	Pupil questionnaire.....	59
5.5.1	Comparison between scale scores by school type, region, home language and gender	59

5.6	Background and growth of schools .....	66
5.6.1	Background and growth of participating schools .....	66
5.6.2	Reasons why parents chose an all-Irish school for their children.....	67
5.6.3	Challenges associated with the growth of an Irish-medium school/unit .....	70
5.6.4	Staff recruitment .....	71
5.6.5	Past-pupils as a resource .....	74
5.6.6	Language of communication with the Departments of Education.....	74
5.6.7	The education continuum.....	75
5.6.8	Attending an Irish-medium post-primary school or Irish courses at third level ..	81
5.7	Factors influencing the use of Irish as immersion language among pupils .....	85
5.7.1	Medium of instruction for subjects other than English.....	85
5.7.2	The school's Irish language policy .....	87
5.8	Breadth and depth of pupils' total experience with regard to functioning through Irish in school.....	88
5.8.1	Learning support .....	88
5.8.2	Critical junctures .....	90
5.8.3	Educational resources .....	90
5.8.4	Extra-curricular activities for pupils .....	93
5.9	Willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom and outside the school.....	94
5.9.1	Use of Irish.....	94
5.9.2	Comparison between units and stand-alone schools.....	95
5.9.3	Comparison between post-primary units and stand-alone schools .....	95
5.9.4	Distribution of pupils by language spoken in the home and school type .....	96
5.9.5	Mean scores and standard deviations by language spoken at home .....	97
5.9.6	Comparison between boys and girls for the five scales.....	98
5.9.7	The school playground.....	99
5.10	Regression analysis of pupil questionnaire by parents', pupils' and school attributes .....	104
5.10.1	The pupils' Irish.....	105
5.11	Encouraging pupils to speak Irish .....	107
5.11.1	The pupils themselves.....	109
5.12	Factors influencing language and professional development opportunities for school staff .....	115
5.13	The role of the school leader and professional development for Irish .....	120
5.14	Factors influencing the effect of provision for Irish-medium education on the development of the Irish-speaking community.....	121
5.14.1	The languages spoken in the home .....	121

5.14.2	Language behaviour of children with their parents .....	125
5.14.3	School enrolment policies.....	125
5.14.4	Irish language support for parents.....	126
5.14.5	Support services in general .....	129
5.14.6	Communication between the school and parents.....	129
5.14.7	Language(s) spoken at meetings of Boards of Management/Governors .....	132
5.14.8	Role of the school in the development of Irish in the local community .....	133
5.14.9	Parents' evaluation of their children's satisfaction with the school .....	137
5.14.10	Parents' contact with the school and language used when communicating with the school .....	138
5.14.11	Parental assistance with school activities .....	141
5.14.12	Parents' general opinions of Irish-medium education .....	143
5.14.13	Challenges facing leaders .....	144
6.	Management systems which support the establishment and growth of a stand-alone school .....	146
6.1	Introduction .....	146
6.2	Satellite Support System .....	146
6.3	Mentor Support System.....	147
6.4	Summary .....	147
7.	Conclusion .....	148
7.1	Introduction .....	148
7.2	The pupils' Irish .....	149
7.3	The home and parental participation.....	151
7.4	The school staff .....	151
7.5	Developing an Irish-speaking community .....	152
7.6	Leadership structures.....	153
7.7	Recommendations .....	154
7.8	Final words.....	156
8.	References.....	158

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Context

1.1.1 The research report was commissioned by An Coiste Seasta Thuaidh Theas ar Ghaeloideachas (North-South Standing Committee on Irish-medium Education) to analyse models of Irish-medium education provision in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Standing Committee was established to support cross-border co-operation in the Irish-medium education sector, and the sharing of good practice on a north-south basis. The research reported on here contributes to the fulfilment of official obligations regarding the facilitation and promotion of Irish-medium education, in accordance with national and international legislation.

1.1.2 For the past forty years there has been a significant growth in the provision of education through the medium of Irish on the island of Ireland. The history of the schools gives an insight into the various experiences of the communities which established all-Irish schools. As the number of schools increased, official policies were implemented which regulated aspects of the developmental process. For example, policy dealing with sustainability criteria has meant that all-Irish schools are established in urban areas only. Organisations promoting Irish-medium education focussed on strategic planning for the sector but the groups of parents attempting to establish all-Irish schools faced significant challenges. On occasions it was decided to close schools. Such a decision was taken in the case of 8 schools in Northern Ireland over a period of 10 years. (This does not include one unit which closed and which opened as an independent primary school on a new site without a break in provision.) Other schools succeeded in overcoming challenges as a result of creative problem-solving and adapting provision to specific contexts.

1.1.3 A range of models of provision emerged as part of this developmental process, in response to local needs. In general, they are classified as stand-alone<sup>1</sup> schools or units/streams, though such umbrella terms may mask various individual school characteristics. Within those models there are examples of independent schools which began as a unit or stream in an English-medium host school, and the reverse, though

---

<sup>1</sup> We use the term 'stand-alone' to describe a school in which curriculum subjects apart from English are taught through the medium of Irish to all pupils. Other terms exist, such as 'discrete' and 'independent' but other meanings could be taken from such terms.

examples of the latter are rare. In general, change from one model to another does not occur, and population density is the largest contributory factor influencing choice of model established.

1.1.4 The research covered two jurisdictions, the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI), and two school levels, primary schools and post-primary schools. As is seen in Table 1.1 some of the types of provision include units or streams. There are seven primary units in NI and there is no primary unit in ROI. As regards post-primary schools, there are 10 post-primary units/streams in ROI and 4 in NI. Of the 4 post-primary units/streams in NI, one was established in 2010 and another in 2011 and the curricular provision is still being developed in these units/streams. Year 12 is the most senior class in any post-primary unit/stream in NI.

Table 1.1: Total number of all-Irish stand-alone schools and units, primary and post-primary, in NI and ROI

	Republic of Ireland (ROI)	Northern Ireland (NI)	On the island of Ireland
Stand-alone primary schools	141	28	169
Primary units	0	7	7
Primary school total	141	35	176
Stand-alone post-primary schools	26	1	27
Post-primary units	10	4	14
Post-primary school total	36	5	41
Overall total	177	40	217

These various contexts must be taken into account when reading the research results below as our principal focus was to compare units/streams with stand-alone schools. With no primary units/streams established in ROI, and with only one stand-alone post-primary school established in NI, a comprehensive analysis was required which would cast light on the strengths and obstacles associated with each model.

## 1.2 Main Findings

The research provided new data which add to previously available information on immersion education in Ireland. The following is a summary of results focussing on the models of provision. Where reference is made to units, it is understood that both units and streams are included.

### 1.2.1 Factors influencing the use of Irish as immersion language among pupils

- In the all-Irish units the English-language environment throughout the school influences the use of Irish among the pupils. Priority is usually given to the whole school needs in the staff recruitment process. As a result, sometimes a limited number of subjects is taught through the medium of Irish.
- Sometimes the arrangements at lunchtime and break time in the units create obstacles to the use of Irish. These complications relate to shared space and the unit pupils being in the company of the all-English community at those times. In certain cases unit and host school pupils are kept together at lunchtime in case it might be thought that the units were being favoured.
- Pupils need immersion in Irish within the entire school environment and this is the greatest advantage offered by stand-alone schools. The entire curriculum is offered through the medium of Irish.
- There are particular challenges to implementing a policy of total immersion education in the post-primary units, including recruiting teachers with good Irish; recruiting ancillary staff with good Irish; parents' lack of Irish; the lack of suitable Irish-language textbooks; finding guest speakers with good Irish; and encouraging pupils to speak Irish.
- In some cases post-primary school pupils in the ROI attend an all-English school for certain subjects for the Junior Certificate and for the Leaving Certificate.
- In the ROI 5% of the pupils take some of the examinations for the Junior Certificate through the medium of English and 15% take some of the examinations for the Leaving Certificate through the medium of English. In the stand-alone school in NI the pupils take every subject except English through the medium of Irish for the GCSE and A-level examinations. One unit teaches 50% of the curriculum through English and the pupils take those subjects through English in the GCSE examination.
- Two other factors influence the use of Irish as a language of immersion among post-primary school pupils:
  - a. The language of the post-primary curriculum. An advanced level of language proficiency is required to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum;
  - b. Complex social language required by teenagers. The thoughts they are trying to discuss are broader and deeper, and their areas of interest in life matters are more varied.



### **1.2.2 Breadth and depth of pupils' overall experience of functioning through Irish in school life**

- Stand-alone schools play a pioneering role and have a duty to develop an Irish-speaking community. The school encourages a growth in Irish-language services, services dealing with pastoral care, special needs, examinations, and curricular development. As a result, the stand-alone school model greatly enhances the breadth and depth of the pupils' total experience of functioning through Irish in school life.
- Greater dissatisfaction was expressed in the primary schools and units in NI than in the ROI primary schools regarding the number of assessment instruments/tests available through the medium of Irish. A high level of dissatisfaction was shown in all primary school communities regarding the number of diagnostic instruments/tests in Irish.
- 90% of all primary schools in NI reported that external services made formal assessments through English only or mostly through English. This practice worried parents.
- Education through Irish is provided up to Transition Year (ROI), or Year 12 (NI), in some units and teaching is through English after that.
- Sometimes pupils from a unit go to another school to study certain subjects through English.
- Principals/directors in the various models indicated that the amount of Irish-language resources available across the curriculum was unsatisfactory. In the post-primary schools in ROI an English-language version of the textbook is frequently used as the Irish version is not of an equal standard to the English-language version. According to unit heads and the heads of stand-alone schools the greatest lack is of Irish-language resources online, for example, programmes in Irish for the interactive whiteboard.
- In the units there is occasionally internal tension in the school regarding the distribution of resources on the two sides of the school.
- Extra-curricular activities often take place through the medium of English, in the primary and post-primary units in NI and in the post-primary schools in ROI. For example, in the units pupils from both sides of the school are together for many extra-curricular activities and certain activities take place with the host school through the medium of English. In the case of the primary schools about 50% of them provide the activities in Irish only or mostly in Irish.

### 1.2.3 Willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during playtime) and outside the school

#### 1.2.3.1 Use of Irish

- The primary school pupils in stand-alone schools in this research were the strongest group in terms of use of Irish compared to the post-primary school pupils and the primary school pupils in units in NI.
- **The pupil himself/herself:** There was a strong link between Irish and the pupils' development of personal and linguistic identity. Some pupils felt that it was a personal achievement to be able to speak, read and write Irish. The pupils understood the advantages associated with bilingualism for them and that it would be easier for them to learn other languages in future.
- **Family and friends:** It was clear that pupils' backgrounds had a considerable influence on pupils' willingness to use Irish within and outside the school. Some pupils indicated that parents, siblings and other relatives encouraged them to speak Irish. They liked speaking Irish to friends at school and outside school.
- **The school and education system:** It emerged in the statements from the pupils that the approach of all the teachers, the school's approach and the continuum of education feature strongly among the factors influencing the use of Irish as an immersion language among pupils. These factors have a considerable influence on the willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises outside the classroom. But it is the extra-curricular activities which most entice pupils to speak Irish. Extra-curricular activities add greatly to the overall breadth and depth of the pupils' experience of functioning through Irish in school life.
- **Society:** Society plays a considerable role in the development of Irish. There is clearly a strong connection between the willingness of pupils to use Irish outside the school and the opportunities society provides them to speak the language, including contact with other Irish speakers, the media, the professional opportunities which Irish provides them, and pursuing various pastimes through the medium of Irish.
- **The language and the culture of the country:** Themes related to national identity and cultural identity featured strongly in the responses given by the pupils. They showed an interest in the language itself, in the history of the language and the link between the language and the history of Ireland. They felt that, as Irish speakers, they had a role to play in the preservation of the language and these factors greatly influence the pupils' willingness to speak Irish in the school and outside the school. There was also a strong connection between the willingness to speak Irish and participation in cultural activities

such as traditional music, singing, Irish-language literature, Irish-language games and drama.

#### **1.2.4 Other differences in pupils' opinions**

- At primary school level it was primarily pupils in the stand-alone schools who stated that it was the school which encouraged them to speak Irish. And it was also the pupils in the stand-alone schools who most frequently mentioned cultural activities as a motivation to speak Irish.
- In contrast pupils in the primary units were most likely to state that it was the family which encouraged them to speak Irish.
- 71.9% of pupils in the primary units stated that they were keen to speak Irish for reasons of identity compared to 18.3% in the stand-alone primary schools.
- 29.3% of the pupils in the post-primary units/streams stated that the family encouraged them to speak Irish compared to 13.3% in the stand-alone post-primary schools.
- 77.8% of the pupils in the stand-alone post-primary schools stated that they were inclined to speak Irish for reasons of identity compared to 56.1% in the post-primary units/streams.

##### **1.2.4.1 Desire to learn Irish and attitude towards learning Irish:**

- With reference to the desire to learn Irish, there was a significant difference between NI stand-alone primary schools in comparison to the following contexts; NI primary units, ROI stand-alone post-primary schools, ROI post-primary units, and NI stand-alone post-primary schools.
- Regarding attitudes towards the learning of Irish, NI stand-alone primary schools had the highest mean score, significantly different to ROI post-primary units and NI stand-alone post-primary schools.

### **1.3 Factors influencing pupils' willingness to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during playtime)**

- The most significant factors influencing the pupils' willingness to use Irish are the pupils' home language, the region in which the school is located (ROI or NI), and the level (primary or post-primary) rather than whether it is a stand-alone school or unit. Apart from those factors, primary school pupils in stand-alone schools were strongest

regarding the use of Irish compared to the post-primary school pupils and primary school pupils in units in NI.

- Irish language competence is noticeable among pupils coming from an Irish-language background at the start of schooling, enhancing Irish language acquisition, but the importance of parents' positive attitude was also emphasised.
- **Disadvantaged area:** The principals identified additional challenges created in disadvantaged school areas. There is a problem of limited opportunities which some pupils have for the development and use of language, both English and Irish, as a consequence of having other social problems.
- **Classroom assistants with Irish:** Frequent mention was made of the importance of the availability of classroom assistants with Irish and their support for the encouragement of Irish in the class and in the playground.
- **Teachers' competencies:** Pupils speak Irish when the teachers are present, during class activities and outside the class. Teachers' competencies, both strong ability in Irish and understanding of immersion education pedagogy, were identified as a big influence on the pupils' Irish.
- **Examination bonus points:** The standard of Irish becomes very challenging at senior level and bonus points in state examinations encourage senior pupils to use and improve their Irish.
- Leaders of both stand-alone schools and units stated that the naíonra/naíscoil experience is among the biggest factors influencing the use of Irish among primary school pupils. If pupils had attended a naíonra (Irish-medium playgroup) they have already had an understanding of the language and of the environment when transferring to primary school.
- Pupils in the stand-alone schools were more committed to using Irish outside the classroom than pupils in the units, a difference which was statistically significant.

### **1.3.1 Factors influencing language and professional development opportunities for school staff**

- The coordinators of NI primary units explained that the school development plan prioritised whole-staff professional needs over unit staff development needs, and that this was a disadvantage.
- A strong opinion was expressed that plenty of courses were available in English but there was a lack of courses available in Irish. It was stated that it is not sufficient to translate courses already available in English to Irish.

- The principals of primary schools, both stand-alone schools and units, raised the issue of time pressure and recommended Irish courses online and courses during school time.
- The principals of primary schools in ROI raised the issue of teachers' good will towards engaging in professional development, which was at risk because of the pressure on teachers. It was explained that school leaders cannot engage in professional development as they wish, due to shortage of time. It would help if a substitute were employed while the principal or director was attending a course.
- It was indicated that there is a need for comprehensive needs analysis to identify the specific professional needs of principals and directors in the all-Irish sector and to provide professional development opportunities focussing on these specific requirements.
- The professional development opportunities provided for school clusters were praised and practitioners benefited from cooperation with other schools.
- In general, leaders emphasised the value of Gaeltacht experience and the connection between that and staff professional development. Schools in NI placed the most emphasis on this aspect of professional development. Interaction with the Gaeltacht community benefits both staff and pupils.

### **1.3.2 Effect of provision on the development of an Irish-speaking community in the vicinity**

- Past-pupils have a valuable role to play as teachers, classroom assistants, youth officers and at authority and decision-making levels. Therefore it is advantageous to have access to all-Irish education from the naíonra level to the end of the post-primary period. However, all-Irish primary school pupils frequently do not transfer to an all-Irish post-primary school because there is no all-Irish post-primary school in the locality.
- NI schools were more active than ROI schools in the development of Irish in the community. All of them saw it as part of their role to promote Irish in the community and they organise activities for the community. Though ROI schools organise activities also, the percentage was considerably lower.
- Parents understand the importance of the use of Irish as a means of communication. Some parents felt that the school was already doing plenty to develop an Irish-speaking community. Parents recommended other social activities to foster a community, e.g. activities between schools. Parents felt that it would help the pupils if they could conduct their business through the medium of Irish in the local shops at lunch break.

- The primary school parents in ROI were by far the largest group who helped with school activities. On the whole, post-primary parents gave less help. Parents helped with administrative matters in the school, at fundraising activities, with the maintenance of accommodation, and with activities with the pupils such as youth clubs, church services, school tours, craft workshops and especially with dance and drama.
- Parents mentioned various reasons which prevented them helping the school, mostly practical issues which arise such as shortage of time, demands of work, child care, and distance from the school. In particular, some parents in NI reported that lack of confidence in their Irish-language ability was a hindrance.

### **1.3.3 Analysis of Irish language support provided by schools to parents of Irish-medium pupils**

- Most of the schools in ROI provide Irish classes for parents and information about classes in the school area.
- Only about one third of the schools in NI tend to provide Irish classes in the school but information is provided about classes in the area.
- Parents in NI and in ROI indicated that they also receive support from the school in written form (e.g. vocabulary and useful phrases).
- Some schools provide guidance on assistance with homework, with literacy development (e.g. shared reading), with the pronunciation of Irish and the immersion education approach is explained to parents.
- Guidance in English about homework is given to parents with little Irish and English-language textbooks, if available, are provided.
- The after-school clubs, homework clubs and numeracy clubs are very beneficial according to the parents. Where they do not exist, some parents recommended they be established.
- Parents welcomed the opportunities provided by primary schools in ROI to participate in activities in the classroom.
- One stand-alone primary school in NI reported that they organise classes with parents and pupils together during which, teachers model teaching strategies.
- It was clear from the parents' responses that many of them are worried about their ability to help with homework in Irish, particularly at primary school level.
- Parents in each type of school, primary schools and post-primary schools, units and stand-alone schools in NI and in ROI, indicated extreme satisfaction with the schools' communication with them. A small number of parents felt that schools could make more

use of bilingual communication and use more English in written communication. Though most parents feel comfortable if a member of the school staff speaks Irish to them, a minority of 15.97% feel uncomfortable. More ROI primary school parents spoke Irish to the school than NI primary school parents or parents in post-primary schools in both jurisdictions and the difference between ROI primary school parents and the other parental groups was statistically significant.

- An equal mix of Irish and English is the most common medium of communication in all-Irish primary schools with a greater tendency towards English noted in the primary schools in NI.
- When communicating orally with parents a quarter of primary schools in ROI use primarily Irish or Irish only. The reverse is true in the case of the primary schools in NI where the amount of English rises from 31.6% in the case of written communications to 47.4% in oral communications.
- Bilingual translation is the most common method of communication for post-primary schools. When communicating orally ROI post-primary schools give more prominence to Irish.

#### **1.3.4 Most effective leadership support structures for management and organisation of units**

- Principals/Unit directors reported that it was an advantage to have all school facilities, both teaching resources and infrastructural facilities, shared between both sides of the school. Some facilities are available to the unit as a result of the link with the host school, including school buses and sports facilities, facilities which would not otherwise be available. It is also an advantage for newly-qualified teachers to be able to plan in collaboration with colleagues in the host school.
- Sometimes the development of the unit is restricted by whole-school management and by the implementation of the whole-school development plan.
- When a unit size increases sometimes pressure occurs to move towards the establishment of a separate school. This could have implications when teachers are teaching in both parts of a post-primary school. The growth of the unit may create tension between the needs of the unit and those of the host school.
- Coordinators in the units have heavy administrative and managerial responsibilities, comparable to the duties of teaching principals.
- Some parents were concerned at the lack of provision for all-Irish education at the post-primary level and doubted the effectiveness of units/streams. On the other hand, other parents (in NI) recommended the establishment of more streams.

- The enrolment capping system in the unit and host school occasionally creates complexities. Sometimes pupils move to the all-English host school.
- Though schools and units want to expand, the growth of the school creates a challenge, for example an increase in the number of families needing support, or the need for combined classes.
- There is a particular challenge in serving the two communities – an Irish-speaking community and a non-Irish-speaking community, and ensuring the recognition of the Irish language tradition.
- Frequently, the principal of the host school or the managers with specific duties do not have Irish, thus placing a greater administrative burden on unit coordinators.
- 80% of post-primary schools in ROI use Irish only or mostly Irish at meetings of the Board of Management. Two thirds (66.6%) do likewise in the case of the primary schools in ROI. 83.3% of primary schools in NI use English only or mostly English on the Board of Governors. The practices in the three all-Irish post-primary schools in NI vary from only Irish to only English.
- Two other management systems were implemented which supported the growth of stand-alone schools. A satellite system and a mentoring system helped two primary schools in NI to develop effectively and to maintain independence during the early years of development.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

The research shows that there is a spectrum of provision ranging from a stand-alone system which provides total immersion education to a stream or unit in a school functioning through the medium of English which provides 50% of the teaching programme in Irish. Transient models providing a scaffold for newly-established schools have also been implemented. The analysis revealed considerable differences between models of provision, particularly in relation to infrastructural and organisational issues. Pupils' overall immersion experiences and parental experiences varied not just across Irish-medium models, but also across school levels. The role of schools in the development of an Irish-speaking community in the area varied mainly according to jurisdiction. Consequently, the authors conclude that comparisons between different immersion models that also include analyses across jurisdictions and across school levels provide much rich and nuanced data that could be of benefit to policy-makers and other stakeholders.



## 2. Introduction

This research report was commissioned by An Coiste Seasta Thuaidh Theas ar Ghaeloideachas (North-South Standing Committee on Irish-medium Education) to analyse models of provision of Irish-language education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Standing Committee was established to enhance cross-border co-operation in the Irish-medium education sector, and to share best practice on a North-South basis. There is no doubt that for the past forty years there has been a significant growth in the provision of Irish-medium education on the island of Ireland. The departments of education on both sides of the border were not always able to keep up with the demand for schooling through Irish and obstacles were placed before groups of parents attempting to establish all-Irish schools. In fact, because of strict regulations governing the establishment of new schools in the Republic of Ireland, it is now likely that all-Irish schools will only be established in areas of population growth.

In certain areas on the island it is recommended that an all-Irish unit be established instead of a stand-alone school for various reasons. The question might be asked whether the unit model is as effective as a stand-alone school. In certain places, a stand-alone school may not be sustainable due to the lack of population density. The research was prompted by questions such as this and the specific issues set out in the research tender are listed below:

1. The factors influencing the use of Irish as immersion language among pupils;
2. The breadth and depth of the pupils' overall experience of functioning through the medium of Irish in school life;
3. The willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during playtime) and outside the school;
4. Factors influencing the willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during playtime);
5. Factors influencing professional development and language development opportunities for school staff;
6. Factors influencing the effect of supply on development of Irish-speaking communities in the school vicinity;
7. Analysis of the Irish language support provided by schools to parents of Irish-medium education pupils.

With regards to Irish-medium units in English-medium schools:

1. An analysis of the most effective leadership support structures in managing and organising an Irish-medium unit.

This report is set out according to the questions which guided the research and the themes arising from analysis of the data. Relevant literature on immersion education is reviewed in the next chapter. This is followed by an account of the methodologies used in the research. Finally, the results are presented in the subsequent chapters.

The research results provide an overview of the challenges to be overcome by leaders in all-Irish primary and post-primary schools, including all-Irish stand-alone schools and units, challenges relating to school infrastructure, human resources and leadership. The results of the case-studies give an overview of the attitudes of immersion education pupils towards Irish, towards learning Irish and towards speaking Irish as well as factors influencing pupils' overall experience of functioning through the medium of Irish. There is also an overview here of the attitude of parents towards immersion education in Ireland, their reasons for choosing an all-Irish education for their children and the challenges facing them in participating fully in their children's education, including lack of competence in Irish and ability to provide academic support to their children. The complexities of the various models are discussed with reference to administration, professional development and promoting the use of Irish among pupils, and management systems which support the development of a stand-alone school are examined. The results are discussed in the final chapter and recommendations are presented focussing on the research issues outlined above.

## **2.1 Definition of all-Irish stream and unit**

We distinguish between all-Irish units and all-Irish streams as follows in accordance with the definitions on the website [www.gaelscoileanna.ie](http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie):

The all-Irish unit is a linguistic unit in which the pupils are immersed in Irish for the duration of the school day. The all-Irish unit functions within the host school where English is the language of communication and the language of instruction of the host school. The unit is like a small school which is run and organised through a minority language while the host school is organised through the normal language of the community.

An all-Irish stream is a limited teaching provision through the medium of Irish within a host school where English is the language of communication and the language of instruction in the host school.

That said, as the number of units and streams which participated in the second stage of the research was relatively small, we had to combine units and streams for the analysis. The term ‘unit’ is used to refer to both contexts in this research.

## 2.2 Structure of schools and areas

The research covered two jurisdictions i.e. the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI), and two school levels i.e. primary schools and post-primary schools. As indicated in Table 2.1 some of the schools are units or streams. There are seven primary school units in NI and none in ROI. There are 10 post-primary units/streams in ROI and 4 in NI. Of the post-primary units/streams in NI, two of them are streams which were established in 2010 or 2011. Consequently, no pupils have yet taken A-level examinations and the curricular provision is still being developed in these streams.

Table 2.1: Total number of Irish-medium primary and post-primary schools and units in NI and ROI

	Republic of Ireland (ROI)	Northern Ireland (NI)	On the island of Ireland
<b>Stand-alone primary schools</b>	141	28	169
<b>Primary units</b>	0	7	7
<b>Primary school total</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Stand-alone post-primary schools</b>	26	1	27
<b>Post-primary units</b>	10	4	14
<b>Post-primary school total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>217</b>

These contexts must be kept in consideration when reading the report as our primary concern was to compare units/streams with stand-alone schools.

### **3. Literature Review**

This literature review begins with a discussion of the role played by the education system in the revival of a language. The advantages of bilingualism and the effectiveness of immersion education as a system for teaching language are discussed. Various models of immersion education and various bilingual programmes in Wales, in Scotland and in the Basque Country are examined. The education system in those countries and in Ireland plays a central role in the preservation of minority heritage languages. Therefore, there is much to be learnt about the way in which state resources in other countries are used to preserve minority heritage languages, information which would be beneficial to state agencies responsible for the development and implementation of language policies and education policies in Ireland. Comparative studies of various models of immersion education in Canada are also reviewed. These studies show that the stand-alone schools have some advantages over French-language units or streams, advantages relating to the academic achievement of the pupils, academic support services, administration, resources, parents' participation and the fostering of a French-language community within the school. The review also includes a synthesis of research on parents' participation in the immersion education system, with a discussion of the reasons why parents choose a programme of immersion education for their children and challenges which hinder parents' participation in the immersion education system in Ireland, including competence in Irish and the lack of appropriate support from the schools, as perceived by the parents.

#### **3.1 Role of the education system in language revival**

In many countries around the world efforts are being made to revive minority languages through the education system. Examples of these efforts are seen in countries such as Scotland, Wales, the Basque Country, New Zealand and Hawaii. Frequently a language which was the native language of a community but suppressed during colonial times is seen as a powerful means of constructing and enacting one's identity. In the case of the countries mentioned above and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the minority heritage language is not spoken outside those countries and often the future of the language depends largely on the success of the education programmes. In the case of Irish, for example, the amount of transmission occurring in the Gaeltacht areas is not enough for Irish to survive as a community language. The education system must generate new speakers with each generation (Harris, 2005; Ó Riagáin, 2008).

It is understandable that states would emphasise the education system as an agent of revival as they have a direct influence on that system. It would be mistaken, however, to assume that the education system could bear the entire burden of language revival (Baker,

2003). There is evidence that various governments in Ireland, for example, thought that the schools could revive Irish with little support from other State institutions (Coolahan, 1981; Ó Buachalla 1988; Fishman 1991; Hyland and Milne 1992; Kelly 2002; Ó Riagáin 2008; Ó Tuathaigh 2008). That said, there is little chance of reviving a language without the full support of the education system. There is great pressure from various stakeholders on education systems today and consequently, there must be a strong rationale for allocating space to any subject on the curriculum. Language revival alone is no longer a sufficient reason for having Irish on the curriculum. It must have other advantages and some of these are discussed in the next section.

### **3.1.1 Advantages of bilingualism**

Research results have long shown that there are cognitive, linguistic, academic and social advantages to being bilingual. Not only that, but research in recent years has shown that the cognitive advantages last for the person's life and can delay the onset of dementia (Bak, 2014; Bialystok, 2009; Lauchlan, Parisi, & Fadda, 2013). Another advantage to being bilingual is that a bilingual is familiar with two separate cultures and the different values associated with each. Researchers such as Cenoz & Genesee (1998) showed that bilinguals have better divergent thinking in comparison to monolinguals. Bilinguals are also better at problem-solving (Bialystok, 2009). Children who are completely bilingual are more aware of the needs of the listener compared to monolingual children (Lazaruk, 2007). Cenoz (2003) showed that it was easier for bilinguals to learn an additional language. And better metalinguistic awareness is fostered in multilingual education settings (Cummins 1993; Lasagabaster 2001). Thomas & Collier (2001) found that the achievement of pupils in bilingual programmes was better than their monolingual peers in each subject area following 4-7 years attending a bilingual programme or an immersion education programme.

These are just some of the advantages accruing to bilinguals evidenced in the research. The most important point concerning all-Irish schools in Ireland is that bilingualism suggests advantages rather than the opposite. The case can be made, then, to education authorities that Irish should have a central role in a bilingual education system and that learners would benefit from it. Baker (Comhdháil Gaelscoileanna, 2008) claimed that there are disadvantages for any learner not in a bilingual system. Cummins (1976) proposed the threshold hypothesis when discussing the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. According to the threshold hypothesis a reasonable level of competence must be achieved in the two languages in order to benefit from the advantages. It is important, therefore, in the immersion education system in Ireland that a strong form of bilingualism is fostered and that learners attain a high standard of Irish in order to benefit from the advantages and also to maintain

the integrity of the language into the future. In the next section immersion education as a system of education is discussed.

### **3.2 Immersion education**

The term immersion education is used to describe bilingual education programmes started in Montréal, Canada in 1965 (Genesee, Holobow, Lambert, & Chartrand, 1989). Parents of English speakers were worried that their children were not attaining sufficient ability to live successfully in a French-speaking society (Fortune & Tedick, 2008; Genesee, 1985, 1998; Swain & Johnson, 1997). It is a teaching approach as opposed to a methodology in which the second language (T2) is promoted (Bernhardt, 1992; Genesee, 1985). Instead of just teaching the language, every subject is taught through the medium of that language (Stryker & Leaver, 1997). The pupils learn subject and language at the same time (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). According to Baker & Jones (1998) immersion education is a type of strong bilingualism with bilingualism, biliteracy and biculturalism as intended targets (Baker 2006).

One of the most significant characteristics of immersion education is that it is an additive bilingualism (Genesee, 2008). This means that the T1 of immersion education pupils, by the end of the programme, is of an equal standard to pupils who studied through the T1. In addition, a high level has been attained in the T2 though it is not native speaker level (Swain & Johnson, 1997). They achieve a very good level of fluency as well as advanced abilities in the receptive skills, listening and reading (Allen et al., 1990; Lazaruk, 2007; Ó Duibhir, 2009; Swain, 2000). Weaknesses are noted, however, in the production skills, speaking and writing (Harley, 1993; Swain & Lapkin, 2008).

### **3.3 Immersion education in Ireland**

When the Free State was established in the south in 1922 the education system was given a central role in the revival of Irish. The first conference which drafted the programme of education in 1922 recommended that all subjects in the infant classes be taught through Irish wherever teachers were qualified and able to do so (National Programme Conference, 1922). This was an immersion education policy, though it was not described as such at the time. That decision gave rise to a long tradition of Irish-medium education in Ireland. There was a period of growth at the start which faded over the years for various reasons which we do not have space to discuss here. For the past forty years, however, there has been a steady growth again in education through the medium of Irish throughout the island, now described as immersion education. It is the parents rather than the state who are driving this growth and it is regarded as one of the most positive developments ever in the promotion of Irish (Council of Europe, 2008; Mac Murchaidh, 2008). Research shows that pupils in all-Irish schools are succeeding in achieving additive bilingualism without any detriment to their L1 skills (Harris, 2006; NigUidhir, 2001; Ó Cathalláin, 2011; Ó Duibhir, 2009; Ó hAiniféin,

2007). Pupils' attainments in other curricular subjects such as mathematics are very satisfactory also (Shiel, Gilleece, Clerkin, Millar, 2011).

On the whole, the research reports on immersion education in Ireland to date show positive results but it must be remembered that an advanced level of L2 ability is required to benefit from the advantages of bilingualism, as mentioned above. With reference to the revival of Irish, acquisition is only the first step. As Baker reminds us:

A further concern about bilingual education is that language learning may stop at the school gates. The minority language may be effectively transmitted and competently learned in the classroom ... Extending a minority language learned at school to use in the community is something that is difficult to engineer, difficult to plan, but nevertheless vital if the language is to live outside the school gates (2003: 101).

An Irish-speaking community needs to be developed around the school in which speaking Irish would be normalised. After acquisition, the speaking of Irish must be normalised in the classroom. Then it must be normalised in the playground and in activities outside the classroom. After that again attempts can be made to normalise it outside the school gates.

The structure of the school will affect this process. If it is a stand-alone school, it will be possible to attempt to establish Irish as the language of play in the playground. If it is an all-Irish unit within an English-language host school this will be much more difficult. The rest of this report discusses our analysis of the two most common models of all-Irish schools in Ireland i.e. a stand-alone school and an all-Irish unit. First, however, these models are examined in an international context.

### **3.4 Wales**

The education system plays an important role in the preservation of Welsh. The statistics show that the percentage of primary school pupils with fluent Welsh is increasing despite the fact that the percentage who speak Welsh at home is decreasing (Lewis 2006). There is a variety of models of immersion education at primary and secondary level in Wales, including all-Welsh schools and bilingual programmes. Frequently, native Welsh speakers and Welsh learners are being taught together through the medium of Welsh (Lewis 2006; Redknap 2006). Different models of immersion education are required to serve the needs of pupils from a variety of sociolinguistic contexts, according to Lewis (2006: 32) *'the notion of one canonical model of bilingual education in Wales is both impractical and inappropriate'*.

### 3.4.1 Models of immersion education and bilingual programmes in Wales

In the document “Iaith Pawb” (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2003) the Welsh Assembly Government highlighted the definition of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh in schools as a priority. The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in Wales (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2007) implemented this work in 2007. There was a need to define the different models available in the schools:

- establishing clear objectives for educators and pupils regarding linguistic outcomes;
- providing unambiguous information to parents and their children regarding the options available;
- assisting Local Education Authorities in developing and co-ordinating their strategies for Welsh-medium and bilingual provision, including resource planning and staff recruitment; and
- allowing systematic evaluation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different models of language teaching (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2007).

The categories shown below in Table 3.1 were identified at primary level.

Table 3.1: Different models of education through the medium of Welsh at primary level

Welsh Medium [WM]	Welsh medium primary school
Dual stream [DS]	Dual Stream Primary School
Transitional [TR]	Transitional primary school: Welsh medium with significant use of English
English (with significant Welsh) [EW]	Predominantly English medium primary school but with significant use of Welsh
English medium [EM]	Predominantly English medium primary school

Source: (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2007: 10)

At second level the situation was more complex and the categories listed below in Table 3.2 were identified.

Table 3.2: Different models of education through the medium of Welsh at secondary level

Welsh Medium [WM]	Welsh-Medium Secondary School
A Bilingual [AB]	Bilingual Secondary School Category 2A - At least 80% of subjects apart from English and Welsh are taught only through the medium of Welsh to all pupils. One or two subjects are taught to some pupils in English or in both languages.
B Bilingual [BB]	Bilingual Secondary School Category 2B – At least 80% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh but are also taught through the medium of English.
C Bilingual [CB]	Bilingual Secondary School Category 2C – 50 – 79% of subjects (excluding Welsh and English) are taught through the medium of Welsh but are also taught through the medium of English.
Ch Bilingual [CH]	Bilingual Secondary School Category 2Ch – All subjects, except Welsh and English taught to all



	pupils using both languages.
English (with Significant Welsh) [EW]	Predominantly English medium secondary school with significant use of Welsh: 20 – 49% of subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh but are also taught in English.
English medium [EM]	Predominantly English medium secondary school where 1 or 2 subjects may be taught through the medium of Welsh as an option.

Source: (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2007: 14-15)

It is clear from the categories mentioned above that there is a great variety of models of provision for bilingual and Welsh-medium education at primary and secondary level. Interestingly enough, it was agreed during the 2012/13 school year that one Dual Stream Primary School would convert to a Welsh medium primary school (Llywodraeth Cymru 2013). With regard to the balance between education through the medium of English and education through the medium of Welsh in bilingual education, it is commonly accepted that at least 70% of the teaching should be through the medium of Welsh so that learners would have the competence to use the language with confidence and fluency across a broad range of different contexts (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009, 2010).

### 3.4.2 The education continuum in Welsh-medium education

To achieve a wide range of Welsh-language skills and functional bilingualism it is recommended that education through the medium of Welsh be provided at each stage in the education system for those with Welsh as their first language and for learners of Welsh as another language also. Therefore, schools, local authorities and other providers are asked to implement strategic planning to facilitate linguistic progression (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009, 2010).

The attrition rate is a cause of concern in Wales, particularly between *Key Stage 2* and *Key Stage 3* in certain geographical areas. A large number of learners switch to a bilingual system or gradually study a smaller number of subjects through the medium of Welsh. For example, mathematics and science are frequently taught through the medium of Welsh at *Key Stage 2* (Redknapp 2006; Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009). After that pupils in some schools are given opportunities to choose different percentages of immersion education provision ‘*through a linguistic streaming system*’ (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009: 65). Consequently, these pupils have less contact with Welsh and lose out on opportunities to enrich their vocabulary. Their modes of expression and their linguistic registers are more limited and they do not have the same fluency (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009).

Many factors influence the ability and willingness of pupils to continue in the immersion education system in Wales, including the pupil’s own attitude and that of the

parents as well as the policies and leadership of local authorities and individual schools. To counteract attrition rates it is understood that there will be a need for more staff with the appropriate qualifications to provide continuity in Welsh-medium education and pupils and parents will need to be persuaded of the value of immersion education. And it is recognised that there is a need for more cooperation between primary schools and post-primary schools to ensure that transition arrangements are in place which take into account the pupils' language experience as well as appropriate planning to build on the linguistic foundation already established. There is also recognition of the importance of systematic planning to ensure that the linguistic balance in schools which make provision through the medium of Welsh and through the medium of English provides pupils with opportunities to make satisfactory progress in their Welsh language skills. To this end some schools in Wales are trying to increase the number of curricular subjects taught through the medium of Welsh (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009).

Schools are asked to set out growth targets where the provision through the medium of Welsh already in the school is unsatisfactory. To assess the provision through the medium of Welsh, schools are asked to take the following circumstances into consideration:

- suitability of the provision in the light of the linguistic needs of pupils (for example less Welsh spoken in the home);
- suitable progression which builds on the progress made in the previous grade (for example, teaching mathematics and science through the medium of Welsh in *Key Stage 2*); and
- practical and organisational considerations which deter pupils from taking advantage of immersion education when it is available (for example, arrangements for *'linguistic streaming'* at second level) (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2009).

A strategic aim of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2012-2013 is *'to ensure that all learners develop their Welsh-language skills to their full potential and encourage sound linguistic progression from one phase of education and training to the next'* (Llywodraeth Cymru 2013: 13). Therefore, each local education authority is asked to indicate rates of progression from one stage to another in the education system (Llywodraeth Cymru 2013). Linguistic progression in Welsh as a first language and opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh from age 14 through to higher level education are recognised as a priority by the Welsh Assembly Government (Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2010).

### **3.4.3 The Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project in Wales**

In 2004 an interesting pilot project was established in Wales to tackle the rate of attrition between primary level and second level in the immersion education system and to increase

the number of Welsh speakers and to widen the use of Welsh in accordance with the aim of the Welsh National Assembly. The following review is based on two evaluations of the pilot project (Estyn 2006 and Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

The *Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilots Project* was developed by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board, based more or less on the *Intensive Core French Programme* in Canada in order to explore potential for

- Creating new access points to Welsh-medium education;
- Opening up access to a greater range of subjects through the medium of Welsh at school;
- Addressing the drift from learning through the medium of Welsh to learning Welsh as a subject when transitioning from primary to second level;
- Increasing the availability of appropriate Welsh-medium teaching and learning resources (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Pupils participating in the pilot project undertook intensive language courses over a period of five or six weeks at the end of their time in primary school (Year 6) in most of the schools which took part in the project. The intensive language courses were taught in the secondary schools and the pupils took part in a wide range of activities, including extra-curricular activities. These courses aimed to improve the Welsh-language skills of the participants and to prepare them for Welsh-medium or bilingual secondary education. Apart from three schools, most of the participating teachers were able to speak Welsh and teach through the medium of Welsh. A partnership system was in place in four schools in which pairs or *buddies* were made between primary school pupils and older pupils in the secondary school (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

The amount of contact the participants had with Welsh before taking part in the project differed for each pupil but for the most part those entering all-Welsh schools had a low standard of Welsh. The secondary schools had different practices for the participants when they transferred to secondary school at the start of the new school year (Year 7). Some of the schools established discrete classes of immersion pupils for at least a year. In other schools, participants were in the same classes as mainstream pupils from the outset. Extra support was given to immersion education pupils in the majority of schools, for example additional Welsh lessons, help with homework and support during lessons. Most schools aimed to have the immersion education pupils integrated with the mainstream pupils by Year 9 at the latest (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Both pupils and parents felt that the pilot project provided pupils with the opportunity to learn Welsh as well as securing a place in one of the participating Welsh-medium schools instead of other local schools. As a result, the pilot project provided another way of entry into

Welsh-medium education to many young people. There was a significant improvement in the participants' Welsh language skills following attendance at the intensive language courses at the end of Year 6. However, many pupils still had low proficiency in Welsh and it was recognised that they would need continuous support in Year 7 and even beyond. The intensive language courses gave the participants the opportunity to become friendly with pupils in the same boat as them, to get used to the secondary school environment and to develop confidence in their ability to cope with all-Welsh/bilingual education. The most successful pilot schools were those offering pupils higher levels of contact with the Welsh language in Year 7, following the intensive language courses (Estyn 2006; Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Pupils reported that they used more Welsh with secondary school friends than they used in primary school. In addition, participants indicated that at the end of Year 7 they used more Welsh in the local community. Both pupils and parents recognised the advantages of learning Welsh, advantages relating to academic achievement, to learning other languages, more employment opportunities and awareness of Welsh identity. Pupils indicated that they enjoyed the intensive language courses and that they had more confidence in their Welsh language ability as a result (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Teachers felt that the pupils had an extremely positive attitude to schooling and to Welsh. Their attendance rate was higher than their peers and they participated enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities and activities outside the school also. But pupils did not use Welsh much outside the school especially in areas where English is the dominant language. The project benefited the participating schools also. The schools' commitment to all-Welsh education was strengthened. The use of Welsh in the schools increased and teachers were facilitated to reflect critically on their teaching practices (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Before taking part in the pilot project, many pupils and parents were apprehensive about homework, the lack of support for Welsh at home, lack of understanding during lessons and difficulties with examinations through the medium of Welsh. But on the whole most of the pupils and parents were satisfied that they chose Welsh-medium education. The teachers felt that parents of immersion education pupils were more active in educational affairs than other parents and some parents started learning Welsh. One explanation given for this active role of the parents was *'the increased level of active decision making required of parents'* to give permission for the children to finish in primary school six weeks earlier in order to attend an intensive course in the secondary school, and to enrol their children in Welsh-medium education in Year 7 (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008: 119).

A teaching/learning resources pack was commissioned for the intensive language course and schools received a grant to develop their own resources. But despite this level of

support teachers and coordinators felt that the range of resources was not sufficient to meet the needs of immersion education pupils (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Training was provided for practitioners, including principals, coordinators and subject teachers, with a strong emphasis on active learning for practitioners when researching and sharing examples of best practice with each other. During the training courses the focus was on the theory of language teaching in the context of immersion education, scaffolding of language teaching and ways to promote the active use of language. Participants expressed great satisfaction with the training courses, especially opportunities to share their experience with practitioners in other schools (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

Arising from an evaluation of the pilot projects it was recommended:

- that the Welsh Language Board should explore with participating schools the feasibility of developing extra-curricular activities to encourage and reinforce pupils' use of Welsh outside school time;
- that the Welsh Language Board should support the active learning approach taken to practitioner training and disseminate examples of good practice and resources developed by individual schools to all participating schools (Llywodraeth Cymru 2008).

### **3.5 Scotland**

There are different models of immersion education and bilingual education at primary and post-primary level in Scotland, including Gàidhlig-medium (Scottish Gaelic) schools and Gàidhlig-medium units. At primary level it is recommended that there be full immersion education in Gàidhlig from *Primary 1* to *Primary 3* and that English be introduced gradually through the medium of Gàidhlig after that with the majority of teaching in the other subjects through the medium of Gàidhlig to the end of the primary school period (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2010). In dual-stream primary schools composite classes are common in the Gàidhlig-medium stream (O'Hanlon et al. 2010). There is flexibility in the guidelines for primary schools on the amount of Gàidhlig which will be used in teaching in the middle and higher classes, which means that the various local authorities recommend different Gàidhlig-English language models. And teachers have freedom to adapt the Gàidhlig-English ratio in teaching to the pupils' home circumstances and to the community context (O'Hanlon et al. 2012).

At second level a distinction is made between the two categories 'education through the medium of Gàidhlig' and 'teaching of Gàidhlig as a subject'. If one or more subjects as well as Gàidhlig is taught through the medium of Gàidhlig that model is called post-primary education through the medium of Gàidhlig (O'Hanlon et al. 2012). In a survey conducted by the same authors it was found that there were 56 providers in Scotland for pre-school

education through the medium of Gàidhlig, 59 providers for Gàidhlig-medium primary education and 33 providers for Gàidhlig as a subject for fluent speakers at second level.

Gàidhlig is the main home language for a maximum of 23% of pupils in Gàidhlig-medium schools (O'Hanlon et al. 2012) but over time there has been a reduction in the number of pupils in Gàidhlig-medium education from families who speak Gàidhlig (O'Hanlon et al. 2010). Most of the children in the early years of education and childcare in the Gàidhlig-medium sector come from families which speak English (Stephen et al. 2010).

### 3.5.1 Models of Gàidhlig-medium education

In the research carried out by O'Hanlon et al. (2012) four categories of provision were identified for 90% of Gàidhlig-medium primary education and the different categories are shown in Table 3.3 below. The pattern of use of Gàidhlig outside the classroom (in the playground, at extra-curricular activities etc.) follows the pattern of use in the classroom in the various models, more or less. That is to say, the highest level of use of Gàidhlig is by pupils in the schools in Category 1 and the lowest level of use is by pupils in the schools in Category 4. Emphasis is placed on extra-curricular activities (sport, music, drama, debating competitions, and film competitions) through the medium of Gàidhlig and the importance of the support role played by Gàidhlig institutes to promote the use of the language outside the school is recognised. Frequently, Gàidhlig-medium pupils and English-medium pupils are together for extra-curricular activities, which means that English-medium pupils also have contact with Gàidhlig. But usually more Gàidhlig is used when the two groups are not together. Schools use little Gàidhlig with parents as most parents are not bilingual or biliterate. Similar to parents in Wales and Ireland, parents in Scotland try to learn the language so that they will be able to help their children (O'Hanlon et al. 2010).

Table 3.3: Categories of education through the medium of Gàidhlig at primary level (Based on O'Hanlon et al. 2012)

Category	Percentage of providers	Percentage of teaching through the medium of Gàidhlig
Category 1	30%	Gàidhlig is the medium of instruction of nearly all teaching time throughout the primary school stages.
Category 2	30%	Gàidhlig is the medium of instruction of nearly all teaching time in the early primary school stages, but the amount of Gaelic used decreases steadily from <i>Primary 4</i> , reaching about two thirds of teaching time in <i>Primary 7</i> .
Category 3	20%	Gàidhlig is used for about four-fifths of teaching time in the first

		three primary school stages, for just above two thirds of teaching time in <i>Primary 4</i> and for two thirds of teaching time by <i>Primary 7</i> .
Category 4	10%	Gàidhlig is the medium of instruction of nearly all teaching time in the first two primary-school stages, and then falls steadily to reach about one half of teaching time in <i>Primary 6</i> and <i>Primary 7</i> .

### 3.5.2 The education continuum in Gàidhlig-medium education

Normally the use of Gàidhlig in the curriculum at the pre-school level is very high (84% in *Early Years 1* and 83% in *Early Years 2*) (O'Hanlon et al. 2012) but Stephen et al. (2010) report that the level of use of Gàidhlig in early years education and childcare depends on the setting. As a national average the level of use of Gàidhlig as medium of instruction is fairly high in the lower classes in primary schools but comparatively low in the higher classes. There is a marked drop in the use of Gàidhlig as medium of instruction for Gàidhlig-medium pupils at second level. On average less than 20% of teaching is through the medium of Gàidhlig in the Gàidhlig-medium second level schools. Some 14 secondary schools offer four or more subjects (including Gàidhlig as a subject for fluent speakers) through the medium of Gàidhlig in first and second year. And there is a significant decline in the use of Gàidhlig in the school environment and at extra-curricular activities also despite the efforts of adults to speak Gàidhlig to each other and to immersion education pupils (O'Hanlon et al. 2012). The same authors note that it is difficult to work out accurately the percentage of teaching done through the medium of Gàidhlig at primary level and at second level due to the lack of precise information. And Gàidhlig-medium primary pupils frequently transfer to secondary schools in which Gàidhlig is taught as a subject and every other subject is taught through the medium of English. Much less Gàidhlig is used as a means of communication outside the classroom in the secondary schools. As a result, it is not known to what extent is there continuity in the pupils' linguistic experiences from primary level to second level (O'Hanlon et al. 2012). Indeed, the lack of provision for Gàidhlig-medium education at second level is a cause of concern for Local Authority advisers (O'Hanlon et al. 2010).

Among the factors identified as influencing the level of use of Gàidhlig are the provision of teachers with the appropriate qualifications, local authority policies, the school's pedagogical approach to language learning and teaching, the number of pupils who speak Gàidhlig at home, the level of use of the language in the local community, and the school's policy towards the use of Gàidhlig outside the classroom (O'Hanlon et al. 2012). It is clear, then, that there is no one model which would suit every school as the sociolinguistic context differs depending on the area in which the school is located.

### 3.5.3 Academic attainment of pupils learning through the medium of Gàidhlig

O'Hanlon et al. (2010) analysed the results of pupils in Gàidhlig-medium schools and streams at *Primary 3, 5 and 7* and *Secondary 2* based on two surveys conducted by Scottish Government statisticians. In addition, the authors interviewed parents, principals, Local Authority Gàidhlig advisors and pupils in Gàidhlig-medium primary streams and in secondary schools in which Gàidhlig is taught to fluent speakers to further understand the reasons for choosing a particular model of education for primary schooling and post-primary schooling.

The English attainment of the Gàidhlig-medium pupils in reading and writing is lower than English-medium pupils at *Primary 3*. But that gap is closed by *Primary 5* and sometimes the Gàidhlig-medium pupils are ahead of their English-medium counterparts in English reading, an advantage which can also be seen at *Primary 7* and at *Secondary 2* for pupils learning Gàidhlig as a subject. There was no difference between the mathematical attainment of Gàidhlig-medium pupils and English-medium pupils at *Primary 7* or between pupils taking and not taking Gàidhlig as a subject at *Secondary 2*. There was no evidence in the results that Gàidhlig-medium pupils were behind their peers in English-medium schools except in English literacy at *Primary 3*. Therefore, Gàidhlig-medium pupils were level with pupils in the English-medium sector of similar age and the Gàidhlig-medium pupils had also acquired an additional language. At *Primary 7* the attainment of Gàidhlig-medium pupils in English surpassed their attainment in Gàidhlig, especially in reading (O'Hanlon et al. 2010). These results are more or less consistent with the results revealed by Johnstone et al. (1999) except for the fact that the Gàidhlig-medium pupils were not behind their peers in English-medium schools in science nor were they ahead in mathematics any longer. Johnstone et al. (1999) found that between 65% and 70% of Gàidhlig-medium pupils reached the targets for speaking and listening in Gàidhlig at *Primary 7* and about 60% reached the targets for literacy at *Primary 7*. The attainment of Gàidhlig-medium pupils was higher in English than in Gàidhlig at *Primary 5* and at *Primary 7*.

### 3.5.4 Reasons for choosing Gàidhlig-medium education

O'Hanlon et al. (2010) report that parents and pupils choose Gàidhlig-medium education in order to preserve the language and to develop a deeper awareness of their Scottish heritage. The parents indicated that they understood the cognitive and linguistic advantages associated with bilingualism and that they were aware of research results which demonstrated the advantages of bilingualism. And parents choose Gàidhlig-medium education for pragmatic reasons also, for example small class sizes and the academic reputation of the school. Parents in the research conducted by Johnstone et al. (1999) reported the same reasons for choosing Gàidhlig-medium education.



In research carried out by O'Hanlon et al. (2010) parents in the English-language side of the schools (some of whom spoke Gàidhlig) indicated that they did not choose Gàidhlig-medium education as they doubted their ability to help their children with homework. A small number of those parents thought that Gàidhlig-medium education promoted segregation but other parents on the English-language side of the school welcomed the cultural diversity which Gàidhlig-medium education brought to the school and they wanted more opportunities for their own children to learn Gàidhlig. Usually, parents of children in Gàidhlig-medium streams wished for their children to continue with Gàidhlig-medium education at second level for the sake of continuity in learning Gàidhlig. Gàidhlig-medium parents wanted to broaden the provision for Gàidhlig-medium education and the use of Gàidhlig in the school environment and to establish stand-alone Gàidhlig-medium schools at second level in which all subjects except English would be taught through the medium of Gàidhlig. They felt, however, that fully-qualified staff could not be recruited to increase the provision of Gàidhlig-medium education. Primary and secondary school principals indicated that it was difficult to recruit teachers with the appropriate qualifications for the Gàidhlig-medium sector as well as ancillary staff who spoke Gàidhlig.

Other parents who were very committed to Gàidhlig-medium education felt that there were particular challenges associated with secondary education through the medium of Gàidhlig and that it would be better to teach science subjects through the medium of English at second level and that social subjects were better suited to teaching through the medium of Gàidhlig. Pupils indicated that they wanted to remain in the Gàidhlig-medium system at second level for social reasons (to be with their friends) and to develop their language skills (they would be able to speak Gàidhlig to each other, sometimes as a secret language). Some pupils felt that learning mathematics and science subjects through the medium of Gàidhlig posed difficulties and they indicated that it would help if they were given terminology in English and Gàidhlig for each subject taught through the medium of Gàidhlig (O'Hanlon et al. 2010).

The research participants understood the importance of providing informal contexts, for example cultural activities which would give children opportunities to use and develop their Gàidhlig skills. Pupils indicated that they were committed to Gàidhlig and to other aspects of the Gàidhlig culture, particularly music, dance and games. Teachers and parents understood the importance of encouraging pupils to use Gàidhlig outside the school but thought it was challenging to achieve this aim even with pupils who spoke Gàidhlig at home and in areas where Gàidhlig is spoken. Some challenges were identified also which hindered the progress of pupils in Gàidhlig, for example the lack of Gàidhlig in the community, the lack of Gàidhlig clubs for children, the scarcity of interesting reading material for children and the lack of continuity at second level, which means that pupils' Gàidhlig skills decline at second

level. The children's Gàidhlig is frequently limited to school except in areas where Gàidhlig is spoken in the community. It was indicated that there was a need for continuous professional development, especially language development opportunities, for teachers in the sector. But at the end of the day it was more important to have competent teachers working in the sector and the teacher's competence in Gàidhlig was less important, according to principals (O'Hanlon et al. 2010).

### **3.6 The Basque Country**

There are seven provinces in the Basque Country, four in Spain and three in France. In the lower Basque Country in Spain official recognition is given to Basque (the minority language) and to Spanish (the majority language) (Lasagabaster 2001; Mercator 2005). The following review focuses primarily on the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC), a geographical area that spans three provinces in the lower Basque Country. Like other countries with minority languages (e.g. Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) efforts to preserve the Basque language have a significant impact on the education sector (Lasagabaster 2001; Aldekoa and Gardner 2002). To establish a bilingual education system in the Basque Country emphasis was placed on the provision of teachers competent in Basque, on the provision of teaching/learning resources in Basque and on adding a Basque aspect to the curriculum. There has been an increase in teaching Basque as a subject and in using Basque as a medium of instruction throughout the Basque Country at primary level, at second level and in university education. Basque is a compulsory subject in the primary schools and in the secondary schools in the BAC, and education through the medium of Basque is optional throughout the Basque Country (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002).

#### **3.6.1 Models of bilingual education in the Basque Country**

Pupils and parents in the BAC are entitled to choose the medium of instruction, Basque or Spanish, in accordance with the *Law for the Normalisation of the Use of Basque* (1982). The Government of the Basque Country is responsible for the provision of teachers with satisfactory language competence in order to respond to the demand from parents for education through the medium of Basque and to teach Basque as a subject, and for providing grants to develop teaching/learning resources in Basque. And the Government of the Basque Country has defined the models of bilingual education which will be available for parents and pupils (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002; Gardner 2002; Mercator 2005).

There are four models of bilingual education in the BAC at early years, primary and post-primary levels, as shown in Table 3.4 below. Each class in each school is assigned to one of these models and it is on that basis that the balance between the uses of the two official languages in teaching is set. As a result, two or more models are often available in one

school with the school staff and resources shared between the different models (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002; Gardner 2002; Mercator 2005).

Table 3.4: Models of bilingual education in the Basque Country (Based on Gardner 2002; Mercator 2005)

<b>Model</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Percentage of school pupils attending the different models in the 1998-99 school year</b>
<b>Model A</b>	Spanish as medium of instruction; Basque taught as a subject (4-5 hours per week)	41%
<b>Model B</b>	Both Spanish and Basque taught as subjects. Both languages used as medium of instruction, more or less half and half	20%
<b>Model D</b>	Basque as medium of instruction (full immersion for pupils with Spanish as T1 and language enrichment for those with Basque as T1); Spanish is taught as a subject	38%
<b>Model X</b> (unofficial and used by less than 1% of school pupils)	Spanish as medium of instruction with no provision for Basque	1%

Models B and D have continued to grow since the 1982-83 school year due to demand from parents and the other models have declined. In the BAC 60% of school pupils study at least half of the curriculum through the medium of Basque. Literacy skills in Spanish are developed first in model A and priority is given to literacy in Basque in model D. Priority is given to literacy in Spanish in model B and this is why so many parents choose that model (Lasagabaster 2001; Mercator 2005). Usually half of the teaching staff in model B must be qualified to teach Basque but that condition has not always been strictly applied. Consequently, there was a demand from some parents to transfer their children to model D where nearly every teacher would have Basque and in some cases entire classes switched from model B to model D (Lasagabaster 2001; Gardner 2002). Models B and D are far more common than model A in early years education (Lasagabaster 2001). In the 1999/2000 school year pupils were able to take 55.5% of the compulsory subjects through the medium of Basque and 20% of university students completed degrees through the medium of Basque (Lasagabaster 2001).

### 3.6.2 Teacher education in the Basque Country

Teacher education through the medium of Basque was available at the end of the seventies. Usually the *Euskararen Gaitasunagiria (EGA)*, a language competence certificate, is awarded to primary teachers who undertake their pre-service training through the medium of Basque as part of their degree. Primary teachers who undertake their pre-service training through the medium of Spanish must sit the *EGA* examination or its equivalent to qualify to

teach Basque or teach through the medium of Basque. Every post-primary teacher must sit the *EGA* examination or its equivalent to qualify to teach Basque or teach through the medium of Basque (Gardner 2002; Mercator 2005). In 2002-03 about 70% of primary and post-primary teachers were qualified to teach through the medium of Basque and the percentage was higher among the various categories of supply teachers (Mercator 2005). Satisfying the demand for qualified teachers is proving to be a constant challenge. A weakness in the education system in the Basque Country is the dependence on teachers with Basque as L2 who have not achieved the appropriate competence in the language (Gardner, 2002; Mercator 2005).

Recently there has been a greater emphasis on in-service training due to a drop in the number of students at the pre-service level. An in-service programme (IRALE) was established to help teachers in the system achieve appropriate competence in the language. To undertake this programme teachers can take a break of up to three years from teaching duties, part-time or full-time, on full salary (Lasagabaster 2001; Gardner 2002).

### **3.6.3 The attainment of pupils in the Basque Country**

The research shows that pupils attending model A have extremely poor competence in Basque. Pupils attending model B perform better. Pupils attending model D perform best as regards attainment in Basque, especially the native speakers, but it is not known what impact the home context has on these results (Lasagabaster 2001; Aldekoa and Gardner 2002; Gardner 2002). But, like immersion education pupils in other countries in Western Europe not every pupil in model D succeeds in attaining a satisfactory level of competence in the target language (Gardner 2002). Pupils' attainment in model B depends on the context –pupils attending intensive courses of immersion education have more success (Lasagabaster 2001). On the whole it is clear that more children with good spoken and literacy competence in Basque are coming through the education system than ever before (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002).

Study through the medium of Basque does not hinder progress made by pupils in Spanish (Gardner 2002; Mercator 2005). There is no research showing significant differences between the models regarding attainment in Spanish (Lasagabaster 2001). Olaziregi (1994) (cited in Lasagabaster 2001) found that there was no difference in Spanish reading comprehension levels between pupils who started reading and writing in Basque first and their peers who started the literacy process in Spanish. And the Basque literacy first group was well ahead in the Basque reading comprehension examination.

There is no difference between the various models regarding pupils' attainment in subjects other than languages, thus indicating that learning through the medium of Basque does not hinder pupils' progress in the other subjects. Indeed, the academic success level at

primary level is higher for model D (89.8%) than model B (81.3%) and model A (74.7%) with a similar trend at post-primary level (Lasagabaster 2001). The National Institute of Quality and Evaluation (INCE 1996, 1998, cited by Lasagabaster 2001) made a comprehensive comparative study of academic results across the 17 self-governing communities in Spain. The primary school pupils in the BAC achieved the best results in mathematics, social sciences and Spanish. At second level pupils from the BAC were among the highest performing pupils at Spanish reading comprehension, linguistic rules and literature as well as mathematics, evidence which refutes any suggestion that the majority language is eroded in models of immersion education.

ISEI-IVEI (2005) reports on the results of a Basque examination at level B2 (taken from the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*) administered to pupils in the fourth year of compulsory education in the BAC. Some 11,310 pupils sat the examination and a sub-sample of 243 pupils took the oral examination. Students attending model A did not take part as it was discovered in the pilot test that the examination was too difficult for them. 27.5% of the pupils in model B received a pass in comparison to 57.2% of the pupils in model D, a statistically significant difference. And there was a significant difference between the models also in the oral examination with 32.6% of pupils in model B attaining a pass in comparison to 68% in model D. The best results were achieved by pupils attending model D who spoke Basque at home with their parents.

#### **3.6.4 The education continuum in the Basque Country**

The majority of primary school pupils with Basque as L1 attend models B and D. The demand for education through the medium of Basque is not as widespread at post-primary level and, as a result, there is a small decline in the number of secondary school pupils attending models B and D. But there is a significant drop in the number of native speakers studying through the medium of Basque in higher education. And few people undertake professional training through the medium of the first language (Mercator 2005). Pupils transfer to model A at second level as model B is not as widespread at that level, particularly in the technological colleges which are mostly monolingual Spanish, and due to the lack of teachers qualified to teach through the medium of Basque. In addition, some pupils with Basque as a second language feel they do not have the appropriate competence to achieve satisfactory academic attainment through the medium of Basque at second level (Lasagabaster 2001; Gardner 2002). Gardner (2002) reports that about 13,000 students of 55,000 registered in the University of the Basque Country were taking elements of their courses through the medium of Basque at the time. About 25% of the teaching staff and 10% of the administrative staff in the university were qualified to *EGA* level or higher. And demand from students for provision through the medium of Basque was increasing.

### 3.6.5 Use of Basque among pupils

The social use of the language among pupils in the playground at break time is the best yardstick for assessing the success of language planning and use at school level. A formal language register is used in the classroom but children need an informal language register outside the classroom and they are often unable to express themselves precisely and discuss personal matters through the medium of a second language (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002). The Department of Education in the Basque Country established a special unit (NOLEGA) to address this challenge and to promote the use of Basque outside the classroom. For example NOLEGA published a comprehensive programme in 2001-2002 with grants for extra-curricular activities through the medium of Basque, including

- Grants for plays, sung dialogues, school choirs;
- Grants for promotion of Basque at break time etc.;
- Grants for visits to residential centres promoting the use of the language;
- Grants to promote contact between pupils from different sociolinguistic areas;
- Opportunities for secondary school pupils to study Basque films;
- Opportunities for pupils to meet famous Basque authors and to discuss their work with them;
- Visits to residential centres run by the Department of Education to promote the use of the language in a non-academic setting;
- Prizes for prose, poetry and elocution competitions;
- Bilingual singing for schools;
- Bilingual signs in state schools, including standardisation of vocabulary;
- A dictionary of administrative terms for the education sector in both languages; and
- Courses for teachers to develop appropriate skills to implement all these activities (Lasagabaster 2001; Aldekoa and Gardner 2002; Gardner 2002).

The Department of Education invites schools to develop plans (Individual School Language Normalisation Plan) (*Ulibarri* programme) to improve the standard and use of Basque among the whole school community inside and outside the classroom. Qualitative evidence indicates that these language plans succeed in increasing the use of the language among pupils. Arising from the programme *Ulibarri* some schools succeeded in fostering links with local Basque agencies with both pupils and parents taking part in pastimes and in the local media, including radio, newspapers and magazines. Thus, language preservation efforts are not confined to the education system alone but emphasis is also placed on community initiatives which establish networks in which Basque speakers have opportunities to use the language during the day in the local community (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002).

Overall, pupils in model A very rarely use Basque for communication. Spanish is the dominant language of communication among pupils in model B but it depends on the formal and informal learning opportunities provided for them. Some pupils in this model succeed in attaining a good standard in Basque. The choice of language of communication of pupils in model D depends on the context and circumstances, such as the dominant language of other classroom members and of friendship groups outside the school, on situational markers (location, subject and interlocutors) and on the use of Basque in the local community (Aldekoa and Gardner 2002).

### **3.6.6 Fostering a Basque-speaking community**

The census statistics in the BAC show that the number of Basque speakers is increasing, especially among children and young people, as a consequence of education through the medium of Basque (Lasagabaster 2001). Native speakers and second language learners of Basque learn together at every level in the education system but people feel that there is a drop in the standard of Basque among young people due to the influence of Spanish (Mercator 2005). There is a strong Basque adult education movement run by the government (HABE) as well as independent agencies (AEK and IKA) teaching Basque to adult learners. But Basque is not widely used in the workplace and the social use of the language or language transmission in the family is not promoted (Lasagabaster 2001; Gardner 2002). And, at the end of the day, language survival depends on the use of the language in society.

## **3.7 Research on various models of immersion education in Canada**

A short review is presented here of research carried out in Canada on the two models of immersion education in that country, single-track immersion education programmes or immersion education centres (stand-alone schools) and dual-track immersion education programmes (French-language units or streams). Though research on various models of immersion education as regards pupils' academic attainment is limited (Doell, 2011) it is worth looking at the results which have been published.

Lapkin et al. (1981) conducted a comparative study of the attainment of Grade 5 pupils in six classes in immersion education centres and four classes in dual-track immersion education programmes. The authors report that the attainment of pupils in the immersion education centres was better than their peers in the dual-track immersion education programmes not only in French but in certain aspects of English language skills also. Pupils in the immersion education centres used more French outside the classroom context and had more contact with spoken and written French in the school environment. In

addition to this the teachers in the immersion education centres were more satisfied with the resources available to them and more of the ancillary staff in the centres were bilingual. As a result there is more emphasis on the language as a means of communication in the immersion education centres. In conclusion, the authors say: *'The overall implication of the study for planning immersion programs is to provide a school environment which encourages the maximum use of French'* (Lapkin et al. 1981: 68).

Other research supports these results. According to Cummins (2000) the spoken competence of pupils is better in the immersion education centres. Kissau (2003) found that teachers and pupils felt that pupils in the immersion education centres had more contact with the language and had less peer pressure on them in comparison to pupils in the dual-track immersion education programmes. The immersion education centres have advantages in terms of resources, academic support services and administration (Manitoba Education 2001; McGillivray 1984, cited by Doell 2011). Specialists are frequently employed as remedial teachers in the centres and as a result the attrition rate is lower in those schools. On the other hand, the monolingual administrative personnel in the dual-track programmes lack pedagogical knowledge of second language learning and consequently they have difficulties discussing educational issues with French-language immersion education teachers and with supervising and evaluating teachers' work (McGillivray 1984, cited by Doell 2011).

Guimont (2003) carried out a detailed investigation of the different models of immersion education in Alberta, Canada. He conducted a comparative study of the results of Grade 6 immersion education pupils in the four core subjects taught through the medium of French, that is Social Studies, Mathematics, French and Science. Pupils in the immersion education centres achieved better results in each of the subjects. Three principal themes emerged from Guimont's study (2003).

- Immersion centres function like French first language schools (*francophone schools*). Pupils have more exposure to French and a French-speaking community is fostered within the centre. The dual-track immersion programmes have difficulty encouraging pupils to speak French outside the classroom.
- It is better if common resources and goals are directed at one programme.
- Parents in the centres are more committed to the language and to immersion education and they are often willing to travel to another district to enrol their children in an immersion education centre.

The following are some of Guimont's recommendations (2003).



- Principals of dual-track schools must ensure that the school functions effectively as a unit and that this is clear to all stakeholders.
- Principals of dual-track schools must be committed to immersion education.
- There is a need to provide professional development opportunities for administrative personnel in the dual-track schools to help them to respond to the challenges in those particular schools.
- The authorities have an obligation to provide the best model to immersion education pupils to enable them to perfect their French-language skills.

Doell (2011) reports on a dual-track school which switched to an immersion education centre. Two administrators interviewed felt that the immersion centre was more beneficial for various reasons. It is much more challenging to provide leadership to staff serving two different groups with different visions and targets. There are additional challenges to dual-track school management as the two streams have different needs. When the school was functioning as a dual-track immersion education programme the immersion education programme was falling behind and the level of service in French did not match the level of service in English due to lack of funding. The administrators felt that the acquisition rate of French was faster in the immersion centre. French was more visible outside the classroom at cultural activities and extra-curricular activities and the pupils were proud of their ability to speak French to others.

These results are consistent with Ó Duibhir's research on 14 grade 6-8 immersion education teachers in Ontario, Canada. Due to the schools' dual-track structure the teachers reported that they did not succeed in getting the pupils to speak French outside the classroom. As one teacher stated:

I think first and foremost I would love to see a single-track school. I would love to have the students in an immersion centre because then we could use the French outside of the classroom setting, in an authentic situation (Ó Duibhir, 2008: 14).

The teachers also mentioned that much depended on the principal of the host school. If that person had a good understanding of the context the teachers in the French track were supported. But where the principal didn't, they felt isolated. Some dual-track schools had bilingual school assemblies but in other places: "the principal tends to think that it is bad to separate French from English which could be profitable in some situations" (Ó Duibhir, 2008: 20). Another aspect mentioned by the teachers was the lack of opportunities for immersion education teachers to meet each other to plan their work together. One teacher mentioned the school structure was hindering them: "I think it's the dual-track that's preventing this" (Ó Duibhir, 2008: 24).

### **3.8 Parental involvement in immersion education**

There is a large body of literature showing close links between pupils' educational attainment and parental support. For example, parents' participation has a positive effect on pupils' academic attainment (e.g. Miedel and Reynolds 1999; Fan and Chen 2001; Hill and Taylor 2004), on reading attainment (e.g. Miedel and Reynolds 1999; Sénéchal and LeFevre 2002) and on pupils' motivation (e.g. Grolnick and Slowiaczek 1994; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Doan Holbein 2005). And parents' participation levels are linked to their educational background, their socioeconomic status and aspects of family structure (e.g. Grolnick et al. 1997; Davis-Kean 2005).

There is also a strong link between parental support and the success of immersion education programmes (Howard, Sugarman, and Christian 2003). Though immersion education pupils demonstrate higher attainment in the target language than their peers who learn the target language as a subject (Lindholm-Leary and Block 2010; Shannon and Milian 2002), it is clear from the research discussed above that the immersion education school system is not sufficient to achieve total fluency. Support must also be available for the learners from parents and from the wider community.

Whiting and Feinauer (2011) conducted a survey among two hundred and eighty seven parents of children attending a two-way Spanish-English school in Utah. The authors investigated the reasons why parents choose an immersion education programme for their children. In order of frequency the parents reported Bilingualism/Biliteracy, Educational Experience/Opportunities, Vocational Opportunities in the Future, Cultural Immersion/Diversity, Heritage Preservation, and Closeness to Home. It is interesting to compare these attitudes to Maguire's (1991: 99) study which was based on interviews with 98 parents of children at the first all-Irish primary school in Belfast. The high standard of education and national identity were among the advantages of choosing Irish-medium education which most enticed parents to enrol their children at the all-Irish primary school. Parents identified the following factors that influenced their decision to choose Irish-medium education for their children, having been asked to select the top three advantages:

- High quality of education 74%
- Irish identity 71%
- Cultural awareness 48%
- Second language acquisition 36%
- Revival of the language 26%
- Nationalist tradition 9%
- Parental participation 9%
- Other 12%

Parkes and Ruth (2011) conducted research on the level of satisfaction of parents of children attending dual language education programmes in the United States. 724 parents of children attending eight dual language schools took part in the study. Though the parents had concerns regarding language and literacy development, mathematical skills, communication between the school and the parents, and the lack of academic challenge in the other subjects, on the whole the parents were satisfied with the progress made by their children at school. The parents who were not bilingual and the parents who wished to place more emphasis on the teaching of English were the most concerned.

MacNeil (1997) reports that parents play an active role in the Gàidhlig immersion education units in Scotland, parents who were not afforded the opportunity to develop fluency and literacy in Gàidhlig when they themselves were in primary school. Many of these parents are learning Gàidhlig together with their children. But, like the parents who took part in the study with Kavanagh and Hickey (Kavanagh and Hickey 2012; Kavanagh 2014), parents in Scotland are often active in administrative affairs (helping with fundraising activities and school trips) but they do not have a role as co-educators of their children on the school premises.

Cummins (1977) reports that nearly 50% of the pupils in Gaelscoileanna in the Republic of Ireland were from families which spoke Irish. For example, 51% of the fathers of immersion education pupils were working in positions in the civil service where competence in Irish was required. The Gaelscoileanna flourished from the seventies onwards. However, nowadays Irish is no longer required for a position in the civil service. As a result, Harris and Ó Laoire (2006) feel that there is greater diversity among immersion education parents nowadays in terms of educational background, socioeconomic status and competence in Irish. For example, Harris et al. (2006) found that 5.8% of immersion education parents had native speaker competence. And Harris and Ó Laoire (2006) note that an increase in the number of parents with little Irish is likely to have an effect on pupils' attainment in Irish.

To date a limited amount of research has been conducted on parents' participation in all-Irish primary schools despite the central role parents have in the establishment of such schools. Lauren Kavanagh and Tina Hickey have addressed this issue (Kavanagh 2014; Kavanagh and Hickey 2012). They investigated the challenges and difficulties facing immersion education parents while supporting and helping their primary school children. The parents felt that they had to invest more time and effort to support children learning through the medium of the second language than children learning through the medium of the first language. The authors indicate that it is a lack of competence in Irish which most hinders the participation of parents in a range of activities, including helping with homework and speaking Irish with their children at home. In that particular study the parents with little Irish

indicated that they lacked confidence when speaking to teachers. Because of this, they are embarrassed and are not comfortable on the school premises.

The parents indicated that they did not participate in school activities for practical reasons – lack of time, and because of childcare and other obligations. Some parents also reported that they made an effort to speak Irish to their children at home but that the children were reluctant to speak Irish to them especially as the children got older. Even parents with good Irish sometimes are reluctant to speak Irish to their children if other family members have little Irish.

The parents also indicated that they did not make much use of the Irish classes which the schools provided for them and they recommended that specialised courses be provided aimed at the needs of the parents rather than general Irish-language courses. The parents also felt that they would not be welcome to help in the school and in the classroom though they would be willing to do so. Parents were dissatisfied with the school's communication with them and they indicated that they would welcome more contact with the school to discuss their children's progress.

The understanding which the educators had of the role of parents in the school (a role associated with helping with the functioning of the school) did not match the understanding the parents had of their own role as co-educators of their children. The authors recommend that parents need to broaden their own understanding of their role in supporting their children in all-Irish schools and to include out-of-school activities so that they can increase their participation in providing support for their children with the development of both L1 and L2 skills (Kavanagh and Hickey 2012).

### **3.9 Summary**

The education system plays a central role in the preservation of minority heritage languages in Ireland and in other countries also. It is acknowledged that bilinguals have cognitive, linguistic, academic and social advantages, particularly if they succeed in attaining a high standard in both languages. Immersion education is recognised as an extremely effective system for teaching languages. Usually pupils in the immersion education system achieve a high standard in the target language, which means they have achieved additive bilingualism. But other state institutions and the wider society have a role to play in the preservation of a language to ensure that both native speakers and learners have opportunities to speak the language when doing business and in social situations so that they can acquire different specific language registers.

As well as achieving a high standard in the target language, the academic attainment of immersion education pupils in other languages and in the other curricular subjects is equal to, or higher than their peers who are learning through the medium of the majority language.

The research shows that the immersion education units in Canada have some advantages in comparison to dual-track immersion education programmes, advantages relating to the pupils' academic attainment, academic support services, administration, resources, parents' participation and the fostering of a French-speaking school community.

But many ongoing common challenges have been identified in the various countries attempting to promote immersion education. Those challenges include:

- Serving the needs of native speakers and learners who are in classes together;
- Ensuring an adequate supply of fully-qualified teachers with the appropriate language competence through the provision of pre-service education and continuous professional development;
- Developing appropriate resources for the sector;
- Ensuring linguistic and educational continuity in the immersion education system from pre-school through to higher education;
- Promoting the use of the language among pupils outside the classroom and outside the school; and
- Facilitating and increasing the participation of parents as co-educators.

There are particular challenges associated with parents' participation in the immersion education system in Ireland, challenges related to the parents' ability to help their children with homework and with learning Irish and the lack of appropriate support and the lack of welcome from schools as reported by the parents.

In summary, the highest attainment in the target language is by pupils in immersion education systems in which a high percentage (>70%) of the teaching is through the medium of the target language. The more time pupils spend in an immersion education system (at least 4 years) or attending an early education programme rather than delayed immersion education, the better the attainment of the pupils in the target language and in the other curricular subjects. The more contact the pupils have with the target language within the school (e.g. stand-alone school rather than unit), the better the pupils' attainment in the target language. In other words, the pupils' attainment in the target language depends on the amount of time they spend learning the language and on the intensity level of the programme (Johnstone, 2002). There is cause for thought here for state agencies responsible for the development and implementation of language policies and education policies in Ireland. Questions arise regarding the best way to provide a school environment which promotes the maximum use of the language. In other countries it is accepted that one single model of immersion education or bilingual education is not sufficient to meet the needs of all the pupils in the system. The current report presents an analysis of the advantages, disadvantages and challenges associated with the different models of

immersion education at primary and post-primary level in NI and in ROI along with recommendations arising from the research results.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts reflecting the consecutive phases of the research. For the first phase questionnaires were sent to all principals of all-Irish primary and post-primary schools in the country to collect preliminary data in response to the aforementioned research questions. For the second phase of the research 20 schools were selected to participate in case studies. The chapter begins with a discussion of the design of the principals' questionnaires for the first phase. This is followed by an account of the selection of schools for case studies and the design of the questionnaires for pupils and their parents in the case study schools. And finally, the semi-structured interviews conducted with the principals of the case study schools are discussed.

### **4.2 Principals' questionnaire**

#### **4.2.1 Questionnaire design**

A questionnaire was designed for principals that addressed key issues relating to the research questions. Principals were consulted in the design process and the questionnaire was piloted with a small number of principals. It was important to ensure that no question was ambiguous and that there was no controversial question in the questionnaire. The principals advised us to include a couple of extra questions to the questionnaire as well as suggesting other minor amendments, feedback which was very valuable before the final version of the questionnaire was written. There were small differences between the questionnaires for primary principals in ROI and in NI as the two education systems differ in many ways. The same was the case for the questionnaires for post-primary principals. And there were small differences between the questionnaires sent to the principals in the stand-alone schools and the unit/stream principals/coordinators. Though this means that a valid comparison cannot be made between the different models for each question, comparisons can be made for the majority of the questions.

Questionnaires were sent to each of the 216 all-Irish schools and all-Irish units in Ireland. 113 principals/directors responded to the questionnaire after we issued a number of reminders and contacted certain schools by phone. As shown in Table 4.1 90 of those schools were primary schools and the other 23 were post-primary schools. The overall response rate was 52.3%, a satisfactory rate for a questionnaire distributed by post. The data from all questionnaires used in the research were entered on spreadsheets and analysed using the statistics package SPSS.

Table 4.1: Response rate to principals' questionnaire

	Republic of Ireland	Response rate	Northern Ireland	Response rate	Total
<b>Primary schools</b>	70/141	49.6%	20/34	59%	90/175
<b>Post-primary schools</b>	20/36	56%	3/5	60%	23/41

### 4.3 Case studies

As part of the principals' questionnaire schools were invited to participate in case studies later in the research. As indicated in Table 4.2 20 schools in total were selected, 10 in ROI and 10 in NI. Though the total number of schools and pupils in NI is much lower, it was important to have a representative sample from that area. It was also important to have a balance between primary schools and post-primary schools. This was not possible in the case of NI post-primary schools due to the scarcity of all-Irish schools there.

Following a preliminary analysis of the principals' responses questionnaires were designed for pupils and their parents in case study schools in the different areas including both stand-alone schools and units. Pupils in fifth class in ROI and Primary 7 (Key Stage 2) in NI were selected as they would be of the same age, more or less, and Primary 7 (Key Stage 2) is the final year for primary school pupils in NI. At post-primary level Year 4 in ROI and Year 12 (Key Stage 4) in NI were selected as the pupils in each area would be of the same age.

Table 4.2: Case study schools

	Republic of Ireland	ROI Class	Northern Ireland	NI Class
<b>Stand-alone primary schools</b>	5	5 <sup>th</sup> class	4	Primary 7
<b>Primary units</b>	N/A	N/A	3	Primary 7
<b>Stand-alone post-primary schools</b>	2	Year 4	1	Year 12
<b>Post-primary units</b>	3	Year 4	2	Year 12
<b>Total</b>	10		10	

The same questionnaire was administered to pupils at both levels to enable the researchers compare responses across jurisdictions and across school levels. For similar reasons the same approach was used with the parents' questionnaires.

### 4.4 Pupil questionnaire

#### 4.4.1 Background

The questionnaire was designed based on the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner 1985). The objective of the AMTB in this research is to measure the strength of pupils' attitude and motivation towards the learning and use of Irish. Motivation is one of the most important variables between language learners and it exerts a significant influence on



learning a second language. Robert Gardner in Canada did much of the early work on motivation towards language learning and he designed a set of AMTB tests (Gardner 1985). Harris & Murtagh (1999) showed that there was a significant correlation between attitude towards the second language (L2) and ability in L2. A positive attitude helps the learner to persevere with learning the L2 over a prolonged period despite the challenges (Harris & Conway 2002). The AMTB also allows us to make comparisons between schools, and particularly between stand-alone schools and units. Other research has been conducted previously in Ireland using AMTB and comparisons are made between the results of that research and the current research.

#### **4.4.2 Structure of the questionnaire**

The AMTB was amended for the purposes of the current research. There were 38 items or statements in the AMTB, divided into five scales.

- Desire to learn Irish (6 items)
- Attitude to learning Irish (7 items)
- Encouragement from parents to learn Irish (5 items)
- Self-concept of ability in Irish (6 items)
- Use of Irish (13 items<sup>2</sup>).

Pupils were invited to express their opinions on statements in the form of a five-point Likert scale from 'I strongly disagree' to 'I strongly agree'. Some of the statements were deliberately put in the negative form so that the respondent would have to reflect on the answers and could not merely tick the same sections. Pupils' responses were analysed using the SPSS statistics package. The final question, Question 39, was an open question eliciting pupils' opinions on what encouraged them or enticed them to speak Irish.

#### **4.4.3 Participants**

A non-random convenience sample of fifth class pupils in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Primary 7 pupils in primary schools in Northern Ireland (NI) was selected. These classes were selected as the pupils are of a similar age, mostly 10 or 11 years old. Primary 7 is also the final year for NI pupils in primary school. Year 4 (ROI) and Year 12 (NI) were chosen at post-primary school level as the pupils in the two regions are of the same age, mostly 15 or 16, and students in these years would not be undertaking state examinations. A small number of pupils in Primary 6 (NI), Year 3 (ROI) and Year 11 (NI) took

---

<sup>2</sup> There were 14 items on the questionnaire but one was excluded from analysis due to a typographical error.

part as a result of being in composite classes or because the sample in certain schools was very small as shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Class level of participants

Class/year level	N	%
5 <sup>th</sup> class (ROI)	128	34.3
Primary 6 (NI)	11	2.9
Primary 7 (NI)	60	16.1
Year 3 (ROI)	22	5.9
Year 4 (ROI)	78	20.9
Year 11 (NI)	4	1.1
Year 12 (NI)	70	18.8
Total	373	100.0

As Table 4.4 shows, a total of 373 pupils participated in the research, the majority being from ROI. A total of 145 pupils from NI participated, which was a satisfactory number for sampling purposes.

Table 4.4: Participants according to schools

School/Region type	N	%
Primary school (ROI)	128	34.3
Primary school (NI)	71	19.0
Post-primary school (ROI)	100	26.8
Post-primary school (NI)	74	19.8
Total	373	100.0

As Table 4.5 indicates, the vast majority of primary school pupils were 10 or 11 years old and the post-primary school participants 15 or 16 years old.

Table 4.5: Age profile of participants

Age (years)	N	%
9	7	1.9
10	98	26.3
11	92	24.7
12	1	.3
14	19	5.1
15	78	20.9
16	77	20.6
17	1	.3
Total	373	100

A total of seven different school types participated in the research. These included stand-alone schools and units, at both primary and post-primary levels in NI, and at post-primary level in ROI. There are no units at primary level in ROI. Table 4.6 shows the amount of questionnaires distributed to the different types of schools and the corresponding response rates. The response rate is important for generalisation of results. 68.0% of the pupils in stand-alone primary schools in ROI returned questionnaires, as did 62.3% in the case of the

stand-alone primary schools in NI. There was a slightly higher response rate in the primary units in NI at 72.1%. In the case of the post-primary schools, 55.1% of stand-alone post-primary school pupils in ROI answered the questionnaire, as did 44.7% of the unit pupils in ROI. There is only one stand-alone post-primary school in NI where 77.6% of the pupils responded. Only 23.7% of pupils from two post-primary units in NI responded. This latter low response rate and the 44.7% of unit pupils in ROI must be considered when interpreting and comparing the results. The overall response rate to the pupil questionnaire was 60.1%.

Table 4.6: Response rate to pupil questionnaire

Type of School/Region	Number of pupils	Number of questionnaires completed	Response rate
Stand-alone primary schools (ROI)	188	128	68.0%
Stand-alone primary schools (NI)	61	38	62.3%
Primary units (NI)	43	31	72.1%
Stand-alone post-primary schools (ROI)	107	59	55.1%
Post-primary units (ROI)	94	42	44.7%
Stand-alone post-primary schools (NI)	85	66	77.6%
Post-primary units (NI)	38	9	23.7%
Total	616	373	60.1%

#### 4.4.4 Reliability testing

Some of the AMTB scales had been used previously in other studies in Ireland and comparisons are made to those studies, where appropriate. Table 4.7 shows the mean scores and standard deviations (SD) as well as their reliability (Cronbach's Alpha). The reliability of the scales is satisfactory or good in each case except 'self-concept of ability in Irish' which is a little low (.62). Where comparisons are made between the Alpha values in this research and the research of Ó Duibhir (2009) and Harris & Murtagh (1999) they are largely similar. Some changes were made to the number and wording of items for the current research but these changes did not affect the reliability of the items.

Table 4.7: Reliability of scales

Scale	Number of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Alpha	Alpha in Ó Duibhir (2009)	Alpha in Harris & Murtagh (1999)
Desire to learn Irish	6	22.41	5.10	0.75	0.68	0.82
Attitude to learning Irish	7	28.67	5.58	0.83	0.8	0.93
Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	5	17.72	4.45	0.70	0.76	0.88
Self-concept of ability in Irish	6	21.68	4.22	0.62	0.65	(different items)
Use of Irish	14	39.81	9.13	0.78	0.70	(new items)

## 4.5 Parent questionnaire

### 4.5.1 Structure of the questionnaire

The parent questionnaire comprised of three sections with 37 questions in total. The questions related to

- The parent's background (9 questions)
- The child and Irish (7 questions)
- The school and Irish-medium education (21 questions)

The questionnaire included closed questions, multiple choice questions, questions in the form of a five point Likert scale from 'I strongly disagree' to 'I strongly agree', and open questions to give parents the opportunity to express their opinions on a range of issues. Parents were asked to give additional details with multiple choice questions for the purpose of accuracy. Some of the questions were based on the parent questionnaire used by Harris and Murtagh (1999). The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of parents but no changes were recommended.

Questionnaires were distributed to each household and each pupil in the selected schools in fifth class in ROI primary schools and in Primary 7 in NI. Post-primary schools Year 4 in ROI and Year 12 in NI were included as shown in Table 4.2 above. A total of 342 parents responded to the questionnaire. Table 4.8 shows the distribution of those respondents across the different school types in the two areas. In addition, the number of pupils whose parents returned the questionnaire is also shown, 288 in total. In Table 4.4 above we see that 373 pupils responded to the questionnaire. Of those 373, 288 of their parents also responded, which is equivalent to 77.2% of the pupils.

The number of responses was low in the case of some of the school types, especially the post-primary units in NI. For that reason, we combined the post-primary units in NI and in ROI, shaded in Table 4.8, for the purpose of analysis.

Table 4.8: Number of parents who responded, and number of pupils with responses from their parents, by school category

School category/location	Total no. of parents who responded		Pupils with data for their parents	
	N	%	N	%
Post-primary units ROI	42	12.3	35	12.2
ROI stand-alone post-primary schools	60	17.5	56	19.4
ROI stand-alone primary schools	139	40.6	119	41.3
NI stand-alone primary schools	26	7.6	23	8.0
NI primary units	28	8.2	18	6.3
Stand-alone post-primary schools NI	36	10.5	28	9.7
Post-primary units NI	11	3.2	9	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4.5.2 Parents' demographic background and language

The majority of respondents to the parent questionnaire were mothers (82.1%), with responses from 16.4% of fathers and 1.5% with a guardianship or other connection to the child. Most of the parents/guardians were born in the years 1960-1969 (43.9%) or 1970-1979 (43.3%) with 5.0% before 1960 and 7.9% between 1980 and 1989.

Parents were asked about the highest level of education they had attained. 14.2% had attained junior post-primary level, 28.3% had attained senior post-primary level, 25.8% had completed a non-degree course at third level and 31.8% had attained a university degree.

Most parents answered the questionnaire in English (86.3%) and 13.7% in Irish. 76.0% of parents responded that they spoke only English at home, 18.9% speak mostly English, 0.6% speak mostly Irish, 0.9% Irish only and 1.2% speak another language. It was noted in Chapter 2 that Cummins (1977) reported that almost 50% of pupils in Gaelscoileanna in ROI came from families that spoke Irish. Clearly, then, in the past thirty years or more a significant change has occurred in the linguistic profile of parents who choose all-Irish schooling for their children, a trend which is likely to impact on the pupils' attainment in Irish according to Harris and Ó Laoire (2006).

Table 4.9 shows demographic characteristics of parents by school category and the number of mothers who completed the questionnaire, the number with a university degree, the number who answered the questionnaire in Irish and the home language. The number of mothers who answered the questionnaire ranged from 74.5% in post-primary schools in ROI to 91.3% in primary schools in NI. Parents in primary schools in ROI had the highest levels of education with 40.2% having a university degree. The number of parents with a university

degree in every other category is considerably lower. Only parents of children in stand-alone primary schools in NI in this research spoke Irish only at home (4.3%) .

Chi-square tests were carried out on the various data shown in Table 4.9. The only statistically significant result is the language in which the questionnaire was completed (chi-square = 11.894, df = 5, p = .037).

Table 4.9: Comparison between demographic characteristics of parents by school category/location

<b>School category/location</b>	<b>% Mothers who answered the questionnaire</b>	<b>% with university degree</b>	<b>% who answered the questionnaire in Irish</b>	<b>% who speak English only at home</b>	<b>% who speak only Irish or mostly Irish at home</b>
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools (n=119)</b>	84.9	40.2	16.8	71.8	0.0
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools (n=23)</b>	91.3	23.8	4.3	87.0	4.3
<b>NI primary units (n=18)</b>	88.9	22.2	0.0	77.8	0.0
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools (n=56)</b>	74.5	26.4	3.6	74.5	0.0
<b>Stand-alone post-primary schools NI (n=28)</b>	82.1	20.8	10.7	82.1	0.0
<b>ROI and NI post-primary units (n=44)</b>	77.3	31.0	18.2	76.7	0.0

#### 4.6 Interviews with principals

Principals of stand-alone schools and unit coordinators were interviewed individually. A focus group interview was conducted with the principals of other stand-alone primary schools. The interview and focus group questions were based on the eight main research questions outlined in Chapter 2. Recurring themes were sought and patterns and characteristics of the two main models, stand-alone schools and units were analysed. During the interviews and focus group, valuable relevant data were collected, though they do not illustrate clear comparative patterns between stand-alone schools and units. Table 4.10 shows the school types and number of schools which participated in the individual interviews.

Separate to the interviews and focus group, further individual interviews were conducted with two principals in schools where a management system and support structure had been introduced to assist the development of newly-established primary schools. These two principals are not included in Table 4.10 but their experience provides an insight into support systems that can be established as a result of effective collaboration between new and established schools. Both concepts 1) satellite unit and 2) mentoring system will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 4.10: Number of schools in which principals were interviewed

<b>School category/location</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>
<b>Post-primary units ROI</b>	2
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools</b>	2
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools</b>	4
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools</b>	4
<b>NI primary units</b>	4
<b>Stand-alone post-primary schools NI</b>	1
<b>Post-primary units NI</b>	2
<b>Total</b>	19

The rich and complex qualitative data generated from the interviews and focus group with the principals were analysed using thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). The analysis and coding process involved transcribing all recordings, identifying patterns, applying thematic coding and interpreting the data. The emerging themes and patterns reflected the content of the entire data set.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1 Preface**

The research findings are presented in this chapter and are grouped under the following five headings in order to address the research questions outlined earlier.

- i. Pupils' use of Irish
  - Factors influencing the use of Irish as an immersion language among the pupils
  - Breadth and depth of pupils' total experience of functioning through the medium of Irish in school
  - Pupils' willingness to use Irish on school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during play time) and outside the school
  - Factors influencing the pupils' willingness to use Irish on school premises, outside the classroom (e.g. during play time)
- ii. School staff
  - Factors influencing language and professional development opportunities for school staff
- iii. Developing Irish-speaking communities
  - Factors influencing the effect of supply on the development of Irish-speaking communities in the community
- iv. Support for parents
  - Analysis of the support given by schools to parents of all-Irish pupils with respect to Irish;

In the case of the English-medium schools:
- v. Leadership structures
  - Analysis of the most effective leadership support structures for organising a model

First, however, an account is presented of the interviews with principals and the themes which emerged from those interviews. The principals highlighted some issues most central to the research and their views are reported as a unit in order to capture the valuable insights they give into the perspectives of the units and stand-alone schools.

### **5.2 Interviews with principals**

Interviews were conducted with principals of stand-alone schools and units and with unit coordinators. Principals of other stand-alone primary schools participated in a focus group discussion. The interview questions and focus group discussion were based on the eight



main research issues. Using thematic analysis recurring themes and patterns were sought to analyse characteristics of the two main models, stand-alone schools and units. During the interviews and focus group discussion, valuable and relevant data were collected, though they do not illustrate clear comparative patterns between stand-alone schools and units. A total of 19 principals/directors took part in the interviews, as mentioned in Table 3.9 above.

Individual interviews were also conducted with two other principals with experience of implementing a support system and a management and regulatory structure promoted by a newly-established primary school. The two principals did not participate in Stage Two of the research but their experience provides an insight into the support possibilities based on cooperation between a newly-established school and a well-established school. Consequently, those models are described in this chapter also. The two examples discussed as support systems are:

- i. A mentoring system supporting a newly-established primary school;
- ii. A satellite system supporting a newly-established primary school.

The results of the interviews are reported upon under the following themes:

- Units' perspectives of models of Irish-medium education
- Stand-alone schools' perspectives of models Irish-medium education
- Common themes in the units and stand-alone schools
- Continuing professional development for teachers
- The role of the school in the community
- The pupils' Irish
- Challenges facing school principals and unit co-ordinators

### **5.3 The units' perspective**

Historically, units have provided immersion education in communities where the demand for Irish-medium education is unable to sustain a stand-alone immersion school. Unit leaders expressed clear opinions on the advantages and challenges of the immersion unit as a model.

#### **5.3.1 Advantages reported by unit heads**

##### **5.3.1.1 Resources**

The sharing of teaching resources between unit staff and host school staff was highlighted as an advantage which supports effective teaching. Unit teachers welcomed opportunities to collaborate and share best practices with colleagues in the host school. This is consistent with the questionnaire results from the principals where primary units in NI reported that all

the school's resources, both teaching resources and infrastructural facilities are shared between the host school and the Irish-medium unit.

According to one representative of a post-primary unit, the most effective and experienced teachers were selected, as opposed to using Irish language competence as the main criterion when appointing new staff. The leader of another post-primary unit reported that they have access to facilities that would not be available without the link to the host school, including school buses, sports hall, all-weather pitch, traditional music band, sports teams.

#### **5.3.1.2 Assessment**

One primary unit leader explained that the English-medium host school provides useful assessment benchmarks. The unit teachers have opportunities to observe the work of other classes and they expect the children in the unit and in the host school to achieve similar levels of attainment.

#### **5.3.1.3 Planning**

Unit staff have opportunities to plan in collaboration with host school colleagues, especially teachers who are teaching at the same Key Stage. According to the leaders this is a particular advantage for newly-qualified teachers in the unit.

#### **5.3.1.4 Fewer risks**

According to primary unit leaders it is easier for parents to opt for Irish-medium education when an Irish-medium unit is available to them as opposed to a stand-alone immersion school. Not only does it influence parents when they see the abundance of teaching and learning resources in the unit, there is less of a risk associated with the choice of Irish-medium education, according to parents, when there is a host school supporting an all-Irish unit.

#### **5.3.1.5 Benefit to host school**

Leaders recognised that the host school benefited from having an all-Irish unit and that the liaison offered advantages to both sides of the school. A primary unit leader explained that there was a wealth of experience on both sides of the school:

The two sides of the school learn from each other. There are two newly qualified teachers in the unit and this shared planning is a real advantage for them. One Irish-medium teacher is a specialist in the early years and she advised and supported the English-medium staff when they were working on play in the early years.

Post-primary unit leaders in ROI reported that the standard of Irish and use of Irish in the host school was higher due to the presence of a Gaelcholáiste. One of them mentioned that host school pupils seek permission to spend Transition Year in the Gaelcholáiste to improve their Irish and some of them subsequently choose to study some subjects through

the medium of Irish for the Leaving Certificate Examination. There was praise for the foresight of one principal of a host school who identified opportunities for the host school:

And maybe that is why, in comparison with other units, that we flourished and other places failed. The principal was fully behind this concept ... he was probably interested in Irish anyway and he saw that there were opportunities in it for the mháthairschool (host school). (Post-primary unit leader)

In another post-primary unit, the principal explained that it was the all-Irish stream which created the defining characteristic of that school in the area:

That's the thing which lets people show that there is something different about us and that's important. (Post-primary unit principal)

And in another post-primary unit, with quite a lot of pupils of diverse ethnic backgrounds, it was felt that Irish added greatly to the multilingual environment in the school.

## **5.3.2 Challenges reported by unit leaders**

### **5.3.2.1 Host school priorities**

According to the leaders of two primary units whole-school priorities are given precedence over the units' priorities. The development of the units is limited by the whole-school management and by the implementation of the whole-school development plan. One example was given in the context of planning days when emphasis is placed on the training needs of the host school. Though children's writing was identified as the planning and training priority in the unit, guided reading was the priority for the whole school, according to the School Development Plan. Consequently, guided reading was selected as the theme for the training days in the school. According to one unit leader:

If we were a separate school working on the school development plan, we could focus on Irish instead of planning for the whole school.

Two unit leaders reported that the staff did not have the opportunity to attend the annual Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta conference as the conference date did not coincide with the school's optional and exceptional closing dates. As a result, only the unit coordinator was permitted to attend the conference.

### **5.3.2.2 Heavy burden on coordinators**

It was acknowledged that coordinators in the primary units have heavy administrative and managerial duties, comparable to the duties of teaching principals. In the case of the post-primary units, the same concern was shown regarding additional work for unit leaders, despite great support from the host school. The role of the teacher in charge was described as 'authority without authority':

Everything has to go through the principal in the host school. I have to do everything on my own. (Post-primary unit leader)

### **5.3.2.3 Limit to number of pupils**

The system of capping the enrolment numbers in the unit and in the host school creates further complexities. Sometimes pupils transfer to the all-English host school. Concern was expressed about the enrolment numbers in one of the primary units. Transferring from a unit to the all-English side of the primary school occurs on a regular basis, though only a small number of pupils are involved:

... if a parent puts their child through Irish-medium education and, after a year or two, or further on, they have the chance to leave the all-Irish school and enter the ordinary school as they're not switching schools.

### **5.3.2.4 English-speaking environment**

Some unit co-ordinators highlighted disadvantages created by the English-speaking environment throughout the school which influences the use of Irish among the pupils in the unit:

There is more English to be heard around the school and because of this they have the tendency to speak English and not speak Irish. (Primary unit leader)

In the post-primary units, two leaders mentioned the limited number of subjects studied through the medium of Irish and the subsequent effect on the pupils' acquisition of Irish. The use of Irish among unit pupils was reduced because many of the teaching and administration staff did not have Irish:

The majority of teachers here don't have Irish. Not everybody has Irish. That's the main reason why the children don't use it. In my opinion, the children would use Irish if Irish were widespread throughout the school. (Post-primary unit principal)

### **5.3.2.5 Limited range of subjects taught through Irish**

It is a constant challenge to provide a range of subjects through the medium of Irish in the post-primary unit, according to many leaders. Different implications were reported - for example, unit teachers must teach a range of subjects. Provision of subjects through the medium of Irish depends on the availability of teachers with competence in Irish and on the demand for subjects. Unit pupils sometimes study subjects through the medium of English in the host school if the demand for Irish-medium instruction cannot be met. One unit offers Irish-medium education only as far as the Junior Certificate:

There are difficulties with the recruitment of teachers which influence the provision of subjects. If you are interviewing and five people come in and one of them has Irish, he won't get the job just because he has Irish. Because we must consider the school. If you could get a teacher who is well able to teach and who has Irish that would be great, and if he had the subjects, but it doesn't work like that. (Post-primary unit principal)

Such examples of partial immersion provision will likely have implications for the progress pupils make in Irish as international research shows that the highest attainment in the target language is by pupils in immersion education programmes where a very high percentage (>70%) of the teaching is done through the medium of the target language.

#### **5.3.2.6 Arrangements at break time and lunchtime**

The arrangements at lunch time and breaks created obstacles to the use of Irish among pupils, according to the leaders of three of the primary units, as a result of unit pupils sharing space with and socialising with host school pupils at those times. This was not a problem in the fourth primary unit, where they had a separate building and playground for the unit pupils on the school campus. On a number of occasions in the week the senior pupils spend lunch time in the company of the host school pupils to promote social interaction between the two groups.

The relationship between both sides of the school is an important issue. Though the support given by the host school to the unit was acknowledged, sometimes decisions were taken to avoid tensions. For example, in the case of one post-primary unit, unit and host school pupils were kept together at lunch time to allay any fears of preferential treatment of unit pupils:

Everybody is mixed. You would have a problem then. If you keep them segregated, the school is seen to be giving those children special treatment. School management are perceived as being biased towards these children and we must be very careful that as we are treating all children in the school equally in so far as we can. If you are seen to be favouring one group, the school's stakeholders don't like that, especially if a family has a child in the (all-Irish) stream and another child who is not in the Irish stream. (Post-primary unit principal)

#### **5.3.2.7 Conflicting demands**

According to one post-primary unit leader, it is a disadvantage to have to serve the different needs of both host school pupils and unit pupils. The challenge facing the school management to maintain enrolment numbers and to serve the larger community in the surrounding area, who do not have Irish, as well as preserving the tradition of Irish in the school was acknowledged:

That's the disadvantage, that we're too busy serving both sides ... It would be better if we had one thing or the other. (Post-primary unit principal)

One post-primary unit was exploring the possibility of changing its status to become a stand-alone school with the support of the local community. However, such a change of status would not be seen as viable if some of the teachers were to lose their jobs. The employment question is a sensitive issue in the context of a change of status.

Another post-primary principal, highlighted the tension between the provision of education through the medium of Irish and serving the host school:

... in a way, there are two schools and in a way there's only one school. We're trying ... to safeguard the unit's identity and that the separation is there that it is a Gaelcholáiste and that it would not be, as you might say, diluted.

#### **5.3.2.8 External attitude to units**

Primary school leaders referred to a negative attitude to units among the Irish-medium education community. According to two of the interviewees, there is a lack of understanding of the unit system and it is viewed as a deficient model. According to another unit leader, because of a lack of understanding of the unit management system, she was not permitted to attend the Principals' Forum in lieu of the principal.

#### **5.3.2.9 Discussion**

Similar challenges were reported in research by Ó Duibhir (2008). The school is trying to function as a single entity (Guimont, 2003) but this conflicts with the language needs of the unit pupils. Conflicts arise in lunch time arrangements and in providing for the professional development needs of unit teachers. Unit coordinators are assigned heavy administrative workloads without having the time or the authority to do the job effectively.

### **5.4 Perspective of stand-alone schools**

The leaders of the stand-alone schools discussed advantages associated with the discrete immersion school model and they opined that disadvantages applied to the unit model. The leaders of the stand-alone schools identified many challenges, which are relevant to immersion education in general and not specifically to the stand-alone model, for example, the recruitment of teachers, pressure on teachers, lack of understanding of immersion education among authorities and, an ever-changing culture in the education system.

Post-primary principals expressed strong opinions about additional challenges associated with Irish-medium units. Examples were given of units which had been closed and of units that struggled to provide the full curriculum through the medium of Irish. The principals suggested there were ideological differences between a system providing partial immersion and a total immersion education system:

It is much better for an all-Irish school to have an independent school, a sort of independent area, to promote the language. (Post-primary school principal)

From the point of view of Irish-medium education, I don't see any advantage to units. Units have a different ideology and the immersion education system has different advantages. Units teach some subjects through Irish. Limited provision in a unit. (Post-primary school principal)

One primary school principal was critical of the unit system where the principal of the host school does not speak Irish, although a director or leader was in charge of the unit:

He or she was fettered ... not being allowed to implement a vision for Irish-medium education. (Primary school principal)

One unit leader raised the same issue in the context of the workload of unit coordinators. He has a greater administrative burden as the managers with specific duties do not have Irish:

She (vice-principal) does not have much Irish so there's no good being here dealing with parents and pupils.

#### **5.4.1 Use of Irish**

It was acknowledged that the acquisition and use of Irish among pupils were very challenging at the post-primary level even in stand-alone schools. According to the stand-alone schools, pupils need immersion in Irish in the entire school environment and that is the biggest advantage that model offers. Some of the units expressed concurring opinions. Leaders of stand-alone post-primary schools emphasised strategic development on behalf of the school and the Irish-medium sector as a distinct advantage of the stand-alone model.

#### **5.4.2 Critical threshold**

The existence of a critical threshold of post-primary school pupils in the community opting for Irish-medium education facilitates the development of provision for the sector. Where there is sufficient demand the entire curriculum can be offered through the medium of Irish, development projects can be organised and pupils get other benefits in addition to bilingualism. One post-primary school gave the following examples:

- Appointment of a youth officer;
- Development of a specialised support unit for pupils with special educational needs on the school campus;
- Development of comprehensive policies in Irish, for example, pastoral care.

One aspect of the school's role is to demand external services through the medium of Irish for the sector. This can sometimes lead to a growth in Irish-language services, such as services dealing with examinations, curriculum resources and curriculum development. However, another post-primary school principal suggested that the lack of Irish-language services poses a challenge for principals in all-Irish schools:

it frustrates me ... that Irish is being ignored or rejected by various services we deal with around the country ... You call an office and there's nobody there to speak with you in Irish. (Post-primary school principal)

### **5.4.3 Pioneering role**

The stand-alone schools have a pioneering role, according to the post-primary leaders in particular. A post-primary school in Belfast explained that the school was left building a sector as there is no other post-primary school located in the north. Consequently, not only were the staff developing a school, they were also obliged to build a sector. One of the ways in which that post-primary school responds to the task is to create whole-school services through the medium of Irish, for example, pastoral care, special needs, total curriculum through Irish. In addition, it fell to the school to demand assessment services and the provision of resources for the post-primary sector and to support those processes. It was explained that that aspect of the work was heavy since there was no other stand-alone post-primary school to support them:

The school had a pioneering role, developing a sector. I wouldn't like any other school to have to go through that process. But we came through that process stronger with a higher standard of education. (Post-primary school principal)

There was praise for the cooperation done with other principals in the area in the context of Area Learning Communities (ALC), but support from other Irish-medium schools was lacking,

"That's useful up to a point (ALC meetings). After that there's a need for redevelopment and reflection of this school's pedagogy and transfer of English-language schooling to Irish." This principal recognises that an all-Irish school can learn from all-English schools but that the information has to be considered in the context of the needs of the all-Irish schools.

This principal recognises how valuable cooperation would be among leaders and coordinators from other Irish-medium schools and the link between that and the building of a sector.

## **5.5 Pupil questionnaire**

### **5.5.1 Comparison between scale scores by school type, region, home language and gender**

Firstly, mean scores for the five scales are compared by school type and region. Table 5.1 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the five scales for the seven school types. For example, for the scale 'Desire to learn Irish' mean scores range from 20.8 (NI stand-alone post-primary school) to 25.4 (Stand-alone primary school NI). ANOVA tests indicated that there were statistically significant differences between these mean scores, and those differences are discussed below.



Table 5.1: Mean scores and standard deviations for each of the five scales for the seven types of school

Category		Desire to learn Irish	Attitude to learning Irish	Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Self-concept of ability in Irish	Use of Irish
Stand-alone primary school (ROI)	Mean	22.70	29.13	19.22	21.63	42.66
	SD	5.03	5.45	3.78	3.85	9.21
Stand-alone primary school (NI)	Mean	25.41	31.03	20.31	23.16	45.07
	SD	4.09	5.06	3.29	3.23	9.10
Primary units (NI)	Mean	21.26	29.37	16.16	22.05	39.13
	SD	5.29	6.46	3.66	4.77	7.40
Stand-alone post-primary school (ROI)	Mean	22.67	28.40	17.02	23.23	37.32
	SD	4.72	4.95	4.65	4.29	8.50
Post-primary units (ROI)	Mean	22.20	26.75	15.89	20.71	36.37
	SD	5.05	5.74	4.52	4.16	8.08
Post-primary units (NI)	Mean	23.56	27.33	20.56	21.22	32.50
	SD	5.03	4.64	2.88	3.49	13.02
Stand-alone post-primary school (NI)	Mean	20.83	27.69	15.65	20.15	37.24
	SD	5.34	5.70	4.78	4.50	7.74
Total	Mean	22.41	28.67	17.72	21.68	39.81
	SD	5.10	5.58	4.45	4.22	9.13

#### 5.5.1.1 Desire to learn Irish

NI stand-alone primary schools had the highest mean score for this scale (25.41) and there is a statistically significant difference when compared to NI primary units, ROI stand-alone post-primary schools, ROI post-primary units, and NI stand-alone post-primary schools.

#### 5.5.1.2 Attitude to learning Irish

Again, NI stand-alone primary schools had the highest mean for this scale (31.03) and there was a significant difference in comparison to ROI post-primary units, and NI stand-alone post-primary schools.

#### 5.5.1.3 Encouragement from parents to learn Irish

In this case the NI post-primary units had the highest mean score, closely followed by NI stand-alone primary schools. There were significant differences when compared to NI

primary units, ROI stand-alone post-primary schools, ROI post-primary units, and NI stand-alone post-primary schools.

#### **5.5.1.4 Self-concept of ability in Irish**

The highest mean scores in this case were by NI stand-alone primary schools and ROI stand-alone post-primary schools. There was a significant difference between the mean scores of ROI stand-alone post-primary schools and stand-alone post-primary schools in NI. The only other significant difference was between the primary units in NI and the stand-alone post-primary school in NI where the primary schools were significantly higher.

#### **5.5.1.5 Use of Irish**

Mean scores for the 'use of Irish' scale varied quite a bit across the different school types. The stand-alone primary schools in NI and stand-alone primary schools in ROI scored relatively highly. There was a significant difference between the mean scores for the stand-alone primary schools in NI and every other school type except for the primary schools in ROI. There was a significant difference between the mean scores for the stand-alone primary schools in ROI and the post-primary schools, stand-alone and units, in ROI and in NI. These scores indicate that the primary school pupils in stand-alone schools in this research were the strongest group as regards the use of Irish when compared with the post-primary school pupils and the primary school pupils in units in NI.

#### **5.5.1.6 Comparison between units and all stand-alone schools**

Five independent t-tests were also carried out to compare units with stand-alone schools and the results are shown in Table 5.2. When the mean scores in Table 5.2 are examined we see that there is little difference between them except for the scale 'desire to learn Irish'. The t-tests showed that there was a significant difference between the units and the stand-alone schools in this regard, up to nearly two fifths of a standard deviation.

Table 5.2: Comparison between units and all stand-alone schools

Scale/Group (primary & post-primary together)		Mean	SD	Standard error (SE)	t	p
Desire to learn Irish	Unit	23.67 1	4.908	0.574	2.369	.018
	Stand-alone school	22.10 2	5.106	0.297		
Attitude to learning Irish	Unit	28.68 1	5.468	0.658	.016	.987
	Stand-alone school	28.66 9	5.613	0.330		
Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Unit	18.04 3	4.532	0.546	.671	.503
	Stand-alone school	17.64 4	4.434	0.259		
Self-concept of ability in Irish	Unit	21.73 2	4.025	0.478	.110	.913
	Stand-alone school	21.67 1	4.273	0.249		
Use of Irish	Unit	39.53 0	10.01 7	1.233	-.281	.779
	Stand-alone school	39.88 1	8.926	0.529		

### 5.5.1.7 Comparison between units and stand-alone post-primary schools

Five independent t-tests were also carried out to compare the units with the stand-alone post-primary schools and Table 5.3 shows that no significant differences occurred.

Table 5.3: Comparison between units and stand-alone post-primary schools

Scale/Group (primary & post-primary together)		Mean	SD	Standard error (SE)	t	p
Desire to learn Irish	Unit	22.449	5.021	0.717	.797	.426
	Stand-alone school	21.771	5.100	0.446		
Attitude to learning Irish	Unit	26.867	5.496	0.819	-1.133	.235
	Stand-alone school	28.000	5.473	0.488		
Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Unit	16.822	4.619	0.688	.361	.719
	Stand-alone school	16.527	4.758	0.419		
Self-concept of ability in Irish	Unit	20.809	4.014	0.586	-1.061	.290
	Stand-alone school	21.603	4.536	0.396		
Use of Irish	Unit	35.651	9.131	1.392	-1.158	.248
	Stand-alone school	37.400	8.332	0.745		

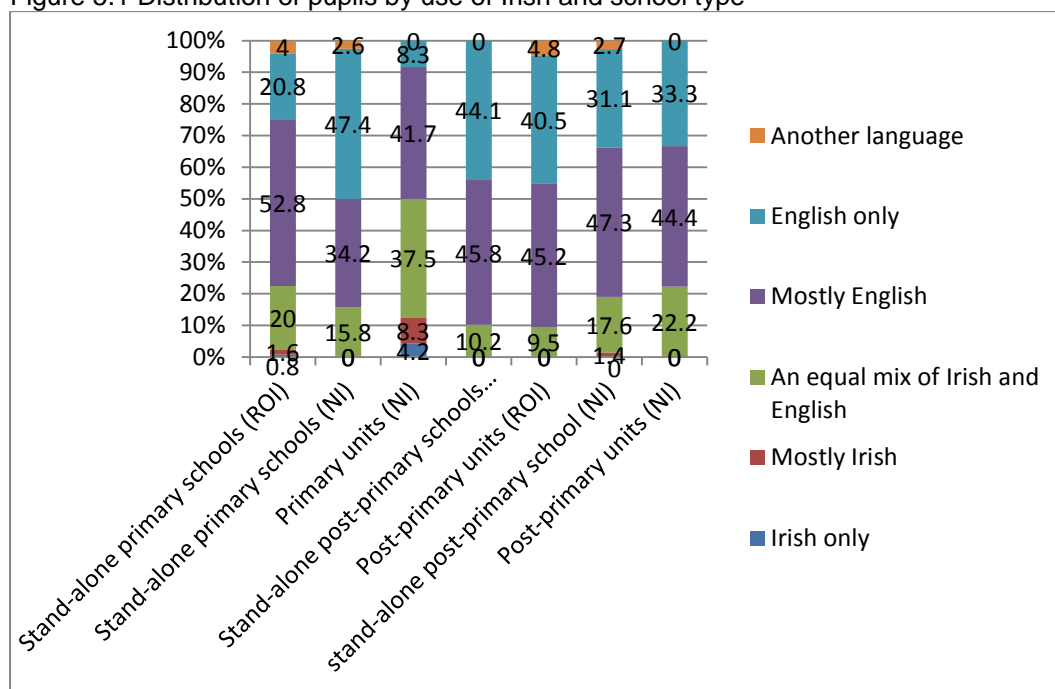
### 5.5.1.8 Distribution of pupils by language spoken in the home and school type

Table 5.4 and Figure 5.1 show the distribution of pupils by use of Irish across the seven school types. It is clear that primary school pupils in ROI and in the primary units in NI speak more Irish at home than any other group. One would have expected that these results might correlate with results reported earlier. These relationships are investigated in the next table.

Table 5.4: Distribution of pupils by use of Irish and school type

School type/Region	Irish only	Mostly Irish	Equal mix of Irish and English	Mostly English	English only	Another language
Stand-alone primary schools (ROI)	0.8	1.6	20.0	52.8	20.8	4.0
Stand-alone primary schools (NI)	0.0	0.0	15.8	34.2	47.4	2.6
Primary units (NI)	4.2	8.3	37.5	41.7	8.3	0.0
Stand-alone post-primary schools (ROI)	0.0	0.0	10.2	45.8	44.1	0.0
Post-primary units (ROI)	0.0	0.0	9.5	45.2	40.5	4.8
stand-alone post-primary school (NI)	0.0	1.4	17.6	47.3	31.1	2.7
Post-primary units (NI)	0.0	0.0	22.2	44.4	33.3	0.0

Figure 5.1 Distribution of pupils by use of Irish and school type



### 5.5.1.9 Mean scores and standard deviations by spoken language in the home

Table 5.5 shows the mean scores for the different scales and the standard deviations by language spoken at home. The scales 'Irish only', 'Mostly Irish' and 'Another language' were combined under 'Other' for the purposes of this comparison. There is a significant difference for each of the scales and for 'use of Irish' in particular.

Group by group Bonferroni post-hoc comparison tests showed that the mean score of pupils who spoke 'English only' at home was lower than that of the pupils in the categories 'Mostly English' and 'Equal mix of Irish and English'. Similarly 'encouragement by parents' was significantly lower for the 'English only' group in comparison to the 'Mostly English' and 'Equal mix of Irish and English' categories. The same pattern emerged for 'Self-concept of ability in Irish' and 'Use of Irish'.

Table 5.5: Mean scores and standard deviations by language spoken at home

Category		Desire to learn Irish	Attitude to learning Irish	Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Self-concept of ability in Irish	Use of Irish
English only	Mean	20.51	27.23	16.13	20.54	35.55
	SD	4.87	5.45	4.25	4.45	8.26
Mostly English	Mean	23.09	29.09	18.08	22.15	40.13
	SD	4.68	5.21	4.31	3.83	8.66
Equal mix of Irish and English	Mean	23.86	29.97	18.97	22.31	45.83
	SD	5.26	5.53	4.43	4.53	7.54
Other	Mean	22.71	28.44	18.88	22.56	42.59
	SD	6.94	8.54	4.54	3.97	11.23
Total	Mean	22.41	28.66	17.69	21.70	39.81
	SD	5.11	5.59	4.44	4.22	9.15

#### 5.5.1.10 Comparison between boys and girls for the five scales

Five independent t-tests were conducted to compare boys with girls and the results are shown in Table 5.6. The mean scores of the girls were significantly higher for ‘Desire to learn Irish’ and ‘Attitude to learning Irish’. There were no significant differences according to gender for the other scales.

Table 5.6: Comparison between boys and girls for the five scales

Scale/Group (primary & post-primary together)		Mean	SD	Standard error (SE)	t	p
Desire to learn Irish	Boy	21.580	5.193	0.399	-2.918	.004
	Girl	23.121	4.921	0.349		
Attitude to learning Irish	Boy	27.823	5.913	0.462	-2.665	.008
	Girl	29.385	5.187	0.371		
Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Boy	17.245	4.612	0.361	-1.846	.066
	Girl	18.111	4.283	0.304		
Self-concept of ability in Irish	Boy	21.455	4.239	0.328	-0.946	.345
	Girl	21.874	4.207	0.298		
Use of Irish	Boy	38.805	9.130	0.724	-1.893	.059
	Girl	40.651	9.063	0.654		

#### 5.5.1.11 Discussion

Following this bivariate analysis, it appears that the most significant factors which influence pupils’ mean scores are the pupils’ home language, the region in which the school is located (ROI or NI), and the level (primary or post-primary) rather than whether it is a stand-alone school or unit. Nevertheless, we note that primary school pupils in stand-alone schools in

this research were strongest as regards the use of Irish in comparison to the post-primary school pupils and the primary school pupils in units in NI.

## **5.6 Background and growth of schools**

Establishing new stand-alone schools or units is challenging and many obstacles must be overcome. In general they are established in response to demand from parents and the stand-alone schools are frequently housed in poor accommodation at the outset. In this context the support of the parents is extremely important. In the first part of this section we report on the background of the schools in the research. After that we look at the reasons the parents in the research chose Irish-medium education for their children. We then present an overview of the challenges faced by schools and units as they continue to grow.

### **5.6.1 Background and growth of participating schools**

The primary schools in Northern Ireland (Primary NI) were in existence for 13 years on average. The Republic of Ireland primary schools (Primary ROI) were established 22 years on average and Republic of Ireland post-primary schools (Post-Primary ROI) 24 years. As the number of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland (Post-Primary NI) is very small and only three of them completed the questionnaire, care must be taken when statistics are being presented to ensure schools' anonymity. It is worth remembering when presenting a percentage for the post-primary schools in NI, that 33% equals one school and that 66% stands for two schools.

The schools have experienced considerable growth since their establishment and, on average, they are about ten times larger now than when first established. That growth is evident in the average number of teachers in the schools at present, as shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Number of teachers in the schools

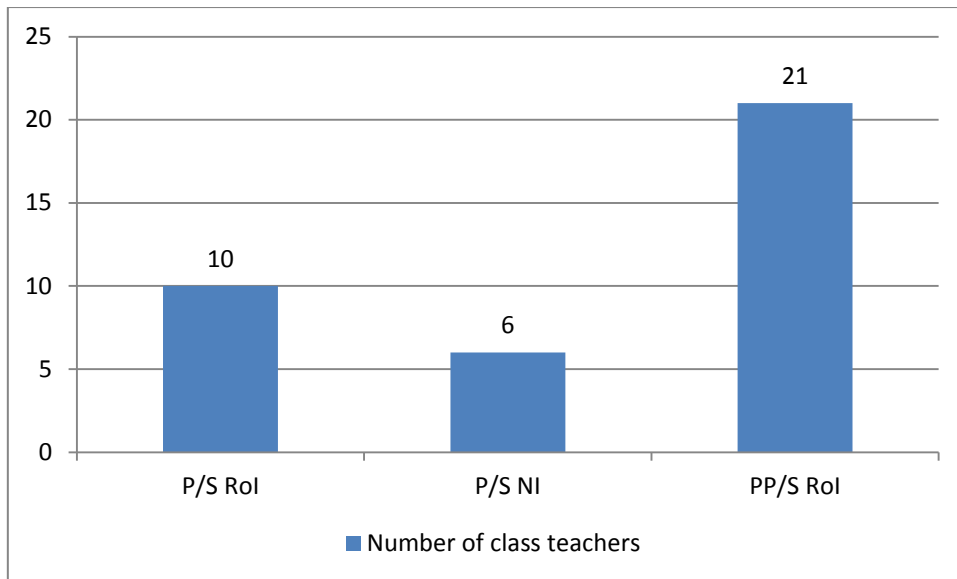
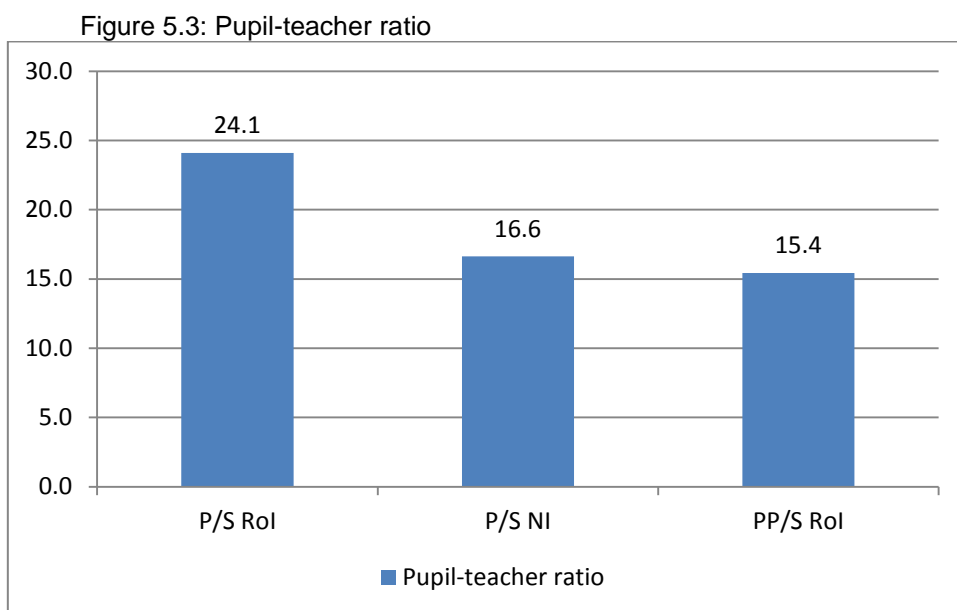


Figure 5.3 shows that the pupil-teacher ratio varies across the different school types with a more favourable ratio in NI primary schools and in ROI post-primary schools.



### 5.6.2 Reasons why parents chose an all-Irish school for their children

We asked the parents about their reasons for choosing an all-Irish school for their children. The vast majority of parents indicated that they chose an all-Irish school as they had respect for the language and that it was important for them that their children would have fluent Irish:

We respect Irish.

I wanted my child to be fluent in Irish.



They indicated that they had confidence in the Irish-medium education system as an extremely effective system for teaching Irish and for fostering a positive attitude towards Irish among the pupils:

Because I felt it was the best way for her to learn the language.

The benefit of learning through Irish immersion.

For Irish, speaking it with ability.

Because of the interest I have in Irish, because of the negative attitude teenagers have towards Irish, that my child wouldn't have that attitude.

They liked the atmosphere of the school, the approach in the school to the teaching of Irish and some of them thought their children would get a more rounded education in an all-Irish school

Her cousins had attended the same school and enjoyed the atmosphere and friendly approach and received a great knowledge of Irish.

The feeling and friendly atmosphere in the school was very important, past pupils had very positive comments in relation to the school.

I believe there is a very high standard of education in Irish language schools.

Parents chose all-Irish schools also because they liked the ethos of the school and so that their children would be aware of their Irish identity and cultural heritage given that emphasis is placed on other aspects of Irish culture (music, dance, singing and Gaelic games) in the all-Irish schools:

I felt the school has a lot to offer when it comes to culture. Not just the language but also the music, dancing and other activities such as Gaelic and hurling.

The ethos of the school, level of involvement of parents in school along with the need to instil in my child a sense of their cultural identity.

It was clear that many parents understood the cognitive, linguistic, academic, employment and social advantages associated with bilingualism for youth:

Language is important to me. Dual language is an important part for brain development, ability to learn other languages.

It is an important language to have for future job prospects.

To learn his native tongue so he may do better in his leaving cert. exams, so he may have a better ear for other languages.

To be competent in the Irish language and to assist with examinations at second level.

For the choice of using another language, also academically I thought it would be better.

I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to develop confidence, cognitive ability, social development and important in regards to identity and self-esteem.

It was clear that the parents' own experiences of learning Irish at school and of all-Irish education influenced their willingness to choose an all-Irish school – both positive experiences:

I personally love the language. It was one of my favourite subjects in school.

I attended all-Irish schools and I feel that Irish is very important as part of my children's culture and the country's culture. I want to give them the opportunity to learn through the medium of Irish. I hope they will love the language.

and negative experiences:

Because I hated learning Irish at school but when I travelled I regretted not being able to speak my own language. I wanted her to love the Irish language.

I was educated by a teacher who disliked the language and taught as little Irish as possible. I did not want my child to experience the same.

I wanted my child to have good Irish. I found Irish difficult in school.

Parents at primary level and at second level chose all-Irish schools for continuity and because their older children had already had positive experiences in the system:

Someone suggested the naíonra and she was so happy there we decided to keep her there to continue her education in the Gaelscoil.

My child has completed her primary education through the medium of Irish and I wanted to take this further through secondary education.

And a couple of post-primary parents mentioned that the children themselves chose an all-Irish post-primary school because they liked their all-Irish primary education a lot:

Having attended an all-Irish primary school it was my daughter's choice to continue her second level education through Irish.

And, of course, parents mentioned other pragmatic reasons not directly connected to the ethos of all-Irish schools, including the proximity of the school, the pupil-teacher ratio, small classes, the school's reputation, and co-education:

The reason we picked this school was that it's our closest school and class sizes were smaller initially.

The child/teacher ratio was more favourable.

The school really has a good reputation.

It was the best available with reputation for excellent teaching.

Co-education also important.

But these pragmatic reasons were frequently cited as secondary rather than principal reasons for their choice:

I decided to send my child to an all-Irish school because I did want him to learn through Irish; also it was a small school and close to where we live.

#### **5.6.2.1 Discussion of the reasons why parents chose an all-Irish school for their children**

These research results are consistent with the results from Wales, Scotland, the Basque Country and Maguire (1991) discussed in Chapter 2. Other existing research has shown that the majority of parents value Irish as an important aspect of their cultural heritage but their support for the language tends to be passive (Harris and Murtagh 1999; Murtagh 2003; Ó Riagáin 2008). They are not prepared to make an additional personal investment to learn the language. Few learners acquire Irish from the school system alone, particularly when the language is taught as a discrete subject for three and a half hours per week for 35 weeks

each school year. The immersion education system is more effective for teaching Irish as the pupils have more contact with the language, the language is emphasised as the school's normal language of communication, and other subjects are taught through the medium of Irish (Murtagh 2003; Ó Riagáin 1997, 2008). Many parents who took part in the current research were unable to benefit from the advantages of an immersion education as such a choice was not available to them 20 years ago. But the demand for and provision of Irish-medium education is more widespread now. It is clear that many parents are prepared to act on their beliefs and choose Irish-medium education to provide opportunities for their children that were not available to themselves. Interestingly, Ó Riagáin (2008) indicates that 25% of the population in ROI are in favour of more intensive language programmes, including immersion education programmes but there is insufficient provision to satisfy this demand.

### **5.6.3 Challenges associated with the growth of an Irish-medium school/unit**

School growth is an important indicator of viability and the need for a critical threshold of pupils for the development of the sector was discussed above. The expansion of a school creates challenges for both models of immersion education at both primary and post-primary levels, albeit not necessarily the same problems. Leaders in each type of model acknowledge challenges related to a significant increase in pupil numbers and examples are presented below of the problems specified in the different school types.

It was reported that there tends to be an increase in the number of families who have Irish at home, as the school community grows. On the other hand the number of parents who choose an Irish-medium school for reasons other than an interest in Irish-medium education increases as the school grows. One principal of a primary school in a disadvantaged area explained that challenges arise not only from the development of communities and changing family profiles but that socioeconomic variables also have an impact. Parents may opt to send their children to a local Irish-medium school because it is the nearest school to them, but having no regard for Irish or interest in the Irish-medium system. Some of these families need considerable support and the school responds positively to this changing demographic profile through creative planning. Another primary school principal discussed the teaching in a DEIS 1 (designated disadvantaged) school highlighting the pupils' language and communication needs in both English and Irish as an issue of concern.

Sometimes, a unit can feel pressurised to switch to a discrete model as the unit expands but due consideration may not be given to employment implications for teachers.

...a unit is a great thing. But when you grow you have another problem and for example, there are people in the area saying now, what about an independent school? ... It would be very hard indeed to do. (Post-primary unit principal.)

In the above-mentioned school, most of the staff teach in the unit and in the host school. Therefore, jobs would be lost if the model were changed to a discrete Gaelcholáiste.

It is easier to encourage the use of Irish when the school is small. A primary school principal described the effect the school's growth has on the use of Irish in the playground:

The teachers have more contact with the children when the school is small. When the school grows, they have more contact with their own colleagues as there are many more children. (Primary school principal in the focus group.)

As a unit grows, unit leaders feel compelled to exert more influence on the development of the whole-school plan. For example, in one unit (NI) there was a large increase in the number of pupils who would be entering class 1 the following year. Consequently, the school had to consider appointing an additional teacher or increasing the number of multi-grade classes. The unit leader feels that the unit's case has to be fought continually to make progress. Another unit leader explained the tension that occurs when different priorities develop on the two sides of the school, as the unit expands:

Problems emerge as the unit grows – different priorities. We have to be creative to address the principal's priorities and the unit's priorities. (Primary unit coordinator)

#### 5.6.4 Staff recruitment

In this section we review the current situation regarding staff recruitment. Table 5.7 shows that 61.4% of primary schools in ROI agreed that it was difficult to recruit teachers with a satisfactory standard of Irish for their schools. This finding is significant given that there are many newly-qualified primary teachers in ROI still seeking continuous employment. The situation appears to be better in NI where 65% of primary respondents and 66% of post-primary respondents disagreed with the statement. The schools which are worst off, however, are the post-primary schools in ROI where 85% reported difficulty recruiting teachers with a satisfactory standard of Irish.

Table 5.7: It is difficult to recruit teachers with a satisfactory standard of Irish for this school/unit

	<b>I strongly agree</b>	<b>I agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>I disagree</b>	<b>I strongly disagree</b>
<b>Primary ROI</b>	14.3	47.1	1.4	32.9	4.3
<b>Primary NI</b>	15.0	15.0	5.0	40.0	25.0
<b>Post-Primary ROI</b>	45.0	40.0	15.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Post-Primary NI</b>	0.0	33.0	0.0	33.0	33.0

At post-primary level recruiting subject teachers who are competent to teach through the medium of Irish is particularly challenging. In the post-primary units, the range of

provision through Irish depends on the number of teachers with Irish across the entire school staff,

We wouldn't have a teacher, for example, you couldn't do technical graphics through Irish or woodwork or if one child goes out to do one of those subjects they don't get it through Irish. So that's one of the problems, so to tell the truth, we have a stream but they don't do all the subjects through Irish. (Post-primary unit principal)

It is clear from Table 5.8 that the situation is more challenging when recruiting substitute teachers. The vast majority of respondents agree that it was difficult to recruit substitute teachers with a satisfactory standard of Irish. The worst situation is at post-primary school level with 95% of respondents in ROI agreeing and 100% in NI.

Table 5.8: It is difficult to recruit substitute teachers with a satisfactory standard of Irish for this school/unit

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Primary ROI	37.1	40.0	1.4	21.4	0.0
Primary NI	25.0	50.0	0.0	15.0	10.0
Post-Primary ROI	65.0	30.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
Post-Primary NI	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0

When it comes to recruiting ancillary staff the problem is even more acute with between 77% and 100% agreeing that it is difficult to recruit ancillary staff with a satisfactory standard of Irish.

Table 5.9: It is difficult to recruit ancillary staff with a satisfactory standard of Irish for this school/unit

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Primary ROI	43.5	33.3	4.3	17.4	1.4
Primary NI	25.0	60.0	10.0	5.0	0.0
Post-Primary ROI	35.0	45.0	10.0	10.0	0.0
Post-Primary NI	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0

The focus group primary leaders stressed the difficulties associated with the panel system when appointing suitably qualified teachers to the Irish-medium sector:

You're tied to the panel, that's a big issue, I think, for Irish-medium schools going forward ... It could happen to me, or to any other principal looking, that the Department would say to you, that person is qualified... You don't have a choice. (Primary school principal)

Primary school leaders acknowledged that the panel system posed a threat to the integrity of Irish-medium education:

There were 116 on the panel this year and I got twelve back who were satisfied to teach in an Irish-medium school. I interviewed them, they didn't have Irish, I would not put them in to do immersion education with the children as it was, and the Department asked me to take a person and I refused. I said I'm not going to take him. They made an exception for me but if it weren't for that I'd have a teacher who had no love for Irish or the culture or anything but we have to take them. And that's the biggest problem with the future of immersion education. (Primary school principal)

Another factor which influences subject provision in Irish or in English is the number of pupils who request that subject. It is clear that the choice of subjects offered through the medium of Irish from year to year changes depending on these factors:

... there are some schools and for example they must do a subject through English as we have no teachers who are qualified to, for example, teach physics, teach chemistry, Construction studies. There are some subjects and we just don't have the teachers. Then they have to choose the subjects through English. This year some of the subjects are very healthy, biology and French and accounting but sometimes not enough pupils choose history or geography and then, to provide a class at least a dozen are needed so if fewer than that choose they have to do the subject through English with the host school.

Recruitment of teachers was among the challenges identified in a stand-alone post-primary school but teaching through English was not the first choice solution in the stand-alone schools. The increase in the number of teachers coming through the Irish-medium school system helped alleviate the problem:

It is a challenge to appoint teachers with Irish. An easy answer to that challenge is to appoint a specialist subject teacher with English only. But development is hindered. You don't put pressure on yourself to develop. We must be developing and innovating. That creates meaning and new energy ... It helps that past-pupils are returning as teachers. (Post-primary school principal)

Another post-primary unit principal explained that flexibility was needed among the teaching staff, teachers who would teach through English in the host school but were able to switch to teaching through Irish in the unit as needs changed. Not only was it difficult to recruit permanent teachers but it was also a struggle to find temporary substitutes.

The geographical location of the schools further compounds the situation. One post-primary unit not situated in a central location was experiencing difficulties retaining teachers:

If a person is good and if a position comes up in Dublin and if a person wants to be in Dublin they'll go. That's one of the problems we have too and it isn't that easy. (Post-primary unit principal)

However, it was acknowledged that this situation may be improving gradually:

I remember when we started out it was very difficult to find teachers with Irish. It has greatly changed now in the last couple of years, it is so much easier to find people

with Irish than it used be in the early days. (Primary school principal in the focus group)

### 5.6.5 Past-pupils as a resource

Leaders of both units and stand-alone schools, at primary and post-primary levels, placed a significant emphasis on the positive results to be observed when past-pupils gained relevant qualifications or experience and were able to add to the development of the school. Past-pupils have a valuable role to play as teachers, classroom assistants, youth officers and at other levels of authority and decision-making, as indicated in the following comment:

For example one of the best examples may be with the teaching staff, we're talking about maybe six teachers here who are past-pupils ... There is a strong role, and the influence of the other gaelscoileanna can be seen too. Many of the staff are from the area and they came through the system of the gaelscoileanna and the gaelcholáistí up there. The gaelscoileanna are now helping each other from that point of view. I would not have any difficulties now finding teachers with Irish among the people of this area for example as they are there. (Primary school principal)

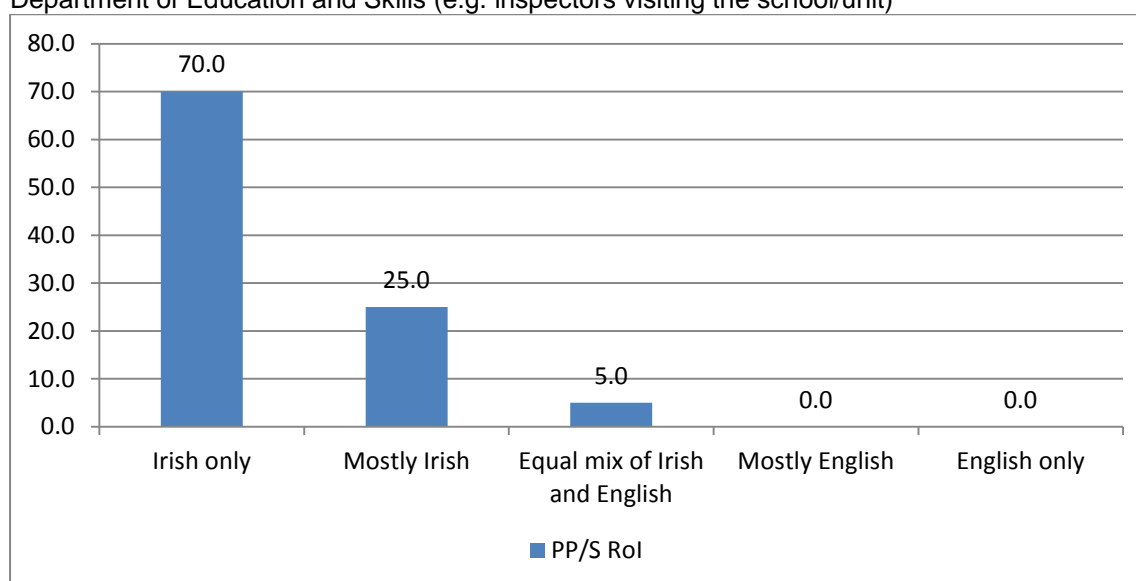
Principals expressed confidence in the ability of past-pupils to speak Irish:

All the past-pupils I meet, they are very keen to speak Irish to me. Or, maybe they don't speak Irish among themselves but if they speak Irish to me they have fine Irish. This is people in their thirties so they don't forget the language or the Irish they learned at school. They are still very proud of it and that's probably the thing you'd most notice about all the pupils. (Primary school principal)

### 5.6.6 Language of communication with the Departments of Education

When representatives of the Department of Education in ROI visit school premises business is conducted in Irish the vast majority of the time, as indicated in Figure 5.4.

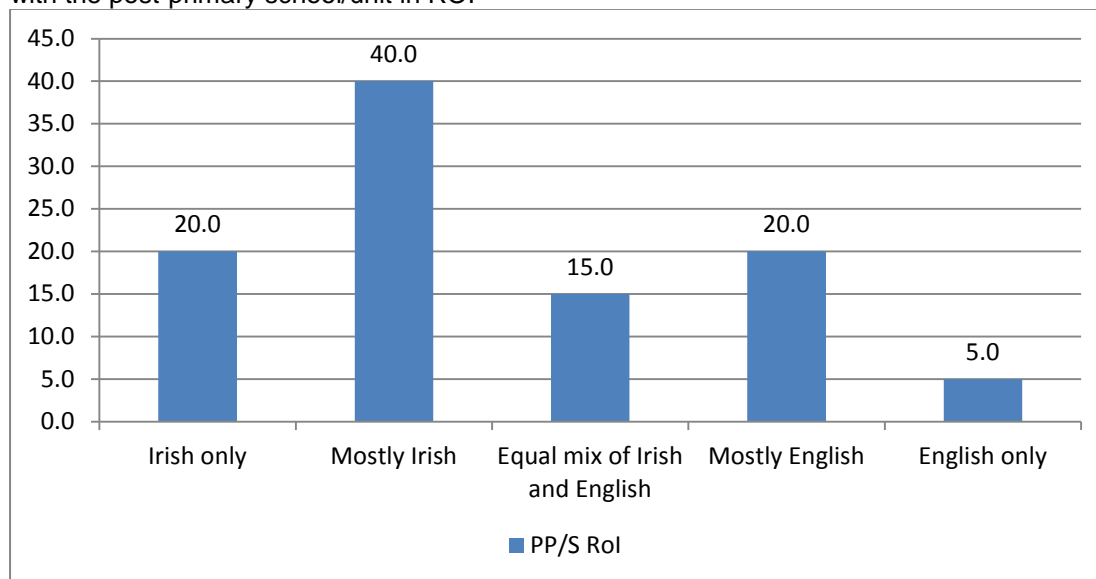
Figure 5.4: Usual language of communication between teachers and representatives of the Department of Education and Skills (e.g. inspectors visiting the school/unit)



Post-primary schools in ROI reported that written communication between the Department of Education and Skills and the school/unit is mostly through Irish (60% of the time) as seen in Figure 5.5.

In NI, during interviews with leaders, it was mentioned that difficulties arise for Irish-medium school leaders when inspectors who don't speak Irish carry out inspections in the school.

Figure 5.5: The language used by the Department of Education and Skills to communicate in writing with the post-primary school/unit in ROI



### 5.6.7 The education continuum

Many primary schools have been established in areas where naíonraí/naíscoileanna (Irish-medium playgroups/nursery schools) already existed and many post-primary schools have been established in areas where Irish-medium provision at primary level was already available. Primary schools in ROI and in NI were asked about the number of naíonraí/naíscoileanna feeding the primary school. The response from the primary schools in this study was between 1.25 (NI) and 1.5 (ROI). Post-primary schools in ROI reported that 3.8 was the average number of Irish-medium primary feeder schools they drew on for pupil intake. The two units in NI enrol pupils from 3 Irish-medium primary feeder schools but the stand-alone post-primary school enrolls pupils from as many as 10 Irish-medium primary feeder schools.

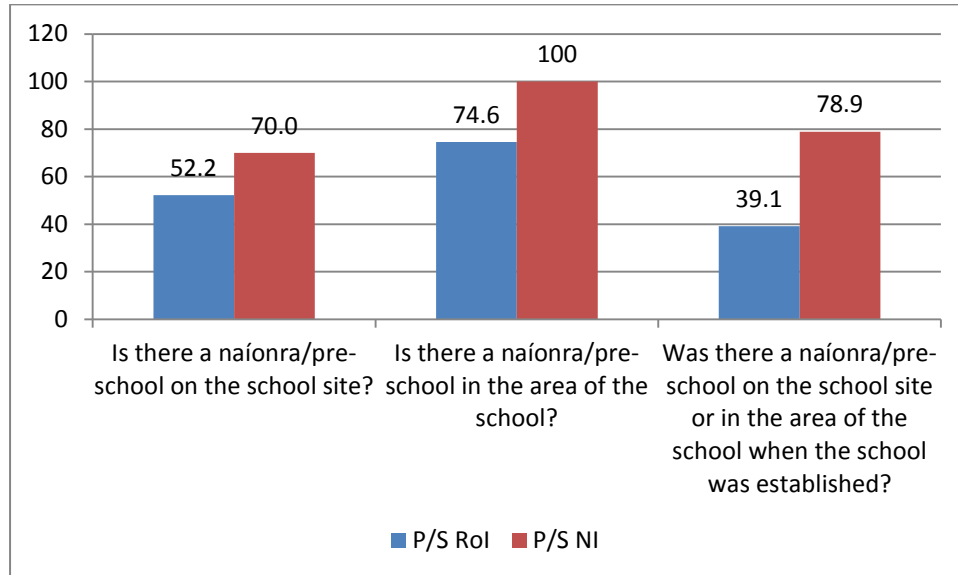
#### 5.6.7.1 Naíonra/naíscoil

The primary schools were asked if there was a naíonra/naíscoil on the school site or in the school area and if there was a naíonra/naíscoil in the area when the school was established. Figure 5.6 shows that in the case of all the Irish-medium primary schools in NI there is a naíscoil in the area or on the site of the school and that, in most cases, a naíonra/naíscoil



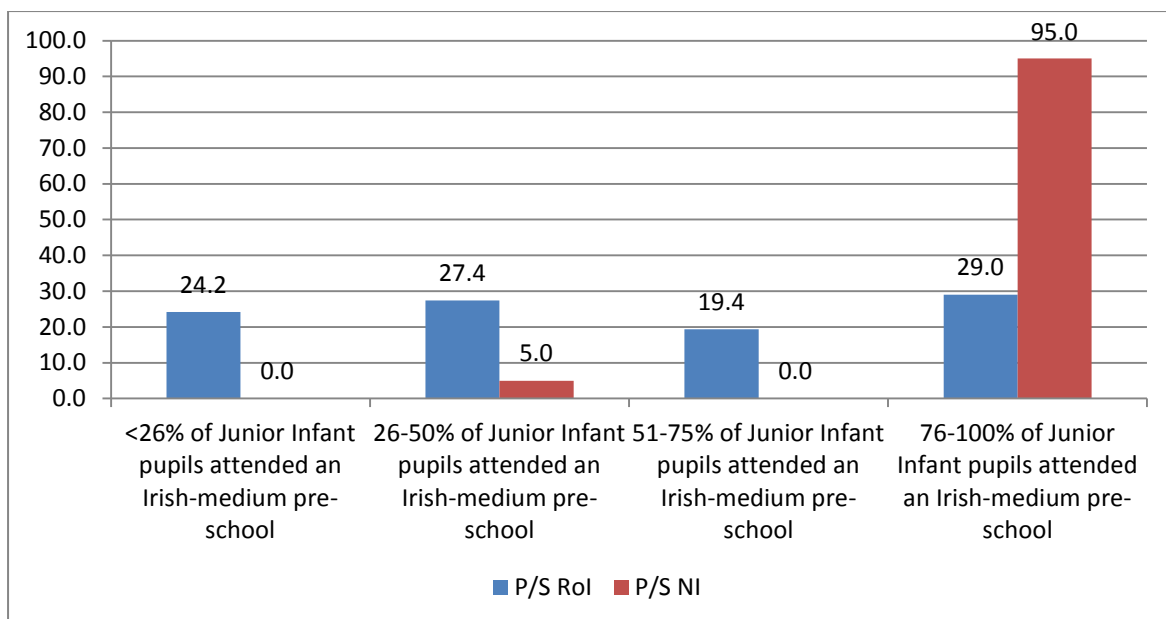
existed when the school was being established. The pre-school primary school connection is not as strong in the case of ROI primary schools although three quarters of schools have a naíonra in the area. It is interesting that only nearly 40% of primary schools in ROI had a naíonra in the area when they were being established.

Figure 5.6: Naíonra/naíscoil on the site or in the area of the school now and when the school was established



When the number of children who attended a naíonra/naíscoil before primary school was investigated significant differences between NI and ROI were observed. In the vast majority of Irish-medium primary schools in NI between 76% and 100% of the pupils had attended a naíscoil, as shown in Figure 5.7. The same did not apply to primary schools in ROI where half the schools responded that half or less than half of the pupils had attended a naíonra. It would be interesting to collect further information about these patterns of transfer from naíonraí/naíscoileanna to Irish-medium primary schools.

Figure 5.7: Attendance at naíonra/naíscoil before primary school



Notwithstanding this difference between the numbers of pupils in the two parts of the country who attended a naíonra, many principals and leaders emphasised the importance of an immersion education experience at pre-school level. Both leaders of stand-alone schools and leaders of units reported that the naíonra/naíscoil experience is one of the biggest factors influencing the use of Irish among the primary school pupils. If pupils have attended a naíonra they understand the language and the environment when they transfer to primary education. Additional challenges were specified which pupils and parents without experience of immersion education at nursery school level encounter. These children experience a delay in communicating through Irish in comparison to pupils who have had experience of a naíonra, though there is no noticeable difference between the two groups by the second or third year of primary school.

Primary school leaders agreed that the provision of immersion education by naíonraí varied as some naíonraí placed more emphasis on Irish than others. Where 'proper immersion education' was not being provided in the local naíscoil, according to the leader, then the use of Irish at home positively influenced the use of Irish among pupils.

It is not just the use of Irish which influences a parent's decision to send their child to a naíonra/naíscoil but also the overall standard of educational provision. One primary school principal reported that the number of pupils transferring from a naíscoil to the primary school rose due to the high standard of the naíscoil staff:

There are even families who have older children in the English-medium school beside them, they would be keeping their children here. The difference we are making is that we are fostering confidence in the parent, because when you have good staff we are able to foster confidence ... it's not that Irish will be the first thing on the parents' minds but the provision itself. So, it's important that that's of a high standard too. (Primary school principal)

The difference which a statutory naíscoil made to the use of Irish among the pupils was noted. One primary school principal explained that the Irish of pupils in the primary school first class had improved since the local naíscoil was placed on a statutory footing:

Before that, there were only two and a half hours and you know to acquire the second language a longer day is needed. I think now since there's a teacher, two classroom assistants and sometimes helpers there who have Irish and the day is longer, the children acquire more Irish. They enter with better Irish and better understanding. (Primary school principal)

Not every person who took part in the focus group had a naíonra located in their local area. That lack of provision, according to one of the ROI primary school principals, means that all the pupils have the same language profile when beginning school:

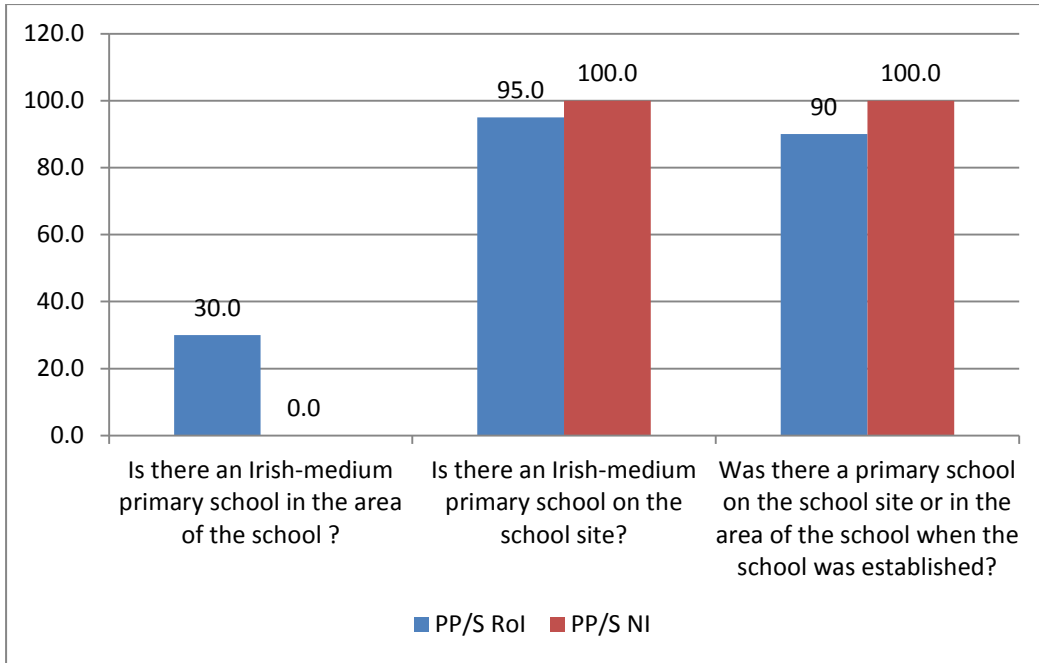
... you have them from the first day without Irish, so the teacher is able to work the same with every person."

#### **5.6.7.2 Access to Irish-medium primary school in the area**

Post-primary schools were asked if there was an Irish-medium primary school on the school site or in the local area. Only 30% of post-primary schools in ROI reported that there was an Irish-medium primary school in the school locality, but there was an Irish-medium primary school in the school locality in almost every other case.

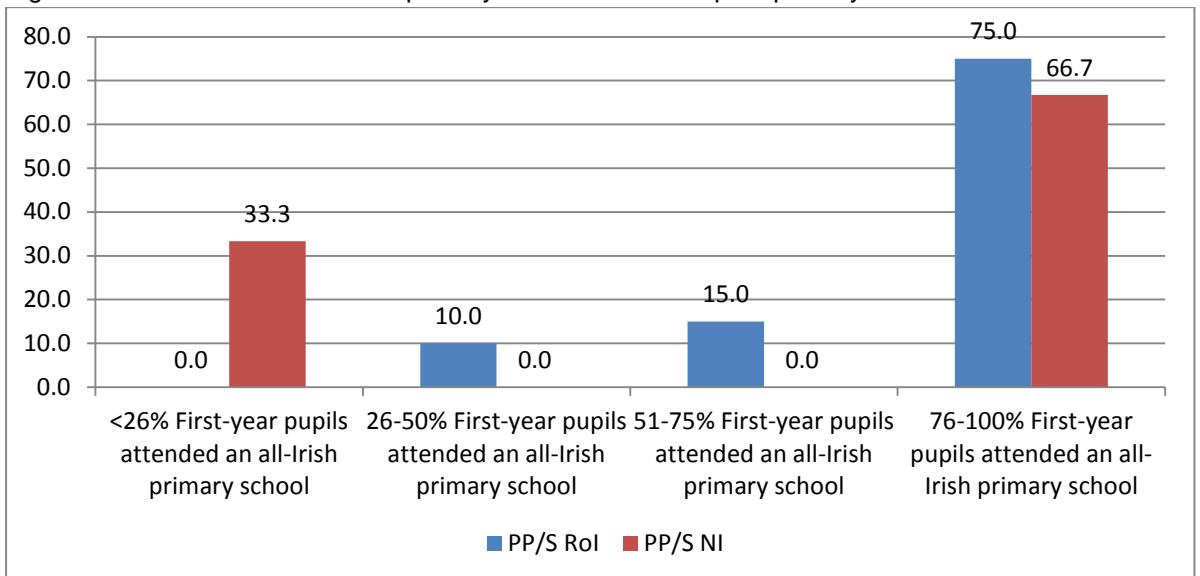
Post-primary schools were also asked about the number of first-year pupils who had attended an Irish-medium primary school before transferring to post-primary education. Again, significant differences were noted. Between 76% and 100% of first-year pupils in the vast majority of Irish-medium post-primary schools in ROI had attended an Irish-medium primary school, as shown in Figure 5.9. In three schools, 51-75% of post-primary first-year pupils had attended an Irish-medium primary school and in the case of two schools only between 26% and 50% of the pupils had attended an Irish-medium primary school. These results indicate that many pupils in the latter category are availing of late immersion. In post-primary schools in NI, in the case of two schools, a high percentage of first-year pupils had attended an Irish-medium primary school. There is one post-primary unit however, as indicated in Figure 5.9, where the percentage of pupils who had attended an Irish-medium primary school was less than 26%. This is likely to present certain challenges for both pupils and teachers.

Figure 5.8: Primary school on the school site or in the school area now and when the school was established



We also see in Table 5.10 below that 59.4% of Irish-medium primary schools in ROI had access to an Irish-medium post-primary school in the locality but only 30.0% of NI Irish-medium primary schools had access to an Irish-medium post-primary school in the area. These statistics have implications for pupils and parents wishing to access the full continuum of education through the medium of Irish.

Figure 5.9: Attendance at all-Irish primary school before the post-primary school

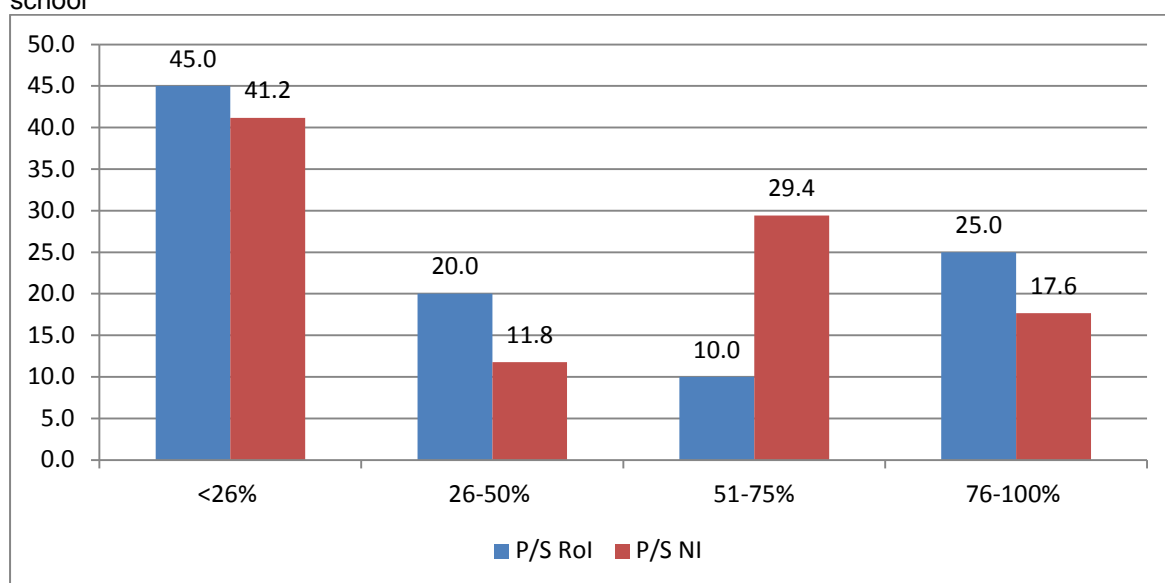


### 5.6.7.3 Attrition rates

Much has been written about immersion education in other areas and reasons why some pupils do not continue in the immersion education system to the end of primary school or

post-primary school (Cummins, 2000). We attempted first to ascertain what level of transfer existed between Irish-medium primary schools and Irish-medium post-primary schools. Figure 5.10 shows that less than half of sixth-class pupils in 65% of primary schools in ROI transferred to an Irish-medium post-primary school. In NI less than half of Class 7 pupils in 53% of Irish-medium primary schools transferred to an Irish-medium post-primary school. On the other hand more than half of pupils transferred to an all-Irish post-primary school in the case of 35% of schools in ROI and 47% in NI. On the basis of the schools who participated in this research, there is a better transfer rate from primary schools in NI, but neither area is very satisfactory.

Figure 5.10: Percentage of the pupils in class 6 last year who went on to an all-Irish post-primary school



One possible explanation for this low transfer rate in the case of some schools is the lack of an all-Irish post-primary school in the vicinity of the primary school. However, Table 5.10 below indicates that 59.4% of Irish-medium primary schools in ROI have access to an Irish-medium post-primary school in the vicinity compared to 30% in NI. Despite this discrepancy in provision, NI schools have a considerably better transfer rate.

Table 5.10: All-Irish post-primary school in the primary school vicinity

	Primary ROI	Primary NI
<b>% All-Irish post-primary school in the primary school vicinity</b>	59.4%	30.0%

In order to ascertain what the attrition rates from Irish-medium education were at both primary and post-primary levels we asked the principals/directors what percentage of pupils did not continue in their school when pupils who leave the school area are not taken into account. We see in Table 5.11 that this percentage is extremely low.

Table 5.11: Percentage of pupils who leave the school each year

	Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post- Primary ROI
<b>Pupils who leave the school each year</b>	1.5%	.94%	1.60%

We also asked the principals/directors to indicate the reasons pupils left the school, in their opinion. We gave them a list of possible reasons which they could add to. Learning difficulties as well as advice from a psychologist were the most common reasons cited.

Table 5.12: Reasons why pupils leave an all-Irish school

	Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post- Primary ROI
<b>Learning difficulties</b>	71.0	70.0	65.0
<b>Dissatisfaction with the all-Irish system</b>	12.9	25.0	20.0
<b>On the advice of a psychologist</b>	56.5	45.0	25.0
<b>Other</b>	17.7	25	30.0

### 5.6.8 Attending an Irish-medium post-primary school or Irish courses at third level

Parents were asked if they would advise their children to attend an Irish-medium post-primary school in the case of primary school parents or to study Irish and/or study courses through the medium Irish at third level in the case of post-primary school parents. Different opinions were expressed and it must be acknowledged that the parents were expressing their own personal opinions and feelings. First, we look at the responses regarding attendance at a post-primary school.

#### 5.6.8.1 Attending an Irish-medium post-primary school

We see in Table 5.13 that, on the whole, parents are positive about encouraging their children to continue in the Irish-medium school sector. There was no correlation between these responses across school type or location. It would be interesting, however, to explore parents' and pupils' views on this topic in greater detail.

Table 5.13: Would you recommend to your child to attend an all-Irish post-primary school/study Irish or a course through the medium of Irish in a third-level college?

School category/location	% Yes	% No	% I don't know
... attend an all-Irish post-primary school			
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools (n=119)</b>	70.1	13.7	16.2
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools (n=23)</b>	78.3	4.3	17.4
<b>NI primary unit (n=18)</b>	94.4	0.0	5.6
... study Irish or a course through the medium of Irish in a third-level college			
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools (n=56)</b>	70.9	5.5	23.6
<b>Stand-alone post-primary school NI (n=28)</b>	76.9	3.8	19.2
<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit (n=44)</b>	57.1	19.0	23.8

Many parents hoped their children would continue in the all-Irish sector for reasons related to identity, culture and preservation of the language.

Because I feel Irish schools encourage the kids to love their culture and give them a real sense of their identity.

Parents felt that continuity in all-Irish education was important to give their children the opportunity to continue to develop their competence in Irish.

I would like her use of Irish to continue and her Irish language skills to develop and improve. To be part of a community.

Like parents in Scotland, the parents who participated in this research were knowledgeable about the cognitive, linguistic, academic, employment, and social advantages of bilingualism.

Bilingualism is no burden! It broadens the mind/if reflecting or thinking of a word or a vocabulary to create!

We feel it is a natural progression and it helps children pick up another language easily. We also feel it will enhance her future job prospects.

Parents felt that class sizes were smaller and that the pupil-teacher ratio was more favourable in all-Irish post-primary schools compared to English-medium schools. They thought the standard of education was better in an all-Irish post-primary school and some of them indicated that older children already attending a local all-Irish post-primary school were excelling at school.

In contrast, some parents were dissatisfied with the experience older children had in an all-Irish post-primary school. The parent's decision often depends on the provision in the local area rather than on reasons related to language and culture.

My first daughter went to an all-Irish post-primary school, she spent a year there before transferring to an English-medium secondary school, much more satisfied now despite my love for the language. The most important thing is for them to be happy at school.

Some parents were doubtful about the support that would be available in the all-Irish post-primary school for their children with special educational needs. And people with little Irish doubted their ability to give appropriate support to their children, in particular when preparing for state examinations.

I would have some reservations about an all-Irish post-primary school simply because my own level of Irish would impede my ability to provide assistance (or monitor progress). I am aware that as the child gets older such assistance will be necessary.

Certain parents felt that the all-Irish post-primary schools were more limited in terms of subject choice, recruitment of teachers, textbooks and the ethnic background of pupils.

Irish is very important to us as a family but I would like to have every subject choice available to children so that they will have greater opportunities in future for University/Jobs etc.

Feel all-Irish post-primary schools have poorer selection/availability of teachers in all disciplines. Poorer choice of textbooks.  
She enjoys the language however I would prefer if her education was more inclusive of other nationalities who live in Ireland.

Some parents were worried about their children's ability to study subjects with specific terminology such as mathematics, science and business studies. They felt that Irish-medium education would hinder their children's attainment of good results in state examinations and in third level courses.

From the point of view of examinations (Junior Cert/Leaving Cert) a lot of specific terms must be learnt (science & maths) and those terms won't be used again when you're working. It's difficult to function in the university as a result.

Parents in Scotland, in the Basque Country and in Wales expressed the similar opinions.

A couple of parents thought that the standard of English of pupils in all-Irish post-primary schools was unsatisfactory and that it was important to perfect literacy and communications skills in English as English is a global language.

I anticipate that children need a good level of English in business. Irish school children's English grammar is not as good as English school children.  
English is of greater importance ultimately and 2<sup>nd</sup> level needs to develop very high level of literacy and communication skills.

The lack of Irish-medium post-primary provision was of concern to some parents. They would like to give their children the opportunity to continue in the all-Irish sector but an all-Irish post-primary school or unit is not available in the locality.

There is no all-Irish post-primary school within reasonable travelling distance from home.  
Because English school is within walking distance and with both parents working there is no worrying about transport. If Irish post-primary was nearer would encourage them.



Because the all-Irish primary school is not one of the local schools, the girls found it difficult to fit in with sporting activities so we didn't want this for secondary school. We wanted them to feel part of the local community. For me the Irish would not be a problem.

A couple of parents indicated that they were not willing to send their children to a local all-Irish post-primary school as the school had a poor reputation for academic attainment and disciplinary matters or because the school accommodation was unsatisfactory. On the whole the parents' responses show that they take pragmatic decisions and they will choose the best school for their children regardless of whether it is an all-Irish school or an all-English school.

On the basis of the evidence in this research from primary school principals and parents, it is clear that the schools have a very low attrition rate overall but the transfer rate from primary schools to post-primary schools is a cause for concern. It would be important to investigate the underlying causes in order to address this challenge. It appears, however, that a wider provision at post-primary level would help. Regarding pupils who transfer to English-medium schools before completing their primary schooling or post-primary schooling through Irish, it is evident that the lack of provision of learning support is a contributory factor.

#### **5.6.8.2 Third-level Irish courses**

We asked the post-primary school parents if they would advise their children to study Irish or to take a course through the medium of Irish in a third-level college. Many parents indicated that they wished their children would continue with Irish at third level but ultimately it would be the child's decision.

Having come from an English-speaking primary school and non-Irish speaking home, I am proud that my child has achieved excellence academically in what is essentially his second language. I would like to see him take this further.

To maintain links with the language and utilise the expertise gathered through Irish education.

I will only encourage her to find something she loves doing whether it involves Irish or not. I would never push her towards anything in particular but would actively facilitate her if she found something she loved.

Parents expressed a variety of opinions about the employment opportunities which would be available for their children as a result of studying Irish or studying through the medium of Irish at third level. Certain parents thought it was an advantage to attain a qualification in Irish at third level.

Because it may enhance career opportunities.

Yes because I feel it may offer him a better opportunity in life.

But other parents thought that additional study of Irish would limit employment opportunities.

While I believe it is an important aspect of the culture and a wonderful basis for language development, the career prospects Irish offers are limited to this country and hence not economically viable for the future.

I'm not sure it is relevant or helpful to future employment.

While I believe knowledge of Irish is important for cultural reasons, I'm not sure of its influence on other levels. I think it would depend upon the direction of study.

Parents also expressed doubts about the level of provision for Irish-medium education at third level.

She doesn't know yet what subjects she'll do at third level, but she's inclined towards law. I don't think a law course is taught through Irish, though.

It would depend if a course she wanted to study was available in Irish.

The evidence here suggests that some parents would encourage and support their children to study Irish or through the medium of Irish at third level, for both integrative and instrumental reasons (Gardner, 1985) but ultimately it would be a decision for the children. Other parents doubt the instrumental value of pursuing such courses.

## **5.7 Factors influencing the use of Irish as immersion language among pupils**

Many factors influence the use of Irish among pupils including both the language in which the curriculum is taught and the school's Irish language policy.

### **5.7.1 Medium of instruction for subjects other than English**

We investigated the extent to which curriculum subjects other than English are taught through the medium of Irish in the primary schools. The schools reported that all subjects apart from English are taught through Irish.

Table 5.14: The medium of instruction for subjects other than English

	Primary ROI	Primary NI
<b>Every subject except English taught through Irish</b>	100%	100%

The situation is more complicated in post-primary schools as they have a wider range of subjects to offer and students must be prepared for state examinations. Table 5.15 shows the extent to which subjects other than English are taught through Irish in Irish-medium post-primary schools in ROI. 95% of the subjects are taught through Irish for the Junior Certificate. This drops to 80% in the case of the Leaving Certificate. 20% of schools have to send pupils to an 'all-English' school for certain subjects for the Leaving Certificate and 15% of schools for the Junior Certificate. There is an increase also in the number of schools reporting that students take some of the examinations through English from 5% for the Junior Certificate to 15% for the Leaving Certificate. Taking into account the fact that pupils

study some subjects through English for the examinations it is not surprising that pupils opt to take some state examinations through English. It will be important, then, to provide the necessary resources for post-primary schools to enable them to teach the widest possible range of subjects through the medium of Irish.

Table 5.15: Percentage of subjects other than English taught through Irish in ROI post-primary schools

	<b>Post-Primary ROI</b>
<b>Percentage of schools teaching each subject except English through Irish to Junior Certificate (JC) level</b>	95.0%
<b>Percentage of pupils attending an all-English school for certain subjects for the JC</b>	15.0%
<b>Percentage of pupils taking some of the examinations for the JC through English</b>	5.0%
<b>Percentage of schools teaching each subject except English through Irish to Leaving Certificate (LC) level</b>	80.0%
<b>Percentage of pupils attending an all-English school for certain subjects for the LC</b>	20.0%
<b>Percentage of pupils taking some of the examinations for the LC through English</b>	15.0%

In the case of NI post-primary schools, the stand-alone school which participated in the research teaches every subject through Irish except English and the pupils do not go to another school for any subject. The pupils sit all GCSE and A-level examinations through Irish.

Two post-primary units in NI took part in the research. One of the units teaches 50% of the curriculum through the medium of Irish and the other subjects, including mathematics, art, technology, music, physical education and home economics, are taught through the medium of English in the host school. The availability of teachers with proficiency in Irish and lack of funding were cited as factors which had to be considered when deciding which language would be used as medium of instruction for various subjects. The other unit has not been in existence long enough to prepare pupils for GCSE or A-level examinations.

The breadth of the curriculum isn't the only factor influencing pupils' use of Irish. Post-primary leaders discussed challenges associated with use of the target language among pupils at post-primary level. While pupils attain fluency in the L2 during the primary school years, post-primary pupils face added challenges including,

- a. The language of the post-primary school curriculum: A high degree of language proficiency is required for deep, meaningful engagement with the curriculum;
- b. Teenagers need complex social language. The thoughts they are trying to discuss become broader and deeper as their interest in life issues develops and expands.

One stand-alone post-primary school expressed a strong view that a total immersion experience was required to help pupils gain mastery of the language required at post-

primary level. However, unit leaders took a different view based on the conditions that obtained in the units where some subjects were taught through the medium of English because of a lack of subject teachers with proficiency in Irish.

### 5.7.2 The school's Irish language policy

Principals/directors were asked about the school's Irish language policy. For example, the primary schools were asked if there was a policy of early total immersion education in place in the school and Table 5.16 shows that about two thirds of primary schools in ROI and in NI implement a policy of early total immersion.

Table 5.16: Is there a policy of early total immersion education in the school?

	Yes	No
<b>Primary ROI</b>	68.6	31.4
<b>Primary NI</b>	65.0	35.0

The post-primary schools were asked if there was a policy of total immersion education in effect in the school and Table 5.17 shows that all post-primary schools in ROI, both stand-alone schools and units, implement a policy of total immersion education. The same does not apply to the post-primary schools in NI, however. Only the stand-alone school implements a policy of total immersion. The other two schools, which are units, do not implement a total immersion education policy. It is worth reporting that these are relatively new units and do not yet have the resources to offer every subject through the medium of Irish.

Table 5.17: Is there a policy of total immersion education in the school?

	Yes	No
<b>Post-Primary ROI</b>	100.0	0.0
<b>Post-Primary NI</b>	33.3	66.7

Among the challenges associated with implementing a total immersion education policy, post-primary school principals/unit directors in ROI mentioned:

- encouraging pupils to speak Irish;
- supervising the behaviour of the pupils;
- finding teachers with good Irish;
- finding ancillary staff with good Irish;
- the parents' lack of Irish;
- the lack of textbooks;
- finding guest speakers with good Irish; and

- notices for various competitions available in English only.

The primary schools were asked about the stage at which they commence teaching English. It must be remembered when looking at the responses to this question that the different classes have different labels in the two jurisdictions. Children in ROI begin school in Junior Infants but this is called Class 1 in NI. Table 5.18 shows that English reading is introduced from the beginning of schooling in 10% of primary schools in ROI and NI. Apart from this class group it is clear that English reading is introduced at an earlier stage in ROI. At the start of senior infants 50.6% of pupils in all-Irish primary schools in ROI have started English reading. 68.4% of NI primary schools wait until class 3 to commence teaching English and indeed another 21.1% do not commence until class 4.

Table 5.18: When does the teaching of English commence?

Primary ROI	%	Primary NI	%
From start of infants	10.1	Class 1	10.5
At some stage in junior infant class	33.3		
At the start of senior infants	7.2	Class 2	0.0
Sometime during senior infants	47.8		
At the start of or during 1 <sup>st</sup> Class	1.4	Class 3	68.4
		Class 4	21.1

## 5.8 Breadth and depth of pupils' total experience with regard to functioning through Irish in school

Many factors influence the deepening of the pupils' total experience. As well as policies such as the school's Irish language policy and the immersion education model in place, we investigated the language in which learning support and extra-curricular activities are provided.

### 5.8.1 Learning support

Schools were asked about the provision made for learning support. We begin with an account of staffing levels for learning support. Table 5.19 shows the average number of support/resource teachers in the different schools. In the case of NI primary schools it should be noted that 60% of learning support/resource teachers also have class duties. Often, in the case of a unit, the learning support teacher does not have Irish.

Table 5.19: Number of resource/support teachers

Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post-Primary ROI
2.8	1.3	3.0

The primary schools were asked about the areas in which additional learning support is provided. Nearly every school provides learning support for English and Mathematics. It is

significant that only 47.1% of ROI primary schools provide learning support for Irish. In the case of one primary unit in NI the learning support for Mathematics is provided through English. But, as mentioned above, the support teachers available to the units do not always have Irish. Stand-alone primary schools in NI and one unit in NI indicated that they have engaged learning support teachers a couple of days per week, sometimes funded by the school.

Table 5.20: Areas in which learning support is provided

	Primary ROI	Primary NI
<b>Irish Literacy</b>	47.1%	94.7%
<b>English Literacy</b>	97.1%	89.5%
<b>Mathematics</b>	97.1%	84.2% (78.9 + 5.3)

The primary schools were asked about the assessment instruments/tests available to them. Table 5.21 shows that ROI primary schools are, on the whole, much more satisfied than the schools in NI. 90% of NI principals/directors disagreed with the statement compared to 28.4% of ROI principals.

Table 5.21: The number of assessment instruments/tests for Irish and for teaching through Irish is satisfactory

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
<b>Primary ROI</b>	7.5	50.7	13.4	22.4	6.0
<b>Primary NI</b>	0.0	10.0	0.0	35.0	55.0

Table 5.22 shows that ROI primary school principals were more dissatisfied with the provision for diagnostic tests, with two thirds (66.1%) of them disagreeing with the statement.

Table 5.22: The number of diagnostic tests for Irish and for teaching through Irish is satisfactory

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
<b>Primary ROI</b>	0.0	14.7	19.1	48.5	17.6

Primary school principals/unit directors in NI indicated that they use some assessment tools for literacy including Drumcondra tests, PIN, Fuaimeanna Focail Ardmhínicíochta, NILA/NCAS, COMET, Marie Clay, ÁML, PML, CBA, NINA, Fónaic na Gaeilge, and MIST (but this is not available in Irish). It was mentioned that not all Drumcondra tests are standardised for NI yet. Primary school principals/unit directors in NI reported that they use a wide range of numeracy assessment tools, including Drumcondra tests, PIM, PIE, NRIT, NFER, NINA and Ready, Set, Go. One principal mentioned that the school translated NFER to Irish with the permission of the publisher.

The NI primary school principals/directors were asked about the language used in the formal assessments made by external services and Table 5.23 shows that 70% of them were in English only and 20% were mostly in English. The lack of Irish among people providing external services is a cause of concern for parents, as one parent in NI indicates: 'I would like to see educational psychologists speak Irish. I had to take a child out of Irish school in P3 as extra help/support wasn't funded enough and education psychologists didn't understand the language'.

Table 5.23: What language is used in the formal assessments administered by external services?

	Primary NI
Equal mixture of Irish and English	10
Mostly English	20
English only	70

### 5.8.2 Critical junctures

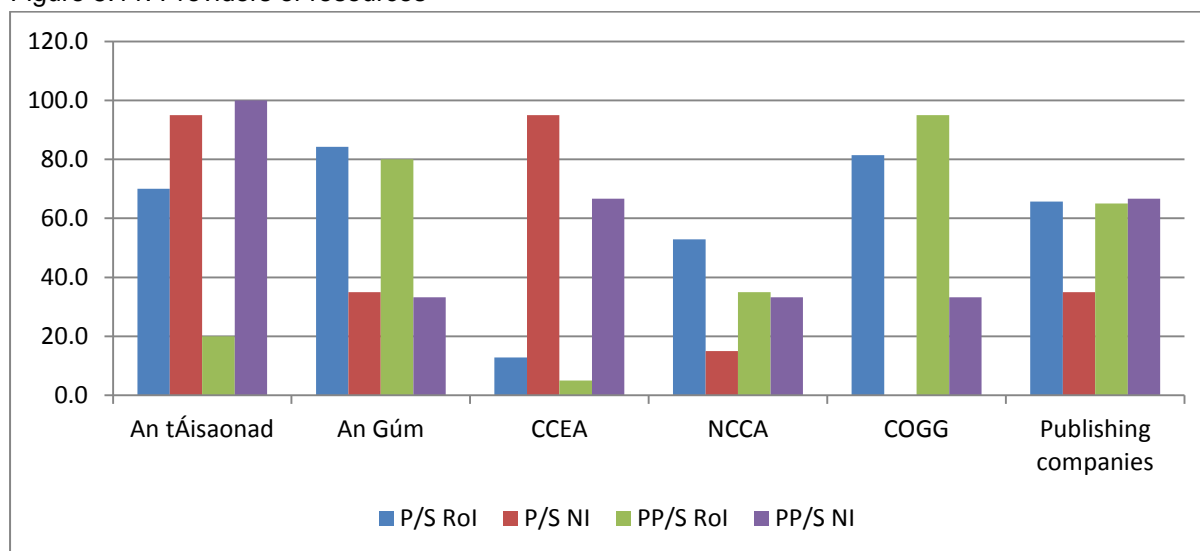
The leaders acknowledged that there were critical junctures at which changes occurred in the attitude of pupils towards Irish or changes in the patterns of use of Irish among pupils. One of these junctures which was most often mentioned was Transition Year. Education is provided through Irish up to Transition Year in some units and teaching is through the medium of English subsequently. In other units host school pupils use the Transition Year to attend classes in the unit and improve their Irish. Primary schools praised the help they received from Transition Year pupils who spent time as voluntary assistants in the Gaelscoileanna. The system of awarding extra points for answering through the medium of Irish in the Leaving Certificate Examination in ROI helped to motivate Transition Year pupils with some pupils transferring to the Irish-medium unit after Transition Year. Among the Leaving Certificate subjects mentioned as being taught through the medium of English in post-primary schools and units in ROI were Spanish, chemistry, physics, accounting and home economics. One school mentioned that pupils go to another English-medium school for certain subjects.

### 5.8.3 Educational resources

Questions were asked relating to the provision of resources for schools including, the number of them, the providers, the requirements of schools etc. With reference to the providers of resources, Figure 5.11 shows that NI schools get a large percentage of their resources from An tÁisaonad, from CCEA and from publishing companies. Nearly every primary school in NI stated that they use an exchange scheme managed by An tÁisaonad and one primary school in NI reported that they use the 'Séideán Sí' learning and teaching

package provided by An Gúm in ROI. In the case of ROI schools they get a large percentage of resources from An Gúm, from COGG and from publishing companies. It is interesting to note that ROI primary schools purchase resources from An tÁisaonad in NI but NI schools receive fewer facilities from An Gúm and CNCM in ROI.

Figure 5.11: Providers of resources



The schools were asked if they were satisfied with the number of Irish-language resources available for all-Irish schools across the curriculum. Table 5.24 shows that all the schools are dissatisfied with the provision of resources with around 60% of ROI schools dissatisfied but 85% of NI primary schools dissatisfied and every post-primary school in NI dissatisfied.

Table 5.24: The number of Irish-language resources available across curriculum is satisfactory

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
<b>Primary ROI</b>	1.4	32.9	4.3	55.7	5.7
<b>Primary NI</b>	0.0	20.0	5.0	55.0	5.0
<b>Post-Primary ROI</b>	0.0	5.0	10.0	80.0	5.0
<b>Post-Primary NI</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3

Primary school principals/directors were asked to identify the three curriculum areas most in need of additional teaching resources. Science, Geography and History were the subject areas most commonly identified in ROI. The NI principals/directors identified Language and Literacy (Irish), Mathematics and Numeracy and The World Around Us.

ROI post-primary schools were asked questions about textbook use in Irish and in English. Table 5.25 shows that few schools had a policy to use the Irish-language version of



a textbook where available. Maybe it is not surprising, then, that English-language versions of textbooks were used in 60% of post-primary schools even though an Irish-language version was available. Post-primary school principals/unit directors in ROI mentioned that teachers use the English-language version of a textbook available in Irish as the Irish-language version was not satisfactory. The subjects in question were Business Studies, Woodwork, Construction Studies, History (for Junior Certificate), CSPE and SPHE. Post-primary school principals/unit directors in ROI reported that teachers in their schools use resources in English for many subjects, including Science, Biology, Business Studies, Economics, History and Geography. They use English-language charts and posters because Irish-language versions are not available or because the Irish-language resources are not of the same standard as the English-language ones. As one principal wrote, “No information can be hidden from pupils because of Irish”. Despite this, the principals reported that resources in English are not widely used across the curriculum and when teachers create resources 41.2% share them with other schools. A couple of principals in ROI reported that the Vocational Educational Committee had a system of bringing teachers together regularly to share material with each other and one school mentioned that An Foras Pátrúnachta organises inter-school meetings for a similar purpose.

It appears that the post-primary schools in NI were more loyal to textbooks in Irish and that all of them had a policy to use them where available. In one school the English-language versions of textbooks are used though Irish-language versions are available. Two schools use resources in English across the curriculum and one school shares the resources they create with other schools.

Table 5.25: Use of resources

	<b>Post-Primary ROI</b>	<b>Post-Primary NI</b>
Is it the policy of the school to use the Irish-language version of a textbook where available?	5.0%	100.0%
Is there an English-language version of a textbook which is available in Irish in use in the school?	60.0%	33.3%
Do teachers use resources in English across the curriculum?	10.0%	66.7%
When teachers create resources do they have the opportunity to share them with other all-Irish schools?	41.2%	33.3%

The biggest deficiency is in online Irish language resources, according to unit leaders and stand-alone school leaders. A big issue is the lack of resources at second level in particular. According to second level unit leaders, textbooks through Irish are scarce:

... there's only very few (textbooks) available through Irish. Everybody's using the internet. Really it's extremely difficult to find things in Irish. In my opinion, it's not fair to us as staff.

This unit leader identifies two challenges related to resources based on his own experience: a) Not enough Irish-language resources are funded for post-primary schools and b) there is an internal tension in the school regarding the distribution of resources on the two sides of the school.

Leaders raised the issue of inequality and additional pressure on teachers in all-Irish schools:

Regarding notes and class resources and preparation in Irish, the same pressure does not fall on their colleagues in English-medium schools. (Post-primary school principal)

... there are special programmes for the interactive whiteboard... We don't have those resources yet in Irish so there is an awful delay in resources ... it isn't fair for us to be competing with schools which are able to use things which are very new out there and we're still waiting on them. (Primary school principal)

It is not sufficient for resources to be available in Irish - they must be written at an appropriate level for the pupils:

... in intelligible and legible language and so that the pupils would be able to find the information and that the technical language is not coming between them and the information.

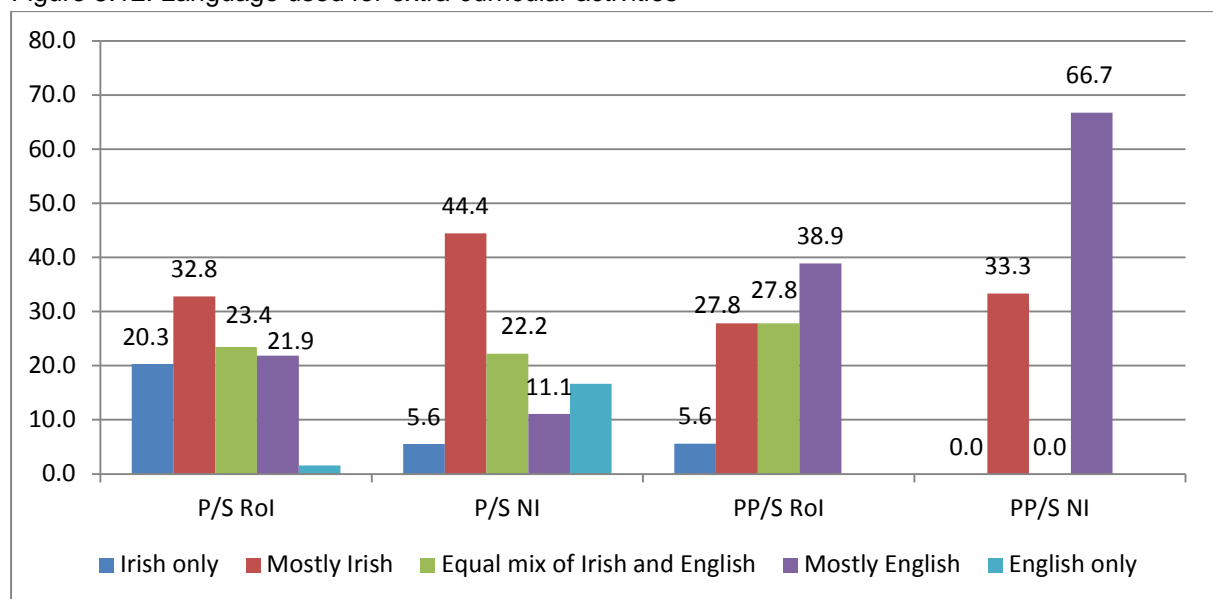
The work done by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) was praised but unease was expressed about the future of COGG because of cutbacks.

#### **5.8.4 Extra-curricular activities for pupils**

In the case of the schools which provide extra-curricular activities they were asked about the language in which these activities are provided. In the case of the primary schools we can see that about 50% of them provide the activities in Irish only or mostly in Irish. In the case of the post-primary schools, however, a higher proportion of the activities are mostly in English - 38.9% in the case of post-primary schools in ROI and 66% (i.e. two units) in NI. All the schools reported that plenty of extra-curricular activities are provided for the pupils, focussing on Gaelic culture, including traditional music, sport, drama, dance, singing, debates, writing, quizzes, youth clubs, after-school clubs, science clubs and homework clubs, as well as activities in other languages. Two stand-alone primary schools in NI indicated that an Irish-speaking assistant is present where a tutor with English only is in

charge of the activities. A primary unit in NI mentioned that they have a fortnight-long summer camp through the medium of Irish. It was clear from the analysis of the pupils' questionnaire discussed below that these activities greatly influence the pupils in terms of use of Irish and their basic interpersonal communication skills are fostered (BICS Cummins 1980). One principal of a post-primary unit in ROI indicated in an interview that the pupils from both sides of the school are together on school teams and that the training is bilingual as much as possible, which means that the pupils in the English-medium side of the school have contact with Irish outside the classroom. Similarly O'Hanlon et al. (2010) reported that it is common to bring pupils in the all-Gàidhlig stream and the all-English stream together for extra-curricular activities in some schools in Scotland and that all-English pupils have contact with Gàidhlig as a result. One post-primary unit in NI mentioned that certain activities (Young Enterprise, Study Skills and Love for Life) occur with the host school through the medium of English, due to lack of money.

Figure 5.12: Language used for extra-curricular activities



## 5.9 Willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom and outside the school

### 5.9.1 Use of Irish

There was considerable variety in the mean scores for the scale 'use of Irish' among the different school types. Stand-alone primary schools in NI and stand-alone primary schools in ROI had a fairly high score. There was a significant difference between the mean scores for the stand-alone primary schools in NI and every other school type except the primary schools in ROI. There was a significant difference between the mean scores for the stand-alone primary schools in ROI and the post-primary schools, stand-alone and units, in ROI

and in NI. The data indicate that the primary school pupils in stand-alone schools in this research are the strongest group as regards the use of Irish in comparison to the post-primary school pupils and the primary school pupils in units in NI.

### 5.9.2 Comparison between units and stand-alone schools

Five independent t-tests were conducted to compare units and stand-alone schools and the results are shown in Table 5.26. On examining the mean scores in Table 5.26 we see that there is little difference between them except for the scale 'desire to learn Irish'. The t-tests indicate that there was a significant difference between the units and the stand-alone schools in this respect, with a standard deviation of almost two fifths.

Table 5.26: Comparison between the units and all stand-alone schools

Scale/Group (primary & post-primary together)		Mean	DC	Standard error (SE)	t	p
<b>Desire to learn Irish</b>	Unit	23.671	4.908	0.574	2.369	.018
	Stand-alone school	22.102	5.106	0.297		
<b>Attitude to learning Irish</b>	Unit	28.681	5.468	0.658	.016	.987
	Stand-alone school	28.669	5.613	0.330		
<b>Encouragement from parents to learn Irish</b>	Unit	18.043	4.532	0.546	.671	.503
	Stand-alone school	17.644	4.434	0.259		
<b>Self-concept of ability in Irish</b>	Unit	21.732	4.025	0.478	.110	.913
	Stand-alone school	21.671	4.273	0.249		
<b>Use of Irish</b>	Unit	39.530	10.017	1.233	-.281	.779
	Stand-alone school	39.881	8.926	0.529		

### 5.9.3 Comparison between post-primary units and stand-alone schools

Five independent t-tests were also carried out to compare the post-primary units and stand-alone schools and Table 5.27 shows that there were no significant differences.

Table 5.27: Comparison between post-primary units and stand-alone schools

Scale/Group		Mean	DC	Standard error (SE)	t	p
Desire to learn Irish	Unit	22.449	5.021	0.717	.797	.426
	Stand-alone school	21.771	5.100	0.446		
Attitude to learning Irish	Unit	26.867	5.496	0.819	-1.133	.235
	Stand-alone school	28.000	5.473	0.488		
Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Unit	16.822	4.619	0.688	.361	.719
	Stand-alone school	16.527	4.758	0.419		
Self-concept of ability in Irish	Unit	20.809	4.014	0.586	-1.061	.290
	Stand-alone school	21.603	4.536	0.396		
Use of Irish	Unit	35.651	9.131	1.392	-1.158	.248
	Stand-alone school	37.400	8.332	0.745		

#### 5.9.4 Distribution of pupils by language spoken in the home and school type

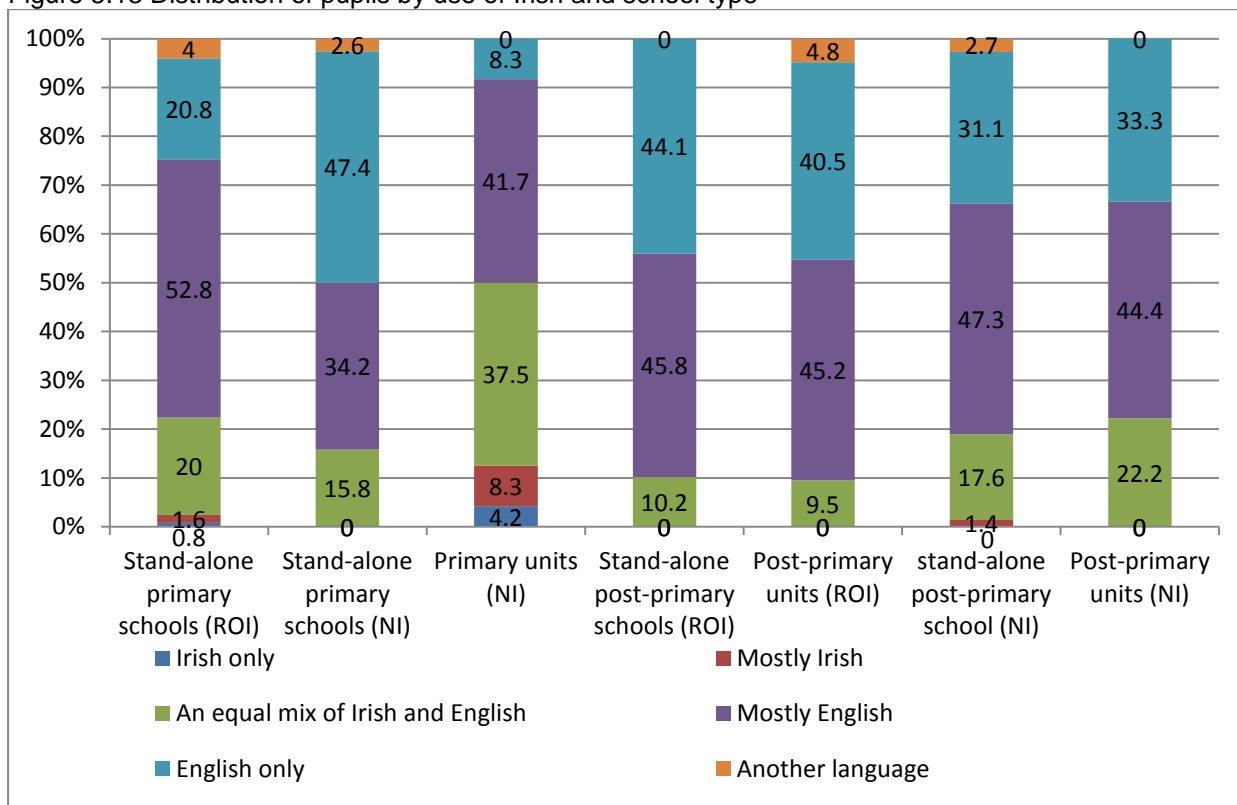
Table 5.28 and Figure 5.13 show the distribution of pupils by use of Irish in the seven school types. There is considerable variety but we see that primary school pupils in ROI and in the primary units in NI speak more Irish at home than any other group. One would have expected that these results might be related to results reported earlier. These relationships are investigated in the next section.

Table 5.28: Distribution of pupils by use of Irish and school type

School type/Region	Irish only	Mostly Irish	Equal mix of Irish and English	Mostly English	English only	Other language
Stand-alone primary schools (ROI)	0.8	1.6	20.0	52.8	20.8	4.0
Stand-alone primary schools	0.0	0.0	15.8	34.2	47.4	2.6

(NI)							
Primary units (NI)	4.2	8.3	37.5	41.7	8.3	0.0	
Stand-alone post-primary schools (ROI)	0.0	0.0	10.2	45.8	44.1	0.0	
Post-primary units (ROI)	0.0	0.0	9.5	45.2	40.5	4.8	
Stand-alone post-primary school (NI)	0.0	1.4	17.6	47.3	31.1	2.7	
Post-primary units (NI)	0.0	0.0	22.2	44.4	33.3	0.0	

Figure 5.13 Distribution of pupils by use of Irish and school type



### 5.9.5 Mean scores and standard deviations by language spoken at home

Table 5.29 shows the mean scores for the different scales and the standard deviations by language spoken at home. 'Irish only', 'Mostly Irish' and 'Other language' were combined under 'Other' for this comparison. There is a significant difference for each of the scales and for 'use of Irish' in particular.

Group by group Bonferroni post-hoc comparison tests showed that the mean score of pupils who spoke 'English only' at home was lower than that of the pupils in the categories 'Mostly English' and 'Equal mix of Irish and English'. In the same way encouragement by parents was significantly lower for the 'English only at home' group in comparison to the 'Mostly English' and 'Equal mix of Irish and English' categories. The same pattern emerged for 'Self-concept of ability in Irish' and 'Use of Irish'. This result is consistent with the

research showing the influence of parents on their children's motivation to learn a language (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005).

Table 5.29: Mean scores and standard deviations by language spoken at home

Category		Desire to learn Irish	Attitude to learning Irish	Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Self-concept of ability in Irish	Use of Irish
English only	Mean	20.51	27.23	16.13	20.54	35.55
	DC	4.87	5.45	4.25	4.45	8.26
Mostly English	Mean	23.09	29.09	18.08	22.15	40.13
	DC	4.68	5.21	4.31	3.83	8.66
Equal mix of Irish and English	Mean	23.86	29.97	18.97	22.31	45.83
	DC	5.26	5.53	4.43	4.53	7.54
Other	Mean	22.71	28.44	18.88	22.56	42.59
	DC	6.94	8.54	4.54	3.97	11.23
Total	Mean	22.41	28.66	17.69	21.70	39.81
	DC	5.11	5.59	4.44	4.22	9.15

### 5.9.6 Comparison between boys and girls for the five scales

We now look at the differences between boys and girls for the five scales. Five independent t-tests were used to compare boys and girls as shown in Table 5.30. The mean scores of the girls were significantly higher for 'Desire to learn Irish' and 'Attitude to learning Irish'. There were no significant differences for the other scales.

Table 5.30: Comparison between boys and girls for the five scales

Scale/Group (primary & post-primary together)		Mean	DC	Standard error (SE)	t	p
Desire to learn Irish	Boy	21.580	5.193	0.399	-2.918	.004
	Girl	23.121	4.921	0.349		
Attitude to learning Irish	Boy	27.823	5.913	0.462	-2.665	.008
	Girl	29.385	5.187	0.371		
Encouragement from parents to learn Irish	Boy	17.245	4.612	0.361	-1.846	.066
	Girl	18.111	4.283	0.304		
Self-concept of ability in Irish	Boy	21.455	4.239	0.328	-0.946	.345
	Girl	21.874	4.207	0.298		
Use of Irish	Boy	38.805	9.130	0.724	-1.893	.059
	Girl	40.651	9.063	0.654		

### 5.9.7 The school playground

The school playground has particular importance for the implementation of all-Irish schools' Irish-language policies. Here the pupils get the opportunity to practise the Irish they are learning in a natural communicative context. The principals were asked in the questionnaire if it was school policy that pupils should speak Irish in the playground and if the pupils were incentivised to do so. Table 5.31 shows that there was a policy in nearly every school that pupils would speak Irish in the playground. Only one unit in NI does not have this as a policy. There are incentives in place in each school in NI to encourage pupils to speak Irish in the playground. Pupils are incentivised to speak Irish in the school playground in the vast majority (94.4%) of the all-Irish primary schools in ROI and in three quarters of the post-primary schools.

Table 5.31: Irish in the school playground

	Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post-Primary ROI	Post-Primary NI
<b>% policy of speaking Irish in the playground</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	66.7
<b>% policies in place to encourage pupils to speak Irish in the playground</b>	94.4	75.0	100.0	100.0

Post-primary school principals/unit directors in ROI and in NI reported that pupils are incentivised to speak Irish with awards and prizes (e.g. Irish-speaker of the Week/Month, Gaeltacht scholarship), with a wide provision of extra-curricular activities and organising Scléip (talent competition) and An Brat Gaelach in the school. Some schools have action plans to promote Irish at assemblies and on school trips. Schools have written policies to inform pupils and parents of the way the school deals with pupils who speak English in the school environment and sometimes pupils are penalised for breaking the school's language rules. It is a challenge for the schools to monitor the pupils' language behaviour and implement the school's policy fairly. In certain schools there is an Irish-language captain, or Irish-language leaders or an Irish-language committee nominated so that the pupils themselves are responsible for implementing the school's policy on the use of Irish.

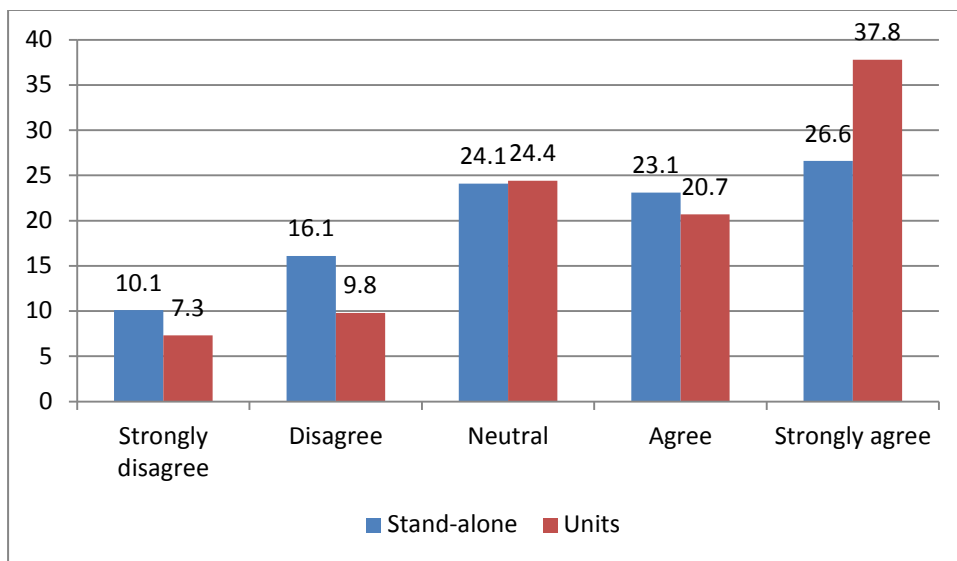
One primary school principal in the focus group thought it was easier to encourage the use of Irish when the school was small: "The teachers have more contact with the children when the school is small. When the school grows, they have more contact with their own colleagues as there are many more children." (Principal 1, Focus group).

When the pupils were asked about the use of Irish differences emerged regarding stand-alone schools and units. In some cases the stand-alone schools were more positive and in other cases the units were more positive.



We look first at some of the items dealing with the use of Irish. Figure 5.14 shows that the pupils in stand-alone schools disagreed more strongly with the statement that they speak more English than Irish in the playground. This difference was statistically significant.

Figure 5.14: Item 33 - I speak more English than Irish in the playground



Consistent with this, Figure 5.15 shows that pupils in stand-alone schools disagreed more strongly with the statement that they don't make much effort to speak Irish outside the class when they are at school.

Figure 5.15: Item 35 - To tell the truth, I don't make much effort to speak Irish outside the class when I'm at school

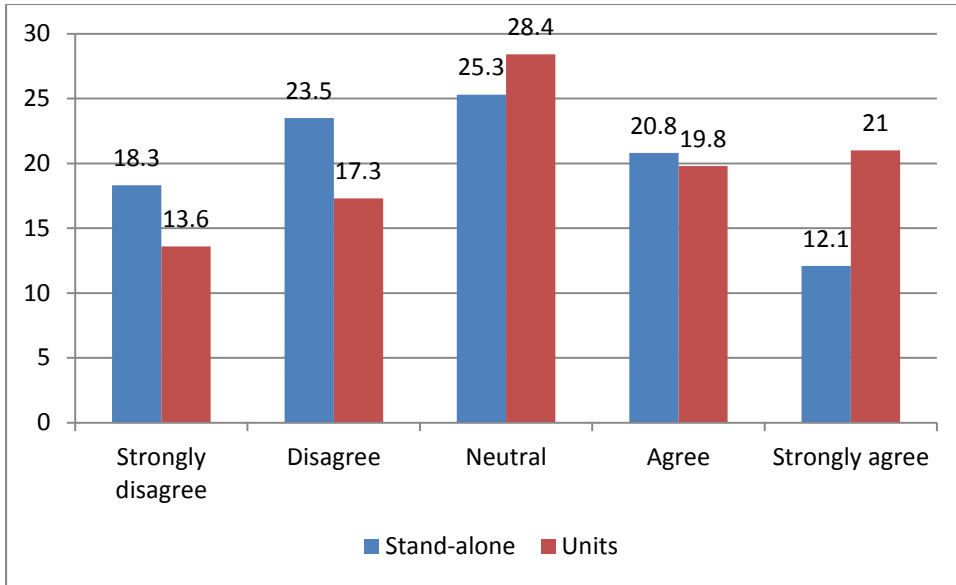


Figure 5.16 shows that pupils in stand-alone schools agree more strongly with the statement that the school's teachers encourage them to speak Irish always when they are at school. This difference was statistically significant.

Figure 5.16: Item 22 - The teachers encourage me to speak Irish when I'm at school

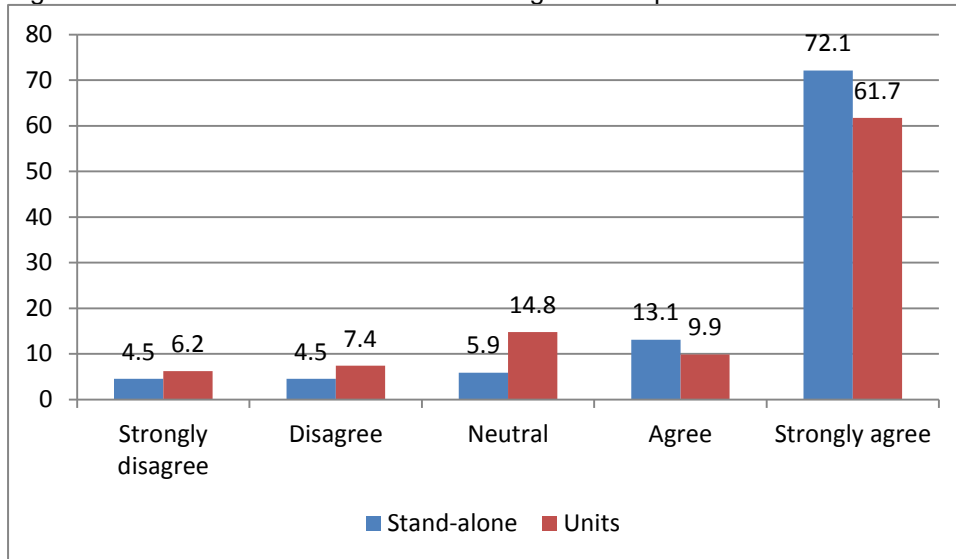
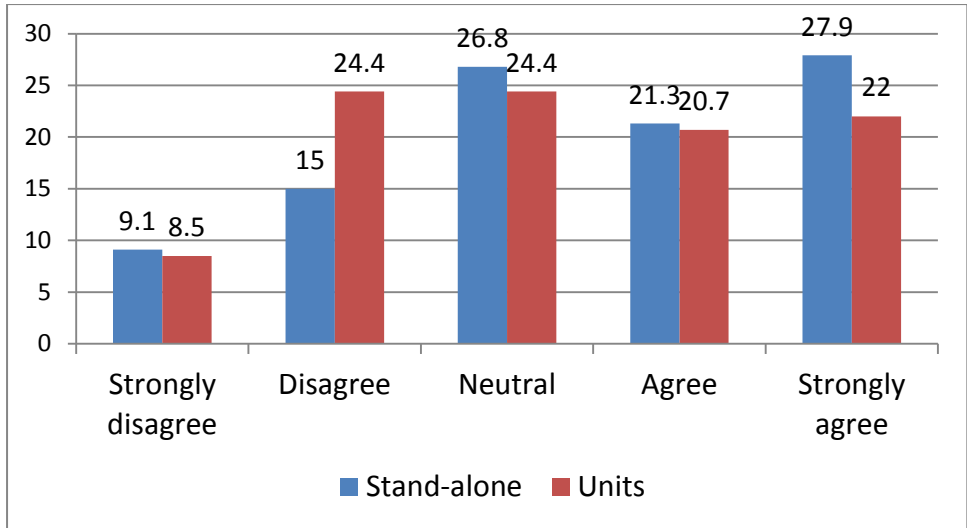


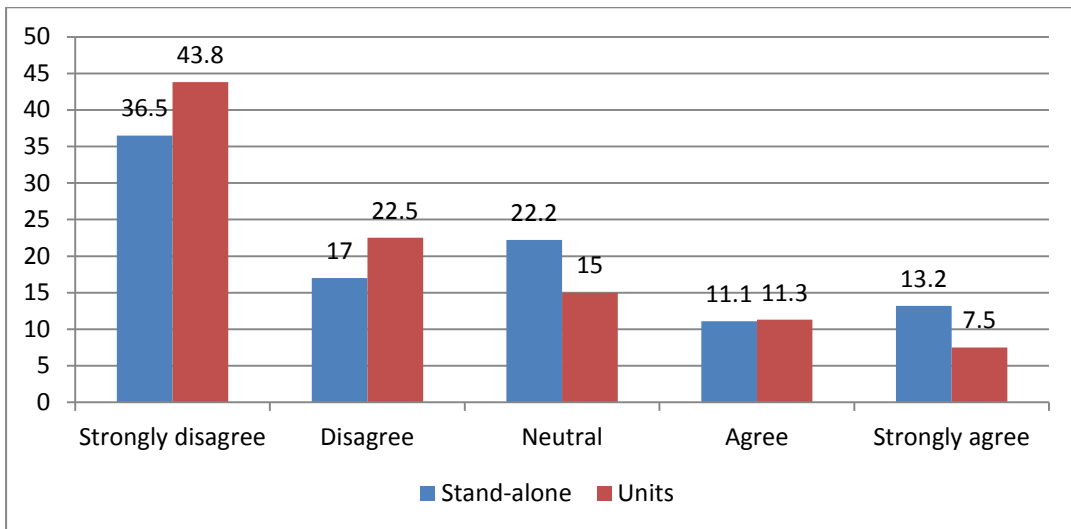
Figure 5.17 shows that pupils in stand-alone schools agree more strongly with the statement that it is important for them to speak Irish always when talking to their friends at school.

Figure 5.17: Item 32 - It's important for me to speak Irish always when talking to my friends at school



We see in Figure 5.18 that most of the pupils in the two school types disagreed with the statement that they hate it when parents speak or try to speak Irish to them at home. The differences here were not statistically significant.

Figure 5.18: Item 37 - I hate it when my parent(s) speak or try to speak Irish to me at home



The pupils were asked about interesting books to read in Irish. 40.2% of pupils in stand-alone schools and 34.6% of pupils in units agreed that there were no interesting books available. The differences here were not statistically significant. Having said that, it shows that many Irish-medium school pupils believe that interesting reading material is not

available to them. This will impact on the pupils' contact with Irish and on the development of their literacy skills in Irish, an issue which needs to be addressed.

Figure 5.19: Item 38 - There are no books available in Irish which are interesting to read

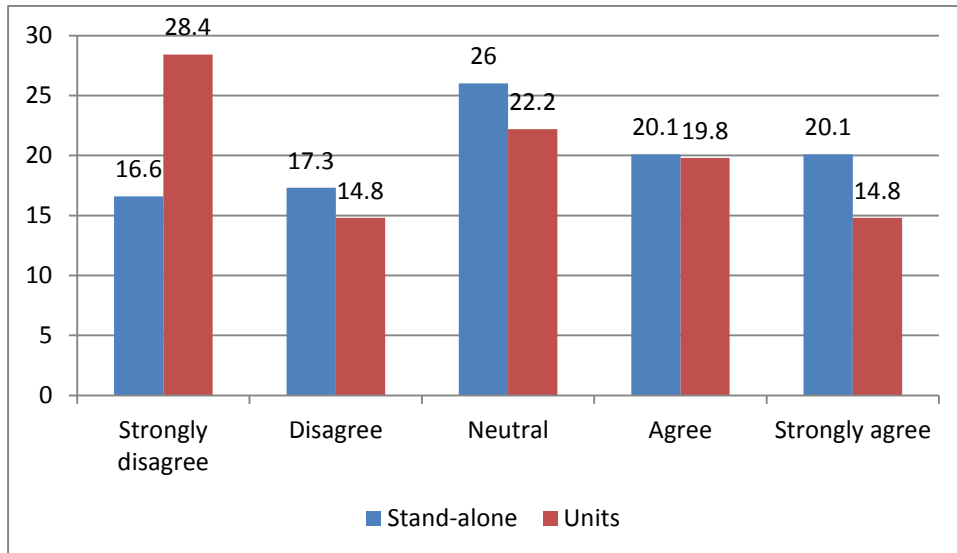
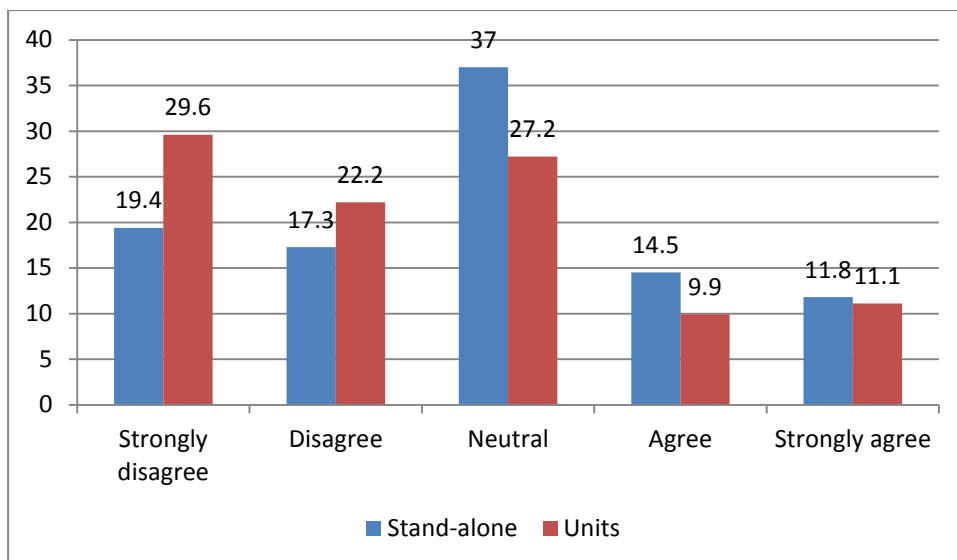


Figure 5.20 shows that responses from pupils regarding the importance of English and of Irish varied. More of the pupils from the units disagreed that learning English was more important but the difference was not statistically significant.

Figure 5.20: Item 31- Learning Irish is important but learning English is more important



## 5.10 Regression analysis of pupil questionnaire by parents', pupils' and school attributes

As mentioned above, a questionnaire based on the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was administered to the pupils. There were 38 items or statements in the AMTB, divided into five scales as follows:

- Desire to learn Irish (6 items)
- Attitude to learning Irish (7 items)
- Encouragement from parents to learn Irish (5 items)
- Self-concept of ability in Irish (6 items)
- Use of Irish (13 items)

As indicated previously, the pupils' and parents' questionnaires were coded so that we could match their responses. It was noted in Table 4.8 above (shown again below) that there were 288 pupils in respect of whom we had data from their parents. The regression analysis, then, is based on those 288 pupils. The five scales were used as the outcomes and the variables below as explanatory variables. If we take the first category as an example – gender – we took 'girls' as a reference group and we calculated the difference between boys and girls on the different scales. Most of the variables are binary, apart from the parent's ability to speak Irish in which we used an interval scale. We had to combine some of the categories in binary form as the number of responses in some of the groups was too low. An example of this is the parents' attendance at an all-Irish school. We had to combine 'attendance at an all-Irish primary school', 'at an all-Irish post-primary school' or 'at both levels' together.

Table 4.8: Number of responses from parents, and the number of pupils with responses from their parents, by school category

School category/location	All parents		Pupils with data for their parents	
	N	%	N	%
ROI Post-primary unit	42	12.3	35	12.2
ROI Stand-alone post-primary schools	60	17.5	56	19.4
ROI Stand-alone primary schools	139	40.6	119	41.3
NI Stand-alone primary schools	26	7.6	23	8.0
NI Primary unit	28	8.2	18	6.3
NI Stand-alone post-primary school	36	10.5	28	9.7
NI Post-primary unit	11	3.2	9	3.1
Total	342	100.0	288	100.0

- Pupil gender (binary: girl-boy)
- Parent's educational attainment (binary: other [combined categories] - third level)
- Parent's attendance at an all-Irish school (binary: did not attend - attended primary school, post-primary school or both levels [combined categories])
- Parent's ability to speak Irish (on a six-point scale, a higher score means a greater ability)
- Language spoken by parent to the child (binary: English only - Some Irish to mostly Irish [combined categories])
- Language spoken by parent growing up (binary: English only -Some Irish to mostly Irish [combined categories])

The most significant result arising from the regression analysis was that girls showed greater desire to learn Irish than boys and this was statistically significant even though the p value was not very strong ( $p= 0.5-0.6$ ). This was true for each school type, level and location.

There is a significant positive correlation between the language the parent speaks to the pupil at home and 'encouragement from parents to learn Irish' and 'use of Irish' scales. When we included the educational level in the model, however, the 'use of Irish' scale was no longer significant. It appears that the language the parent speaks to the child depends on the child's age and it seems that, as we saw in Table 8 above, more Irish is spoken with primary school children than with post-primary school children. We also found that 'encouragement from parents to learn Irish' was significantly higher for primary school children.

When a comparison was made between stand-alone schools and units including the above variables the unit pupils had a greater desire to learn Irish than the pupils of the stand-alone schools, a difference that was statistically significant. However, the size of the sample for the units must be taken into account when interpreting this result.

We did not find any significant differences on the five scales between NI and ROI pupils when we included the above background variables.

### **5.10.1 The pupils' Irish**

The leaders who attended the focus group engaged in a rich and knowledgeable discussion of the factors which influence the pupils' Irish. Different conditions which are conducive to promoting the use of Irish among pupils were identified at primary school and post-primary school levels. Certain factors that promote pupils' acquisition of Irish were proposed by ROI leaders only or NI leaders only. Here we present a summary of factors which encourage or

hinder the use of Irish and those which strengthen or hinder pupils' control of their acquisition of Irish, drawing on examples from both unit and stand-alone school leaders.

Experience of immersion education in the naíscoil.

In the early years the advantages accruing to pupils who received pre-schooling in an Irish-language environment were acknowledged. Some of the leaders mentioned the need for statutory naíscoileanna or naíscoileanna with staff with proficiency in Irish.

Irish at home

Leaders explained that most of the pupils come from an English-speaking background but the importance of the parents' support was acknowledged. Pupils coming from an Irish-speaking background are seen to have an advantage at the start of schooling as regards acquisition of the language, but the importance of parents' positive attitudes was emphasised,

I am always saying to parents..... as long as you're positive about Irish, about the language and about the children's learning that will be good and that will suffice.  
(Primary school principal)

Disadvantaged area

The principals identified additional challenges in schools in disadvantaged areas. There are limited opportunities for some pupils to develop and use language, both English and Irish, as well as other social problems in such areas.

Classroom assistants with Irish

Leaders frequently mentioned the importance of classroom assistants with Irish being available to support and foster the use of Irish in the classroom and in the playground.

Teachers' competences

Pupils speak Irish when the teachers are present, during class activities and outside the class. Teachers' competences, including both advanced ability in Irish and understanding of immersion education pedagogy, were identified as a major influence on the pupils' Irish.

School projects

Leaders also mentioned strategies, activities and creative projects which encouraged the use of Irish in the school and during extra-curricular activities.

Resources

Some of the leaders discussed the importance of appropriate resources as a factor encouraging the use and enrichment of the language.

Examination bonus points

The standard of Irish becomes very challenging at senior level and the bonus points help to encourage senior pupils to use and improve their Irish.

There are additional significant conditions which would support the use of Irish among unit pupils, and where such conditions do not obtain pupils' use of Irish is diminished.

1. The principal speaks Irish to the pupils.

2. At lunch time and break time the unit pupils are not integrated with the host school pupils but are kept together.

3. A designated space is provided for the unit pupils in the school playground.

Post-primary unit leaders mentioned the number of pupils in the unit as a challenge. There is a limit to the number of subjects which can be taught through Irish if the number of pupils is too low and in that case the pupils are integrated with host school peers in an English-medium class.

### 5.11 Encouraging pupils to speak Irish

The pupils were asked an open question about the factors which encourage them to speak Irish. Here we present a thematic analysis of the pupils' responses to this question.

There were 616 pupils in the classes that participated in the second stage of the research and 372 pupils responded to the questionnaire (60.4%). Of the 372 pupils who completed the questionnaire, 350 answered Question 39 that is 56.8% of the total population. Table 5.32 shows the number of pupils in each classification who answered Question 39.

Table 5.32: Number of pupils in the different schools who answered the question about the factors that encourage them to speak Irish

Primary units (NI only)	Stand-alone primary schools (NI & ROI)	Post-primary units (NI & ROI)	Stand-alone post-primary schools (NI & ROI)
3 primary units participated in Stage 2	9 stand-alone primary schools participated in Stage 2	5 post-primary units participated in Stage 2	3 stand-alone post-primary schools participated in Stage 2
31 of 43 pupils answered the	165 of 249 pupils answered the	51 of 132 pupils answered the	125 of 192 pupils answered the



questionnaire. <b>(72.1%)</b>	questionnaire. <b>(66.3%)</b>	questionnaire. <b>(38.65%)</b>	questionnaire. <b>(65.1%)</b>
31 of 31 answered Question 39. <b>(72.1% of the total population)</b>	164 of 165 answered Question 39. <b>(65.9% of the total population)</b>	41 of 51 answered Question 39. <b>(30.1% of the total population)</b>	113 of 125 answered Question 39. <b>(58.9% of the total population)</b>

A thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was conducted of the answers the pupils gave to the open question and the themes identified can be divided into five categories as follows:

- The Pupil Himself/Herself;
- Family and Friends;
- The School and the Education system;
- Society;
- The Language and Irish Culture.

A full list of the themes by categories is given in Table 5.33 below. Although the themes are divided into categories it must be recognised that these categories are not independent of each other and should be viewed holistically.

Table 5.33: Thematic analysis of the pupils' answers about the factors that encourage them to speak Irish

<b>The Pupil Himself/Herself</b>	<b>Family and Friends</b>	<b>The School and the Education system</b>	<b>Society</b>	<b>The Irish Language and Irish Culture</b>
Personal identity	Speaking Irish to parents, siblings and other relatives	The school ethos	The Gaeltacht and native speakers of Irish	National identity
Linguistic identity	Speaking Irish to friends outside school	The principal and other teachers in the school	Speaking to other Irish speakers in the community	Cultural identity
Being Bilingual	Helping relatives,	Friends at school	Hearing Irish outside	
		Extra-curricular		

friends and others who don't have much Irish	activities Irish-language books The education system and educational advantages	the school Pastimes The media Additional professional opportunities available for Irish speakers Youth pop-culture
--	---	--

### 5.11.1 The pupils themselves

There was a strong link between Irish and the development of the pupils' personal and linguistic identities. Some pupils felt that it was a personal achievement to be able to speak, read and write Irish.

I'm from Ireland and therefore it's better to speak Irish and it's great to hear it outside school.

It's part of my personality and part of my identity.

Because I like speaking Irish and I'm an Irish person.

The pupils understood the advantages associated with bilingualism and that it would be easier for them to learn other languages in future.

I think as well that it's nice to have two languages.

It's good to know a lot of different languages, and Irish is a beautiful language.

I can speak two languages fluently.

If you can speak Irish it will be easier to learn another language.

I can pick up another language quickly.

Some pupils indicated that it was important for them to be able to speak their native language while listening to other languages when they went on holidays abroad.

It's a good thing to have your own language when you go abroad or on holidays.

I noticed when we went on holidays lots of people had English there but they also have their native language and it would be nice to show them that we also have our own language.

I love speaking Irish on my holidays in France or someplace like that as they can't understand me, because my sister, my brother and my dad can speak it too.

Similar to pupils in Scotland, the pupils liked using Irish as a secret code when they were among English speakers.

To speak secretly in front of people who speak English.

I like that I and my friends are able to speak in Irish and nobody else knows what we're saying.

#### 5.11.1.1 Family and Friends

It was clear that the pupil's background had a significant influence on their willingness to use Irish inside and outside the school. Some pupils indicated that parents, siblings and other relatives encouraged and motivated them to speak Irish. Sometimes pupils use Irish to bond

with a parent or sibling. Pupils derived satisfaction from helping relatives, friends and others with little Irish. They liked speaking Irish with friends at school and outside school.

My parents and school encourage me to speak in Irish.

I am encouraged to speak Irish when I am out with my friends, so people will be able to hear us speaking.

In my opinion Irish is a special language and I can have a conversation in Irish with my family and friends.

All my cousins speak Irish so they encourage me to speak Irish. My little brother goes to an Irish-medium primary school and I love helping him to speak Irish.

Most of my family speak Irish and we see it as an escape when I and my brother are speaking personally.

I love speaking Irish with my family.

### **5.11.1.2 The School and the Education System**

It emerged in the statements from the pupils that the approach of all the teachers, the school ethos and the Irish-medium education continuum feature prominently among the factors influencing the use of Irish as an immersion language among the pupils. These factors have a significant influence on the willingness of pupils to use Irish on the school premises outside the classroom. For example, in some schools prizes are awarded to incentivise pupils to speak Irish and for the most part the pupils accept the school's particular linguistic identity.

I feel good after spending a whole day at school speaking Irish.

Every time I speak Irish to my friends and the teachers I am proud of the language.

My teachers but in particular my principal and vice-principal encourage me to speak Irish.

The teachers – because they encourage us to speak more Irish in the playground or the canteen or the class.

The school does lots of interesting things to encourage Irish.

As I attended an all-Irish primary school I was speaking Irish from a very young age without thinking much about it and because of that I got comfortable with Irish.

I've been doing Irish since I was young, I went to a Gaelscoil and I enjoyed it.

We are Gaelcholáiste people, so we must do our best to speak Irish every day.

But it is participation in extra-curricular activities which most entices pupils to speak Irish, including school tours, after-school clubs, debates, music classes, Irish-language competitions, swimming, drama, Irish dancing, games, singing, cooking, art, science clubs, and school choirs. Extra-curricular activities greatly add to the breadth and depth of the pupils' total experience of functioning through Irish in school life.

When we do fun things at school for example going on a trip.

After-school activities like debating.

I love writing songs in Irish – I can enter them in different competitions and I meet people with the same interest.

When my class and I go to dancing and when I hear the music I want to speak Irish.

When I play Gaelic football.

Art, sport, music classes, baking.

The Science Club.

I love the Young Scientists.

I like the music classes and sport because with the music classes myself and a group of girls got to Scór.

At the Irish-language clubs and the after-school clubs.

Some pupils recognise the educational advantages which an all-Irish education gives them, including extra points in state examinations and a wider range of third level courses being available to them.

I'm encouraged to speak Irish because you're able to get more qualifications with Irish.

I prefer to go to an all-Irish school also because the points for the Leaving Cert work out better if you do it through Irish.

That gives me the encouragement to speak Irish as well with the extra marks available for the Junior Certificate and for the Leaving Cert if you do a subject through Irish.

### **5.11.1.3 Society**

Irish society plays a considerable role in the development of Irish and a significant percentage of the pupils indicated that native speakers and other speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht and in the local community encouraged them to improve their ability in Irish.

Also if an old man is speaking to me in Irish!

The things that encourage me to speak Irish are looking at people speaking naturally.

That entrances me because it sounds beautiful.

I like speaking it when I go to the Gaeltacht.

When I'm in counties like Donegal or Galway and people in the shop speak to me in Irish or when I'm in the Gaeltacht.

And when I'm on the Aran Islands.

I'd like to speak Irish because I can speak the language of Ireland and I can speak to a native speaker.

Hearing native speakers.

When I'm in Kerry in the shop they speak Irish to me.

When I'm in a shop or anywhere the employee speaks Irish that encourages me.

A small number of pupils expressed interest in Irish language programmes on television and radio. Some pupils recognise the professional opportunities which Irish affords them.

What encourages me to speak Irish is posters, television programmes, people on radio etc... I think it's very interesting to be able to understand these things.

When I'm listening to the radio and the Irish-language station comes on I feel proud when I understand the words. When I see Irish-language ads on the television it encourages me to speak Irish.

I recommend television programmes like 'Glee' in Irish.

I hate it when I'm looking at TG4 on the television and the English comes up at the bottom of the television. I love watching the television programme An Jig Gig to learn new Irish.

I would like to be able to speak Irish because in the future I would like to get a good job.

I know that there's a lot of jobs in the news and in the media if you have Irish.

It opens lots of other opportunities to me as maybe I can work in RTE, in the Gaeltacht or be an Irish teacher.

Many of the pupils indicated that they feel motivated to speak Irish when engaging in pastimes outside of school such as youth clubs, Irish-language societies, cultural activities/festivals, scouts, swimming clubs, drama, Irish dancing, music classes, and Gaelic games. These results show that the school and the wider society are not mutually exclusive but act in tandem to offer pupils a range of different contexts in which they can use and improve their language skills.

I attend an all-Irish society so I'm learning new Irish from people around the place.  
I attend an all-Irish youth club. The way that encourages me to speak Irish is that there is no (*Authority Figure*) there like a teacher telling you to speak Irish and because of that Irish comes naturally and you're happy to speak the language. Also, I do voluntary work in a youth club and I encourage children to speak Irish.  
Social activities with friends. Music competitions.  
I love it when different hobbies are available through Irish, but that's not seen often.  
When I'm at scouts, when I'm at swimming.  
I love speaking Irish as it's a very nice language as I do music, Irish dancing and everything I love it!  
I love speaking Irish when I play my accordion.  
At the GAA club playing hurling and football.  
Summer scheme, Irish clubs, Irish-language swimming club.  
I like speaking Irish at different clubs that are on outside school.

It is clear from these statements that there is a strong link between pupils' willingness to use Irish outside the school and the opportunities provided by society to them to speak the language, including contact with other Irish speakers, the broadcasting media and the availability of various pastimes through the medium of Irish.

#### **5.11.1.4 The Irish Language and Irish Culture**

Themes of national identity and cultural identity featured prominently among responses given by the pupils. They showed interest in the language itself, in the history of the language and the link between the language and the history of Ireland. They felt that they had a role as Irish speakers in the preservation of the language and these factors greatly influence the willingness of the pupils to speak Irish in school and outside the school.

The history of the country encourages me to speak Irish.  
Irish is a symbol in the country.  
It encourages me because I am an Irish person and we should speak Irish but I like to speak Irish sometimes too.  
I believe that Irish is part of my cultural identity ... I think that I will have to learn my native language.  
The reason I'm interested in speaking Irish is that I believe it's a great part of my culture and it's up to us to speak it to keep the language alive.  
The Gaelic culture that I, my friends and my family have encourages me to speak Irish.  
I think it's important to keep Irish alive.

In my opinion, this country's history is very interesting indeed, especially because of Irish.

Because it's a language that's dying. As well as that not many people know how to speak Irish and it's nice to be able to say that I can speak it.

It's nice to be able to speak your native language and my parents speak it all the time at home.

It's our own language.

The pupils indicated that they were interested in the language itself and that they were proud of their ability in Irish.

Because I love Irish.

I love the language.

To enjoy it.

I love the language too. I think it's a great thing to be able to speak it and it's a lovely language.

There was a strong connection to between willingness to speak Irish and cultural activities such as traditional music, singing, Irish-language literature, Gaelic games and drama.

I love singing and writing in Irish.

Irish-language books.

The writers who were writing Irish.

I recommend books in Irish for teenagers.

When people speak to me in Irish or when I hear people singing in Irish on the radio I feel like speaking Irish.

When people are singing in Irish.

When I'm reading a good book in Irish.

A very small number of pupils gave negative answers, twelve in total, (3.4% of the pupils who answered Question 39, i.e. 1.9% of the total population).

Nothing!!!

I have no urge to speak Irish.

Nothing encourages me to speak Irish I don't like it.

Nothing encourages me to speak Irish anywhere in the world.

#### **5.11.1.5 Differences between stand-alone schools and units/streams**

At the primary school level it was the pupils in the stand-alone primary schools who most frequently stated that the school encouraged them to speak Irish (53.7% of the pupils who answered Question 39 in the stand-alone primary schools in comparison to 9.4% in the primary units). And it was the pupils in the stand-alone primary schools also who most frequently mentioned cultural activities as a stimulus to speak Irish (44.5% of the pupils who answered Question 39 in the stand-alone primary schools in comparison to 9.4% in the primary units). In contrast to this the pupils in the primary units were more likely to state that it was the family which encouraged them to speak Irish (50% of the pupils who answered Question 39 in the primary units in comparison to 29.3% in the stand-alone primary schools).

71.9% of the pupils in the primary units who answered Question 39 stated that they felt like speaking Irish for reasons relating to identity in comparison to 18.3% in the stand-alone primary schools.

Significant differences did not emerge between the responses which the pupils in the post-primary units/streams and the stand-alone post-primary schools gave except regarding the influence of the family and of factors relating to identity on the use of Irish. 29.3% of the pupils in the post-primary units/streams who answered Question 39 stated that the family encouraged them to speak Irish in comparison to 13.3% in the stand-alone post-primary schools. 77.8% of the pupils in the stand-alone post-primary schools who answered Question 39 gave responses related to identity in comparison to 56.1% in the post-primary units/streams.

#### **5.11.1.6 Discussion**

It is widely accepted among teachers and researchers that motivation exerts a considerable influence on the success rate of second language learners (Dörnyei, 1998). And learners' positive attitude towards the target language correlates positively with motivation to learn the language over an extended period of time (Ó Duibhir, 2009). It is clear from the results presented above that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence the pupils' willingness to speak Irish at school and outside school. Among the factors mentioned which inspire the pupils who participated in this study to speak Irish were factors related to both integrative orientation and instrumental orientation, concepts which help to arouse motivation and guide learners towards their targets (Gardner, 1985). Integrative orientation provides strong motivation for language learners (Dörnyei, 2009; Ó Baoill, 1999) depending on the linguistic context (Dörnyei, 2009).

But it is challenging for learners of Irish to act on integrative orientation in Ireland and foster social proximity with a Gaeltacht community for various reasons. The Gaeltacht communities are small communities. In addition nearly every native speaker of Irish has good English. Therefore is it most likely that English would be spoken as a *lingua franca* in any complicated conversation between learners and native speakers of Irish (Ó Baoill, 1999). This is also true in social interaction between young learners of Irish and young native speakers (Hickey, 2001, 2007). And, of course, the language acquisition patterns among young speakers in the Gaeltacht are changing under the influence of English which means that not many young speakers in the Gaeltacht succeed in achieving total acquisition (Ó Giollagáin & Mac Donncha, 2008).

The factors influencing the use of Irish among pupils in this research are consistent with research results from other countries that are active in the preservation of a heritage language and were reported in Chapter 2, that is Scotland, Wales and the Basque Country

and with Ó Cathalláin's research (2012), most especially factors related to extra-curricular activities, pastimes, cultural activities and opportunities to speak Irish with other people in the Gaeltacht and outside the Gaeltacht. It will be important that those involved in Irish-medium education – teachers, parents, Departments of Education, state-funded organisations and voluntary organisations – provide an abundance of opportunities to pupils attending all-Irish schools to develop their basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS, Cummins, 1980). The absence of contact with the second language outside the school lessens the learner's motivation if pupils associate the target language with the curriculum but don't see a connection between the language and peer culture (Baker, 2003).

### **5.12 Factors influencing language and professional development opportunities for school staff**

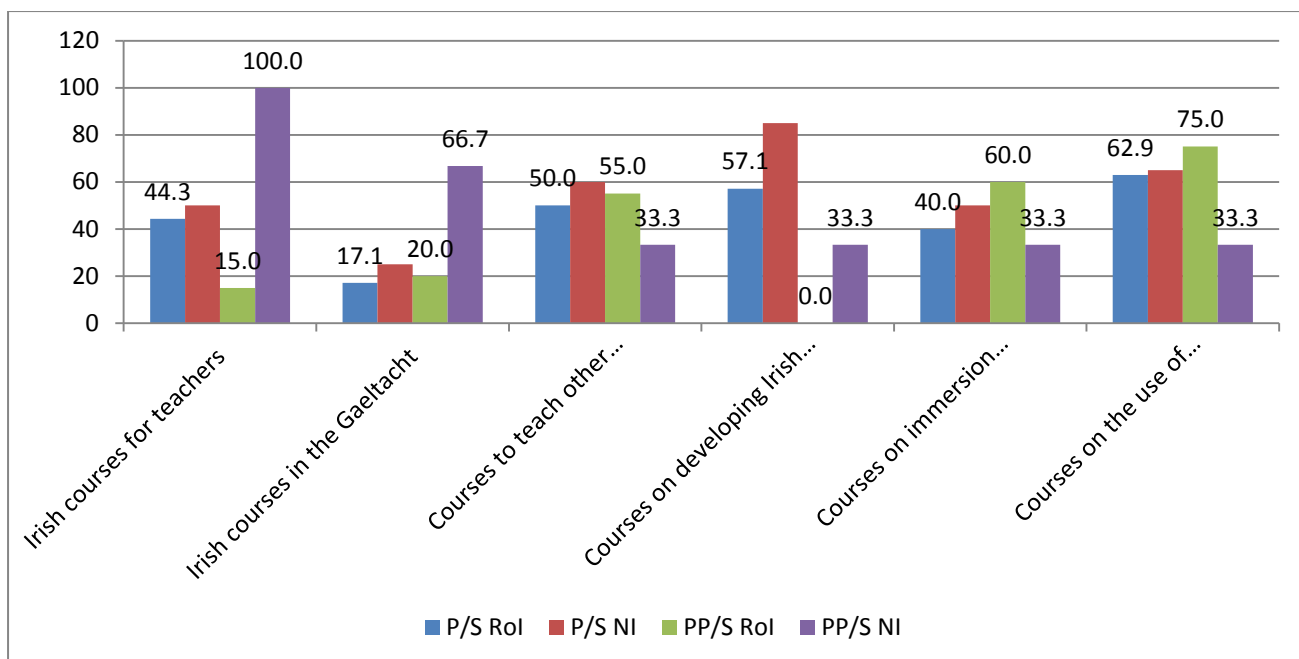
Data relating to the provision of professional development and the needs of school staff were analysed. With reference to current practice, Figure 5.21 shows the range of courses that teachers attend. The first two columns in the figure indicate that teachers attend courses to improve their Irish and courses in the Gaeltacht. It appears that NI post-primary school teachers attend such courses a lot more frequently than the post-primary school teachers in ROI. However, there was only one post-primary school in NI attending the other types of courses on the list of courses schools were given in the questionnaire.

Professional development of staff is usually included in school development plans. NI primary unit coordinators explained that the professional development needs of the whole staff, including host school and unit, are given priority in the school development plan rather than the professional development needs of the unit staff and this is a disadvantage.

A high percentage of NI primary schools (85%) attend professional development courses on Irish-language literacy. A large number of schools attend courses on using resources and implementing teaching programmes.

Figure 5.21: Professional development courses





We investigated the level of satisfaction of schools with the range of provision available for professional development opportunities for the teaching staff. Table 5.34 shows that primary schools and ROI post-primary schools are divided evenly, with approximately equal numbers expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction. For example, 45% of NI primary schools are satisfied with the range of provision and another 45% are dissatisfied with it. Two of the three post-primary schools disagreed with the statement. When asked about additional professional development opportunities school leaders would like to be available to them, respondents emphasised courses relating to the development of Irish among the pupils and among the staff.

Table 5.34: The range of provision for professional development opportunities for the teaching staff is satisfactory

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
<b>Primary ROI</b>	4.3	36.2	15.9	39.1	4.3
<b>Primary NI</b>	5.0	40.0	10.0	30.0	15.0
<b>Post-Primary ROI</b>	0.0	40.0	5.0	50.0	5.0
<b>Post-Primary NI</b>	0.0	33.3	0.0	33.3	33.3

There were no significant differences between school types when the principals/directors were asked about professional development opportunities for themselves. The ROI principals/directors are again divided equally with similar numbers expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction with current provision. NI primary school

principals/directors are a little more negative about the range available and two post-primary schools in NI were neutral.

Though the teachers are pretty much divided equally in Tables 5.34 and 5.35, at least 40% disagree with the statement in each case, which shows that many staff are dissatisfied with the current range of provision for professional development.

Table 5.35: The range of provision for professional development opportunities for principals/directors is satisfactory

	I strongly agree	I agree	I don't know	I disagree	I strongly disagree
Primary ROI	1.4	43.5	8.7	43.5	2.9
Primary NI	5.0	35.0	20.0	35.0	5.0
Post-Primary ROI	0.0	27.5	23.5	23.5	5.9
Post-Primary NI	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0

On the whole principals/directors are dissatisfied with the provision for language development opportunities for ancillary staff. Table 5.36 shows that one third or less report that the opportunities are satisfactory.

Table 5.36: The provision for language development opportunities for ancillary staff is satisfactory

	Yes
Primary ROI	24.60%
Primary NI	27.80%
Post-Primary ROI	30.0%
Post-Primary NI	33.3%

Many respondents opined strongly that there was no shortage of professional development courses for teaching staff available in English but there was a lack of courses available in Irish. Respondents were of the opinion that it was not sufficient to translate courses already available in English into Irish.

Principals stated that there is a need for courses which support:

- Irish for the teachers;
- Irish for the staff of the host school in the case of a unit;
- Classroom practice on integrating the teaching and learning of subject matter and language;
- Promotion of Irish on a whole-school basis;
- Composite class teaching;

- Differentiation and responding to special educational needs;
- Improvement of Irish for principals and directors;
- Team leadership and curriculum leadership.

It is clear that courses which enrich Irish are a priority and principals gave examples of practices already in place which encouraged the enrichment of the language among the staff. In one primary school grammar items are discussed at the beginning of staff meetings. In another primary school a member of the management committee gave language workshops for teachers who wished to attend. Both initiatives succeeded well.

Primary principals of both stand-alone schools and units raised the question of time pressure and they recommended online Irish-language courses and courses during school time be made available. Primary principals in the south raised the question of goodwill of teachers towards professional development, which was in danger of being eroded because of the pressure on teachers. School leaders explained that they cannot attend professional development courses when they wish, due to lack of time. It would help if a substitute could be employed when the principal or director was attending a course. Respondents highlighted the need to conduct a comprehensive needs analysis to identify the specific professional development needs of principals and directors in the Irish-medium sector and to develop professional development courses focussing on these specific needs.

The opportunities provided for developing clusters of schools that support each other were praised as schools benefited from cooperation with each other. For example, one unit used the Extended Schools Programme funding to organise professional development activities in partnership with teachers in other units. Principals would welcome an annual meeting of school leaders to discuss common issues, share best practice and learn about immersion education in other places.

One post-primary principal emphasised the need for strategic development for the sector. In his opinion, it is appropriate to plan a strategic service in collaboration with a teacher education institution in order to provide continuous professional development. Such professional development was needed by both graduates of Irish and other subject teachers. During the focus group discussion participants highlighted contextual influences which affect the planning and vision for professional development in the different school models, as shown in Figure 5.22.

Figure 5.22 Planning frames which guide professional development

Stand-alone post-primary schools	Stand-alone primary schools	Units
Strategic planning for the sector and the school development plan.	The school development plan	The host school development plan

One post-primary school principal attributed less importance to professional development in Irish because most of the teaching staff were from the Gaeltacht or had attended all-Irish schools. But even in that school, the professional needs of other teachers regarding the development of Irish were acknowledged and served. In general, the leaders stressed the value of a Gaeltacht experience and the link between that and the professional development of the staff. It was schools in NI which most emphasised that aspect of professional development. The contact with the Gaeltacht benefits both staff and pupils. Unit leaders described after-school activities which give children the chance to enrich their Irish during music classes, for example, having a music teacher from the Gaeltacht. This is one example of the benefit that accrues from the Extended Schools Programme, a programme which aims to increase children's and young people's life opportunities and reduce underachievement.

In the same school, the local Cumann Gaelach gave grants to three teachers to attend an Irish course in the Gaeltacht. The staff of the post-primary stand-alone school in NI availed of the Comenius programme to provide week-long courses for teachers.

A primary school principal explained that the school should foster a stronger link with the Gaeltacht for the benefit of the teachers' language enrichment and professional development. That principal believes, "that you're kind of living in a little bubble", without contact with the Gaeltacht. Until now the staff did not have enough opportunities to spend time in the Gaeltacht and he would like them to have more opportunities.

Another perspective on this concept was voiced by a post-primary unit principal in ROI when the subject of the interview was directed to contact between the school and the community. Though the school is not located in the Gaeltacht, the principal had prior experience as a teacher in the Gaeltacht and there are historic links between the school district and Gaeltacht districts.

This district isn't a Gaeltacht district but sort of, like, the Gaelcholáiste is a little Gaeltacht ... People out there in the community see that Irish is being given to the next generation; that young people are using Irish regularly during the day and strengthening the Irish they have.

Though the Gaeltacht is seen as an exemplar regarding the use of Irish, the leaders were also aware of challenges facing Gaeltacht schools relating to the attitude of young people towards Irish and encouraging the use of Irish among pupils

### **5.13 The role of the school leader and professional development for Irish**

The majority of school leaders emphasised the importance of the teaching staff having a high standard of Irish. The principals understood that leaders exerted influence on teachers' participation in continuous professional development. A stand-alone primary school principal commended the concept of life-long learning. A relief system was in place in that school on a rotation basis to give study time to teachers and to the principal who were undertaking post-graduate degrees.

According to the leaders, they have a responsibility to demand and encourage a high standard of Irish among the teachers. One primary school principal described this role as, "preserver of the language".

A primary school principal criticised the lack of adequate preparation of student teachers in colleges of education to teach subjects through Irish in Irish-medium schools, except for one college in NI which provides teacher education through the medium of Irish. According to this principal, the leaders struggle to appoint teachers with a high standard of Irish.

I think now that there isn't any school, any Gaelscoil in the country where all the principals would be comfortable as regards choosing a teacher for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> classes, that they would say well the teachers themselves need a certain standard in written and spoken Irish. (Primary school principal)

This principal explained that he did not have the time to address this issue as he wished.

... they (teachers) come to me asking to correct things before they send, say, a note home to a parent and that in itself is an indication that they understand that a certain standard will be issuing from the school. It's a hint to me, if you spent time with them and sat with them, maybe there'd be no resistance, that they'd be very satisfied, but again it's finding the time... (Primary school principal)

Another primary school principal expressed a positive view on the same issue, explaining that most teachers are second language learners. He has a duty to encourage the development of Irish among the staff and, as part of that role, he gives corrective feedback to teachers, as appropriate, and also encourages their participation in professional development courses.

## 5.14 Factors influencing the effect of provision for Irish-medium education on the development of the Irish-speaking community

### 5.14.1 The languages spoken in the home

Principals/directors were asked how many parents spoke Irish at home regularly or were learning the language. They were also asked what percentage of the parents spoke a language other than Irish or English at home. It must be noted that the data shown in Table 5.37 are based on the principals'/directors' reporting, many of whom reported that they didn't have the information. About one parent in twenty spoke Irish at home. Between 10.8% and 14.9% of primary school parents were learning Irish but that fell to 4.3% in the case of ROI post-primary school parents. The number of parents who speak a language other than Irish or English at home is fairly low. Principals/directors of the post-primary schools in NI reported that they did not have the information requested.

Table 5.37: Languages spoken in the home

	Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post- Primary ROI
<b>Parents who speak Irish regularly at home</b>	6.1%	4.6%	5.0%
<b>Parents who are learning Irish</b>	10.8%	14.9%	4.3%
<b>Parents who speak a language other than Irish or English at home</b>	2.1%	0.6%	1.4%

It is interesting that principals in the focus group reported that there weren't many pupils in the primary school classes with Irish as their home language, and that there was a negative effect on those pupils' Irish for a while, particularly in junior infants. During interview one NI post-primary principal stressed the importance of other support for the pupils from parents apart from learning the language.

Questionnaires were coded so that we could match the responses of pupils and their parents. This allowed us to perform a regressive analysis on the data and that analysis follows the initial analysis we did on the parents' questionnaire. Chi-square tests were carried out on the various data collected. This is a test which shows if the results are statistically significant. In order for results to be statistically significant a 'p' lower than 0.05 is sought.

The parents were asked about the language spoken at home when they were growing up and the results are presented in Table 5.38. Although there are differences across school type and location, the results are not statistically significant (chi-square = 25.926, df = 25, p = .412).

Table 5.38: When you were growing up, what language(s) was spoken at home?

School category/location	%English only	%Mostly English	%Equal mix of Irish and English	%Mostly Irish	% Irish only
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=119)	71.8	23.1	1.7	1.7	0.0
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=23)	87.0	4.3	4.3	0.0	4.3
<b>NI primary unit</b> (n=18)	77.8	22.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools</b> (n=56)	74.5	23.6	1.8	0.0	0.0
<b>NI stand-alone post-primary school</b> (n=28)	82.1	17.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit</b> (n=44)	76.7	16.3	2.3	0.0	0.0

Table 5.39 shows the number of parents who attended an all-Irish primary or post-primary school. Attendance at an all-Irish primary school ranged from 0-11% across school types and attendance at an all-Irish post-primary school ranged from 0-14%. It must be noted that most of the parents who participated in this research were born between 1960 and 1979 (87.2%) and schooling through the medium of Irish was probably not available to them when growing up.

When these percentages are cross-tabulated Table 5.40 shows that 3.9% of parents attended both an all-Irish primary and post-primary school. 5.7% attended either an all-Irish primary school or an all-Irish post-primary school. That means that 9.6% of parents in this research received part of their education through Irish at primary level or post-primary level.

Table 5.39: Did you go to an all-Irish primary school/post-primary school?

School category/location	% who attended an all-Irish primary school	% who attended an all-Irish post-primary school
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=119)	7.6	6.8
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=23)	4.3	0.0
<b>NI primary unit</b> (n=18)	11.1	5.9
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools</b> (n=56)	3.6	3.6
<b>NI stand-alone post-primary school</b> (n=28)	0.0	3.7
<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit</b> (n=44)	9.3	14.0

Table 5.40: Cross-tabulation of parents' attendance at all-Irish primary school and/or post-primary school

All-Irish post- primary school	All-Irish primary school		
	Attended	Did not attend	Total
Attended	3.9	2.7	6.5
Did not attend	3.0	90.5	93.5
Total	6.8	93.2	100.0

The parents were asked to rate their own ability in Irish. The results of this question are shown in Table 5.41 by category and school location. The average mean can be seen in the final column to the right with a higher mean indicating a higher perceived ability to speak Irish. The statistical tests (ANOVA and Bonferroni) showed that parents of the pupils in stand-alone primary schools in ROI had the highest mean score. This mean score was statistically significant in comparison to stand-alone primary schools in NI, stand-alone post-primary schools in ROI and the stand-alone post-primary school in NI. These are the figures in bold type in Table 5.41. The other differences were not statistically significant.

We compared the parents' ability in Irish and attendance at an all-Irish school to see if these factors were linked. As might be expected, ANOVA and Bonferroni tests showed that parents who did not attend an all-Irish school rated their ability to speak Irish significantly lower than parents in the other two groups as shown in Table 5.42. It must be remembered that the number of parents who attended an all-Irish school was quite low. The mean scores in bold in Table 5.42 are statistically significant.

Table 5.41: How would you describe your ability to speak Irish?

School category /location	%No Irish	%A few words	%A few simple sentences	%Parts of conversations	%Most conversations	%Native speaker competence	%Mean
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools (n=119)</b>	0.8	8.5	31.4	36.4	18.6	4.2	3.763
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools (n=23)</b>	4.3	34.8	39.1	17.4	0.0	4.3	<b>2.870</b>
<b>NI primary unit (n=18)</b>	5.6	16.7	27.8	44.4	0.0	5.6	3.333
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools (n=56)</b>	7.3	20.0	40.0	29.1	1.8	1.8	<b>3.036</b>
<b>NI stand-alone post- primary school (n=28)</b>	7.1	35.7	42.9	7.1	0.0	7.1	<b>2.786</b>
<b>ROI and NI post- primary unit (n=44)</b>	14.0	11.6	25.6	30.2	14.0	4.7	3.326



Table 5.42: Comparison between the mean self-assessed ability to speak Irish and attendance/non-attendance at an all-Irish school

<b>Attended an all-Irish school</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Did not attend either</b>	3.311	305
<b>Attended both</b>	<b>5.154</b>	13
<b>Attended primary school or post-primary school</b>	<b>4.474</b>	19
<b>Total</b>	3.448	337

Parents were asked about the language(s) they speak with their children. Table 5.43 shows that the majority of responses fall into the categories on the left side of the table, indicating that it is mostly English which is spoken, a result which is consistent with the parents' self-assessed level of Irish in Table 5.41 above. We see in the first three rows of Table 5.43 that it is primary school parents who most often speak Irish to their children. There is a reasonably strong correlation, which is statistically significant, between the language the parents spoke while growing up and the frequency with which they speak English/Irish/other language with their own children (chi-square=173.846, df=25,  $p < .001$ ). There were no correlations, however, between the parents' attendance at an all-Irish school and the frequency with which they speak English/Irish/another language to their own children (chi-square=12.770, df=10,  $p = .237$ ). Again, it must be remembered that a fairly small group of 32 parents in this research attended an all-Irish primary or post-primary school but it is not clear from the evidence presented here that this factor had a strong influence on their language behaviour with their own children.

Table 5.43: What languages(s) do you speak with your child?

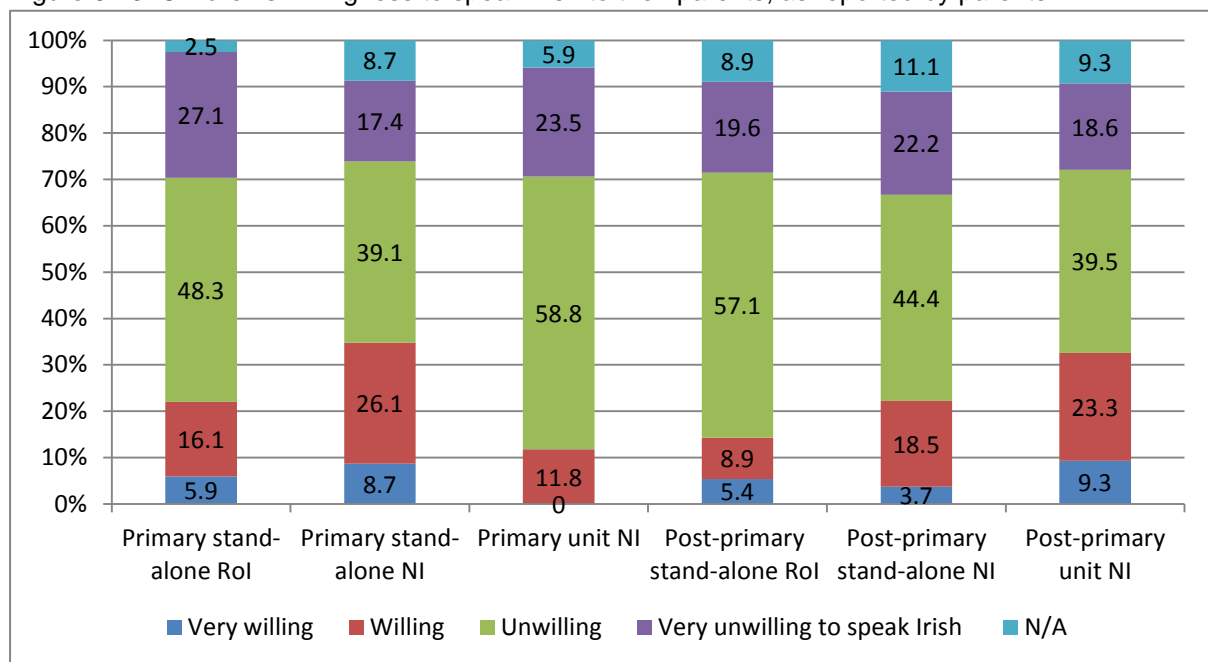
<b>School category/location</b>	<b>%English only</b>	<b>%Mostly English</b>	<b>%Equal mix of Irish and English</b>	<b>%Mostly Irish</b>	<b>% Irish only</b>	<b>% Other language</b>
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools (n=119)</b>	23.9	59.8	12.0	1.7	0.0	2.6
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools (n=23)</b>	43.5	56.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>NI primary unit (n=18)</b>	27.8	66.7	0.0	5.6	0.0	0.0
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools (n=56)</b>	67.9	32.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>NI stand-alone post-primary school (n=28)</b>	60.7	32.1	0.0	7.1	0.0	0.0
<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit (n=44)</b>	62.8	34.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3

### 5.14.2 Willingness of children to speak Irish with their parents

The parents were asked about their children’s willingness to speak Irish to them. Figure 5.23 shows how willing the children were to speak Irish to their parents. There was no statistically significant correlation by school type or location.

When we calculated the mean for each school, we found that 71.2% of parents felt their children were willing or very willing to speak Irish to them. Less than one quarter, 22.3%, reported that their children were reluctant or very reluctant to converse with them in Irish.

Figure 5.23: Children’s willingness to speak Irish to their parents, as reported by parents



### 5.14.3 School enrolment policies

We also investigated the enrolment policies of the schools which participated in the research and whether they have to refuse pupils entry due to a shortage of places etc. Table 5.44 shows that enrolment policies are in effect in 63.4% of primary schools and 26.3% of post-primary schools in ROI to give priority to pupils from families who speak Irish regularly. 42.9% of primary schools and 25.0% of post-primary schools in ROI had to refuse entry to pupils because not enough places were available in September 2012. The following is the number of prospective pupils turned away from six post-primary schools/units in ROI in order of size.

2      4      10      29      30      90

These figures clearly show that there is a very high demand for all-Irish post-primary education in certain areas and the supply does not meet this demand. The problem does not appear to be as acute in NI where 10% of the primary schools in this research had to refuse pupils a place in the school. Post-primary schools in NI reported no difficulties in enrolling all applicants.

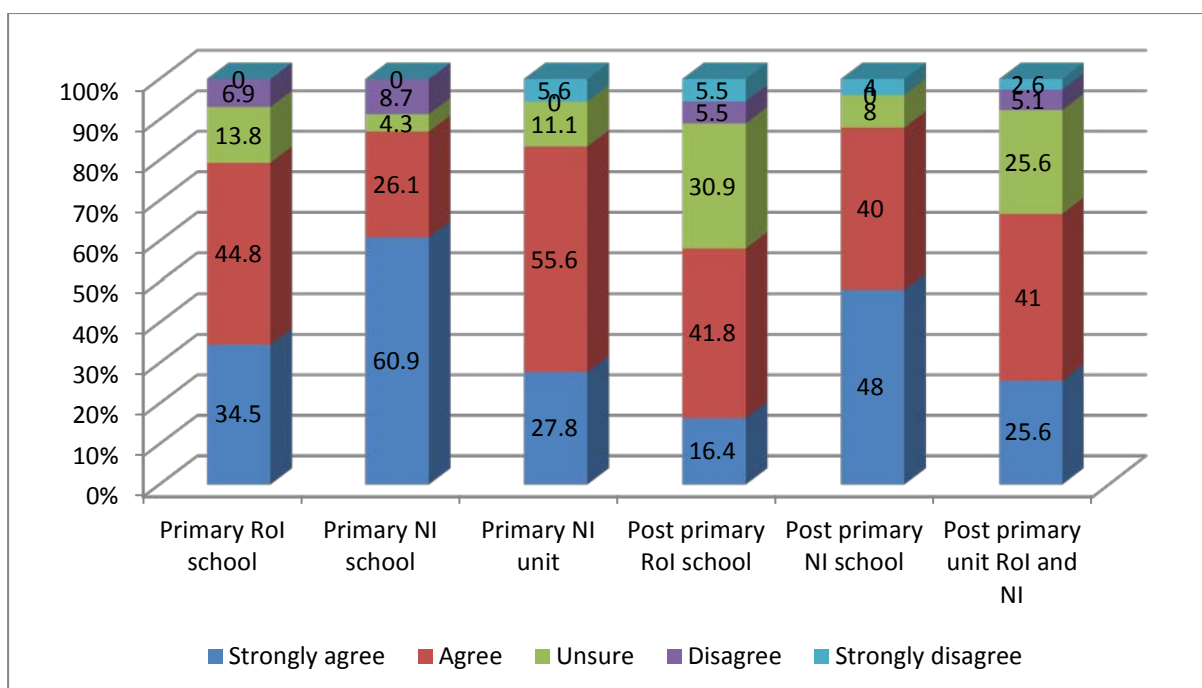
Table 5.44: School enrolment policies

	Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post- Primary ROI	Post-Primary NI
Priority is given to pupils who speak Irish at home	63.4%	Not applicable	26.3%	Not applicable
Pupils were refused a place due to a lack of places	42.9%	10.0%	25.0%	0.0%
Pupils were refused a place due to a lack of places in the school/unit in September 2012	4.3%	0.0%	5.0%	0.0%

#### 5.14.4 Irish language support for parents

On the issue of Irish language support provided by schools to parents, Figure 5.24 shows that most of the parents are satisfied with the level of support they receive. Only 7.32% disagreed with this statement and 15.61% did not know. That said, in the case of ROI stand-alone post-primary schools and post-primary units in NI and in ROI, there was a high enough number of parents who responded that they did not know and again this raises the question of whether or not some schools have a definite policy in this regard. The difference in responses to this question was statistically significant (chi-square = 37.578, df = 20,  $p < .010$ ).

Figure 5.24: I am satisfied with the level of support the school gives to parents/guardians as regards the use of Irish



Parents were invited to offer suggestions in the form of an open question ‘How can the school give more support to parents/guardians as regards Irish?’ A good number of parents expressed satisfaction with the support the school had already provided to them. The main suggestions which parents had were help with Irish (to provide Irish classes, to help with Irish phrases on the internet and to provide a phrasebook) and help with homework (to organise a homework club on the school site).

Schools were asked about the support they provide to families with little or no Irish. A list of options was provided to primary schools and respondents were asked to indicate the options which applied to their school. The options related only to Irish-language classes in the case of the post-primary schools. Table 5.45 shows that most of the schools in ROI provide Irish classes for parents as well as information about Irish classes in the locality. Only about a third of the schools in NI tend to provide Irish classes in the school but information is provided about classes in the area.

Table 5.45: Support for families who do not have Irish

	Primary ROI	Primary NI	Post-Primary ROI	Post-Primary NI
<b>Irish classes for parents in the school</b>	84.3%	70.0%	35.3%	33.3%
<b>Information about Irish classes in the community</b>	72.9%	90.0%	64.7%	100.0%
<b>Translating class material to English</b>	12.9%	60.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>Recording school texts, reading books etc.</b>	11.4%	30.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>Additional guidance for homework</b>	52.9%	85.0%	N/A	N/A
<b>Guidance on ways to support the pupils’ learning</b>	65.7%	60.0%	N/A	N/A

The parents indicated that they receive support from the school in written form also (e.g. vocabulary and useful phrases) and some schools provide guidance on helping with homework, with literacy development (e.g. shared reading), with Irish pronunciation and the immersion education approach of the school is explained to parents. This information is frequently conveyed to parents at meetings at the start of the school year and the information is also provided on the school website. Guidance in English about homework is given to parents with little Irish and English textbooks are provided, if available. After-school clubs, homework clubs and numeracy clubs are of great benefit, according to the parents. Where such clubs do not exist, some parents recommended they be established. Parents welcomed the opportunities provided by schools in ROI to participate in classroom activities.

Parents are invited to school to read with children and participate in class games, which helps you pick up phrases in a fun way.

Parents come into the classes helping with group work and they also help with reading.

One primary unit in NI mentioned that they organise workshops on Irish phonics for the parents and one stand-alone primary school in NI reported that they run classes with parents and pupils together modelling teaching strategies. And the following is how one parent described the approach of a primary unit in NI.

There are curriculum evenings based on literacy and Maths. There is a focus on the teaching method for literacy in Irish. There are books compiled for parents about what the children will be learning in the different classes.

A couple of parents of children attending a stand-alone post-primary school in ROI welcomed the fact that the school gives additional Irish classes to the pupils who did not attend an all-Irish primary school.

Sometimes parents are not able to avail of the support provided by schools for various reasons. Though many schools run Irish classes for the parents it is clear that the situation is not the same in each school or that the classes had been discontinued. A great many parents would welcome Irish classes in the evening for those at work and during the day for single parents, in particular classes aimed at beginners. Other recommendations mentioned by parents included

- Homework clubs (where they don't exist);
- Bilingual reports on pupils' progress;
- Dictionaries with useful phrases, and specific vocabulary relating to different subjects (mathematics, science, geography);
- Mathematics classes for parents;
- Induction day for parents;
- Encouraging the pupils to speak Irish at home;
- A resource site with links to useful sites, for example online dictionaries etc.;
- To organise more social occasions for parents and pupils together; and
- Information in English about homework.

It was clear from the parents' responses that many of them are concerned about their ability to help with homework in Irish, especially at the primary school level, as the following comments indicate.

Help with how to check homework. Teachers differ in approach - it would be good to be briefed on their expectations for the year ahead.

A big problem that puts parents off sending their child to Irish-medium education is homework. If you have no Irish you have to rely on your child to translate for you. I think there should be a lot more help in this area as it causes a lot of stress.

#### **5.14.5 Support services in general**

It is clear that many parents avail of the support services which the school provides. One parent in a primary unit in NI and a parent in a stand-alone post-primary school in NI praised the support services provided by the schools for parents of children with special educational needs.

I have received a lot of positive support regarding my daughter's special needs.

Support from teachers and getting him diagnosed with ADD and additional support in dealing with it.

There was also praise for the support service provided by a stand-alone post-primary school in ROI on bullying and internet use:

Have gone to all evenings with great speakers on different topics to do with teenagers on the use of internet, bullying etc.

A couple of parents in a stand-alone post-primary school in NI reported that they help with services in the school, one parent as a classroom assistant and the other with a study class for the GCSE. Some parents also mentioned that they did not avail of the support services, due to lack of time, because they did not need such support or because the services available in the school were not suited to their needs.

#### **5.14.6 Communication between the school and parents**

Parents in each school type, primary schools and post-primary schools, units and stand-alone schools in NI and in ROI indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the schools' communication with them. Certain parents recommended that more use be made of newsletters, websites, e-mail and text but such media are being used by nearly every school which participated in the research. A small number of parents felt that schools could make more use of bilingual communication and use more English in written communications. Suggestions included

- Meetings with teachers on a more regular basis, for example once per term;

- Receiving information earlier about extra-curricular activities, school tours etc.;
- Receiving more information about the school's development plans including increasing the number of pupils in the school and the school accommodation;
- Receiving information early if a problem is to be solved;
- Schools to be more open and transparent about school policies and procedures, and about curriculum targets.

Explaining syllabus/curriculum targets for each class. Guidance on what is being taught so that teaching can be supported better at home. To set assessment in the context of immersion education and ordinary systems. (Primary unit in NI)

It is interesting that parents of a few children attending all-Irish units highlighted the lack of communication from the host school:

There is a monthly newsletter but over the years the primary school section has grown smaller (Primary unit).

They don't communicate, they have not seen Irish-medium unit as extension of the school but obstacle that they themselves are trying to come to terms with (post-primary unit).

We investigated the language used by schools to communicate with parents. Figure 5.25 shows that an equal mix of Irish and English is the most common means of communication among the all-Irish primary schools with a greater tendency towards the use of English in the primary schools in NI.

When communicating orally with parents a quarter of primary schools in ROI use mostly Irish or Irish only. The reverse is true in the case of the primary schools in NI where the amount of English rises from 31.6% in the case of written communication to 47.4% in oral communication. Since Irish is not on the curriculum of every school in NI, it may be the case that a higher percentage of parents don't have the same passive ability and that they resort to English as a result.

Figure 5.25: Written communication with parents - primary schools

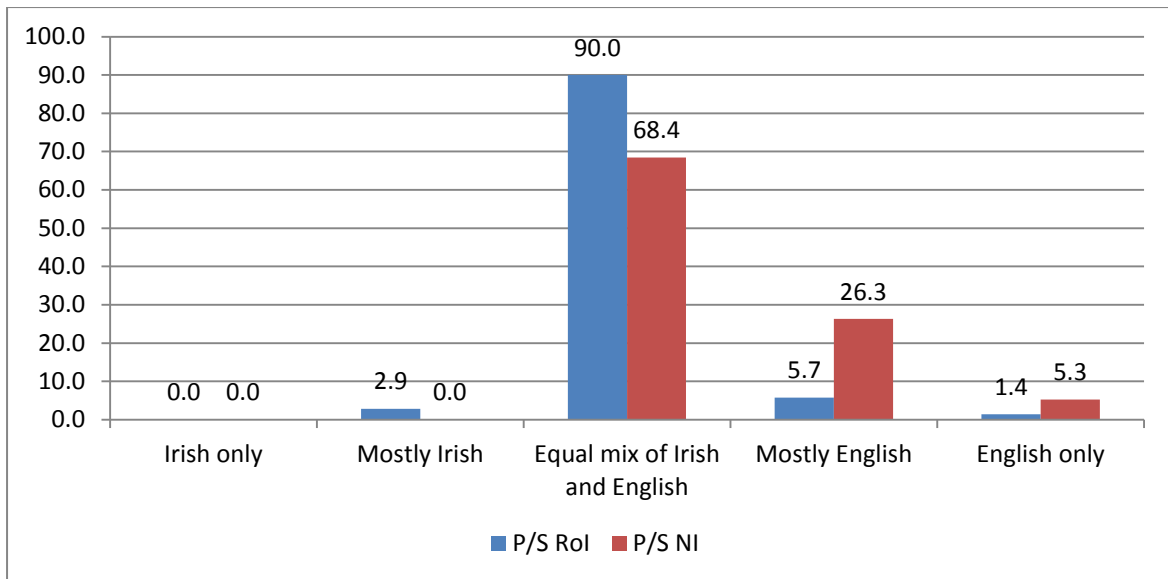
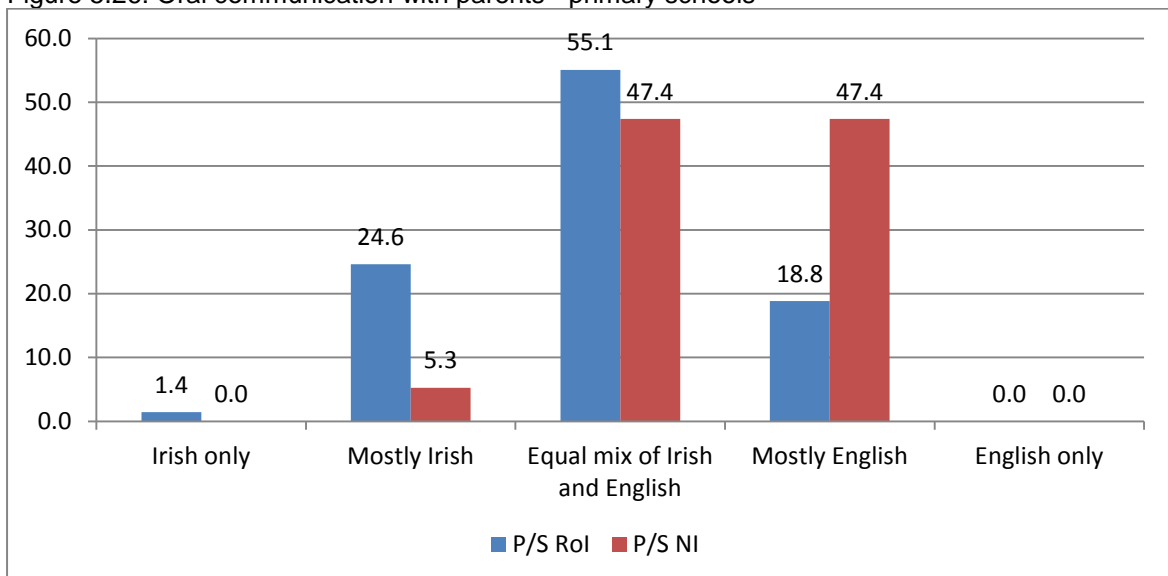


Figure 5.26: Oral communication with parents - primary schools

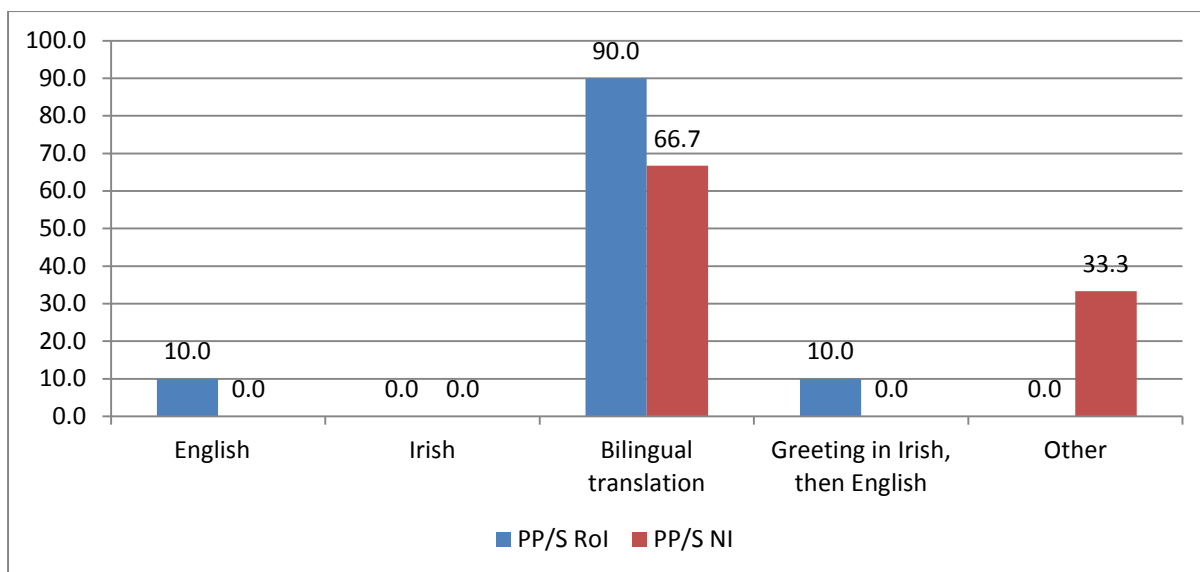


In the case of the post-primary schools we see in Figure 5.27 that bilingual translation is the most common method of written communication<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 5.27: Written communication with parents - post-primary schools

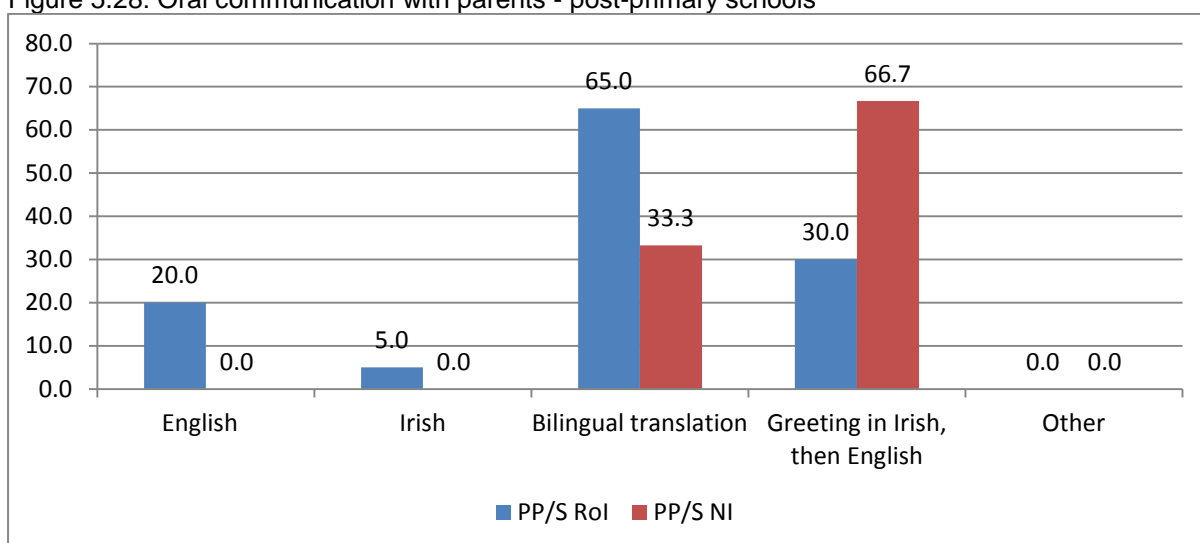
<sup>3</sup>Two post-primary schools placed ticks in two boxes, giving an overall total of 110%.





When communicating orally with parents ROI post-primary schools give a more prominent position to Irish as can be seen in Figure 5.28<sup>4</sup>.

Figure 5.28: Oral communication with parents - post-primary schools



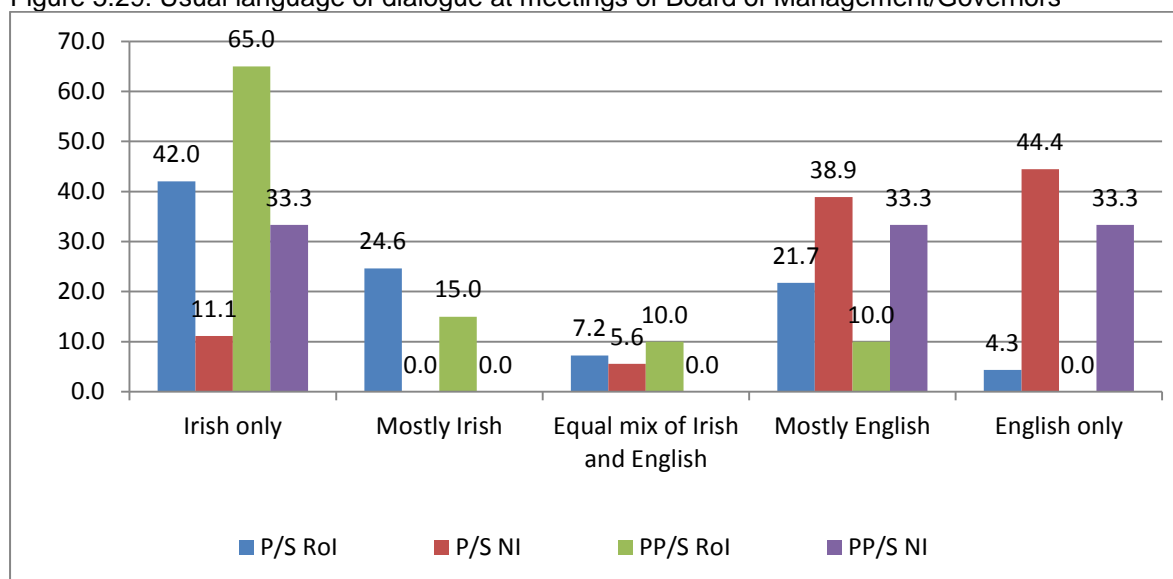
#### 5.14.7 Language(s) spoken at meetings of Boards of Management/Governors

Figure 5.29 shows usual language of dialogue used at meetings of Boards of Management/Governors. 80% of post-primary schools in ROI use Irish only or mostly Irish at such meetings. Two thirds (66.6%) do likewise in the case of primary schools in ROI. 83.3% of primary schools in NI use English only or mostly English at meetings of Boards of

<sup>4</sup>Four post-primary schools placed ticks in two boxes, giving an overall total of 120%.

Governors. The practices of the three all-Irish post-primary schools in NI vary from Irish only to English only.

Figure 5.29: Usual language of dialogue at meetings of Board of Management/Governors

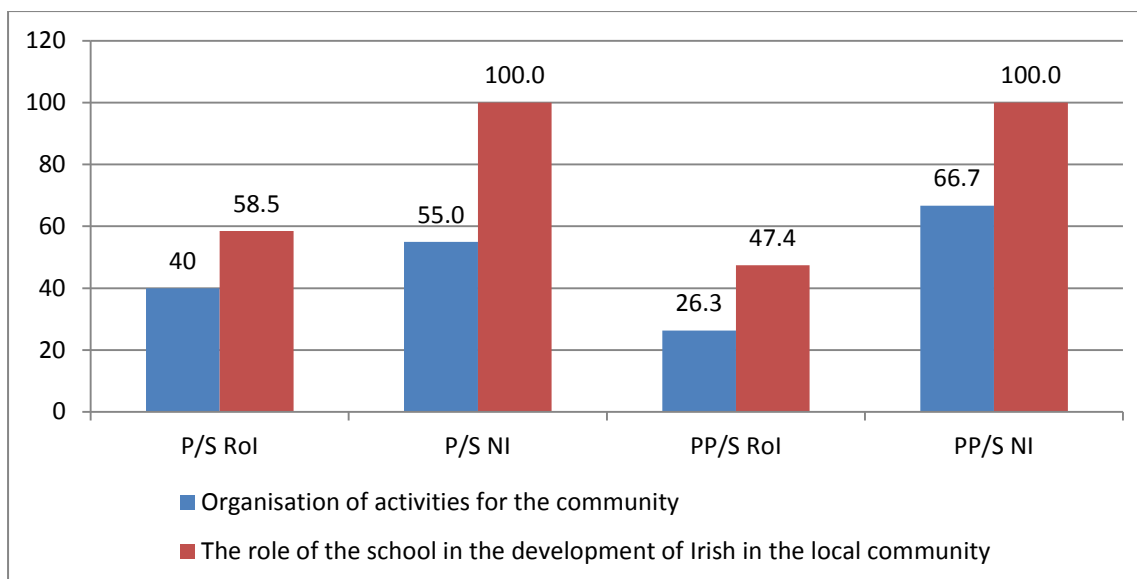


#### 5.14.8 Role of the school in the development of Irish in the local community

The all-Irish schools north and south clearly play a central role in the development of Irish in the local community but Figure 5.30 shows that NI schools are more active than ROI schools in the development of Irish in the community. The schools in NI reported that they are proactive in the development of Irish in the school locality in collaboration with other organisations which are active in the promotion of Irish. It appears that schools in NI see it as part of their role to promote Irish in the community and 55% of primary schools and two of the post-primary schools in NI organise activities for the community. The percentage is considerable lower for ROI schools.

The NI principals/directors reported that their schools run a wide range of Irish-language activities in the school outside school hours, aimed at the local community. Among the activities mentioned were Irish language classes/conversation groups, activities promoting social interaction (sport, music, drama, dancing, a book club), church services, youth clubs, summer camps and fundraising activities. And one stand-alone primary school in NI reported that a language officer in the area helps them to organise various activities.

Figure 5.30: Organisation of activities for the community and the role of the school in the development of Irish in the local community



Some principals in ROI also indicated that their schools are active in the local community (e.g. in establishing a Gaelcholáiste, in establishing another Gaelscoil in the area, in establishing a cultural centre, at various festivals, at events in the public library). A couple of primary school principals reported that their schools have links to the local media (print media and local radio). It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that schools in the Basque Country had made links with the local media in order to promote the language in the area. And the pupils who participated in this research indicated that they were eager to improve their Irish as more employment opportunities would be available to them, including jobs in the media. Therefore, it would be worthwhile for all-Irish schools to investigate the possibilities of fostering further links with the local media. But the role of the school in ROI is frequently limited to activities during Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish-language Week), (e.g. Mass through Irish, participating in the local parade), supporting activities organised by community groups.

One post-primary school principal explained the active role a post-primary school plays in community development and in the development of a Gaeltacht area in a city. It engenders a community spirit in the school itself. As an example of the results of such activism, the principal made reference to past-pupils who now occupy leadership positions in the community. In that particular post-primary school, the educational priorities specified in the school ethos include promoting personal development and developing leadership skills among the pupils. The school focusses on the needs of individual pupils and on the school's responsibility as an Irish-language community activist which encourages respect for Irish in the area and strategically supports the development of Irish.

One primary school principal explained the input the school had in planning and implementing a cultural strategy for the local area and that the school was rooted in the community and promoting community development.

Schools forge links with external organisations and they often have connections with a particular organisation, for example a branch of Conradh na Gaeilge or the umbrella organisation, Gaelphobal an tSratha Báin. Schools cooperate with such organisations to organise activities and provide information on Irish language classes to parents. The schools' premises are used as activity centres, for example Campa Chormaic, Ógras, and for sports clubs. According to one primary school principal another aspect of the school's role is to introduce Irish speakers to each other.

Some principals referred to An Carn, the development association of Carn Tóchair (Carntogher) in Co. Derry, as an exemplary model which provides services and resources for the community and which is committed to the revival of Irish. Many advantages accrue to the primary unit which is situated beside An Carn as a result of such community activism. Pupils benefit from youth activities which are organised there and links are fostered with the Gaeltacht and with other cultural organisations both in Ireland and Scotland.

Four of the units voiced other perspectives on the role of the school in the local community. They would like to foster links with the community but noted a number of obstacles including, for example, the historical and demographic background of the area. One unit attempts to build links through public notices and by distributing a newsletter in the community. But the unit is situated in a suburb in which there has recently been a significant increase in the number of commuters, and there isn't a strong community spirit in the area yet.

Other units noted similar obstacles such as the fact that many pupils and teachers do not live in the local area but commute to the school from other communities,

... we only have one teacher who lives in the town and then there's the other teachers, most of them coming from over twenty miles away. (Post-primary unit principal)

One primary unit coordinator concurred with this opinion, saying that it was a disadvantage not to have local teachers on the staff.

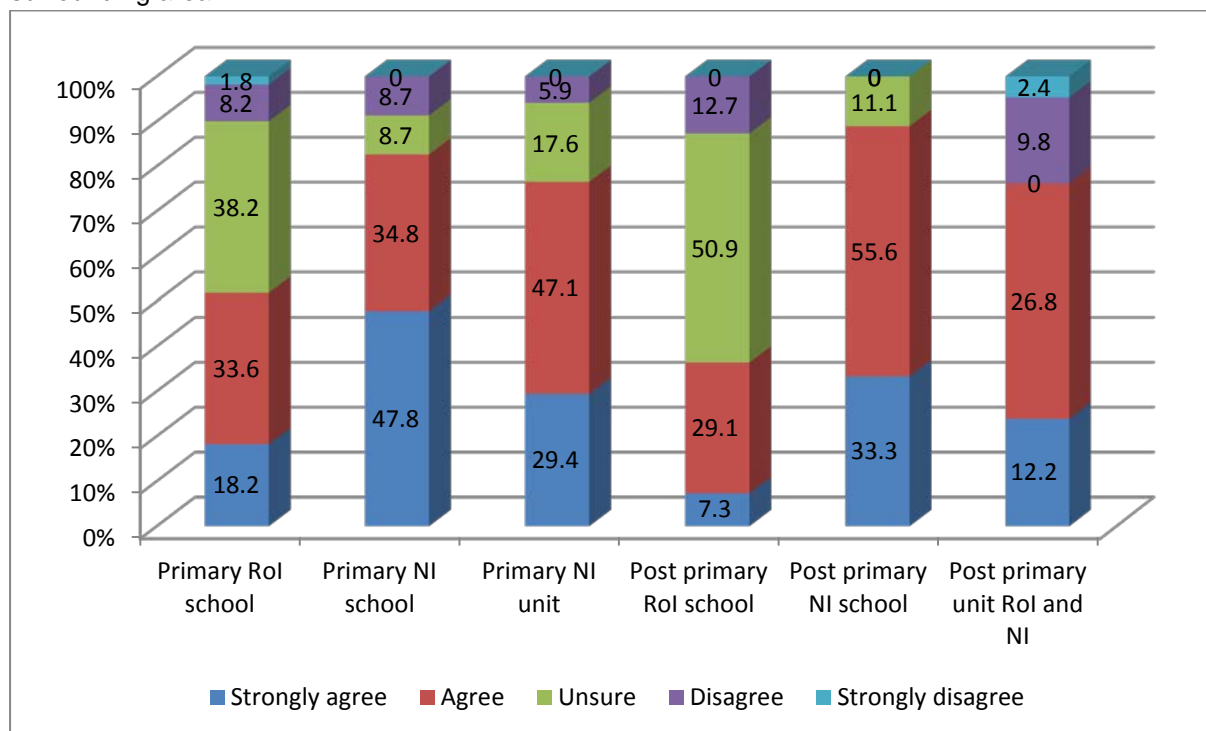
In general, the schools were enthusiastic to foster links with the community. Much emphasis was placed on the interaction between a school and the surrounding community, and principals explained that good interaction had a positive influence on the pupils' progress, on the building of an Irish-language community in the neighbourhood, on developing a positive attitude towards the school and on the growth of the school.

Using a five point Likert scale parents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: 'The school plays an active role in the development of an Irish-language community in the surrounding area'. On average, 8.25% of parents disagreed with this statement. It is worth noting in Figure 5.31, that no parent in the stand-alone post-primary school in NI disagreed with this statement. One of the most significant results, however, in Figure 5.31 is the high level of parents in primary schools in ROI (38.2%), in stand-alone post-primary schools in ROI (50.9%) and in post-primary units in ROI and in NI (48.8%) who selected 'I don't know' as a response. The difference in the responses to this question was statistically significant (chi-square = 46.204, df = 20,  $p < .001$ ). This raises the question of whether or not some schools have a definite policy regarding their role in the development of an Irish-language community.

It was clear from the responses of parents to an open question on the role of the school in the development of an Irish-language community in the surrounding area that they understand the importance of the use of Irish as a means of communication. Some parents felt that the school was already doing plenty to develop an Irish-language community. Parents recommended that schools should foster stronger links with cultural organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) and that the school premises should be available as a cultural centre in the evening. Parents would welcome weekly social activities on the school site, for example a coffee morning together with Irish classes and courses through the medium of Irish in the evening (e.g. cookery classes, computer courses). Parents indicated that they would welcome activities organised by the school for the family. Parents thought it might help the pupils if they could conduct their business through the medium of Irish in the local shops at lunch time and they recommended that the schools foster stronger links with the local media with press releases, articles in magazines and radio programmes in Irish.

Parents felt that schools could organise more activities in the local community, for example plays in Irish. It was recommended that schools have an open day for the community and that the community be invited to a school exhibition or social event. It was also suggested that inter-schools activities (in participation with other all-Irish schools and all-English schools) should be organised with an emphasis on science and art and an Irish-language summer camp. Other possibilities were mentioned including an Irish-language Mass, erecting Irish-language signs designed by the pupils in the local shops and inviting past-pupils and parents to take part in social activities to foster a wider community.

Figure 5.31: The school plays an active role in the development of an Irish-speaking community in the surrounding area.



#### 5.14.9 Parents' evaluation of their children's satisfaction with the school

The parents were given a series of statements and were asked to agree or disagree with them using a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, strongly disagree). Overall, parents agreed that their children liked attending an all-Irish school. They disagreed that their children tell them friends mock them because they attend an all-Irish school. With respect to the statement "I let my child know that Irish is an important aspect of our culture", the vast majority of parents agreed with this statement.

The vast majority of the parents indicated that they are extremely satisfied with the level of support the school gives their children with Irish. The level of support is different in each school, particularly support for pupils with special learning needs, as the following statements show.

My daughter is dyslexic and receives peripatetic help in English but not in Irish (Stand-alone primary school in NI).

The fact that my child who has special educational needs enjoys learning through Irish is an indication of the high standards of teaching practices implemented at the school. I couldn't ask for any more (Primary unit in NI).

The parents had some recommendations, including

- The establishment of homework clubs;
- The organisation of more after-school activities (cultural activities) with the emphasis on acquisition of Irish on a fun basis;
- A web-based school forum for the pupils;
- Irish classes for parents and pupils together;
- Fostering links with other all-Irish schools;
- Organising trips to the Gaeltacht;
- Making more use of the media, including newspapers, TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta;
- An e-mail buddy system for pupils for homework;
- Establishing an all-Irish second-level school in the area; and
- Providing appropriate service for native speakers of Irish.

Post-primary school parents had additional recommendations:

- Providing a grant for pupils to attend summer courses in the Gaeltacht;
- Providing additional Irish classes for pupils who did not attend an all-Irish primary school; and
- Employing teachers with good Irish to ensure that pupils can study all subjects through the medium of Irish and experience total immersion education (Post-primary unit in ROI).

#### **5.14.10 Parents' contact with the school and language used when communicating with the school**

Parents play an important role in their children's education and schools aim to maintain regular communication with parents. In this section we report on the types of contact parents have with the school, the assistance they give and their level of satisfaction with the communication between them and the school.

Using a series of statements in the form of a Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree, strongly disagree) we investigated parents' experiences of communicating with the school. Figure 5.32 shows that the vast majority of parents are confident when communicating with the school.

Figure 5.33 shows, however, that although most parents disagree that they feel uncomfortable if a member of the school staff speaks Irish to them, there is a substantial minority which agrees with that statement. In the case of NI primary schools no parent disagrees but 27.3% of parents in post-primary units in NI and ROI combined disagree. Overall the mean level of parents agreeing with this statement is 15.97%. In contrast to these results nearly 25% of the parents in four all-Irish primary schools in the Republic of

Ireland in a survey carried out by Kavanagh and Hickey (2012) and over 66% of the parents interviewed by the same authors reported that they felt uncomfortable when teachers spoke Irish to them. It is important that schools would be cognisant of this substantial minority when implementing the school's Irish-language policies.

Figure 5.32: I'm confident when communicating with the school.

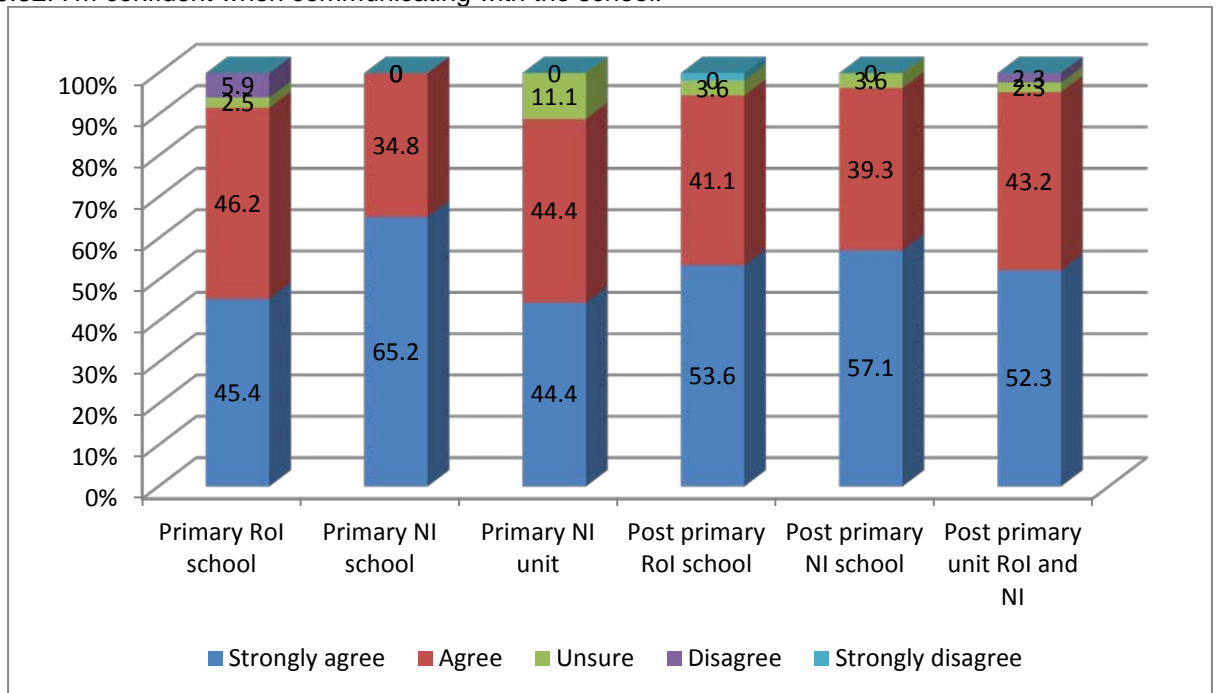
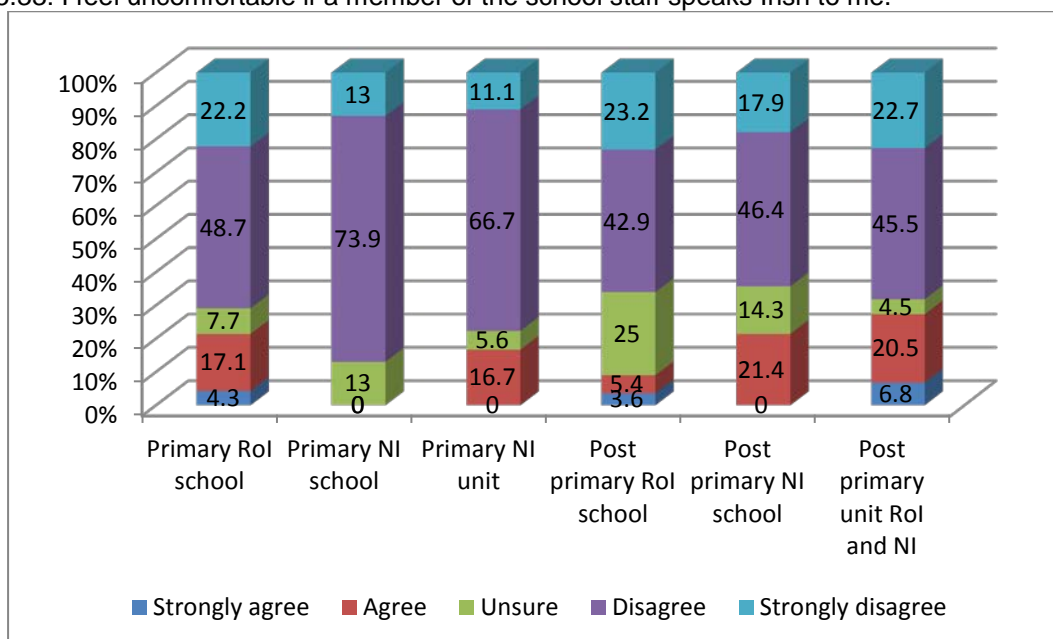


Figure 5.33: I feel uncomfortable if a member of the school staff speaks Irish to me.





The parents were asked about their contact with the school. The figures in Table 5.44 show that the highest level of contact is among primary school parents in NI and the lowest level among the post-primary unit parents in NI and in ROI. In another question on the same subject, parents were asked if they were satisfied with the level of contact they had with their child's school. The vast majority of parents said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with this aspect. There were no significant differences by school type or location.

Table 5.44: How often do you have contact with the school?

School category/location	Never	Very rarely	Now and again	Regularly
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=119)	0.0	3.4	43.6	53.0
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=23)	0.0	0.0	13.0	87.0
<b>NI primary unit</b> (n=18)	0.0	5.6	44.4	50.0
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools</b> (n=56)	0.0	1.8	46.4	51.8
<b>NI stand-alone post-primary school</b> (n=28)	0.0	3.6	53.6	42.9
<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit</b> (n=44)	0.0	15.9	65.9	18.2

The parents were asked about the language they speak when communicating with the school. Table 5.45 shows the languages used by the parents. In row one we see that it is mostly ROI primary school parents who spoke Irish with the school and there is a statistically significant difference between this group and parents of pupils in each of the other models (chi-square = 74.149, df = 25, p < .001). As well as that, there is a strong correlation between the language the parents spoke with the school and the language they spoke while growing up (chi-square = 121.874, df = 25, p < .001). There are strong correlations with the language spoken to the children at home also (chi-square = 173.581, df = 25, p < .001).

Table 5.45: What languages(s) do you speak while communicating with the school?

School category/location	%English only	%Mostly English	%Equal mix of Irish and English	%Mostly Irish	% Irish only	% Other language
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=119)	26.0	45.4	11.8	9.2	7.6	0.8
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=23)	69.6	26.1	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.0
<b>NI primary unit</b> (n=18)	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools</b> (n=56)	80.4	16.1	1.8	0.0	1.8	0.0
<b>NI stand-alone post-primary school</b> (n=28)	75.0	14.3	3.6	3.6	3.6	0.0

<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit</b> (n=44)	65.9	15.9	9.1	6.8	2.3	0.0
---	------	------	-----	-----	-----	-----

### 5.14.11 Parental assistance with school activities

Parents were asked about any assistance they give the school. Some parents mentioned that they help the school on a voluntary basis with administrative matters in the school, for example, participating on the Parents' Committee, on the Board of Management and at fundraising activities. Parents help with the maintenance of accommodation, for example gardening, with cooking and baking for social occasions and one parent mentioned that he/she participated in demonstrations on behalf of the school. Parents also help with activities with the pupils, including youth clubs, church services, school tours, craft workshops and particularly with dancing and drama, depending on parents' own skills. One parent in a primary unit reported that the school does not accept assistance from him/her.

Table 5.46 shows that there were statistically significant differences in levels of assistance given by parents, according to school type (chi-square = 62.335, df = 5, p < .001). When tests of statistical significance were conducted the focus was on column one i.e. no help at all, as other types of assistance might be dependent on school policies. Indeed 'no help' could be in accordance with school policies. Primary school parents in ROI were the largest group by far who gave assistance to the school. Overall, post-primary parents gave less help but, having said that, the level of help was higher among ROI post-primary schools in comparison to NI post-primary schools.

Table 5.46: Do you help in the school on a voluntary basis from time to time?

School category/location	% no help	% class activities	% school library	% sporting activities	% religious ceremonies	% school tours	% musical /cultural activities	% fund-raising
<b>ROI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=119)	69.5	15.1	1.8	21.0	19.3	12.6	17.6	37.8
<b>NI stand-alone primary schools</b> (n=23)	34.8	17.4	8.7	8.7	8.7	30.4	17.4	26.1
<b>NI primary unit</b> (n=18)	38.9	0.0	0.0	11.1	11.1	11.1	5.6	22.2
<b>ROI stand-alone post-primary schools</b> (n=56)	28.6	0.0	1.8	5.4	1.8	0.0	3.6	26.8
<b>NI stand-alone post-primary school</b> (n=28)	10.7	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0	7.1	0.0	7.1
<b>ROI and NI post-primary unit</b> (n=44)	17.1	0.0	2.3	2.3	2.3	0.0	2.3	15.9

When parents were asked about the reasons which prevented them from helping the school, it was mostly practical matters which emerged such as lack of time, work commitments, childcare commitments, health problems, family commitments, distance from the school, working at night and studying full-time. A few parents in NI indicated that they are

not invited by the school or that they feel unwelcome in the school. Some parents reported that their lack of confidence in their Irish ability was an obstacle. We see in column 5 of Table 5.47 that there were differences according to school location and these differences are statistically significant (chi-square = 22.438, df = 5,  $p < .001$ ). The percentages in bold show that NI had the highest number of parents who mentioned lack of confidence in their Irish as an obstacle. One parent in the ROI mentioned that lack of Irish was an obstacle as the other parents who help in the school speak Irish only. It would be worthwhile for schools to consider parents' concerns and other commitments when inviting parents to participate in the life of the school. Only one parent out of the total sample mentioned a lack of welcome from the school to participate. This is clearly not an obstacle to parental participation, then.

Table 5.47: If you don't help, give the reason that prevents you from helping.

School category/location	% Lack of time	% Too busy with work commitments	% Family commitments	% Lack of confidence in my own Irish	% Lack of welcome from the school to participate
ROI stand-alone primary schools (n=119)	16.0	16.0	10.9	5.0	0.8
NI stand-alone primary schools (n=23)	26.1	17.4	21.7	<b>13.0</b>	0.0
NI primary unit (n=18)	5.6	27.8	22.2	<b>16.7</b>	0.0
ROI stand-alone post-primary schools (n=56)	19.6	32.1	14.3	10.7	0.0
NI stand-alone post-primary school (n=28)	14.3	28.6	14.3	<b>35.7</b>	0.0
ROI and NI post-primary unit (n=44)	20.5	29.5	15.9	9.1	0.0

During the interviews school leaders highlighted the importance they attach to the active role of parents as partners with the school. Principals emphasised the close links between parents' attitude and support and the progress the pupils make. The challenge of promoting parents' input was discussed in the context of a disadvantaged area. During interviews with leaders, three schools indicated that not many parents attended classes organised for them and that, in general, parents did not have a strong interaction with the school. Due to concerns about an increase in the number of parents who did not show an active interest in their children's education, creative projects, for example play dates, were initiated to raise awareness and to build parents' confidence as the children's first educators. One primary school principal reported on the success of that project when almost every parent with a child in Class 1 (NI) attended those information events.

Schools reported a wide range of activities organised to support parents. Extended Schools Programme funding was used to organise individual meetings between teachers

and parents in an environment outside of the school. Schools and Conradh na Gaeilge provided Irish classes for parents. In some cases notes and resources were sent home explaining homework every week, and efforts were made to create a welcoming and positive environment in the school so that parents would feel at their ease.

A post-primary school principal explained that it was not necessary for parents to be fluent in Irish. A strong emphasis is placed on the role played by parents as mentors who encourage and support their children. But parents also help with the development of the school and they make their voices heard when lobbying for improved facilities as well as participating in parents' committees or on Boards of Governors.

#### **5.14.12 Parents' general opinions of Irish-medium education**

The vast majority of parents indicated that they and their children are extremely satisfied with Irish-medium education (*'the best thing I ever did'*) for many reasons, which were discussed above. Some additional opinions expressed by parents are discussed here.

Parents recommended that an all-Irish education should be available for all families who wish to avail of it and that there is a need for additional investment.

I would like to support this education and feel that it is very important to maintain and have this education choice in a community.

In my opinion it is poorly funded considering it is the national language.

The fundraising issues and lack of permanent buildings need to be addressed.

Some parents were worried about the lack of provision for Irish-medium education at post-primary level and they doubted the effectiveness of the units/streams.

I would like an all-Irish school on one site.

There is a lack of flow through to post-primary and the level/quality of Irish teaching at post-primary in the teaching of other subjects is a major concern.

We need a follow on school from the Gaelscoil, a standard as good and a principal that will be active and interested in Irish and the students. Two schools together, Irish and English, does not work with the same principal.

Units are an out and out disaster.

On the other hand, another parent (in NI) was recommending that more streams be established.

I think that Irish-medium schools in a rural setting have more specific needs than in urban areas. Streams should be established in all post-primary schools as I believe there are enough numbers in local primary schools to provide this. I strongly believe that not enough support comes from Irish language bodies perhaps because they prefer 'stand-alone' secondary provision. A lot of Irish-medium students are disadvantaged because there is no post-primary provision. These children are being failed. (Name of school) I believe are turning children away such is the demand.

Parents of children with special educational needs had different experiences, some of them satisfied with the support from the school but some of them dissatisfied with psychological services.

Having a child with special needs, I couldn't have found a better school. Not only is the school interested in giving my child the best possible education they can but also in the development of my child as an individual.

I have three children who have attended Irish-medium education, two of these children are very bright and one has special needs. All three have thrived at this school.

I would like to see educational psychologists speak Irish. I had to take a child out of Irish school in P3 as extra help/support wasn't funded enough and education psychologists didn't understand the language.

Some parents are of the opinion that all-Irish schools are not multiracial.

My children's experience to date has been positive. However, I would be very concerned if Irish-medium education was used to exclude children and families from other countries or ethnic origins. Any child with an interest in learning through Irish who has an aptitude or love of languages ought to be able to access Irish-medium education if they so wish.

But it is clear from the following statement that parents who are not from Ireland choose Irish-medium education also.

Our experience has been very positive and we are immigrants.

And another parent indicated that their child likes the school's ethnic mix.

Loves percentage of non-nationals in the school.

### **5.14.13 Challenges facing leaders**

The leaders discussed a wide range of issues which present challenges for Gaelscoil and unit leaders. One participant in the focus group spoke of the pressure on leaders to encourage staff to engage in professional development when they already feel overburdened.

Too many changes have happened in a short period of time ... Really, the teaching within the class is the most important thing and if they prepare for that, and the school's progressing fine but still you're calling into them again for extra Croke Park hours ... Everybody's under pressure. We'll lose staff. We'll lose good will. (Primary school principal)

Other challenges relate to school accommodation, administration, recruitment of teachers, school improvement, the growth of the school, the public image of school, parents' attitudes, appropriate servicing of special educational needs, provision of resources, dealing with official Department representatives who don't speak Irish, continuous professional development, and providing both subject education and language development to the highest standard. For example, one post-primary leader explained that it was a challenge to

develop the Irish-medium sector and create a demand for external professional services in Irish.

Unit leaders discussed an additional challenge relating to pupil numbers. The limited growth of pupil numbers created a challenge when composite classes had to be formed, a practice which often causes dissatisfaction among parents. Another dilemma for the school leader is the appointment a new teacher when pupil numbers increase. Whole-school needs have to be taken into account which may prevent an additional appointment for the unit.

One primary unit leader explained the pressure they felt because the increase in numbers in the unit reached a plateau after a number of years. Other challenges emerged when people thought it was appropriate to change from a unit to a stand-alone school model. The employment implications for teaching staff stemming from such a change were not given due consideration.

And finally, another challenge is the lack of knowledge and understanding of units reported among external groups and services. The unit staff feel that not everybody understands the unit model, resulting in misconceptions about the model of immersion education offered by units, even among stand-alone schools.

## **6. Management systems which support the establishment and growth of a stand-alone school**

### **6.1 Introduction**

During interviews principals spoke highly of various support systems which were available to them. For example, schools availed of advantages to be derived from membership of school clusters, from cooperation with other schools, with education organisations and with community organisations. Stand-alone post-primary schools assumed sectoral responsibility, in particular where there were no other post-primary schools in the area to establish a cluster or network with which to develop a vision for Irish-medium education. In the context of Irish-medium units, the provision in place for the English-medium sector takes precedence when problems arise relating to issues such as the recruitment of subject teachers, the professional development of teachers, and curriculum provision through the medium of Irish.

A summary of two other management systems which support the growth and development of newly-established schools is presented below. A community may often opt to establish a stand-alone school as a first choice and the leaders of two primary stand-alone schools in NI referred to management systems which supported them and helped them to maintain their independence during the early years of development. The first management system is a satellite support system and the second a mentoring system.

### **6.2 Satellite Support System**

Scoil na Fuiseoige was established as an independent school in west Belfast in 1992, with seven pupils on the register. The school is situated in an area of social and economic disadvantage and the onerous task of raising considerable funds was placed on the local community. Scoil na Fuiseoige was made a satellite unit of Bunscoil Phobal Feirste in 1994 and the two separate school locations were retained. By 1994, there were 16 pupils on the register, between Class 1 and Class 3, with two teachers employed in the school. It was agreed that a decision would be made after three years whether to maintain satellite unit status or recommend grant-aided primary school status. During the period of the project, the satellite unit was awarded recurring funding as part of Bunscoil Phobal Feirste. The Board of Governors of Bunscoil Phobal Feirste were responsible for the unit and the principal of that school responsible for the internal management of the unit. At the end of the pilot phase, the Department of Education carried out an inspection focussing on the standard of teaching and learning and on the general operation of the unit and the school was awarded grant-aided primary school status. A very positive report was published. In conclusion, it was reported that,

The satellite unit is operating efficiently and successfully. Factors which are contributing to its progress include high priority given to it by the principal and Board

of Governors of the host school, the generous allocation of experienced staff, the leadership of the senior teacher in the unit, the quality of the teaching, the commitment of the parents and the management committee and the very good response of the children. Inevitably, the operation of the unit has placed additional pressure on the principal and senior management team of the host school; its success bears testimony to their efforts. (Department of Education, November 1996)

The Inspectorate praised Scoil na Faiseoige highly, following an inspection process which took place in the 2014 academic year and Bunscoil Phobal Feirste was highly praised in the school's latest inspection report (Department of Education, November 2012).

### **6.3 Mentor Support System**

Gaelscoil an Aodha Rua was established in Dungannon, Co. Tyrone in 2011 with 12 pupils enrolled in that first year. A mentoring system was put in place to support the newly-established primary school with cooperation between Gaelscoil an Aodha Rua and the support school focusing on matters of curriculum planning and school development. When an inspection was carried out in the school that cooperative system was commended:

She (the teacher) has forged strong links with other schools and teachers. She has adapted her teaching well and has made the transition successfully from the upper school to the FS<sup>5</sup>.

With the support of Gaelscoil Uí Néill, Coalisland, the teacher has developed useful, yearly overviews and half-termly planning for all areas of the curriculum ... She has a clear vision for the development of the school and she displays good leadership skills in taking forward this venture. She has observed FS good practice in a range of other schools. She liaises effectively with another IM primary school, Gaelscoil Uí Néill, Coalisland. As a result of this partnership Gaelscoil Aodha Rua receives sound advice on curriculum and management matters. She speaks highly of the assistance she receives from the link Principal who acts as her professional mentor. (Department of Education, 2012)

### **6.4 Summary**

The analysis of interviews conducted with leaders illustrates that there is a spectrum of provision which encompasses both stand-alone schools that provide a full immersion education programme and units that provide bilingual learning experiences, depending on the conditions that obtain in a school, including teaching resources and human resources. An analysis has been presented above of the advantages and disadvantages or challenges associated with the different models of provision, as articulated by the school leaders.

---

<sup>5</sup> Foundation Stage



## **7. Conclusion**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Based on the international research reviewed in this research report we acknowledge the important role played by education systems in language revival. We also note that transmission of a minority language to the next generation via the education system alone is not sufficient for a language to survive. Support is needed from all state institutions and from communities. That said, our focus in the current research was to look at the system of immersion education in Ireland independently of other institutional and community support. We discussed the advantages of bilingualism and the effectiveness of immersion education as a system to teach a language. We drew on the experience of immersion education systems from other countries including Wales, Scotland, the Basque Country and Canada. We saw in the comparative studies on various models of immersion education in Canada that the stand-alone schools have some advantages when compared to French units or streams. Those advantages related to pupils' academic attainment, academic support services, school administration, resources, parents' participation and the fostering of a French-speaking community in the school. We also discussed research which showed that the attainment of the immersion education pupils in both the L1 and in other curriculum areas is as good as, or better than their peers in non-immersion settings.

There has been considerable growth in Irish-medium education on the island of Ireland in the last forty years. It is timely, therefore, to review the system of immersion education in Ireland. The research published in Ireland to date is consistent with the positive results from other countries mentioned above in relation to pupil attainment. However, no research has been carried out heretofore on the models of provision for Irish-medium education and that, rather than pupil attainment, is what the current research focusses on.

The most important parties in the functioning of a school are the pupils and the teachers. Parents also play a critical role and few Irish-medium schools would exist without the commitment and diligence shown by parents in the establishment and ongoing development of these schools. Leadership is needed too and it is the principals, who are responsible to the boards of management/governors, who manage the schools on a day-to-day basis. We gathered data from three of those parties for this research i.e. the pupils, the principals and the parents. We did not have the resources to include the teachers or the boards of management/governors. The conclusions presented here are based on the data collected from questionnaires administered to principals, pupils and parents as well as interviews with principals.

## 7.2 Pupils' use of Irish

The factors influencing the use of Irish among pupils who participated in this research are consistent with the research results from other countries active in heritage language maintenance and revitalisation, which were reported in Chapter 3, that is Scotland, Wales and the Basque Country, and previous research carried out by Ó Cathalláin (2012). In particular, factors related to extra-curricular activities, pastimes, cultural activities and opportunities to speak Irish with other people in the Gaeltacht and outside the Gaeltacht have a positive influence on pupils' motivation to use Irish. It will be important, therefore, that those involved in providing Irish-medium education – teachers, parents, Departments of Education, state-funded organisations and voluntary organisations – provide ample opportunities for pupils attending all-Irish schools to develop their basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1980) outside the school setting. Lack of contact with the second language outside the school decreases the learner's motivation if pupils associate the second language with school and the curriculum but not with peer culture (Baker, 2003).

A comprehensive analysis of pupils' use of Irish from four perspectives was carried out:

- Factors which influence the use of Irish as an immersion language among the pupils;
- The breadth and depth of the pupils' total experience of functioning through Irish in school life;
- The willingness of the pupils to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom, and also outside the school;
- The factors that influence the pupils' willingness to use Irish on the school premises, outside the classroom and outside the school.

In the stand-alone schools, a total immersion model is implemented in the classroom and on the school site, as a result of which, pupils have more contact with the language and more opportunities to use Irish. The advantages of a total immersion model are well documented in the international literature. Despite disagreement among academics about specific theories, it cannot be denied that evidence exists that a total immersion model offers advantages to pupils in terms of target language development. SLA theories and theories on attitudes to learning are relevant and useful theoretical lenses through which we can make sense of the observations of the participants with regard to factors which influence the pupils' use of Irish. For example, school leaders' opinions about the role played by rich language input and about the opportunities for interaction created in a total immersion environment reflect Krashen's (1987) arguments. Leaders' emphasis on the importance of the teacher's role and the need for Irish language professional development for the staff

reflect sociocultural theories of language learning and the value of social interaction between pupils and both the teachers and the principals or unit directors. The leaders emphasised this point when the use of Irish by unit principals was commended as a practice which encourages the pupils to use Irish. The opposite practice, principals not speaking Irish to the pupils, was criticised as having a negative influence on the language environment. Pupils indicated that the influence of the principal and the staff was among the factors which motivated them to speak Irish. The thematic analysis of the pupils' responses showed that they had a clear understanding of the factors which motivated them to speak Irish and stand-alone primary school pupils often mentioned that the school staff exerted a positive influence on their motivation to speak the language. Social experiences and cultural identity were specified as sources of motivation. The pupils enjoy speaking the language during extra-curricular activities, in the company of friends and other speakers of Irish and they feel positive about the help they can give to relatives who are learners of the language. Aspects of personal, national and linguistic identity were cited as motivating factors which encourage them to speak Irish. Thus the power and effectiveness of intrinsic motivation in the context of learning the second language (Brown, 2000: 160-166) are evident.

Classroom assistants competent in Irish play an important role in an Irish-medium environment and the leaders are cognisant of the link between the classroom assistant's role and the development of Irish among the pupils. Mhic Aoidh (2012:113) discusses the emphasis teachers place on the role of assistants in the all-Irish classroom in the context of assessment, citing examples of challenges that arise if the classroom assistant has limited Irish. Both stand-alone schools and units which participated in the current study provided insights into the importance of having classroom assistants with Irish as a resource that supports the use of Irish among the pupils. They also highlighted the difficulties schools in certain areas have in recruiting assistants with Irish and the consequent implications for providing pupils with a full immersion experience in school.

Experience of immersion education at pre-school level is a critical factor influencing the pupils' Irish in the early years, according to the school leaders. Standards of provision for the development of Irish vary across naíscóileanna (Irish-medium preschools) and there was particular commendation for the acquisition of Irish in statutory naíscóileanna in which teachers and directors were fluent in Irish. The home can also exert much influence on the pupils' progress and on the development of their Irish in the early school years. If Irish is spoken at home and/or if the children have attended an all-Irish preschool, the positive effect on the pupils' development of Irish is noticeable in the early primary school years in particular.

### **7.3 The home and parental participation**

One of the areas investigated in the research which provides an insight into immersion education in Ireland is the home and the role of parents. Indeed, there is a corpus of literature which provides evidence of the close link between parental involvement in children's education and the children's educational achievement. For example, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994, 65, 237-252) examine the processes involved in the relationship between parental involvement and children's attainment at school. Historically, parents in all-Irish schools have a very close connection with the school and are often the founders of the school. However, the current research report gives an insight into important factors relating to parental participation, and to language habits in the home which are worth presenting to the education community. We investigated the patterns of use of Irish and English in the home. In the case of a family that speaks only English at home, the pupils report lower scores for encouragement from parents to speak Irish and for self-concept of ability in Irish than reported by other pupils in the study.

As schools develop additional challenges emerge, one of which relates to the profile of the parents availing of Irish-medium education. Challenges faced by schools in disadvantaged areas were discussed and a wide range of examples given which show how schools respond positively and creatively to a changing landscape.

In the case of the post-primary schools, it emerged that a sizeable percentage of parents in NI were reluctant to offer help to the school because they didn't speak Irish. It is clear that lack of Irish or lack of confidence in their Irish exerts a negative influence on parents' participation in the life of the school. Schools were sympathetic towards post-primary school parents who did not speak Irish, and stressed other forms of parental participation. Grolnick and Slowiaczek analyse categories of participation, for example,

Parents' personal involvement includes the child's affective experience that the parent cares about school, and has and enjoys interactions with them around school. Such a perception may convey a positive feeling toward school and the child (Grolnick and Slowiaczek 1994: 65, 239).

In the case of all-Irish post-primary education, it might be important for schools to bear in mind that where a lack of Irish prevents parents from assisting the school, schools might be cognisant of other forms of parental support and participation. The present research study shows the commitment and creativity of the schools in serving the needs of parents, in particular by providing support with the language.

### **7.4 The school staff**

It came to light in this research that recruitment of staff with fluency in Irish is one of the greatest challenges facing principals, especially at the post-primary level in ROI. St Mary's University College, Belfast offers Irish-medium programmes in Initial Teacher Education

which include an Irish-medium Bachelor of Education Honours degree course and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Irish-medium Education (PGCE primary) at Masters level. St Mary's University College also offers a professional course in Irish-medium education and pedagogy for students who have registered on the post-primary PGCE programme at Queen's University Belfast or University of Ulster and wish to teach in an Irish-medium post-primary school. And St Mary's University College provides an Irish-medium specialist option on the Masters in Education programme for teachers, with a range of modules on Irish-medium education. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick offers a Level 9 Masters in Irish-Medium Education aimed at providing professional development for fully-qualified teachers already working in the Irish-medium education sector.

As discussed in Chapter 3, other countries recognise the importance of the availability of a continuum of education from pre-school to higher education level through the medium of the minority heritage language, in particular for those who will be returning to the sector as teachers. It is commendable then, that students in NI have the opportunity to undertake their Level 8 initial teacher education course through the medium of Irish. It would be desirable to have similar provision in ROI. However, it must be noted that all primary school teachers in ROI who receive a BEd degree, Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching), or Professional Masters in Education are qualified to teach in all types of primary school, including Irish-medium schools. It would be recommended, however, that student teachers, in particular those who received their primary and/or post-primary education through the medium of Irish, would have the opportunity to undertake their undergraduate studies through the medium of Irish regardless of what part of the country they live in.

The principals/directors around the country who participated in this research indicated that the range of provision for professional development is not satisfactory. They criticised the scarcity of professional development courses through the medium of Irish and the lack of appropriate courses focussing on the professional needs of teachers, directors, assistants and principals in the Irish-medium sector. We recommend that a comprehensive analysis be carried out of the professional development needs of immersion education teachers, principals/directors and assistants. Such a needs analysis could be the basis for appropriate coordinated planning to respond to sectoral needs building on current provision for professional development.

## **7.5 Developing an Irish-speaking community**

It was clear from the responses given by parents, pupils and leaders that the schools play an important role in the development of an Irish-speaking community in the school locality and that the concept of community is rooted in the vision being developed for Irish-medium

education. Sometimes the school plays an active role in regional or local planning, and one example cited was of a school helping to write a culture strategy for the area. Another interesting example was given of a linguistic and cultural community built around a school in south Derry, where community and social facilities are situated beside the school and links are forged and strengthened with other Irish-speaking communities. It is evident that a school has an influence on the community and on attitudes towards Irish within the community. It was also acknowledged that the pupils have an influence on the communities as part of that process. One principal explained that the community recognised that Irish was important as a consequence of immersion education pupils speaking Irish and interacting with the local community. The data presented here portray an image of school communities which are committed to the development of an Irish-speaking community and to fostering a positive environment for Irish-speakers.

## **7.6 Leadership structures**

Challenges faced by principals in all-Irish schools are not the same as those faced by principals in the English-medium sector. Principals of Irish-medium schools see themselves as guardians of the language. They provide feedback to the teachers on the accuracy of their Irish. They strive to maintain a high standard in the Irish-language correspondence issued by the school, and so they acknowledged the professionalism of teachers who asked them to proofread content for them. The Irish-medium principal has additional challenges to overcome to ensure that teachers have access to appropriate professional development and that they avail of those opportunities. In one school a rotation system is implemented to facilitate study leave for the staff, including the principal, when attending post-graduate courses. The lack of suitably qualified substitute teachers with competence in Irish can prevent participation in professional development courses. One principal was of the opinion that it was appropriate for the principal to take over class duties to facilitate teachers to attend courses, when possible. ROI principals mentioned the struggle they have to encourage teachers to attend additional courses outside school time because of recent changes increasing teachers' time in school for planning and the concomitant increase in teachers' workload. Leaders are acutely aware of the need to provide both subject education and language education to the highest standard and to facilitate the children's development and attainment in all areas of the curriculum.

Another challenge for leaders relates to the size of the school. There is pressure on leaders to grow and develop schools, but growth often creates significant new challenges to be overcome, challenges related to composite classes, recruitment of suitably qualified staff,

tension between the Irish-medium unit and the host school, plus the lack of resources to support pupils with special educational needs.

Challenges faced by principals are not the same in NI and ROI. Leaders in Northern Ireland face an additional challenge of building the post-primary sector to support the existing stand-alone post-primary school and serve the needs of the Irish-medium education community. Though strategic planning has begun, with a view to developing Irish-medium post-primary education, further collaboration with interested parties is needed for these plans to be implemented. The development of a vision is central to the decisions taken in the post-primary school and the development of leadership skills among the pupils has been highlighted as a priority. One principal recommended that a partnership be established with a teacher education institution with a view to providing strategic and continuous professional development. Other recommendations were made, for example, the development of the satellite system to build a post-primary sector or community. Overall, principals and directors showed a positive attitude towards the administrative challenges they encounter.

## **7.7 Recommendations**

Here we present our recommendations arising from our analysis of the research data as well as recommendations made by the research participants that would support the improvement and enrichment of provision for Irish-medium education. Some recommendations relate to the Irish-medium sector in general while others are specific to either stand-alone schools or units.

### **General Recommendations**

#### *Irish as the target language*

- Respond to the recommendations of the pupils in this research who identified factors which would encourage them to speak Irish, for example social and extra-curricular opportunities.
- Provide grants for Irish-language organisations to organise more cultural activities and competitions through the medium of Irish and promote social interaction between immersion education pupils from different areas.
- Provide grants for schools to facilitate immersion pupils to spend short periods and extended periods in the Gaeltacht.
- Support teachers to attend Irish-language courses.

- Provide professional development for external services providers to enable them speak Irish with teachers and pupils in all-Irish schools and to develop their understanding of the sociocultural context of immersion education.
- Provide CPD for ancillary staff to enable them to speak Irish with pupils thereby enriching the total immersion experience of the pupils.

#### *Resources*

- Develop a range of standardised and diagnostic assessment tests to assess the academic attainment of pupils attending all-Irish schools.
- Develop more Irish-language resources for all subjects across the curriculum.
- Develop Irish-language technology resources.

#### *Leadership*

- Provide support and guidance to leaders as a school grows, helping them to overcome the challenges they encounter as a result of increasing pupil numbers.
- Take into account the results of this research which highlight the specific professional development needs of staff in Irish-medium schools and the need for strategic professional development planning.
- Examine the potential for participation by past-pupils in a school community.
- Employ retired practitioners with appropriate expertise as mentors to support teachers and principals.

#### *Developing an Irish-language community*

- Develop Irish-speaking communities around Irish-medium schools to provide opportunities for immersion pupils to speak Irish outside the school setting.
- Provide further support for parents to learn Irish and support to encourage the use of Irish at home, even if on a limited basis.
- Add to the ongoing work to support parents to increase their input into their children's education in the Irish-medium system.
- Improve communication between Irish-medium schools and inform all Irish-medium schools of the advantages and challenges of the different models of provision.
- Inform external members of the education sector of the distinctive sociolinguistic context of immersion education.

#### *Research*



- Collect accurate data from all-Irish primary schools/units every year about the number of pupils in sixth class (ROI) and Primary 7 (NI) who transfer to an all-Irish post-primary school/unit and the number of pupils who transfer to an all-English post-primary school to facilitate strategic planning for Irish-medium post-primary provision based on demand.
- Build on this research on models of provision for Irish-medium education, investigating the potential learning from the satellite and mentoring support systems reported here and further develop these innovative approaches.

## **Further Specific Recommendations**

### *Provision for Irish-medium Education*

- Identify the locations of Irish-medium primary schools/units that do not have access to an all-Irish post-primary school/unit in the area and examine the potential for establishing a post-primary Irish-medium school or unit in the locality so that all immersion primary pupils can access Irish-medium post-primary education in their own locality.

### *Stand-alone schools*

- Support the post-primary schools in NI to build an all-Irish post-primary sector, including strategic planning for continuous professional development in collaboration with higher education providers.

### *Irish-medium units*

- Examine the specific challenges faced by Irish-medium units for example, identifying best practices which avoid or overcome tensions between the two sides of a school.

## **7.8 Final words**

In this research study we investigated the complexities related to different models of provision for immersion education in Ireland and valuable insights were gained into the advantages which the two main models offer. Both unit leaders and principals of stand-alone schools were of the opinion that the unit model presented additional challenges. Undoubtedly, this work raises important questions worthy of further research. For example, what are the requirements and resources needed by the immersion education school

community situated in a disadvantaged area? How can school leaders be supported to overcome new emerging challenges as a school community grows? What are the most effective ways to serve a staff's professional development needs, taking into account the current pressures of time and work on teachers and principals?

It is clear from the research presented here that there are certain complexities which relate to the macro-context in which the schools are operating. At a socio-political level immersion education plays an important role in the maintenance and revitalisation of Irish. At a sociocultural level Irish-medium schools provide a particular education option to parents and pupils who value Irish as part of their personal and cultural identity. But the research results from this study also highlight complexities at the micro-context with regard to the functioning of schools. Each school must tackle the complexities at a local level. Various models of provision have emerged over the years to serve the demands and needs of local communities. The research results presented here show that both the stand-alone model and the unit/stream model have common and individual advantages and disadvantages. But it cannot be said that one model suits every context. In conclusion, it makes sense to develop the strengths of each model to ensure that immersion education pupils in Ireland have the best educational and language experiences possible.

## 8. References

- Aldekoa, J. and Gardner, N. (2002) Turning Knowledge of Basque into Use: Normalisation Plans for Schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 5(6), 339-354.
- Allen, P., Swain, M., Harley, B., & Cummins, J. (1990). Aspects of classroom treatment: Toward a more comprehensive view of second language education. In B. Harley, P. Allen, J. Cummins & M. Swain (Eds.), *The Development of second language proficiency* (pp. 57-81). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bak, T. H., Nissan, J. J., Allerhand, M. M., & Deary, I. J. (2014). Does bilingualism influence cognitive aging? *Annals of Neurology*, n/a-n/a. doi: 10.1002/ana.24158
- Baker, C. (2003). Education as a site of language contact. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23, 95-112.
- Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Baker, C., & Jones, S. P. (1998). *Encyclopaedia of bilingualism and bilingual education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bernhardt, E. B. (1992). *Life in language immersion classrooms*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bialystok, E. (2009). Bilingualism: The good, the bad, and the indifferent. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 12(1), 3-11.
- Brown, D. (2000) *Principles of Language learning and Teaching*. 4<sup>th</sup>ed. New York: Longman.
- Cenoz, J. & Genesee, F. (Eds) (1998). *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Cenoz, J. (2003). The additive effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition: A review. *The International Journal of Bilingualism* 7(1), 71–88.
- Coady, M. and Ó Laoire, M. (2002). Mismatches in language policy and practice in education: The case of *Gaelscoileanna* in the Republic of Ireland. *Language Policy*, 1(2), 143-158.
- Coolahan, J. (1981). *Irish education: Its history and structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- Council of Europe. (2008). *Language education policy profile: Ireland*. Strasbourg: Language Policy Division.
- Cummins, J. (1976). The influence of bilingualism on cognitive growth: A synthesis of research findings and explanatory hypotheses. *Working Papers on Bilingualism* 9, 1-43.
- Cummins, J. (1977). A comparison of reading achievement in Irish and English medium schools In V. Greaney (Ed.), *Studies in Reading*. Dublin: Educational Co. of Ireland.
- Cummins, J. (1980). The Entry and Exit Fallacy in Bilingual Education. In C. Baker and N. H. Hornberger (Eds) *An Introductory Reader to the Writings of Jim Cummins*, (pp. 110-138). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J. (1993). Bilingualism and second language learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13, 51-70.
- Cummins, J. (2000). Immersion education for the millennium: What have we learned from 30

- years of research on second language immersion? In M. R. Childs and R. M. Bostwick (Eds) *Learning through two languages: Research and Practice*, (pp. 34-47). Second Katoh Gakuen International Symposium on Immersion and Bilingual Education. Japan: Katoh Gakuen.
- Cummins, J. (2010). Diverse Futures: Immigration, Education, and Identity in Changing Times. In P. Ó Duibhir, R. McDaid and A. O'Shea (Eds) *All Changed: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Ireland*, (pp. 49-70). Dublin: Duras.
- Davis-Kean, P. E. (2005). The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: The indirect role of parental expectations and the home environment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19(2), 294-304.
- Dickinson, D. & Tabors, P. (2002). Fostering language and literacy in classrooms and homes. *Young Children*, March, 10 – 18.
- Doell, L. (2011). Comparing Dual-Track and Single-Track French Immersion Programs: Does Setting Matter? *ACIE Newsletter*, 14(2).
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning: Survey article. *Language Teaching*, 31, 117-135.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA Review*, 19, 42-68.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 Motivational Self System. In Z. Dörnyei and E. Ushioda (Eds) *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, (pp. 9-42). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Skehan, P. (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C. Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 589-630). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Estyn (2006). *A report on Welsh immersion and intensive language teaching pilot projects in schools*. [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk) (29 Bealtaine 2014).
- Fan, X. and Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review* 13(1), 1-22.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing Language Shift*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Fortune, T. W., & Tedick, D. J. (2008). One-way, two-way and indigenous immersion: A call for cross-fertilization. In T. W. Fortune & D. J. Tedick (Eds.), *Pathways to multilingualism: Evolving perspectives on immersion education* (pp. 3-21). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gardner, N. (2002). *Basque in Education in the Basque Autonomous Community* [http://www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.net/r43-573/en/contenidos/informacion/dia6/en\\_2027/adjuntos/publications\\_in\\_english/basque\\_in\\_Education\\_en.pdf](http://www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.net/r43-573/en/contenidos/informacion/dia6/en_2027/adjuntos/publications_in_english/basque_in_Education_en.pdf) (Bealtaine 2014)
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: the role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Genesee, F. (1985). Second language learning through immersion: A review of U.S. programs. *Review of Educational Research*, 55(4), 541-561.
- Genesee, F. (1998). French immersion in Canada. In J. Edwards (Ed.), *Language in Canada* (pp. 305-325). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Genesee, F., Holobow, N. E., Lambert, W. E., & Chartrand, L. (1989). Three

- elementary school alternatives for learning through a second language. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(3), 250-263.
- Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., Willems, P. P. and Doan Holbein, M. F. (2005). Examining the relationship between parental involvement and student motivation. *Educational Psychology Review*, 17(2), 99-123.
- Grolnick, W. S., Benjet, C., Kurowski, C. O. and Apostoleris, N. H. (1997). Predictors of parent involvement in children's schooling. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(3), 538-548.
- Grolnick, W. S. and Slowiaczek, M. L. (1994). Parents' involvement in children's education: A multi-dimensional conceptualization and motivational model. *Child Development*, 65, 237-252.
- Guimont, G. (2003). French immersion in different settings: A comparative study of student achievement and exemplary practices in immersion centres versus dual- and multi-track schools. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.
- Hannon, P., Morgan, A., & Nutbrown, C. (2006). Parents' experiences of a family literacy programme. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 4(1), 19-44. doi: 10.1177/1476718x06059788
- Harley, B. (1993). Instructional Strategies and SLA in Early French Immersion. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 15, 245-259.
- Harris, J. (2005). The role of ordinary primary schools in the maintenance and revival of Irish. In J. Cohen, K. T. McAlister, K. Rolstad & J. MacSwan (Eds), *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism* (pp. 964-977). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Harris, J., & Murtagh, L. (1999). *Teaching and learning Irish in primary school: A review of research and development*. Baile Átha Cliath: Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann.
- Harris, J. and Ó Laoire, M. (2006). *Language and literacy in Irish-medium primary schools: A review of the literature*. Baile Átha Cliath: CNCM.
- Harris, J., Forde, P., Archer, P., Nic Fhearaille, S. and O'Gorman, M. (2006). *Irish in Primary Schools: Long-Term National Trends in Achievement*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Hickey, T. (1998). Early immersion in Ireland: The Naíonra experience. In V. Regan (ed.) *Contemporary approaches to second language acquisition in social context*, (pp. 46-61). Dublin: University College Dublin.
- Hickey, T. (2001). Mixing beginners and native speakers in Irish immersion: Who is immersing whom? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57(3), 443-474.
- Hickey, T. (2007). Children's Language Networks in Minority Language Immersion: What goes in may not come out. *Language and Education*, 21(1), 46-65.
- Hill, N. E. and Taylor, L. C. (2004). Parental involvement and children's academic achievement: Pragmatics and issues. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 13(4), 161-164.
- Howard, E. R., Sugarman, J. and Christian, D. (2003). *Trends in two-way immersion: A review of the research*. Report 63. Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR/Johns Hopkins University.
- Hyland, Á. and Milne, K. (Eds) (1992). *Irish Educational Documents Volume II*. Baile Átha Cliath: CICE.
- ISEI-IVEI (2005). *Level 2 in Basque*. Bilbao: ISEI-IVEI Instituto Vasco de Evaluación e Investigación Educativa [http://www.isei-ivei.net/eng/pubeng/B2\\_ENGLISH1.pdf](http://www.isei-ivei.net/eng/pubeng/B2_ENGLISH1.pdf) (Bealtaine 2014).

- Johnstone, R. (2002). *Immersion in a second or additional language at school: A review of international research*. Stirling: Scottish CILT.
- Johnstone, R., Harlen, W., MacNeill, M., Stradling, B. and Thorpe, G. (1999). *The Attainments of Pupils Receiving Gaelic-medium Primary Education in Scotland*, Stirling: Scottish CILT.
- Kavanagh, L. (2014). Exploring parental involvement and home-school relations in Irish immersion education: Integrating multiple perspectives. *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*, 2(1), 119-136.
- Kavanagh, L. and Hickey, T. M. (2012). 'You're looking at this different language and it freezes you out straight away': identifying challenges to parental involvement among immersion parents. *Language and Education*, 1-19.
- Kelly, A. (2002). *Compulsory Irish: Language and Education in Ireland 1870s – 1970s*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.
- Kissau, S. (2003). The relationship between school environment and effectiveness in French immersion. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 87-104.
- Krashen, S. (1987) *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.
- Lapkin, S. (1991). Uses and misuses of research in school board decision-making: Examples from French immersion. *CONTACT*, 10(3), 3-4.
- Lapkin, S., Andrew, C. M., Harley, B., Swain, M. and Kamin, J. (1981). The immersion centre and the dual-track school environment and achievement in a French immersion program. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 6(3), 69-90.
- Lasagabaster, D. (2001). Bilingualism, Immersion Programmes and Language Learning in the Basque Country. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 22(5), 401-425.
- Lauchlan, F., Parisi, M., & Fadda, R. (2013). Bilingualism in Sardinia and Scotland: Exploring the cognitive benefits of speaking a 'minority' language. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 17(1), 43-56. doi: 10.1177/1367006911429622
- Lazaruk, W. (2007). Linguistic, academic, and cognitive benefits of French immersion. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(5), 605-628.
- Learning and Teaching Scotland (2010). *Literacy and Gàidhlig: Principles and Practice*. Dundee: Learning and Teaching Scotland.
- Lewis, W. G. (2006). Welsh-medium primary education: the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. In W. G. Lewis and H. G. Ff. Roberts (Eds) *Welsh-Medium and Bilingual Education*, (pp. 21-35). Bangor: University of Wales. [http://www.bangor.ac.uk/addysg/publications/Welsh\\_mediumBE.pdf](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/addysg/publications/Welsh_mediumBE.pdf) (Bealtaine 2014).
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lindholm-Leary, K. J. and Block, N. (2010). Achievement in predominantly low SES/Hispanic dual language schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 13(1), 43-60.
- Llywodraeth Cymru (2008). *Evaluation of the Immersion and Intensive Language Teaching Pilot Projects – Final Evaluation Report*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/research/081101immersionintensivelanguageteachingen.pdf> (Bealtaine 2014).
- Llywodraeth Cymru (2013). *Welsh-medium Education Strategy: Annual report 2012-13*. [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills) (30 Bealtaine 2014).
- Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru (2003). Iaith Pawb: A National Action Plan for a Bilingual

- Wales. <http://wales.gov.uk/depc/publications/welshlanguage/iaithpawb/iaithpawbe.pdf?lang=en> (Bealtaine 2014).
- Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru (2007). *Defining schools according to Welsh medium provision. Document number 023/2007*. Welsh Assembly Government.
- Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru (2009). *Welsh-medium Education Strategy*. [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills) (30 Bealtaine 2014).
- Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru (2010). *Welsh-medium Education Strategy*. [www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills](http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills) (30 Bealtaine 2014).
- Mac Murchaidh, C. (2008). Current attitudes to Irish. In C. Nic Pháidín & S. Ó Cearnaigh (Eds.), *A new view of the Irish language* (pp. 212-223). Dublin: Cois Life.
- MacNeil, M. M. (1997). Immersion Programs Employed in Gaelic-Medium Units in Scotland. *European Education*, 29(2), 101-110.
- Maguire, G. (1991). *Our own language: An Irish initiative*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Mercator. (2005). *Basque: The Basque language in Spain (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)* Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. [http://www.mercator-research.eu/fileadmin/mercator/dossiers\\_pdf/basque\\_in\\_spain2nd.pdf](http://www.mercator-research.eu/fileadmin/mercator/dossiers_pdf/basque_in_spain2nd.pdf) (Bealtaine 2014).
- Mhic Aoidh, E. (2012) *Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices in Irish-medium Early Years Foundation Stage Settings: a socio-cultural analysis*. Tráchtas neamhfhoilsithe, Ollscoil na Banríona, Béal Feirste.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miedel, W. T. and Reynolds, A. J. (1999). Parent involvement in early intervention for disadvantaged children: Does it matter? *Journal of School Psychology*, 37(4), 379-402.
- Murtagh, L. (2003). *Retention and attrition of Irish as a second language: A longitudinal study of general and communicative proficiency in Irish among second level school leavers and the influence of instructional background, language use and attitude/motivation variables*. Tráchtas PhD Neamhfhoilsithe, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.
- National Programme Conference. (1922). *National programme of primary instruction*. Dublin: Browne and Nolan.
- Nig Uidhir, G. (2001). Taithí an tumoideachais: Achar foghlama d'oideachasóirí. *Taighde agus Teagasc*, 1, 194-209.
- Ó Baoill, D. P. (1999). Social cultural distance, integrational orientation and the learning of Irish. In A. Chambers and D. P. Ó Baoill (Eds) *Intercultural Communication and Language Learning*, (pp.189-200). Dublin: The Irish Association for Applied Linguistics in association with the Royal Irish Academy.
- Ó Buachalla, S. (1988). *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press.
- Ó Cathalláin S. (2011). *Early Literacy in all-Irish Immersion Primary Schools: A micro-ethnographic case study of storybook reading events in Irish and English*. Stirling: University of Stirling. Unpublished PhD Dissertation.
- Ó Duibhir, P. (2008). *Teachers' attitudes towards the proficiency in French of their students in Grades 6-8 French immersion schools in Toronto and Ottawa*. Coláiste Phádraig, Baile Átha Cliath.
- Ó Duibhir, P. (2009). *The spoken Irish of sixth-class pupils in Irish immersion schools*. (PhD), Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath.
- Ó Giollagáin, C. and Mac Donnacha, S. (2008). The Gaeltacht Today. In C. Nic Pháidín

- agus S. Ó Cearnaigh (Eds) *A New View of the Irish Language*, (pp. 108-120). Dublin: Cois Life.
- Ó hAiniféin, D. (2007). *Iníúchadh ar na Múnlaí Tumoideachais Reatha i nGaelscoileanna i bPoblacht na hÉireann, agus ar na Caighdeáin Ghnóthachtála i Léitheoireacht an Bhéarla iontu*. Gaillimh: Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta, ÓNÉ Gaillimh.
- O'Hanlon, F., McLeod, W. agus Paterson, L. (2010). *Gaelic-medium Education in Scotland: choice and attainment at the primary and early secondary school stages*. <http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/Downloads/Aithisg%202010%20Report%20-%20GME%20Choice%20and%20Attainment.pdf> (Bealtaine 2014).
- O'Hanlon, F., Paterson, L. and McLeod, W. (2012). *Language Models in Gaelic-medium Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education*. <http://www.soillse.ac.uk/downloads/Modailean%20C%3%A0nain%20an%20am%20Foghlam%20Ro-sgoile,%20Bun-sgoile%20agus%20C%3%80rd-sgoile%20Meadhain-Gh%3%A0idhlig.pdf> (Bealtaine 2014).
- Ó Riagáin, P. (1997). *Language policy and social reproduction: Ireland, 1893-1993*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Ó Riagáin, P. (2008). Irish-language Policy 1922-2007: Balancing Maintenance and Revival. In C. Nic Pháidín and S. Ó Cearnaigh (Eag.) *A New View of the Irish Language*, (pp. 55-65). Dublin: Cois Life.
- Ó Tuathaigh, G. (2008). The State and the Irish Language: an Historical Perspective. In C. Nic Pháidín and S. Ó Cearnaigh (Eag.) *A New View of the Irish Language*, (pp. 26-42). Dublin: Cois Life.
- Parkes, J. and Ruth, T. (2011). How satisfied are parents of students in dual language education programs? 'Me parece maravillosa la gran oportunidad que le están dando a estos niños'. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(6), 701-718.
- Rialtas na hÉireann (2010). *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030*. Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair.
- Redknap, C. (2006). Welsh-medium and bilingual education and training: steps towards a holistic strategy. In W. G. Lewis and H. G. Ff. Roberts (Eds) *Welsh-Medium and Bilingual Education*, (pp. 1-19). Bangor: University of Wales. [http://www.bangor.ac.uk/addysq/publications/Welsh\\_mediumBE.pdf](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/addysq/publications/Welsh_mediumBE.pdf) (Bealtaine 2014).
- Sénéchal, M. and LeFevre, J. (2002). Parental involvement in the development of children's reading skill: A five-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 73, 445-460.
- Shannon, S. M. and Milian, M. (2002) Parents choose dual language programs in Colorado: A survey. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(3), 681-696.
- Shiel, G., Gilleece, L., Clerkin, A., & Millar, D. (2011). *Measúnachtaí náisiúnta 2010 ar léitheoireacht Bhéarla agus ar Mhatamaitic i scoileanna a bhíonn ag teagasc trí mheán na Gaeilge*. Baile Átha Cliath: An Foras Taighde ar Oideachas.
- Stephen, C., McPake J., McLeod, W., Pollock, I. agus Carroll, T. (2010). *Review of Gaelic Medium Early Education and Childcare*. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/315694/0100403.pdf> (Bealtaine 2014).
- Stryker, S. B., & Leaver, B. L. (1997). *Content-based instruction in foreign language education: Models and methods*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Swain, M. (2000). French immersion research in Canada: Recent contributions to SLA and applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 199-212.
- Swain, M., & Johnson, R. K. (1997). Immersion education: A category within bilingual



- education. In R. K. Johnson & M. Swain (Eds.), *Immersion Education: International Perspectives* (pp. 1-18). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2008). Lexical learning through a multitask activity: The role of repetition. In T. W. Fortune & D. J. Tedick (Eds.), *Pathways to multilingualism: Evolving perspectives on immersion education* (pp. 119-132). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Thomas, W. and Collier, V. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students: long-term academic achievement*. Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Whiting, E. F. and Feinauer, E. (2011). Reasons for enrollment at a Spanish-English two-way immersion charter school among high motivated parents from a diverse community. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(6), 631-651.