



COMHAIRLE
NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA

**Response of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to the Strategic Review of
Education being carried out by Professor George Bain**

01. Introduction

In the first instance Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta welcomes very much the principle of integration of school resources so as to ensure the best educational opportunities for children. CnaG recognises that the current deployment of provision can, in some instances, represent an underuse of resources and, in turn, affect the quality of the educational experience. CnaG recognises the complexity of the task in hand and, and while we embrace any change that will improve the educational experience, we also look forward to the values, ethos and specific needs of Irish-medium (IM) education being fully recognised and catered for within any new arrangements.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta has concerns, based on experience with other reviews and strategic documents, that there is a danger that our specific and unique needs will not be given full cognisance in the review and that IM will be dealt with simply as a ‘bolt on’ to a broader reform. It is our contention that the Bain review should provide an important opportunity to the Department of Education (DE) to understand and recognise that we have a dual language education system in Northern Ireland. If the important linguistic needs of IM are not fully recognised in a practical and operational fashion it is likely a new education structure may offer little to our sector, and may in fact, mitigate against its optimum function as an education provider. The review will, as a consequence, fail to ensure the best educational opportunities for children in the IM sector.

01. 1 The Status Quo

Traditionally the education sector has been defined according to religious ethos with the majority of schools being defined as Voluntary, Controlled, CCMS Maintained and Grant Maintained Integrated. While these traditional boundaries have become less clear in recent years they still form the major context within which education in N.I occurs.

IM education fits into most of the above brackets. However most of our provision fits within the bracket defined by DE as ‘Other Maintained’. It is important to note that IM Education is also found within the CCMS and Controlled sectors. It is also important to realise that several IM schools have an integrated ethos (both interdenominational and nondenominational), although because they are already defined as IM, no such legal definition exists with DE to give them this classification. While some IM schools may have a particular religious ethos, it is the *linguistic context* that defines IM schools and it is this area that will form the context of our submission.

01. 2 A definition of Irish-medium Education

Irish-medium education, or Gaeloideachas, is a form of education that follows the *immersion method*. Immersion education simply means that children, most of whom are from a single language (L1) background (English in NI), are taught through a

second language (L2). In the case of N. Ireland the L2 language is Irish, i.e. the children entering this system of education are ‘*immersed*’ in an Irish-speaking environment, which is the language of tuition for the majority of the curriculum. Irish is also the working language of activities within the school. English is also taught within IM schools. The formal teaching of English reading normally begins at the end of Year 3 or the start of Year 4. The aim of the IM system is to facilitate the linguistic ability of the child in Irish and English through a process known as ‘*additive bilingualism*’. Additive bilingualism refers to bilingualism that results when students add a second language (Irish) to their intellectual toolkit, while also developing conceptually and academically in their first language (English). The more balanced the children’s fluency is in both languages, the more likely these benefits will be attained. (Cummins 2001)

01. 3 Immersion Education Globally.

Immersion education is a global phenomenon which occurs in most countries of the world. Within the context of Ireland and Britain, immersion-education programmes are found in all countries i.e. Welsh immersion in Wales and England; Scottish-Gaelic Immersion in Scotland; Irish-Gaelic Immersion in Ireland, both NI and ROI and Manx Gaelic in the Isle of Man.

01. 4 Heritage Language Immersion

Many immersion schools, e.g. French immersion in Germany and English immersion in Japan, focus solely on the linguistic and academic benefits of additive bilingualism. Immersion as is practised in Irish-medium, Welsh-medium, Scottish-Gaelic and Manx-Gaelic schools, also has a strong heritage, language-protection and revival element. This language-revival element means that these schools are not just about academic skills. They actually seek to encourage a positive sociolinguistic environment for the use of the L2 language, both within the school and within the broader school community, i.e. among parents/carers and within the community as a whole.

It must also be recognised, that as heritage languages, the language rights of these groups are accepted in law, and there is an incumbent on the authorities to recognise these rights through positive action.

01. 5 Advantages of Immersion as carried out in Irish-medium schools

There are over 150 empirical studies carried out during the past 35 years that have reported positive associations between additive bilingualism and student’s development. These advantages can be broken down into several areas (Cummins 2001, Baker 1993):

01.5.1 Linguistic ability

Much of the research carried out indicates that children who undertake immersion programmes associated with additive bilingualism show an increased ability to learn

further languages (L3). (Cummins 2001; Baker 1993, Bild and Swain 1989; Cenoz and Valencia 1994; Sanz 2000).

01.5.2 Cognitive ability

There is significant research indicating that bilingual children are more likely to have highly developed cognitive skills (Baker 1993; Gonzalez 1999; Cummins 2001). A typical example of such research saw a group of bilingual 5-6 year olds (n=57) compared to a monolingual group (n=55). The results of two studies indicated that the bilingual children had better cognitive and creative abilities as well as metalinguistic awareness and advanced verbal and non verbal abilities (Riccardelli 1992;1993).

01.5.3 Academic Development

There is a strong link between bilingualism and academic results in a range of subjects (Cummins 2001). One such example was illustrated by Schlesinger (1991), whose research indicated that literacy in two languages enhances the intellectual and academic resources of bilingual students. More recently, government backed research from Scotland, carried out by Professor Richard Johnstone (unpublished), indicated that children in Scotland, in Gaelic-medium schools, when compared to children in English medium schools of a similar background, achieved higher results in almost all areas of the curriculum. Due to a lack of government-funded research there is no empirical information on IM in N.I. However, one research briefing published by DE indicated that former pupils of Irish-medium education attained a higher academic standard than might be expected among the general population of the same age group. (Hanna and Gallagher 2002).

01.5.4 Social and Community Development

There is significant evidence that indicates that there are many social advantages to immersion education and bilingualism. Research commissioned by DE indicated that past pupils of the sector had a very positive attitude to the educational and cultural experience they received (Hanna and Gallagher 2002). There was also an indication that, due to the cultural enrichment these children experienced, on the whole they were more open to cultural diversity (Hanna and Gallagher 2002). This local research is further supported by international studies, which indicate that immersion education and bilingualism tend to lead to a positive outlook in the child, and to a greater acceptance of difference and diversity in society (Cummins 2001). This important aspect of IM education should not be understated particularly in a N.I. that is emerging from conflict and is working towards a 'culture of tolerance' and a 'shared future'.

02. What makes Irish-medium schools different?

02. 6 The Imperative for a linguistically discrete environment within Irish-medium Education

What makes IM schools different is of course the Irish-language linguistic element, i.e. IM schools use Irish. Often at this point the understanding of IM education by people who are not directly involved in it begins and ends. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta feels that it is this ignorance of the intrinsic needs and of the context of IM within the broader educational sector that can mitigate against providing the correct environment for our schools and, more importantly, for the children in our schools.

The basic tenet of immersion education is that languages are best *acquired* rather than *learned*. For example in English medium schools only a fraction of one percent of children become fluent in a second language, (fluency being defined as the ability to communicate orally and in written form) however in IM schools the overwhelming majority become fluent in Irish.

To *acquire* a language we need to provide a *sociolinguistic* context for it i.e. the correct sociocultural context is essential for the effective acquisition of the second language. It is an imperative therefore to the success of the IM system that this is provided within our schools. This *sociolinguistic* context is at its optimum when it allows the children to follow full immersion in the language of both formal and informal school settings. This means that the context of lessons, play, sport, drama and the whole range of school and after-school activities need to be provided in the immersion language. This linguistic environment can be best achieved in a discrete environment. A dilution of such an environment reduces the efficacy of heritage language immersion as it diminishes the positive influence of the schools sociolinguistic setting.

02. 7 A discrete linguistic environment for teachers

Teachers and other staff in an Irish-medium school, unlike teachers who teach a second language as a subject, are using the language in a wide variety of contexts and in a more natural fashion. It is however important to understand that within the present N.I. context most of these teachers will have limited opportunities for using Irish outside their school. As language fluency does not remain constant and can diminish if not nourished, it is important to acknowledge the need for a language-rich environment for staff members. This Irish-speaking peer environment nourishes the teachers' own language and helps maintain and further enhance their 'natural' use of the language and, therefore, their ability to deliver the curriculum in that target language. This illustrates the importance of a discrete linguistic environment for IM education.

02. 8 Management structures and sociolinguistic need

The importance of good school-management and governorship cannot be underestimated within the life of the school. One important role carried out by senior management and governors in schools is their support in promoting the school and sectoral ethos. The IM sectoral ethos has unique needs that arise from the need to create a sociolinguistic context, that takes some time to fully appreciate. It is important that those involved in school management fully understand and promote this unique sectoral ethos that is fundamental to the optimum function of IM provision.

02. 9 Ongoing growth within the Irish-medium sector

Irish-medium education, in common with the Integrated sector, is showing strong and steady growth. However, unlike Integrated education, and indeed other sectors, the need for the children to be fluent in Irish means that the growth of the IM sector at post-primary level relies on children having gone through IM primary school and at least one year of preschool. This is not the case for other sectors which can draw on children horizontally from all English language sectors. For example, new post-primary integrated schools frequently draw significant numbers of children from both CCMS and controlled primary schools.

The eight-year lead-in period for IM children means that IM post primary provision is not on a level playing field with English-medium when setting up new provision and does not fit into the current enrolment models (50 in year 8) required to setup a post primary school. It is important therefore that planning for the IM sector allows for this specific need and allows schools to be founded with smaller numbers in the initial years.

03. Planning for the future

03. 10 Strategic Approach

From its foundation, CnaG has recognised the centrality of a strategic approach for the development of the IM sector to ensure that every child, whose guardian wishes, can access IM education (CnaG, 2005). Our development strategy is a public document that is produced in full consultation with all educational partners in a spirit of openness. This approach enables IM education to develop in a co-ordinated fashion and also allows DE and others to plan ahead for the sector as it grows.

03. 11 The implications of a poor understanding and poor planning by DE on the IM sector.

The growth of IM was, and still is, driven by demand from parents and communities to have their children educated in this linguistically rich setting. Even though funding for some IM schools had been granted before 2000, unlike other areas in the UK, the status of Immersion Education was not formally recognised by DE until the Good Friday Agreement. It was at this time that a mechanism for the development of IM education was developed with the foundation of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Implications

Due to ad hoc growth over several years, IM education had grown in several forms:

- At preschool level our sector falls into two main types, i.e., voluntary and statutory. Preschool education is a hugely significant part of the sector as it provides children with their initial contact with the language in a natural setting from as early as three years of age (CnaG, 2003). However, to date, there are only 3 statutory preschools in the IM sector.

This is an area of concern as, despite voluntary preschools offering the same level of curriculum as statutory preschools, they do not receive the same support and also receive significantly less finance.

- IM primary schools fall into 3 categories; (i) stand alone other-maintained IM schools, (ii) CCMS stand alone IM schools and IM units within English medium CCMS schools and (iii) a stand alone Controlled IM school. In stand alone schools it has been relatively easy to manage the environment to ensure that the linguistic needs of children and staff are met. In the instance of units in English-medium primary schools, the success has been more random. This situation has been exacerbated by DE's preference for units as a 'cheaper option' without any understanding or thought for the specific linguistic needs of children and staff. The management of units has been left to principals, trustees and staff, who, though well-intentioned, often struggle to understand the sectoral ethos and sociolinguistic needs of IM schools, and lack the linguistic skills to manage these new educational linguistic settings (See sections 02.6 & 02.7)
- The provision of units in English-medium post-primary schools as a strategy for the development of IM post primary provision is also a challenge. In the post-primary review environment there is an imperative on schools to collaborate to fulfil the educational entitlement. This will mean that in an Irish-medium context there will be a greater need for post-primaries to work very closely together to ensure the maximum provision of the subject range through Irish. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta has developed a strategy to ensure the best possible delivery of the educational entitlement through Irish (Shaw 2005). An alliance of future Irish-medium post primary provision can only function at its optimum where Coláiste Feirste, which has the teacher base and resources, is facilitated to share these with smaller providers in other areas. This is currently common practice in Wales for Welsh-medium post-primary provision. If DE continues to pursue its preferred option of post-primary units as 'bolt-ons' to English language schools, this will result in a number of small units delivering a limited subject choice through Irish in schools that do not provide the *sociolinguistic* environment for the students' language to flourish. This, in effect, is not Irish-medium education, but rather a sort of poor half-way house which will ultimately fail to deliver. This fact has been evidenced by the inability of two existing IM post-primary units in Belfast and Derry to offer even the minimum core curriculum at key stage 3 through Irish. Poorly thought out 'cheap solutions' undermine confidence in the sector at all levels and actively militate against the future development of the sector at post-primary level and in general

03. 12 Current situation in relation to development of provision.

The current legislative definition of an IM school is indicative of the Department of Education's failure to understand the important sociolinguistic features that define the IM sector and is clearly unfit for purpose. It reads "*a school is an Irish speaking school if more than one half of the teaching of religious education and the minimum*

content of the areas of learning other than that called language and literacy is conducted (wholly or partly) in Irish and 'school' includes part of a school".

The teaching of religious education has no bearing on immersion education. This reflects the inability and unwillingness of DE to define education in any terms other than religious ones. The impracticability of determining what constitutes half of the teaching of either religious education or of the minimum content of areas of learning conducted partly in Irish in part of a school is self-evident.

Irish-medium education is expanding in an overall scenario of decline in the numbers of children. It is the view of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta that the growth of this currently small sector should not be ignored in relation to the overall demographic decline. The current legislative definition of the sector should not be allowed to mitigate against the achievement of IM education in practice. The growth and needs of IM immersion education must be fully recognised in the new climate for education. We feel that the restructuring of education provides opportunities to be imaginative and positive in the use of educational infrastructure and estate for the benefit of all sectors.

04. Proposed models for delivery of Irish-medium Education

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta accepts that there are many available choices in the restructuring of education. We have presented various models of provision in the context of the opportunities and issues for the IM sector.

This section of the paper is based on an earlier paper presented by CnaG to DE in an attempt to persuade DE to look imaginatively at the development of the Irish-medium sector (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2004)

04. 13 Establishing and consolidating schools.

Currently the establishment of any school is extremely challenging. Demand must be established, a committee must be established, a site must be found and staff must be appointed. In addition, a range of other challenges need to be addressed including legal matters, curriculum issues and child protection.

The current stand alone IM school model has many benefits in relation to the creation of the sociolinguist ethos in all areas of the school and in relation to facilitating staff, pupil, management and community involvement. In many areas, the stand alone model will remain the preferred option for establishing new provision. However, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is committed to exploring other options that can meet the needs of the wider educational sector but that can also meet the sociolinguistic and sectoral ethos needs of the IM sector.

This portion of the paper aims to look at ways in which new schools can be established and managed in relation to existing provision. Irish-medium is growing at nursery, primary and post-primary levels and this expansion will create many challenges. New arrangements should be flexible and open to the many potential models of provision in a changing future.

04. 14 Opportunities and issues for preschool development

04.14.1 IM Statutory Preschools (Naíscoileanna)

Though preschool education does not seem to fall under the remit of this review, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta feels that it is important to include IM preschool provision in our submission to the review for the following reasons; (1) statutory preschool provision comes under the remit of DE and therefore will come into the scope of the review and (2) preschool education is a very important element in Irish-medium education. Preschool provision provides the sociolinguistic foundations for the majority of children who enter IM primary provision. IM preschool provides early contact with the immersion setting and may bring forward the advantages of ‘*additive bilingualism*’ earlier in school life.

Issues

Currently a very low percentage of IM provision occurs within a statutory setting even though a number of IM schools are seeking to provide statutory provision. The development of the statutory preschool sector where appropriate within an IM context offers a considerable opportunity to schools by allowing them to access further

support, to employ qualified teachers with the essential linguistic abilities and to stabilise funding.

Opportunities:

This review presents a significant opportunity for facilitating the development of statutory IM preschool provision where appropriate. This is a relatively simple option for the strategic review as the statutory provision can, in most cases, be developed as preschool units attached to existing primary provision. This is **relatively simple** and cost effective, requiring only a small extension or addition to an existing IM school.

04.14.2 Redeployment of other preschool premises

As IM is growing in a context of overall decline in numbers of school children, an opportunity must be given to IM providers to avail of buildings and resources that become available as a result of the decline in other sectors. In the case of stand alone preschools that may be due to close it would seem sensible that a mechanism be created that allows resources to be deployed before they are lost to education or sold on the open market. Currently there is no mechanism for IM schools to acquire use of these premises. In the past, schools have been shut and the capital resources disposed of while existing IM provision has been in need of permanent premises. It is very wasteful of publicly-funded resources if premises no longer required by one sector cannot be made available to another sector. There is a risk that if a mechanism for the redeployment of premises is not found that a scenario that promotes wasting of publicly-funded resources will continue.

04. 15 New models for primary (bunscoileanna) development and management;

04.15.1 Change in School Status (School transformation)

Irish-medium education should be facilitated to use a model based on that employed by the Integrated sector (NICIE) for school transformation. Changing the school status from an English-language school to an Irish-medium school. The Department of Education has already prepared guidelines on this matter relating to the controlled and integrated sector but no such mechanism applies for IM. This situation is currently militating against the development of IM in areas where surplus school premises are available.

Opportunities:

- Buildings available for education would be used without wasting resources. It would not be strategic to build a new school building when another school might soon be empty.
- There would be a reduction in the number of schools in an area and thus savings would be made to the benefit of the education sector in general...

Issues

- If the transformation of the school did not include the relevant changes to management and board of governors it could militate against the provision of

the important *sociolinguistic* setting needed for quality IM (See sections 02.6 & 02.7).

- The transition period for transformations would have to consider the short term management of English-medium older age groups in the school. In this case it is very important that interim management arrangements with regard to space and time management of the school allow for this transition without diminishing the IM experience. In this sense the transition years would in effect need management similar to that of a shared campus school (see below).

04.15.2 Founding multi-campus primary schools (A confederation of primary schools)

This means that two or more schools would be placed under one management body. Schools in various areas that are within a reasonable geographical area would be become part of one large multi-campus school and thus would be able to share resources. A school such as this could well be a useful model of management within several settings, however this could prove particularly relevant in a rural setting.

As a result of a fall in the population, the question of rationalisation usually arises. Rationalisation may not alone be the answer, especially in relation to small rural communities who rely on the school and may have difficulty in accessing transport. It is therefore perhaps more suitable in this instance to bring together collaborative arrangements that will allow joint management of several campuses. This could be done by bringing together (at least) two small schools, which are already established, under a new board of governors and/or principal. In this way the human resources and management skills of the schools could be shared without challenging the individual needs and ethos of the different campuses. It is important to understand that management of schools in this fashion is already in use in areas such as Cumbria in England and has added significantly to the quality of provision.

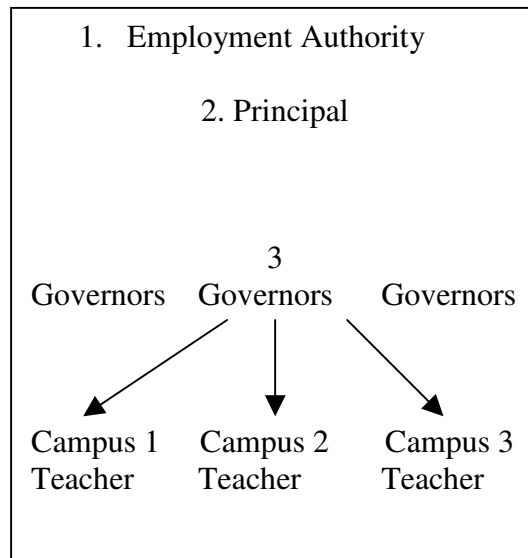
Opportunities

- Schools of different ethos (i.e. Irish medium and English medium) would be able to share limited resources including equipment and personnel.
- The Principal could be a full-time, non-teaching manager who could offer leadership and a vision for the schools. This would be preferable to two teaching principals who would have to share responsibility between teaching and management.
- There would be a greater opportunity to access staff with a high standard of leadership skills, especially in country areas where the pool of potential principals may be limited.

Issues for IM

- A principal would be required who had the respective linguistic skills understanding and experience to manage both campuses.
- The management and board of governors of the IM campus would need to reflect the sociolinguistic needs of that campus school as to understand and cater for the specific needs of IM.

An example of line management in a multi-campus school



04.15.3 Satellite-schools

The concept of satellite schools at primary level should be considered in relation to; 1 - newly established IM schools which would be able to obtain permanent recognition in the future, but which are small at present; 2 - newly established IM schools which are under pressure with regards to school developments because of a lack of management experience.

This could be a temporary arrangement between an IM ‘mother-school’ and IM satellite but would be adequate to ensure and secure the standard of provision through support from a long-established ‘mother-school’.

Opportunities:

- It would be beneficial for the satellite-school’s teachers and pupils to be officially linked with a IM mother-school to share larger educational and management resources. The satellite-school would benefit from the experience of the mother-school on specific IM issues including language management, immersion skills, language policies, advantages of additive bilingualism in education, and use of a sociocultural context to promote tolerance and diversity.
- The Irish-medium education system is still young and therefore many of the teachers in the sector are still young. The satellite-school would give new schools the opportunity to avail of expertise and remove the pressure to appoint its own principal until the correct juncture in the schools development.

Issues

The would have to be clear guidelines as to the long term goal of the school regarding when the satellite becomes a free standing school, or whether it would it be best to move toward a multicampus IM school as a long-term structure.

Other opportunities and possibilities for Satellite-Schools and multi-campus Schools

- the use of information technology to deliver some curriculum components for small schools;
- the delivery of teacher in-service training courses for remote schools through information technology / video conferencing;
- the development of an internet-based mentoring or peer support scheme for new principals and teachers;
- the sharing of administration arrangements with other schools, especially bigger schools;
- the negotiation with the nearest bigger school of job-share arrangements for staff;
- the 'growing' of their own teachers by small rural schools through supporting tertiary students to train as teachers, with the requirement that they return to teach in the district for a specified period on completion of training.
- in relation to Irish-medium schools, this kind of management between schools of a similar ethos offers extra linguistic and immersion education opportunities by creating an extending educationally linguistic environment.

04.15.4 Shared campuses

Shared campuses offer many advantages of education provision while still protecting the ethos, and in the case of IM, socio linguistic needs of the school. This concept, which is being used in Scotland, allows two different schools to share the same building in two discrete areas. It is important to note that sharing of some common resources could and should be a feature, i.e. car parking, technology suites, canteen service, sports fields etc. This model could allow the two schools to maintain their ethos, management, governorship and to maintain their integrity, but there would be advantages of economies of scale for the two schools sharing a single campus.

Opportunities

- Schools could maintain their ethos, (in the case of IM its sociolinguistic environment).
- An IM school could benefit from accessing an existing building in which there is a significant access of space.
- Schools would benefit from economies of scale in relation to the use of shared resources.
- There would be less duplication of resources; this saving could mean that resources could go into front-line services.
- There would a saving of capital resources to the tax payer.

- There would be a real opportunity for functional co-operation between schools of different linguistic ethos leading to mutual understanding and acceptance between students and staff.

Issues

- There is a risk that management agreements and space deployments between the two schools would mitigate against the discrete sociolinguistic environment required for IM (See sections 02.6 & 02.7) . This issue could be relatively easily addressed using by a mixture of good building design and time-tabling of use of shared space.

04. 16 New models for Post-primary Education (Iar-bhunscolaíocht)

The issue of post-primary education is possibly the largest and most challenging issue concerning the development and strengthening of Irish-medium education. According to the strategy there are currently 8 to 9 secondary school areas which will require post-primary education (CnaG, 2005). As previously stated, significant research has been commissioned by CnaG in relation to looking at entitlements at post-primary (Shaw 2005). It is our contention that the success of post primary both in being able to provide the widest possible service of subjects through IM while providing the sociolinguistic environment is of utmost importance.

04.16.1 Satellite-schools and multicampus post-primary schools (Irish-medium mother-school and Irish-medium satellite school)

Currently only Coláiste Feirste in Belfast would be adequately developed to help establish and develop a new satellite school. Only Coláiste Feirste can offer the specific range of subjects and can demonstrate a track record in providing the necessary sociolinguistic needs to support a new satellite school. This would allow the new satellite, which may be some distance from the mother school, to develop, with the benefit of specialist IM support in management and teaching from the mother school. Deployment of senior staff, teaching staff and other services could be managed in a ‘whole school fashion’ to assure high quality of IM education for both campuses. In the medium term, growth in the new campus would allow ‘economies of scale’ to benefit both campuses in relation to numbers of teachers that could be hired overall and the subsequent range of subject choice that could be provided through Irish.

Opportunities:

- The method, subject range and sociolinguistic environment of IM would be protected.
- Management expertise and IM specific knowledge could be shared
- Technology could be used in a ‘real time’ environment between campuses to enrich the teaching, learning and sociolinguistic experience in a context of mutual benefit. This real time high cognitive learning is an important high end function in the use of additive bilingualism to improve academic achievement and personal development (Cummins, 2001)

Issues

- The interests of local communities within the campuses could, if not fully recognised, be underutilised; this could be avoided by founding a local management board for the satellite school which would be keenly important in creating the community link which is a strength in all schools but which also has important sociocultural significance in IM education.

04.16.2 Shared campuses between IM and English Medium post primary schools

As with primary schools, CnaG see the logic in sharing post primary campuses while assuring that ethos issues, and in our case, sociolinguistic environments are protected. This arrangement would of course not predicate against any internal IM sectoral arrangements such as referred to above in 4.15.1.

It is important to note that the shared campus benefits local management of school buildings but still allows for a link with a mother school which is some distance away. This sort of management could, where relevant, allow for a local and sectoral approach to the challenge of new post-primary provision.

Opportunities

One such opportunity could exist if a small English medium and a small IM school shared a campus This would lead to advantages such as:

- Both schools mutually benefitting from the economies of scale from being linked with the other school regarding resources, accommodation, SEN etc.
- The IM ethos and needs being assured at all levels.
- Proximity between two schools contributing to local collaboration at many levels which would promote the ideals of a shared future as a local community reality as opposed to a distant government objective.

04. 17 Other forms of school management

04.17.1 Extended primary schools and/or Junior and senior schools

Due to the disparate nature of some schools from other providers, CnaG would recommend, where appropriate, the use of junior and senior schools. These schools would be free-standing or linked to existing IM primary schools as a multi-level school (see 0.416.2). For example, instead of a primary school ranging from primary 1 – primary 7, the school may continue to year 10. This would be possible under the new educational arrangements that will allow the first 3 years of the new post-primary curriculum to be delivered by a relatively small number of teachers.

Opportunities

- The sociolinguistic and specific IM needs of children could continue in a seamless link through to key stage 4.

- Schools which are some distance from the nearest IM post- primary could deliver the post-primary curriculum for several years thus ensuring a greater transfer of children to IM post primary, for parents to whom travel may have been an issue when their children are still relatively young. According to the new curriculum, the need for subject specialists will not be as keen at this level. At junior level the subjects can be shared between fewer teachers. For example, it could happen that one teacher could be qualified to teach humanities, a second person to teach science and technology, a third teacher to teach languages and a fourth person to teach sport and another for vocational subjects.
- Management Resources and key physical resources can be shared by the whole school from year 1 to year 10.

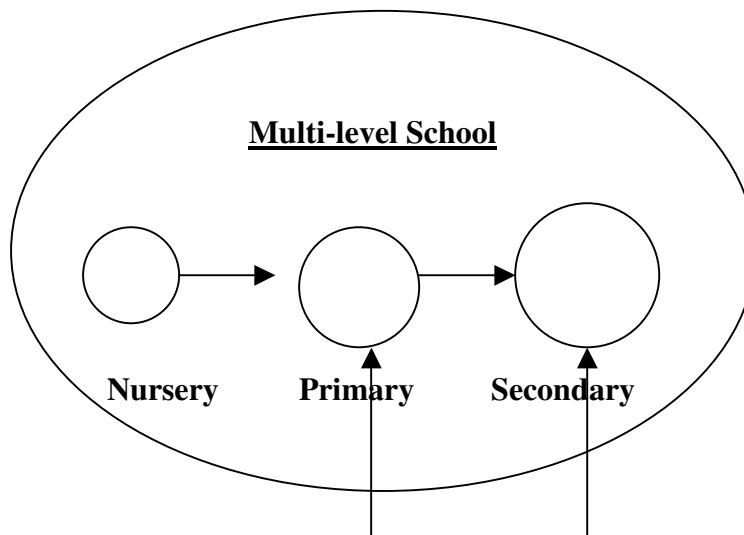
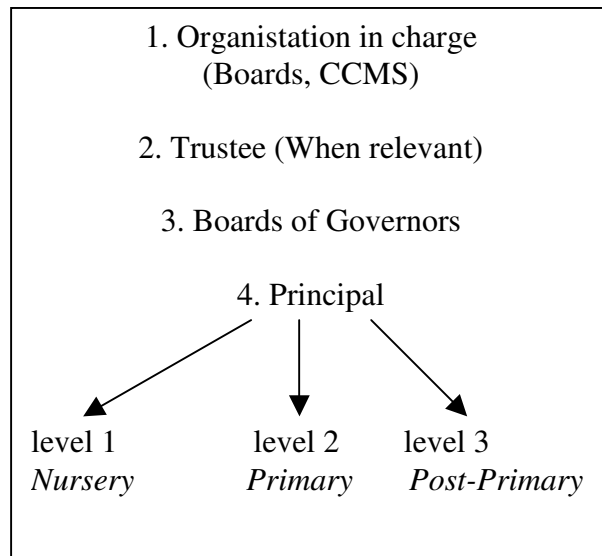
Issues

- Management with the proper understanding of IM post primary would be required to provide an enhanced curriculum. This could be achieved by making links with other IM schools.

04.17.2 Multi-level Schools

This school would comprise a nursery school, primary school and post-primary education provision. This would once again allow economies of scale to be availed of in relation to many common areas of use.

School Management line in a multi-level school



Children from other schools to enter at primary and secondary level

Opportunities

- There would be a large number of children in the entire school thus allowing the schools to avail of economies of scale in terms of capital resources.
- There would be more continuity between the education layers.

- The principal would be able to share resources between every level.
- The IM sociolinguistic environment could be assured in a continuum from nursery to post-primary.

Issues

- A fuller management staff would be needed i.e. 3 vice-principals at the various levels.
- The school must ensure that there is not a physical crossing on campus to ensure the safety of small infants and the primary school children.

04. 18 Use of technology

It is understood in all models that in future there will be more opportunities and indeed a much greater imperative to use technology for distant learning. Many schools in places such as the Scottish islands, Wales and Northern England now use this form of delivery to enrich teaching both in the range and in the method of learning. CnaG see a great linguistically educational advantage in pursuing technology to promote IM education, and to this end we envisage that any new educational arrangement must allow for this (see: 04.14.13)

05. Conclusion.

There are many challenges ahead in the restructuring of education and as with all changes, both opportunities and risks are intrinsic factors. It is our contention that in the case of the current work in relation to the English medium sector, the opportunities outweigh the risks. The future of IM could also be strengthened within any new structure but without undue care borne of an understanding and appreciation of the needs of the sector, this will not be achieved. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and IM in general have suffered from the DE's less than informed view as to what IM is and what its specific needs are. 'Adequate funding' is a term that arises many times in the Bain review document and it is our concern that this must not be used as an excuse not to provide a 'fit for purpose schools' estate. IM is a central and growing part of educational life in N.I and as such must have equality of access. If the community of N.I. is to have a real opportunity to choose IM, then its real needs as opposed to the less than clear legal fudge that currently exists, (see 03.11) must be achieved. A shared future means equal terms and equal terms come from an understanding and appreciation of all our needs. CnaG welcomes this paper as an opening 'statement' in providing a basic context in which the intrinsic needs of the unique IM environment can be explained. We do however appreciate that because these needs take both time to explain and experience to appreciate, it is part of our submission that CnaG should have the opportunity to be fully involved at every stage of this review. No other body in N.I. has the wealth of experience in IM that Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta can demonstrate and therefore we feel it would be useful and essential for us to fulfill this role during the review process.

We once again welcome the opportunity afforded by the Bain process to make this submission and look forward to a positive and imaginative outcome that will benefit all our children.

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