
RESEARCH REPORT SERIES

The Professional Development of Teachers and Principals in Irish-Medium Education

By

**Damian Knipe, Grace Bunting, Joe Ó Labhraí,
Gabrielle Nig Uidhir and Eibhlín Mhic Aoidh
St. Mary's University College, Belfast**

No 34, 2004



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Department of
Education

www.deni.gov.uk

AN ROINN
Oideachais

MÁNNYSTRIE O
Lear

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

	Page
Table 1: ITE Qualifications for Graduates (1985 – 2002)	20
Table 2: ITE Qualifications for Irish-Medium Teachers	23
Figure 1: Percentage Breakdown of Age-Bands of Teachers in Irish-Medium Schools in Northern Ireland	33
Figure 2: Percentage Breakdown of Age-Bands of Principals in Irish-Medium Schools in Northern Ireland	34
Figure 3: Percentage Breakdown of Key Stages Taught by Primary School Teachers	34
Figure 4: Percentage Breakdown for Teachers of Number of Years Teaching in Current Irish-Medium School	35
Figure 5: Percentage Breakdown for Teachers of Number of Years Teaching in General	35
Figure 6: Percentage Breakdown of Number of Years in Role of Principal in Irish-Medium School	36
Figure 7: Percentage Breakdown for Principals of Number of Years Teaching in General	36
Figure 8: Teachers' Qualifications Leading to Eligible to Teach Status	37
Figure 9: Principals' Qualifications Leading to Eligible to Teach Status	38
Figure 10: Types of In-Service Training Courses Attended by Teachers in the Previous Two Years	39
Figure 11: Types of In-Service Training Courses Attended by Principals in the Previous Two Years	39
Figure 12: Relevance of INSET Courses Attended by Teachers	40
Figure 13: Relevance of INSET Courses Attended by Principals	40
Figure 14: The Most Relevant INSET Courses Reported by Teachers	41
Figure 15: The Most Relevant INSET Courses Reported by Principals	41

	Page
Figure 16: Benefits of INSET Courses Attended by Teachers	42
Figure 17: Benefits of INSET Courses Attended by Principals	42
Figure 18: The Most Beneficial INSET Courses Reported by Teachers	43
Figure 19: The Most Beneficial INSET Courses Reported by Principals	43
Figure 20: Quality of INSET Courses Attended by Teachers	44
Figure 21: Quality of INSET Courses Attended by Principals	44
Figure 22: The Best Quality INSET Courses Reported by Teachers	45
Figure 23: The Best Quality INSET Courses Reported by Principals	45

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this report would like to acknowledge those who made this research possible:

- the Department of Education who commissioned and funded the research;
- the principals who kindly facilitated access to the Irish-medium schools/units;
- the teachers and principals who completed and returned questionnaires;
- the representatives from the Education and Library Boards, the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, the Regional Training Unit, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Universities and University Colleges who were interviewed;
- the Steering Group set up by the Department of Education for their advice and assistance in devising the questionnaire;
- staff from the Irish Department at St. Mary's University College.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a research project commissioned by the Department of Education (DE) undertaken by a team of researchers from St. Mary's University College, Belfast.

The focus of the study was the current provision for initial teacher education (ITE) and the professional development of teachers and principals in Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland. The first objective was to investigate ITE provision for and qualifications gained specifically by teachers in Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland. These are set alongside available information on ITE provision for and teacher qualifications in Northern Ireland generally. The second objective was to collect information on the provision for and uptake of general and specific professional in-service training (INSET) and support opportunities for teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools. The third objective was to collect and analyse attitudinal information from staff in Irish-medium schools on the range and quality of the professional INSET and support opportunities they have experienced.

Fieldwork for the research was carried out between October 2002 and January 2003. In total, 74% of teachers and 72% of principals from Irish-medium primary schools, and 77% of teachers and 67% of principals from Irish-medium post-primary schools completed and returned questionnaires.

The questionnaires looked primarily at demographic details such as gender, age, year of class, years teaching, years in role of principal, responsibilities held, qualifications, etc. There was also an emphasis on determining: the in-service courses attended and their relevance, benefits and quality; in-service courses which should be offered; in-service courses to be delivered in the Irish language; support offered for attending in-service courses; and problems experienced when wishing to attend in-service courses.

The following sections present the main findings relating to the provision of ITE and qualifications gained by teachers and principals; the provision and uptake of INSET and support from providers – the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Regional Training Unit (RTU), the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Universities, University Colleges and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; the age, level of experience, responsibilities and qualifications of teachers and principals; and the experiences, attitudes and needs of teachers and principals regarding in-service provision.

Main Findings

Initial Teacher Education and Qualifications

ITE that is specific to Irish-medium education encompasses two types of qualifications, namely the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Irish-Medium Education) and the Bachelor of Education, both offered at St. Mary's University College and both leading to

the College certificate *Teastas san Oideachas Dátheangach agus sa Tumoideachas* (Certificate in Bilingual and Immersion Education).

ITE provision from a general perspective, again encompasses two types of qualifications and are offered in Northern Ireland by four providers, namely Stranmillis University College, St. Mary's University College, The Queen's University of Belfast, and The University of Ulster. The qualifications include, the Bachelor of Education (Primary or Secondary) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

The ITE qualifications obtained by teachers in Irish-medium schools include: Postgraduate Certificate in Education (56%); Bachelor of Education (27%); Higher Diploma in Education (12%); Bachelor of Arts Education (4%); and Certificate in Education (1%). For principals their initial education qualifications include: Postgraduate Certificate in Education (50%); Bachelor of Education (30%); Bachelor of Arts Education (10%); and Certificate in Education (10%).

The ITE qualifications obtained by teachers in general in Northern Ireland (1985-2002) include: Postgraduate Certificate in Education (48%); Bachelor of Education (42%); Bachelor of Arts Education (4%); Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science Education (5.1%); Special Diploma in Education (0.5%); Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Irish-Medium Education) (0.3%); and Certificate in Education (0.1%).

In-Service Training Providers

A prospectus containing details of all INSET courses is disseminated annually by each ELB to every grant-aided school in Northern Ireland. There is also a move towards an on-line service whereby schools can access course details and application forms via the Internet.

Some INSET providers stated that offering materials and resources in the Irish language would cut down on teachers' workload of having to translate for use with pupils in class. However, in order for this to happen, providers would require extra resources, direction and guidance for the translation of training material. Although there were some resources and materials provided in Irish, the general consensus was that the majority of INSET resources and materials were provided in the English language.

One ELB reported that, upon receiving a specific request from an Irish-medium school, negotiations would be made with the school on the possibility of catering for a specialised INSET course related to the particular needs of the school.

One INSET provider felt that the issue of courses being provided in the English language, rather than the Irish language, should not prevent teachers and principals from enrolling on a course.

INSET courses have been offered in the past specifically for Irish-medium schools, however, on two occasions a lack of uptake on the part of teachers in the sector prevented them from taking place, for example, at a Summer School and a University College.

Demographics of Teachers and Principals

Half the teachers in Irish-medium schools are thirty years of age or less. Three quarters have been teaching in their current school for six years or less, with a fifth having only started during the past year. In general, half the teachers have teaching experience of six years or less.

A third of principals in Irish-medium schools are below the age of thirty-five. The vast majority (90%) have occupied their role in the school for six years or less, with nearly a fifth having only done so during the past year. A third of principals have less than fifteen years teaching experience.

Four out of ten principals occupy the dual role of teaching principal.

Nearly three quarters of the teachers hold one or more posts/responsibilities, with just under half of these teachers receiving no responsibility allowance for the posts they occupy.

7% of the teachers surveyed did not have a qualification giving them *eligible to teach* status, however, all but two of these were substitute teachers. One of the two is on a year contract in a school hoping to study for a PGCE in the future, while the other is currently acting as head of department in a school having been employed there for ten years.

Four out of ten teachers and seven out of ten principals did not have a specific Irish-medium element to their qualifications.

A quarter of primary school teachers' and principals' teaching qualifications focused on post-primary education.

Two thirds of teachers and principals are not currently working towards any further qualifications.

Teachers' and Principals' Attitudes to INSET Provision

Just under 600 attendances at INSET courses were made by teachers during the previous two years, resulting in an average of approximately 6 per teacher, with just under 100 attendances at INSET courses being made by principals, an average of 5 per principal.

Three quarters of the INSET courses attended by teachers and nearly two thirds attended by principals were provided by the ELBs.

The vast majority of attendances at INSET courses by teachers and principals were at those delivered in the English language, with 10% at courses delivered in the Irish language.

Approximately half the number of teachers rated the INSET courses they attended high or very high in terms of relevance to teaching and learning in the classroom; benefits in relation to their professional development; and quality of delivery, content and resources.

More than three quarters of the principals rated the INSET courses they attended high or very high in terms of relevance to their current role, with two thirds rating them such in terms of benefits relating to their professional development. Just over half the principals rated the quality of delivery, content and resources as high or very high.

A variety of INSET courses were highly rated by teachers in relation to relevance, benefits and quality, for example, literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT), assessment (level training), teaching and learning, and behaviour management. This was also true for principals regarding courses on management and school leadership, ICT, behaviour management and child protection. A range of diverse reasons for these high ratings was identified.

For INSET courses on literacy, numeracy and ICT, these reasons were due to the provision of informative and practical ideas, activities, strategies and advice for developing teachers' skills and constructively improving teaching and learning in the classroom. This was particularly so when backed up with the provision of good quality resources. The teachers also welcomed information that kept them abreast of new developments within education, as well as new ideas and resources that enhanced and updated their teaching skills. Raising teachers' awareness of new teaching strategies and techniques relevant to implementing the literacy and numeracy strategies were also advantageous, as was improving teachers' ICT skills in order to effectively use ICT as a learning tool in the classroom. When INSET was well presented, resourced appropriately and sustained the interest of the teachers, then it was found to be of high quality. This was also true when the providers were well organised, had a sound knowledge of the subject area, and were aware of potential difficulties involved in classroom teaching.

INSET courses on assessment (level training), teaching and learning, and behaviour management were highly rated when providers gave information, guidelines, and strategies which raised their confidence in approaching such matters. This enabled them to cater for different learning abilities and helped manage potential difficulties in class. High quality delivery and content was evident when providers were enthusiastic and experienced in their subject area, and when they accompanied this with a variety of interesting methods useful to the classroom situation.

Even though teachers did rate INSET courses highly, there was still concern with the lack of specific Irish-medium material and resources provided, ultimately resulting in the additional workload of teachers having to translate before use in the classroom.

INSET courses on management and school leadership, ICT, behaviour management and child protection were rated highly by principals due to the enhancement of skills and strategies related to managing, motivating and training staff, developing school policies and leading the school in an effective manner. Principals also saw exploring the theory and practice of successful management, and discussing issues of common interest with other principals as being beneficial to their professional development. Quality was deemed to be of a high standard when providers held the attention of the principals, demonstrated excellent knowledge of the subject areas, and when interaction and discussion became part of the course. This was also true when information was supplemented by excellent, up-to-date resources.

It was felt by a number of teachers that many INSET courses on literacy, at present, do not meet the particular needs of Irish-medium schools due to resources and guidelines being geared towards English-medium schools which are difficult to transfer to the Irish-medium sector. Guidance and support on how to teach English in an Irish-medium setting was called for, as well as INSET courses and resources in Irish for spelling strategies, teaching phonics and phonographix. INSET provision on creative reading, writing and structured play were areas which teachers felt were necessary to address specifically for the Irish-medium classroom. Teachers also reported a lack of training and resources in the areas of music, drama and physical education for Irish-medium education.

In the context of mathematics, science and geography, teachers expressed a need for INSET with a focus on specific language and terminology requirements in these areas of the curriculum. This was accompanied by a call for INSET courses on specific resources for ICT to suit Irish-medium needs.

There was a sense from some teachers and principals that INSET courses should be offered through the Irish language because it is the language through which the children in school are taught; the strategies used in English-medium cannot always be applied to Irish-medium; it could help provide terminology and make resources available for literacy, numeracy, ICT, etc. in Irish; it could develop teachers' literacy skills and provide strategies that teachers could use in classroom; it could address teaching in the context of Irish-medium education; it could encourage teachers to use and develop more the material given at INSET courses; it could promote language development; and it could reduce the workload and time teachers in Irish-medium education spend translating resources.

Very positive support and encouragement was apparent from the teachers in relation to attending INSET courses, especially if the course was relevant to a teacher's post/responsibility or was beneficial to the needs of the school. Information on INSET courses was generally made available in the staffroom. However, attendance at INSET courses was occasionally dictated by the availability and funding of suitable substitute cover, and this was sometimes referred to as a problem.

There were incidences however, of teachers receiving little or no support or information from the school regarding INSET, while others showed a reluctance to ask for permission to attend due to possibly putting the principal under pressure.

Recommendations

INSET providers should become more pro-active in determining the specific training needs of Irish-medium schools and individual teachers by consulting directly with staff on issues pertaining to their professional development.

INSET providers should conduct an audit of the necessity and costs associated with the supply of INSET materials in Irish for Irish-medium schools in order to meet teachers' professional development needs. Considering there are Irish-medium schools throughout all of the ELBs, there should be equality of provision for INSET materials to Irish-medium teachers in the Irish language in the same way it is provided to teachers in English-medium schools.

Non grant-aided Irish-medium schools should be included when disseminating details regarding INSET courses, and details of courses and application forms should be made available on-line by all INSET providers, so that teachers can access this information directly, rather than having to go through a third party.

Irish-medium teachers and principals should draw on the full provision of INSET courses which are appropriate, however providers should be sensitive, in an informed way, to the cultural and linguistic needs of Irish-medium education, so an assessment can be made regarding the appropriateness of offering an INSET course through the medium of Irish.

The minimum viability threshold for an INSET course specific to Irish-medium education should be given careful consideration by INSET providers due to the much smaller number of teachers in the sector.

INSET providers should be mindful of the relatively young age range and possible lack of experience of teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools, which would indicate the need for professional development training relating specifically to teaching in and managing an Irish-medium school. For example, those teachers who are interested in the Professional Qualification for Headship (PQH) may not as yet fit the criteria for entry onto the course, due to their lack of leadership and management experience.

Due to the added pressures associated with being a teaching principal in an Irish-medium school, it is more difficult for them to gain release for attendance at INSET courses, compared to non-teaching principals. This fact should be acknowledged accordingly, with due consideration given to their circumstances, perhaps resulting in provision being made specifically for them outside of school hours.

Provision for part-time ITE qualifications should be made to those teachers who are long-term substitutes in Irish-medium schools, so they have the opportunity to gain *eligible to teach* status.

Encouragement and support should be offered to teachers and principals in the Irish-medium sector who do not have a specific Irish-medium element to their qualifications in order for them to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and techniques particular to Irish-medium education.

It was suggested by principals of Irish-medium units that training in relation to the foundations and guiding principles of Irish-medium/bilingual education would be useful to assist them in talking to parents and promoting the sector. INSET needs to be directed at these principals to help raise their confidence and competence.

There is a need for INSET provision which caters for those teachers and principals who are not trained in primary education, yet are teaching in a primary school setting, and for those teachers in Irish-medium post-primary schools who are teaching subjects beyond their own specialisms.

INSET provision on literacy in Irish-medium education was highlighted as an area needing further development. Courses are necessary offering guidance to teachers on developing spelling strategies, the teaching of phonics, reading and creative writing, as well as achieving a healthy balance in teaching Irish and English to pupils so they become equally competent in both languages.

There is a call for Irish language INSET courses concentrating specifically on conveying subject specific terminology used in the classroom.

The creation of a regional forum or cluster group meetings for Irish-medium principals and teachers was suggested. This could be organised in collaboration with schools and INSET providers, offering the opportunity for staff within the sector to raise issues of common interest regarding professional development in Irish-medium schools.

In order to facilitate teachers and principals to attend relevant INSET courses, there is a real need to increase the number of suitably qualified teachers of Irish-medium education who can act as substitute teachers when required. The number of places available in higher education for initial teacher education specific to the Irish-medium sector may need to be increased.

Irish-medium schools need to become more pro-active in raising their awareness of INSET provision. Principals should ensure that teachers know what professional development support is on offer in the INSET prospectus/booklets and encourage them to attend.

INTRODUCTION

The first Irish-medium primary school was opened in Belfast in 1971 with a total of nine children and one teacher. The school was not grant-aided until 1984 and was funded through a variety of fundraising events organised by parents, teachers and other interested parties. Since its inception, the Irish-medium sector has always been marked by a sense of dogged determination among parents and teachers who were always prepared to make personal sacrifices for the good of their school; past pupils of the sector display a great sense of loyalty. Since Irish-medium schools received grant-aided status in 1984, the sector has been developing at a rapid rate. This growth has generally not been planned in any strategic way but was driven mainly by groups of local parents who were keen to have Irish-medium provision in their own area. At present the Irish-medium sector can boast 25 primary schools/units with almost 2000 pupils and 3 post-primary schools/units with another 500 pupils. On top of this, there is pre-school provision at 37 sites with a total of around 1000 children. All 5 ELBs and all 6 counties now have Irish-medium education of some kind. As the numbers in Irish-medium pre-schools indicate, there is set to be a rapid increase in demand in the next few years; indeed some involved in the development of the sector have laid plans for a further 60 new Irish-medium pre-schools and schools in the next 10 years! The figure of 60 new schools may seem very ambitious but the sector would not have survived at all without this kind of determined ambition; and even if only half this number is achieved, great difficulties will be created for everyone servicing the sector: responsible strategic planning needs to begin now.

The rapid growth of Irish-medium education, especially since 1984, has created great difficulties for everyone involved in the sector. As stated already the growth has happened largely because of parental demand which was met on an ad hoc basis without much strategic planning. New schools have, at times, struggled to attract suitable applications for teaching posts especially before achieving grant-aided status. The number of young teachers in the sector is much higher than the general situation: whereas young teachers bring lots of energy, enthusiasm etc. they lack experience, and often struggle if working in small schools without much support. It is not unheard of for a beginning teacher to be appointed as the first and only teacher in a newly established Irish-medium school. There is a shortage of ancillary staff with a fluency in Irish who are needed to create and sustain an Irish-speaking community in the school. There is a general lack of resources for the Irish-medium sector and teachers are often expected to create their own which are often very good indeed but never as attractive and polished as professionally produced material.

How can we ask teachers in the Irish-medium sector to prepare, teach, assess etc. like their English-medium peers; cater for children from exclusively English-speaking homes; carry an additional core subject at Year 4 and throughout Key Stage 2; translate and prepare resources; provide correspondence to parents in English and in Irish; translate minutes of meetings; work with composite classes; carry areas of responsibility without adequate experience, expertise or support, and indeed often without any financial reward; and deal with a dozen other problems that teachers in the English-medium sector would justifiably walk away from? Until quite recently the specific needs of the Irish-medium

sector were not catered for in any meaningful way. Teachers were somehow expected to get by and the children would be fine. Even today there is little research on the specific needs of the Irish-medium sector: teachers do their best but there is little reliable advice on how to cater for the linguistic needs of English-speaking children, who live in a largely English-speaking society, in an Irish-medium school; or the needs of the teachers in the Irish-medium sector the vast majority of whom are native English speakers who could be described as competent but imperfect continuing learners of Irish.

Official circles were slow to respond to the needs of the sector but great strides forward have certainly been made. Over the last 8 years or so key posts have been created and filled. Since 1995 there has been specialised Initial Teacher Education for the Irish-medium sector at St. Mary's University College. CCEA appointed a Principal Officer with responsibility for the Irish-medium sector in 1996. In 1998 An tÁisaonad lán-Ghaeilge was established on the site of St. Mary's University College. In 2000 an Irish-medium Advisory Officer was appointed on an interboard basis by the 5 ELBs to look after the needs of the Irish-medium sector. In 2001 Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta was established to manage the development of the Irish-medium sector in a strategic, coordinated manner; they have appointed education and development teams. In 2002 Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta was established to help support schools in the period before they become grant-aided. In 2003 two interboard advisory teachers were appointed by the Education and Library Boards.

Each of the appointments involved in this official response to the needs of the Irish-medium sector has created problems of its own, in that very often key personnel have been lost to the classroom. It is vital that the greatest benefit possible for the whole sector is gained by this official development. It is important, of course, that all key areas are catered for but it is equally important that precious resources are not wasted through duplication etc. All this development on the ground in terms of growth of provision and in terms of the official response to it highlights the importance of the present study on the professional development of teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools.

Teachers and principals are a school's most important resource and continual investment in their professional development through INSET contributes to raising the quality and standards of pupils' learning and achievement. Andrews (1995) provided a historical account of the provision of INSET for developing the Irish language in schools throughout Northern Ireland. He made reference to INSET provision for Irish in Irish-medium primary schools with a particular emphasis on the need for INSET to help with devising textbooks and teaching materials. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) (1999) supported this need having conducted a survey of provision for special educational needs (SEN) in Irish-medium primary schools. Their survey found there to be, "a shortage of appropriate specialist teaching and learning resources for Irish-medium education such as graded reading schemes, Reading Recovery materials and information and communication technology (ICT) software". The ETI went on to stress the need for this to be addressed.

Mac Póilin (1992) recommended that there should be funding made available for specialised INSET and advice for Irish-medium teachers regarding their professional development needs. This idea of specialised INSET was still necessary years later, according to the ETI (1999), who found that, although nearly all the SEN co-ordinators in the Irish-medium schools they surveyed had made use of some INSET on special educational needs, the opportunities for specific Irish-medium special educational needs INSET had been limited. They did go on, however, to stress that, “the schools have not availed of all INSET targeted at the Irish-medium sector” and that, “there is a need for staff in Irish-medium schools to access a wider range of INSET opportunities and support from external agencies”.

A number of key issues related to INSET have been identified in focused, general and follow-up inspections in Irish-medium schools over the past three or four years. In these schools there was generally good attendance at relevant in-service training courses, for example ICT, literacy, numeracy and SEN, with use being made of the Curriculum Advice and Support Service (CASS) and ELB personnel in school-based INSET and in supporting on-going development work. However, they noted that further staff training was required in areas such as Pastoral Care and Child Protection. The ETI emphasised the need for schools to identify and address the training needs of the large number of new teaching staff in Irish-medium schools, who are recent entrants to the teaching profession. This was felt to be an important priority for principals and Boards of Governors. As well as identifying INSET needs, the ETI stressed the importance of developing plans to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers’ attendance at INSET courses on teaching and learning in the classroom.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (2003) compiled a report entitled, “Three Year Training Plan 2003-2006”. The report identified key training issues associated with teachers of Irish-medium education. For example, only four INSET courses have been provided specifically for the Irish-medium sector during exceptional closure days, in addition to one half-day course focusing on curriculum review in 2002. The report called for “proper training provision” with specific training in Irish-medium education related to, for example, literacy and numeracy strategies, immersion education, assessment, induction and early professional development, special educational needs, and composite classes. Suggestions were made for INSET material to be offered in the Irish language, and for consideration to be given to INSET from the point of view of Irish-medium education, alongside collaboration with Irish-medium advisors. The report acknowledged the problem of availability of suitable substitute teachers to release teachers to attend INSET courses during school hours, and therefore suggested that specific INSET for Irish-medium education take place outside school hours, providing the opportunity for Irish-medium teachers to meet on a regular basis to discuss issues on the curriculum and exchange ideas on teaching. The report also pointed out that even though a small number of Irish-medium teachers may apply to an Irish-medium course, consideration should be given to the fact that the number applying may represent a reasonable proportion of the entire Irish-medium school sector.

In relation to the professional development needs of teachers of immersion education outside of Northern Ireland, a study by Day & Shapson (1996) surveyed nearly a fifth of teachers teaching in French immersion programmes in the ten provinces and both territories of Canada. Demographics on the teachers revealed that just over a third had been teaching generally for less than six years, with just over half having less than six years teaching experience in French immersion. Two thirds of the teachers' pre-service education had not offered specialised preparation for teaching French immersion, with just under a third receiving specialist training post-service. In total, only half the teachers had received some form of specialised training in immersion education. Immersion teachers felt there to be a greater need for professional development training in areas such as teaching French language arts in immersion, developing curriculum and resources, teaching subject matter in immersion, motivating students in immersion, integrating subject matter, second language acquisition in children, and methodology of second language teaching. There was also a call from the teachers for professional development training in the areas of French language and culture.

Aims and Objectives of Research

The two main aims of the research conducted for this report were: to investigate the current provision for initial teacher education and for the professional development of teachers and principals in Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland; and to inform policy-making in relation to future arrangements for such teachers' and principals' professional development.

These two aims gave rise to three objectives, the first was to investigate the ITE provision for and qualifications gained specifically by teachers in Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland. These are set alongside available information on ITE provision for and teacher qualifications in Northern Ireland generally. Part one of the research findings relates to this objective. The second objective was to collect information on the provision for and uptake of general and specific professional INSET and support opportunities for teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools. Part two of the research findings relates to this objective. The third objective was to collect and analyse attitudinal information from staff in Irish-medium schools on the range and quality of the professional INSET and support opportunities they have experienced. Part three of the research findings relates to this objective.

METHODOLOGY

During the autumn of 2002 a questionnaire survey on teachers' and principals' current professional development needs and experiences was conducted in all Irish-medium primary and post-primary schools and units in Northern Ireland. At that time there were a total of 25 Irish-medium primary schools/units, and 3 post-primary schools/units. In total the schools contained approximately 165 teachers and principals. In order to gain as full a response as possible regarding completion of the questionnaire, it was decided that a personal approach should be used with the teachers and principals. Therefore telephone calls were made to the principals of all the schools explaining the research, and an appointment was arranged with each school for a visit from a member of the research team who would explain further the background and purpose of the survey and answer any queries teachers or principals might have had regarding their participation in completing the questionnaire. During these visits, which usually took place at a staff meeting, questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and principals, followed by an explanation of the questions. A future date was arranged for the member of the research team to return to the school in order to collect the completed questionnaires from staff, this generally occurred two weeks after the initial visit. However, there were occasions when questionnaires had to be sent by post from the school, due to some staff not being available during the second visit.

This method of 'recruiting' participants resulted for primary schools in a 74% return rate from teachers and a 72% return rate from principals. For post-primary schools, it resulted in a 77% return rate from teachers and a 67% return rate from principals. 10% of returns from all teachers were from substitute teachers employed during the survey period. The questionnaires for teachers and principals were very similar and covered areas which included: gender; age; year of class; years teaching/in role of principal; responsibilities held; qualifications; in-service courses attended and their relevance, benefits and quality; in-service courses which should be offered; in-service courses to be delivered in the Irish language; support offered for attending in-service courses; and problems experienced when wishing to attend in-service courses. Teachers and principals were also offered the opportunity to make any further comments regarding their professional development needs, if they so wished.

The questionnaire was designed and drafted by members of the research team, and after consultation at a meeting with the steering group organised by DE for this project, a final version was agreed upon for distribution to the schools (A copy of the questionnaires for teachers and principals can be found in the appendix).

As well as conducting the survey with teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools, semi-structured interviews were held with representatives from the five ELBs, CCEA, RTU, Northern Ireland Universities and University Colleges, and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. These semi-structured interviews investigated the current provision of INSET available for teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools. Questions focused on the following areas: type of INSET courses offered; uptake of courses by teachers and

principals in Irish-medium schools; dissemination of course details; financial assistance; and factors which may impede attendance.

As well as the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews, an examination was made of the ITE provision for and *eligible to teach* qualifications gained by teachers in Irish-medium education, as well as ITE provision for and *eligible to teach* qualifications gained by teachers generally in Northern Ireland. This was carried out by reviewing the literature available from the Universities and University Colleges in Northern Ireland on the structures, aims, contents and types of qualifications on offer in ITE courses from a general and from an Irish-medium perspective.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section of the report is divided into three parts: ITE provision and qualifications generally and specific to Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland; responses from INSET course providers; and responses from teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools. Each part will present the findings of the research, accompanied by a series of charts and direct quotes/comments where appropriate.

PART ONE: ITE Provision and Qualifications Generally in Northern Ireland (English-Medium)

ITE Provision

Bachelor of Education (Honours) Primary – St. Mary’s University College & Stranmillis University College

The BEd (Hons) Primary degree is a four-year honours degree programme leading to *eligible to teach* status by DE. The modules studied are: education studies; curriculum studies, school-based work; (all of which are compulsory) and main academic subject (which is chosen by the student).

Education studies is a broad subject area drawing on a number of disciplines covering a wide range of topics such as child psychology and development, the curriculum in schools, child protection and children’s rights, the social contexts of school processes, principles of effective teaching and learning, and the education of children with special educational needs. Curriculum studies involves the study of teaching strategies and modes of learning for each subject within the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC), with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Students undertake curriculum planning, the evaluation of teaching resources, and the assessment, recording and reporting of pupil progress. For school-based work all students spend approximately eight weeks each year on placement in schools developing their knowledge and skills in teaching by planning and delivering lessons under the guidance and advice of experienced teachers and tutors. The basic skills of developing discussion, assessing pupil progress, identifying difficulties, lesson planning, and employing learning and teaching resources are developed to a competent level. For main subject, all students spend about a third of their time studying an academic subject of their choice to honours degree level. The subjects currently on offer are: art & design; dramatic art with English; English; geography; graphics and design; history; information technology; Irish; mathematics; music; physical education; religious studies; and science. Not all subjects are offered at both University Colleges.

Bachelor of Education (Honours) Secondary – St. Mary’s University College & Stranmillis University College

The BEd (Hons) Secondary degree is again a four-year honours degree programme leading to *eligible to teach* status by DE. The modules studied are: education studies and school-based work (which are both compulsory), main and subsidiary academic subjects

(which are chosen by the student). The content of education studies and school-based work is similar to that for the BEd (Hons) Primary.

All students spend about half their time on degree-level study of their chosen main academic subject throughout all four years of the course. The subjects currently on offer are: business studies; religious studies; and technology & design. All students choose a subsidiary academic subject which they will study in years one and two of their course. They will be expected to teach this subject in addition to their main academic subject, but not to the same levels in school. The subjects currently on offer are: art & design; dramatic art with English; English; geography; graphics and design; history; information technology; mathematics; music; physical education; and science. Not all subsidiary subjects are offered at both University Colleges.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) – Stranmillis University College

There are two options within this PGCE course – PGCE (Educational Psychology), and PGCE (Early Years). The course is of thirty-six weeks duration, with half this time spent in schools. Course content includes: education studies; teaching studies; primary curriculum studies; and school-based work.

Education studies addresses six key themes. The first is ‘children’, i.e. individual differences, special educational needs, cognitive and language development. The second is ‘curriculum’, examining the aims, objectives and structure of the primary curriculum and its implications. The third is ‘school and community’, investigating the administration of education in Northern Ireland, the role of parents in the school context, and the social and economic values of school. The fourth is ‘classroom management’, concentrating on discipline and control. The fifth is ‘pastoral issues’, such as child protection, bullying, and drugs education. The sixth is ‘assessment’ at Key Stages 1 and 2 (KS1&2). Teaching studies is designed to help students acquire the basic skills of teaching, such as communication skills, questioning, classroom management, group work, lesson planning, resource management and differentiation. Primary curriculum studies is based on the requirements of the NIC in all subject areas, with particular emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Cross-curricular themes are also addressed. School-based work forms an integral aspect of the course and is designed to enable students to achieve levels of competence, experience and knowledge that will fully qualify them for entry into the teaching profession.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) – The Queen’s University of Belfast

This PGCE is a one-year full-time programme lasting thirty-six weeks, twenty-four of which is spent in schools. It begins with a short induction programme, followed by a two-week block experience in a primary school. The next stage of the course takes place in the university, followed by the first extended period of professional placement in a school. Once this has been completed, students return to the university in preparation for their second professional placement in a different school.

The course aims to develop students' competence and confidence in the teaching of their chosen subject specialism and in the general professional role of the teacher. The programme of study is organised around three areas, the first is subject teaching, focusing upon the teaching of the student's particular specialism, and the second is professional performance, focusing on developing practical teaching competence particularly through working closely with experienced teachers during periods of school placement. The third is the professional role of the teacher, concerned with, for example, the education system, assessment, classroom processes and cognition, educational disadvantage, pastoral care, general management issues, use of information technology, and literacy & numeracy in the classroom. Subject specialisms offered to students are: English; mathematics; information technology/computer studies; modern languages; science; religious education; politics; and sociology.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) – The University of Ulster

This PGCE in Primary Education is a course which includes both university and school-based work throughout the year, is full-time and lasts thirty-eight weeks, nineteen of which are spent in schools. Its aim is to promote the intellectual development of the students, with preparation for teaching incorporating critical reflection on educational issues, theories and classroom practice. Students are introduced to the requirements of the NIC at KS1&2 in all subject areas with particular emphasis on English, mathematics and science, and undertake a specialism in one subject of the NIC, appropriately related to their degree subject. Students also acquire personal, subject and teaching competence in information and communication technology. The course also includes a qualification in the teaching of religious education in the primary school.

This PGCE in Post-Primary Education is a one-year full-time course, and the main subjects available are: art & design; English with drama & media studies; geography; history; home economics; music; physical education; and technology & design. Religious education is also available as a subsidiary subject for students with a suitable academic background in religious studies. In order to ensure a close link between theory and practice, the course includes both university and school-based work throughout the year. Generally, twenty-four weeks are spent in schools, with twelve weeks in the university, although for students whose main subject is technology & design, an extra six weeks are spent in workshop practice at a technology centre. Students are introduced to the most recent curriculum developments in their subject with particular attention being paid to the requirements of the NIC. Consideration is also given to the wider social, economic and political context within which these educational changes are taking place. Throughout the course students are made aware of the links between subjects, the statutory cross-curricular themes and the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information communications technology competence via the main subject specialism.

ITE Qualifications

The Northern Ireland Centre for Educational Research (NICER) based at the Graduate School of Education, The Queen's University of Belfast has produced a series of research

reports funded by DE on a follow-up survey of employment patterns of teachers who qualified in ITE giving them *eligible to teach* status. For this report, data have been drawn from the NICER surveys outlining teacher qualifications obtained in general since 1985 by those graduating from four Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Northern Ireland, namely St. Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, The Queen's University of Belfast, and The University of Ulster. From a review of the literature available on teachers' qualifications in Northern Ireland, this appears to be the most comprehensive source.

Data show that over the past eighteen years (1985-2002) there have been 12,291 qualified teachers graduating from the four HEIs. The qualifications obtained include: PGCE; BEd (Hons); BEd (Gen); BA (Hons); BA/BSc (Hons); BA/BSc; Special Diploma; PGCE (IME); BA/BSc (Gen); and Certificate in Education. Below is a table indicating the percentage breakdown of ITE qualifications between 1985 and 2002.

Table 1: ITE Qualifications for Graduates (1985 – 2002)

Qualifications	Number	Percentage
PGCE	5888	48%
BEd (Hons)	4311	35%
BEd (Gen)	854	7%
BA (Hons)	465	4%
BA/BSc (Hons)	349	3%
BA/BSc	276	2%
Special Diploma	105	0.5%
PGCE (IME)	36	<0.3%
BA/BSc (Gen)	4	<0.1%
Certificate in Education	3	<0.1%

ITE Provision and Qualifications Specific to Irish-Medium Education in Northern Ireland

ITE Provision

Teastas Iarchéime san Oideachas (TICO) (Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Irish-Medium Education)) &

Bachelor of Education (Honours) Primary – St. Mary's University College

St. Mary's University College is currently the only HEI offering ITE specifically for Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland. The format this takes is either a Postgraduate Certificate in Education or a Bachelor of Education both leading to the College certificate *Teastas san Oideachas Dátheangach agus sa Tumoideachas* (Certificate in Bilingual and Immersion Education). Students also follow a course leading to the award of the Certificate of Religious Education.

The BEd has the same structure and content as that described previously, however it has the optional route of specialist training for teaching in the Irish-medium sector by following a bilingual degree route. The difference lies with students becoming familiar

with curriculum requirements in both English and Irish-medium schools, as well as being taught through English and Irish. School-based work is divided into half in English-medium schools and half in Irish-medium schools, and the education element includes a course on immersion issues.

The PGCE (IME) is a one-year full-time course of professional training for university graduates following broadly the same structure as the PGCE courses outlined previously. It is primary designated (5-11 age range) and is recognised by DE as an initial qualification to teach in all types of schools. It is thirty-six weeks in duration, eighteen of which are spent in both English-medium and Irish-medium schools. It provides students with the academic and pedagogic study of different elements including education, literacy, numeracy, science and technology, history, geography, art, music, physical education, and ICT, with lectures delivered in both English and Irish.

In the education element of the PGCE (IME), students develop an understanding of the variety of ways in which children learn and progress and how this impacts on classroom teaching. They also enhance their views on the nature of education, the school curriculum and the relationship between school and society. Students are introduced to the complexities of teaching and classroom life, as well as the importance of an ongoing review of classroom practice. Having gone through the induction phase of the course where students learn, for example, about the NIC, assessment, competences, and formative profiling, they then cover curriculum/pastoral issues, such as structured play, baseline assessment, working relationships, and issues in Irish-medium education. Following on from this, they are introduced to child development and learning, i.e. behaviour, socialisation, intelligence, as well as the development of teaching skills, for example, preparing schemes of work, lesson plans, classroom management, and assessment strategies. During the latter stages of the course students concentrate on pastoral care, discipline policies, bullying and emotional/behavioural problems. Students also learn about special needs education, such as the implementation of the code of practice, and the role of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator. They also follow the development of teaching skills, where they learn about, for example, differentiation and group work, and further explore issues in bilingual education – creating resources, translation studies, accuracy in language communication, bilingualism, and second level acquisition. The final week of this element sees students covering issues on the induction year and the law.

The literacy element of the course provides students with an understanding of the Irish/English programmes of study and attainment targets at KS1&2. It introduces insights into the integrated approach to the curriculum and the development of skills, as well as building the competences necessary to fulfil curriculum requirements. It also develops learning, teaching and assessment strategies relevant to KS1&2 Irish/English (listening, understanding and talking, reading, and writing), explores the development of biliteracy, and considers the teaching of English within immersion education. Students gain an understanding of the development of poetry, drama and storytelling in the classroom, learn to analyse resources, consider effective classroom management strategies, and design lesson plans and schemes of work.

The numeracy element of the course introduces the programmes of study for mathematics at KS1&2 of the NIC and raises students' awareness of effective teaching strategies for mathematics in a second language immersion programme. It also provides students with the terminology and language required to teach mathematics in Irish-medium schools and promotes a positive attitude towards mathematics. Students develop competence in using structured apparatus, concrete materials, electronic calculators, pencil/paper methods, board games, and mental fluency, as well as planning lessons, preparing resources, time management, and differentiation. The content of this element includes number, shape and space, data handling, measures, special educational needs and mathematics, assessment, problem-solving, and investigations.

The science and technology element of the course demonstrates how scientific methods can be applied to the primary classroom and raises awareness of primary science skills, concepts and attitudes. It familiarises students with curriculum attainment targets and cross-curricular themes and provides practical experience of conducting simple scientific investigations, problem-solving and technological activities. Students build their confidence in planning and organising science lessons and are prepared for using science resources. The content of the science and technology element is based around a number of themes including, living things, forces & energy, materials, technology, the environment & conservation, health education, ICT and assessment.

History in the PGCE (IME) course familiarises students with the programmes of study and content at KS1&2 in the NIC, demonstrates teaching strategies, provides examples of selecting and preparing history materials and references, and raises awareness of local history. Geography aims to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the programmes of study for geography at KS1&2 covering geographical skills, homes and buildings, work and transport, weather, and the natural environment. Art introduces the NIC programmes of study at KS1&2 and broadens students' knowledge and understanding of the programmes of study through lesson planning. Opportunities are provided to participate in art activities related to the primary school curriculum. There are demonstrations of the use of artists' work in art education where students are introduced to teaching resources, evidence of good classroom practice regarding management and discipline, and art in a cross-curricular sense. Music aims to instil in students the importance of the subject as a significant and valuable part of children's learning by providing an understanding of the range of teaching skills, strategies and resources for music development in the primary school in line with the NIC. This element also shows how music can contribute to cross-curricular teaching. Physical Education prepares students for presenting and evaluating lessons suitable for primary school in dance and games. Students are also provided with an understanding of the principles underlying physical education at KS1&2. The course content includes physical education programmes of study, teaching styles, pupil assessment, resource materials, and supervision/safety in lessons. The ICT element provides students with proficiency in ICT skills for personal and classroom use. Students are presented with an overview of ICT in the NIC and teaching on the communications aspect of ICT focusing on the Internet, e-

mail, and word processing. Students also investigate information handling, modelling and simulation, as well as control technology.

ITE Qualifications

Teachers in Irish-medium education who were surveyed, reported a total of five ITE qualifications leading to *eligible to teach* status. The five qualifications are: Postgraduate Certificate in Education; Bachelor of Education (Honours); Higher Diploma in Education; Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Education; and Certificate in Education. Below is a table indicating the percentage breakdown by qualification.

Table 2: ITE Qualifications for Irish-Medium Teachers

Initial Teacher Education Qualification (leading to <i>eligible to teach</i> status)	Number	Percentage
PGCE (including TICO)	53	56%
BEd	26	27%
Higher Diploma in Education	11	12%
BA (Hons) Education	4	4%
Certificate in Education	1	1%

PART TWO: Responses from INSET Course Providers

INSET course providers, i.e. ELBs, RTU, CCEA, the Northern Ireland Universities and University Colleges, and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta were approached and asked if they would take part in semi-structured interviews dealing with the provision of INSET for teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland. Questions asked centred on the following areas: type of INSET courses offered; uptake of courses by teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools; dissemination of course details; financial assistance; and factors which may impede attendance.

ELBs, RTU and CCEA

Each ELB in Northern Ireland has a CASS team which provides INSET courses on a wide range of curricular and management issues to teachers and principals in all schools. Every year, the ELBs consult with schools to pinpoint the types of support required for INSET in order to raise standards in schools, this is also carried out in collaboration with CCEA and RTU. A programme for INSET is drawn up each year in response to these consultations, ETI inspection reports, as well as current government initiatives, for example, literacy and numeracy strategies, target setting and behaviour strategies. CASS also offers support to beginning teachers through induction and early professional development. INSET can be offered through a variety of external courses available at Out Centres which are generally one or two day events. While each ELB is responsible for delivering INSET in its own area, there are Inter-Board courses organised on a regional basis. One aspect of INSET that has grown in popularity among the ELBs is In-School Support. This is viewed as being more effective than external courses in developing teachers' skills and improving classroom pedagogy in schools. This type of INSET is provided either at classroom level or as whole school support. RTU is responsible for the long-term management of the training needs of principals and senior staff in schools, and is also the lead and awarding body for the PQH in Northern Ireland. Examples of leadership development programmes at senior management level include, Preparation for School Leadership, Induction into Headship, Existing Principals' Continuing Professional Development, Leadership Enhancement Programmes, and Whole School Improvement Programmes. RTU also offers Summer School courses to teachers, which usually take place at the end of August. CCEA offers INSET for teachers and principals, which provide advice, support and guidance materials outlining the requirements for subjects and cross-curricular themes in the NIC. Examples of INSET offered by CCEA include, agreement trials on coursework and examinations, specifications of the syllabus, and curriculum reviews.

The overwhelming response from the INSET providers was that teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools are offered the opportunity to attend the same INSET courses as all other schools in Northern Ireland. When asked whether Irish-medium schools are offered specific INSET courses, there was a mixed response from the providers. One ELB representative stated that if an Irish-medium school requested a specific course which was not offered in the programme booklet, then an adviser would visit the school and negotiate this with the principal or school development co-ordinator. Therefore

although specific courses are not offered to Irish-medium schools in the programme booklet, a specific need could be catered for if requested by the school. However, other providers stated that no specific Irish-medium courses were offered, again emphasising that Irish-medium schools, like all other schools, could avail of existing curriculum advice and support for professional development. The lack of specific provision was largely attributed to there being no demand or requests from the Irish-medium sector for such courses. One provider based this view on the fact that two Irish-medium courses were offered through a Summer School but failed to run because of the low level of uptake from within the Irish-medium sector. However the providers insist that they are pro-active and as the sector grows, so will the demand for Irish-medium courses, and they will respond accordingly. It is also important to note here, that apart from INSET courses, the providers also offer individual advice and guidance to teachers and principals in schools. This school-based support is offered at classroom level, and has taken place in Irish-medium schools.

If a principal of an Irish-medium school rings me up for instance, to come out for an afternoon, then that is curriculum advice, support and guidance and is very much part of our holistic approach to how we view CASS development of teachers.

For instance, an Irish-medium school may request a specific course on Art & Design, which is not in the booklet or maybe on Creative Education, this would be negotiated on a face-to-face basis with the school. These are individually school-based courses which we offer to our schools, so yes there are courses, but they are very much catered to the request coming from the school. Any request that comes from a school is dealt with very professionally and very promptly.

They (the Irish-medium schools) have indicated that where possible they would appreciate specific training courses, but there hasn't been a demand to have a particular course in Irish. Up to now, we haven't had a very specific request, but obviously it is something we will watch particularly as the sector grows and there is a growing customer base and we will adapt the provision accordingly.

We offered two courses which were specific for the Irish-medium sector last year in the Summer School but none of them ran because not enough people from the Irish-medium sector applied to attend.

None specifically for principals however it's never been requested. Usually a group of principals or the management board would come to us, then it would happen, but we've had no requests from Irish-medium schools. The courses we run are open to anybody and everybody, but if there were a specific request we would respond. There have been no requests to my knowledge so there is nothing specific other than what I said was offered in Summer School and didn't take place.

It's fairly well matched but I recognise that there may not have been enough provision directed towards Irish-medium schools in terms of professional development. This is an area we are aware that we need to be working on.

INSET providers were keen to point out that they had a statutory responsibility to provide curriculum training materials to meet the needs of teaching staff. They were aware of the growing diversity within Northern Ireland and accepted the whole issue of equality, and that limited resources are provided in Irish.

We only have a statutory responsibility to provide curriculum, training materials. There's nothing explicit to say that they have to be in either Chinese, Japanese etc. As a Board we would accept the whole equality agenda. I mean we would be happy to do that but the other side of the coin is that this would require CASS to have translators and to have staff allocated to that. Now if Government wishes to move along that way, I think we would need to ensure that the curriculum services on this Board has got the additional staff and expertise to do it.

INSET providers were asked how relevant they felt the INSET courses, offered to teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools, to be for their professional development in Irish-medium education. All providers were confident that the INSET offered was addressing the needs of all schools, English-medium and Irish-medium. They pointed out that all teachers are working to the same syllabus therefore whether the subjects are taught through the medium of Irish or not, the content would be the same, and the principles of management training are generic and would apply to all schools. There was also a feeling expressed by one provider that INSET courses were not being attended by Irish-medium teachers because they were not delivered in the Irish language, and were therefore seen as irrelevant. The provider dismissed this idea of courses being irrelevant due to the language of delivery. This issue is something that the provider felt needed to be stressed to Irish-medium schools. Another provider felt confident in the fact that all INSET courses offered were relevant, regardless of the type of school, because they are focused and targeted on the real needs of schools expressed through a survey of needs and meetings with teachers. One provider realised the advantage to Irish-medium teachers of having training materials provided in Irish, thereby cutting down on the additional workload of translating into Irish for use with the pupils in class. The provider went on to say that if the Government required them to do this, then there would be a need for extra resources, direction and guidance for the translation of training material.

I have not personally heard any Irish-medium teacher express to me or my officers any dissatisfaction in terms of the course being offered in English.

I talked to the advisers and they are absolutely confident that they are relevant. We're confident that we are running courses that are directly addressing teachers' needs. I suspect the issue for some of them may be that it's not delivered in Irish.

No comments have come through in evaluations either in school based work or on externally based work that the teachers have been disadvantaged by the seminar or the training not being offered through the medium of Irish.

INSET providers were asked how information regarding INSET courses was disseminated to teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools. Responses revealed a number of different methods. Information regarding INSET courses is for the most part disseminated to every grant-aided school in Northern Ireland including Irish-medium school by means of an annual prospectus/booklet giving details of all courses on offer. In many cases this is followed up with a reminder letter just before a course is due to take place. A calendar or poster is also sent out to schools in some areas with a month-to-month review of INSET available. However recent changes within the ELBs see them moving towards an on-line service whereby schools can access information and application forms on INSET via the Internet. Teachers and principals are also provided with the facility to register for INSET on-line. Some ELBs have this in operation already, while other providers are adopting a gradual approach to the on-line service.

It is our intention to move towards electronic communication as a means of disseminating information, but we do recognise, despite excellent work done by the NOF and C2K programmes, that not all schools have access to the Internet and therefore we do not want to disadvantage any teachers or any schools that haven't, by having all the information on a website.

Well in the past it has gone through the booklets (INSET), those booklets go out to every grant-aided school. Now there may be an issue for Irish speaking schools that are not grant-aided, and is perhaps one of the reasons why the ELBs need to switch information to the website so that everyone can access it.

This change in the dissemination of information on INSET has been attributed to a number of factors, most notably the cost of producing and circulating INSET booklets and sending out reminder letters. There was a perception that the booklets in many cases were not used to their full potential in advertising INSET courses in schools. There was also the viewpoint that teachers' professional development in ICT would be enhanced if they were offered the opportunity to access information on courses, etc. and register on-line.

INSET providers were asked if they offered any financial assistance to Irish-medium schools to enable the teachers and principals to attend INSET courses. The general response from all providers was that no special financial provision was made for Irish-medium schools. Like other schools, they pay for INSET out of their LMS budgets. However, like all other schools, Irish-medium schools can get indirect financial contributions to cover travel and substitute teacher costs for releasing a teacher who may be having difficulties and may need professional development support on a particular area of their teaching. There may also be indirect financial contributions for substitute cover when vice principals need to attend a training conference or when teachers are involved in literacy or numeracy strategy training. Irish-medium schools have been given one additional exceptional closure day for the past two years for the purpose of training and development.

An area in which financial contributions are made is through a specific earmarked budget, for instance, if an Irish-medium school is involved in the literacy or numeracy strategies, then there is money in the strategy fund to provide for substitute cover and materials, so the school can benefit in an indirect financial way.

INSET providers were asked if they were aware of any factors that may impede teachers and principals from Irish-medium schools in attending INSET courses. Responses given by the providers revealed that generally they did not believe there to be any structural factors that would affect teachers and principals from Irish-medium schools, any more than teachers and principals from other schools, from attending courses. Some providers were of the view that low attendance from within the Irish-medium sector in availing of INSET may be more to do with the lack of substitute teachers suitable for teaching in an Irish-medium school, or possibly not being aware of what they are entitled to regarding INSET. There was also a feeling among some providers that there may be a number of Irish-medium teachers who are reluctant to attend courses because they are not provided in Irish. However it was generally felt that this was not an issue that should prevent teachers or principals from attending. Another impediment could be a lack of awareness of INSET in the Irish-medium sector. One provider commented that teachers might not be aware of the types of INSET on offer.

There is a lack of knowledge about what INSET is taking place and what is important or what's not. That's a problem that probably goes across the Irish-medium sector – too many young teachers and too many inexperienced heads. It's a growing sector.

No factors, other than the factors that would impinge on many other schools in Northern Ireland.

You might find that some of the Irish-medium teachers are waiting for the courses to be run in Irish and therefore are not applying. Presumably for many, if not all of the teachers, English would be their first language.

INSET providers were asked whether they provided any resources, materials, or handouts in the Irish language during INSET courses. One provider commented that assessment resources and materials for Irish-medium pupils were translated but other resources were not, however it was pointed out that this was likely to change in the near future with the increase in demand.

Material that is for teacher use – they can translate. But we realise internally that we need to look at this. At the moment it is limited but it is likely to increase rapidly to meet the demands. The whole curriculum, for example, may need translated and many other support materials for primary schools, even for teachers so they're not translating all the time themselves.

Comments from other providers indicated that generally no resources and materials at INSET courses were translated into Irish. Irish-medium teachers and principals receive the same resources as staff from other schools and these were provided in English. It was

pointed out that this was not the remit of the providers and that translation facilities were available through other channels.

Universities and University Colleges

The Universities and University Colleges offer a range of in-service courses and qualifications for teachers and principals in all types of schools outside of normal school hours. These courses include Doctorate and Masters Level Programmes, Diplomas, Advanced Certificates, and others. At present neither the Universities nor University Colleges offer INSET courses specifically to Irish-medium teachers or principals. However, attempts were made in the past to do this. According to one provider, two Irish-medium courses were previously offered. However, low uptake for one meant that it did not take place and poor attendance on another left no option but to cancel it. Another provider noted that in the past a specific course was offered on special educational needs in Irish-medium education.

Well the short answer is that we don't offer anything specifically for Irish-medium education, however we used to. We basically ran two types of courses, we had the Certificate in Professional Development, which was a certificate course requiring people to take three modules, a couple of which were specific to Irish-medium education, and we stopped running them because by and large they certainly weren't well attended. We had one module in the Masters Programme, which was linked to Irish-medium education that never ran because we never got the numbers. We got maybe one for that particular module.

With regards to the relevance of INSET provided, it was felt that while the courses did not focus on Irish-medium education, they were as relevant to developing the skills and professionalism of teachers and principals in the Irish-medium sector, as they were to teachers and principals in general.

One thing people should realise with Irish-medium education is that it is the same as any other education except it is done in Irish, so the skills and professional development which are required of a teacher in Irish-medium education are 80%, maybe 90% the same as they are in an English-medium school.

The universities and university colleges do not offer financial assistance to any teachers or principals to undertake further professional development training. Teachers or principals taking postgraduate courses usually fund themselves, unless they receive funding from their school.

Masters funding comes mostly from self-financing rather than from departmental sources.

Some students get funding from their own schools, now they are few and far between, but some schools will fund a module or modules or the full programme depending of course on the needs of the school.

The universities and university colleges were generally not aware of specific factors that might impede teachers and principals from Irish-medium schools from attending their courses other than those that affect the teaching population in general. Such factors included financial costs, the times that courses are scheduled, and the distance the teacher may have to travel. One provider acknowledged that some Irish-medium schools may not see the relevance of some of the courses offered, which ultimately could impede teachers attending.

As for any teacher I imagine there could well be financial ones, but that's across the board. There are also ones of relevancy, and finally I have to have sympathy for the Irish-medium teachers, the work load that is expected of them is very heavy, so that may be part of the difficulty.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is an Irish-medium educational promotional body set up in 2000 by DE. It was established to promote and support the strategic development of the Irish-medium education sector. It is not within the remit of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to provide INSET, however it has provided annual education conferences in 2002 and 2003, a half-day course on teaching English in Irish-medium education and training on one exceptional closure day for Irish-medium schools.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta believes that INSET is relevant to Irish-medium schools, however many of the courses offered by the providers are not always suitable for Irish-medium education. It was reported that Irish-medium schools have specific difficulties that English-medium schools do not necessarily experience, namely a higher proportion of young teachers and principals, composite classes and delivering the curriculum in a second language. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta felt that the main providers need to be aware of the specific needs of Irish-medium education and adapt INSET accordingly. It believes that many principals in the sector require management training, however this type of training needs to acknowledge issues specific to Irish-medium education. With regards to the INSET currently provided through external courses and in-school support, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta felt this was generally geared towards English-medium. It suggested that specific INSET should be delivered through the medium of Irish in areas of language, literacy and structured play. There is also a feeling that INSET in special educational needs should be delivered in Irish to enable teachers to identify learning difficulties at an early stage. INSET in mathematics, science and technology could be delivered through the medium of English, however with an Irish-medium dimension attached to it. Other courses could be delivered in English, however it was suggested that resources for use with children in class should be translated.

We have a lot of young principals who need management training which takes into consideration the specific nature of Irish-medium schools and doesn't take the majority as the norm. When they go to management training they are with people who are older and maybe are running big urban schools while they may be from a wee rural school.

INSET on special needs, circle time, behaviour management and learning difficulties would be the other ones that would have to be in Irish. How to spot learning difficulties early? We don't have standardised tests and it's very difficult for us to identify problems early because you're working through Irish. Sometimes you don't realise that it's not just a language problem, that it's something more and that's what you need to identify before P4.

I know that schools have been availing of the literacy strategy and the numeracy strategy and behaviour support. A Board Officer will come and do a series of school-based INSET. The only difficulty really is something like the literacy strategy is all geared towards the English-medium and it's not necessarily the Board Officers' fault, they've just had no training. I've found that people in the Boards are not fully aware of what we do in the Irish-medium sector. It's only when they come out to do school-based INSET that they get a real flavour about what Irish-medium education is about.

Another issue raised by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta was the induction year and early professional development of beginning teachers in non grant-aided Irish-medium schools. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta felt that even though beginning teachers attend induction training, they do not have a principal to observe their teaching or certify their induction year. It also raised the point that if an Irish-medium school becomes grant-aided, a teacher's previous experience is not recognised with regards to issues like threshold payments.

Regarding whether factors may impede teachers and principals from Irish-medium schools from attending INSET courses, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta felt that the shortage of qualified substitute teachers would be a major factor that would impede releasing teachers and principals from Irish-medium schools to attend INSET courses. It was suggested that Irish-medium schools have the constant problem of trying to obtain substitute cover to release teachers to attend INSET, so in many cases schools simply stop trying. This ultimately leads to many teachers in the Irish-medium sector receiving no further professional development. It was also suggested that a negative experience of INSET, when the curriculum was first introduced, has produced reluctance among some principals to release staff to attend.

The main reasons that there hasn't been a 100% uptake of these courses is that it is very difficult to get substitute cover with the teacher shortage in the Irish-medium, so we're left with teachers who haven't received enough in-service training in the system.

In practice I suspect the INSET courses are binned because it is too hard to get subs, or maybe the principal will prioritise who gets out on different courses. I know when I was in charge of getting subs, I remember sitting on the telephone for half an hour or more trying to get a sub and once you've done that a couple of times you loose heart.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta does not provide Irish-medium schools with resources, materials, handouts, etc. in the Irish language, however it encourages and helps teachers in Irish-medium schools to share whatever resources they own.

PART THREE: Teachers and Principals in Irish-Medium Schools

Before embarking on the views teachers and principals reported in relation to in-service training provision in Northern Ireland, outlined below are demographic details on the staff in Irish-medium schools in Northern Ireland regarding their gender, age, year of class they teach (for primary teachers), whether they have full-time responsibility for teaching a class (for primary principals), years teaching, responsibilities held (for teachers), years in the role of principal (for principals), and qualifications obtained or currently working towards. The breakdown of teachers by gender indicated that 69% of teachers were female and 31% male. The breakdown of principals by gender indicated 40% were female and 60% male. The youngest teachers employed in the schools were twenty-one years old, with the oldest being fifty-nine years old, however half the number of teachers were less than or equal to thirty years of age. The youngest principal employed in the schools was twenty-seven years old, with the oldest being fifty-nine years old, however a third of principals were less than thirty-five years of age. These age-bands indicate a relatively large number of young teachers and principals in the Irish-medium sector. Below are two charts showing the full age-bands of teachers and principals.

Figure 1: Percentage Breakdown of Age-Bands of Teachers in Irish-Medium Schools in Northern Ireland

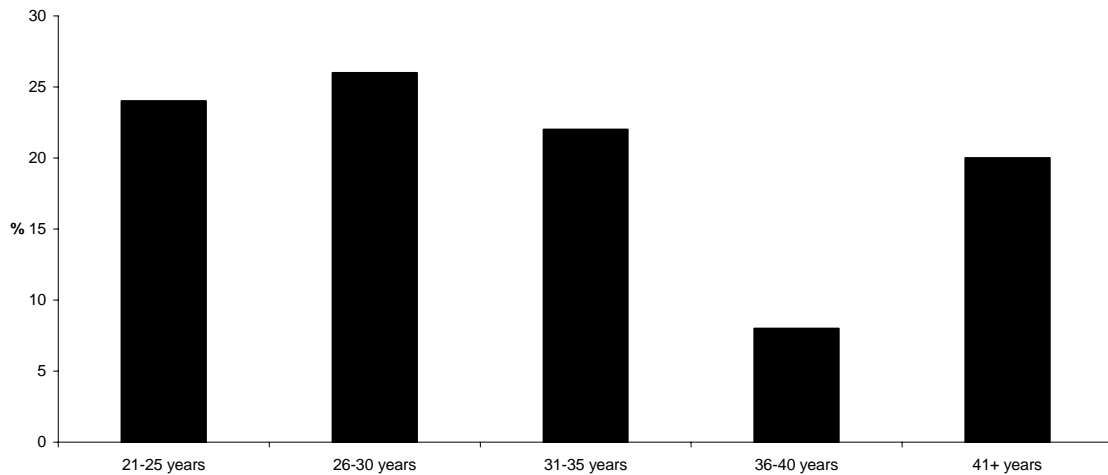
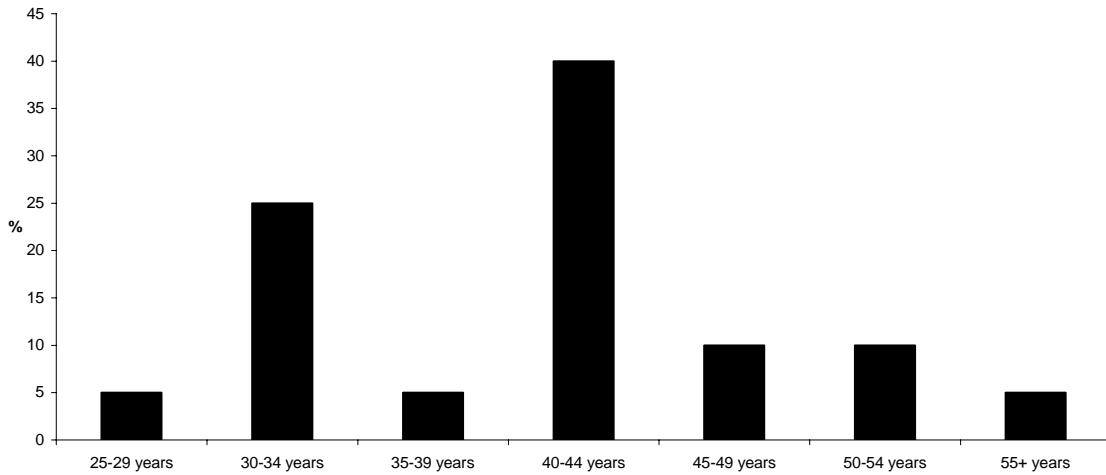
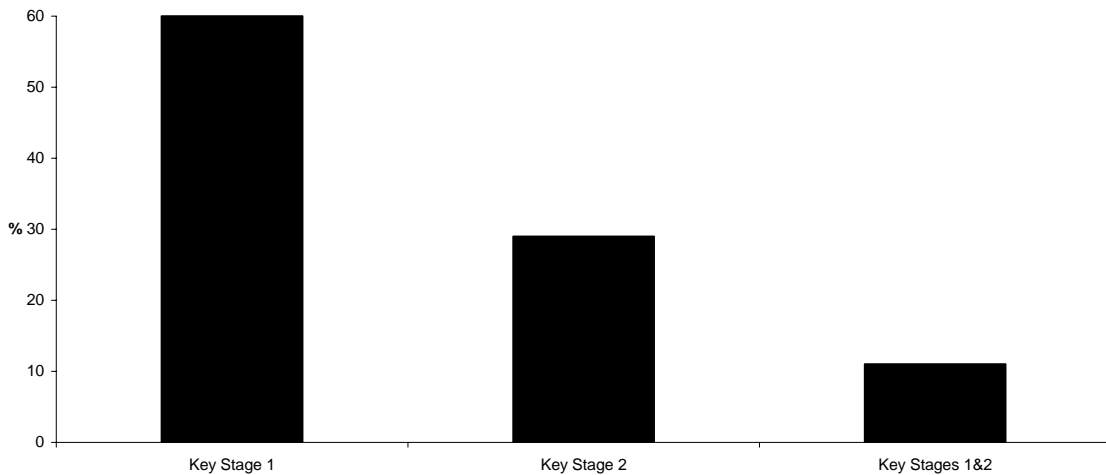


Figure 2: Percentage Breakdown of Age-Bands of Principals in Irish-Medium Schools in Northern Ireland



Nearly two thirds of teachers in the primary schools were teaching key stage 1 pupils, with a small percentage teaching both key stage 1 and 2 pupils, this could be due to some of the schools having only one teacher employed. Below is a chart showing the percentage breakdown of the key stages taught by primary school teachers.

Figure 3: Percentage Breakdown of Key Stages Taught by Primary School Teachers



Teachers were asked how long they had been teaching in their current Irish-medium school, 77% reported they had been teaching there for six years or less, with nearly 20% having only started there within the past year. Teachers were also asked about how long they had been teaching in general in order to ascertain the level of experience they had. Just over half (54%) of the teachers reported having been teaching for six years or less. Below are two charts showing the percentage breakdown for teaching in current school and in general.

Figure 4: Percentage Breakdown for Teachers of Number of Years Teaching in Current Irish-Medium School

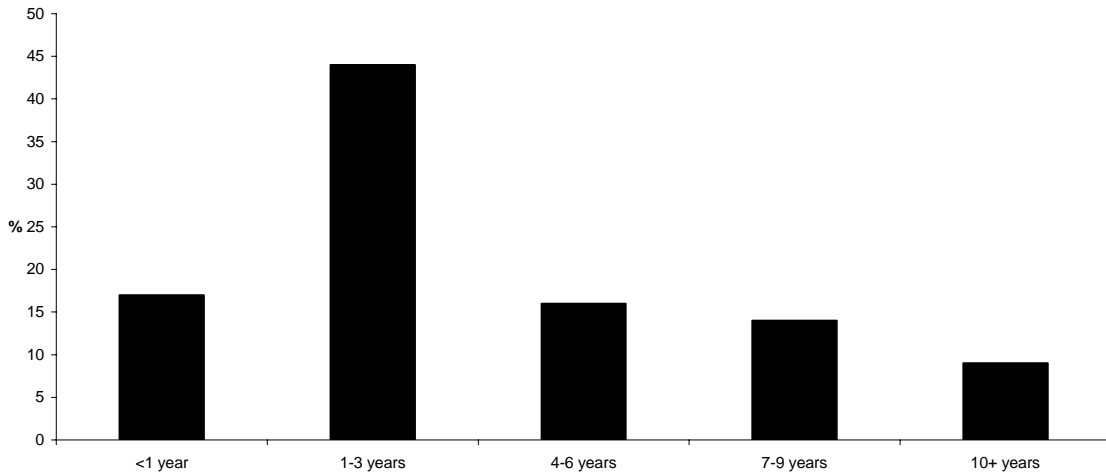
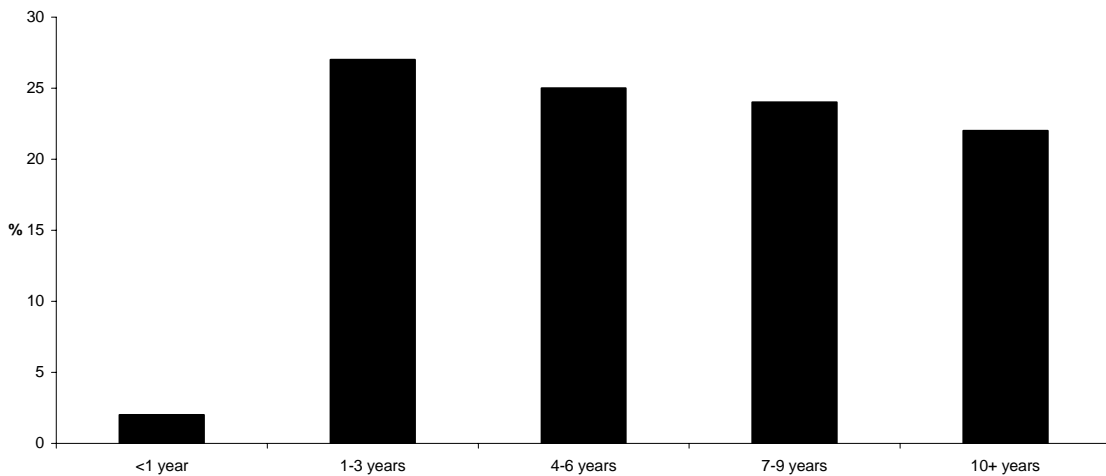


Figure 5: Percentage Breakdown for Teachers of Number of Years Teaching in General



Principals were asked how long they had occupied their role as principal in the school, 90% reported they had been in the role of principal for six years or less, with 15% having only occupied this role within the past year. Principals were also asked about how long they had been teaching in general in order to ascertain the level of experience they had. Just over a third (35%) of the principals reported having been teaching for less than fifteen years. Below are two charts showing the years in the role of principal in the school and the percentage breakdown for teaching in general. Principals were also asked whether they currently had full-time responsibility for teaching a class in the school, with 40% actually occupying the dual role of teaching principal.

Figure 6: Percentage Breakdown of Number of Years in Role of Principal in Irish-Medium School

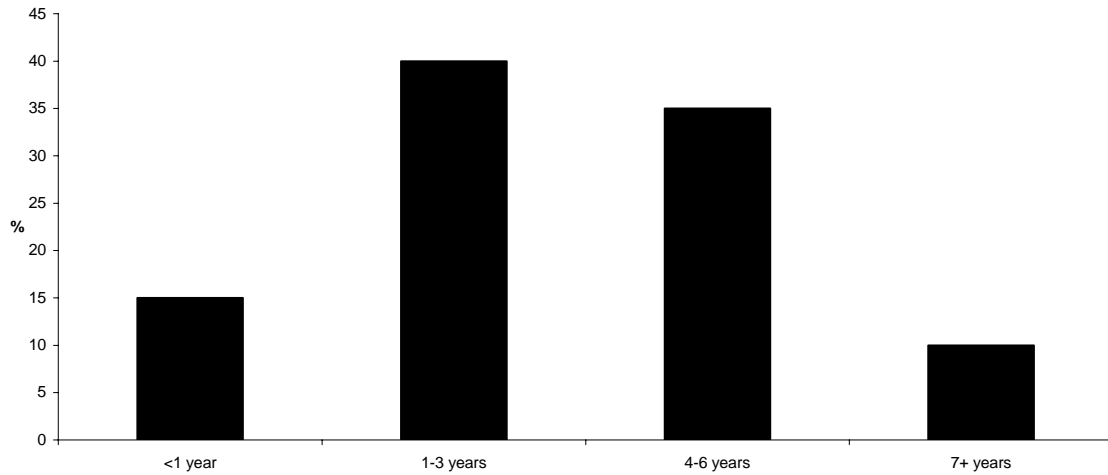
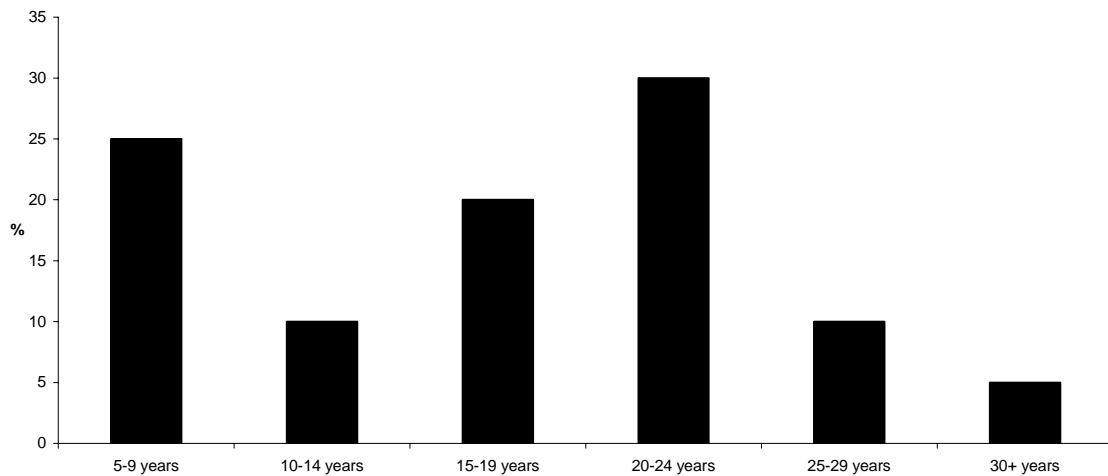


Figure 7: Percentage Breakdown for Principals of Number of Years Teaching in General

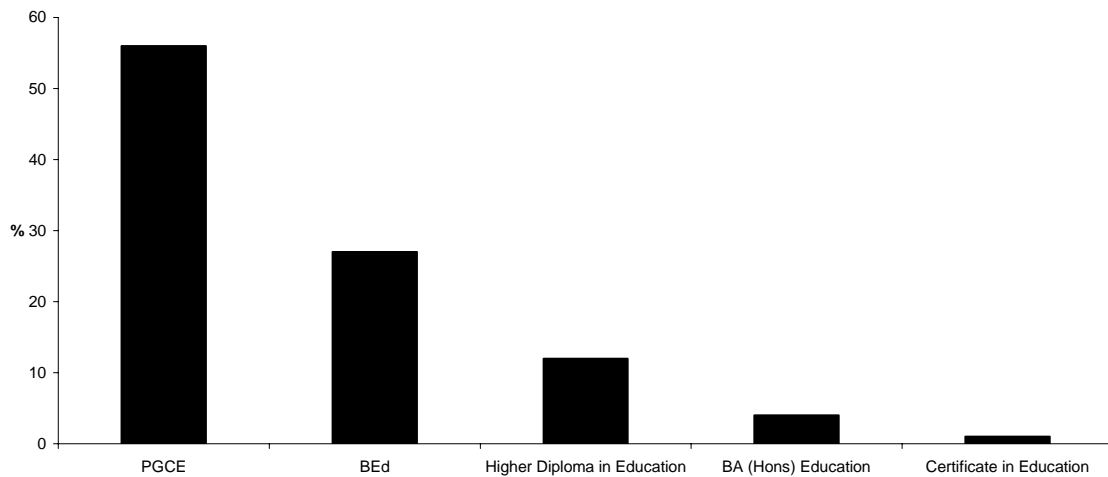


There was a range of posts/responsibilities listed by the teachers in the schools, for example, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Subject Co-ordinator i.e. ICT or science, Head of Pastoral Care, or Head of Subject. In total 70% of teachers reported holding one or more posts/responsibilities, of this 70% just under half reported that they did not receive any responsibility allowance for the posts they occupied.

Teachers reported their qualification that gave them *eligible to teach* status. 7% did not have a qualification in this respect, however, all but two of these were substitute teachers. One of the two is on a year contract in a school hoping to study for a PGCE in the future, while the other is currently acting as head of department in a school having been employed there for ten years. Just over half the teachers reported having a PGCE, with a quarter having a BEd. Below is a chart showing the breakdown of teachers' qualifications leading to *eligible to teach* status. Regarding other qualifications, a total of 137 were

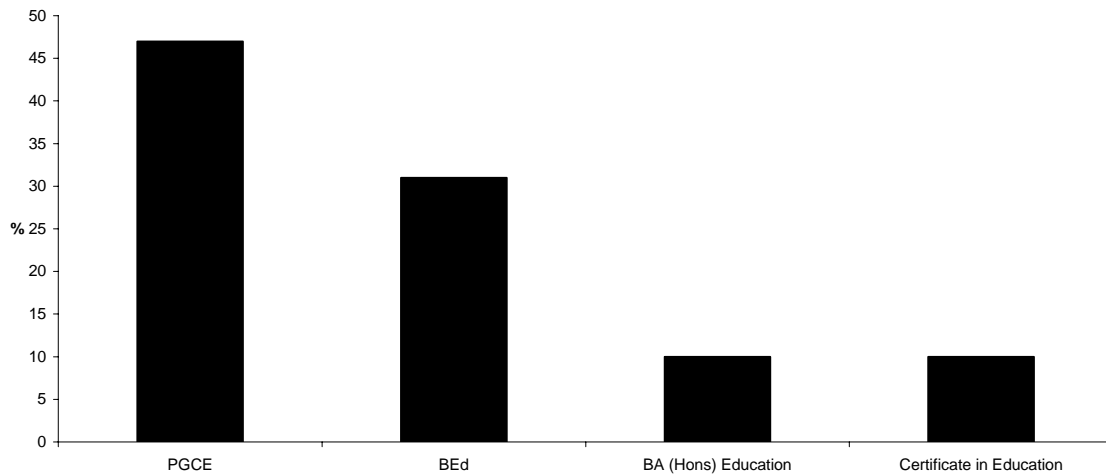
reported by the teachers, the most popular being BA Irish/Celtic Studies, Certificate in RE, and BA Humanities Combined. 59% of teachers reported having a specific Irish-medium element to their qualifications. There were a number of post-primary school teachers who were teaching subjects that were not necessarily reflected in their qualifications.

Figure 8: Teachers' Qualifications Leading to Eligible to Teach Status



Principals also reported their qualifications, with all of them having a qualification that leads to *eligible to teach* status. Nearly half the principals had a PGCE, with a third having a BEd, the remainder had either a BA (Hons) Education or a Certificate in Education. Regarding their other qualifications, a total of 24 were reported by principals, the most popular being BA (Honours), the main academic subject of this degree was not always provided by the principals, but for those that were, it included Irish, German, history, and combined humanities. The remaining other qualifications included DASE, MA, and a variety of others. When asked if there was a specific Irish-medium element to their qualifications, 30% of principals answered yes. Below is a chart showing the breakdown of principals' qualifications leading to *eligible to teach* status.

Figure 9: Principals' Qualifications Leading to Eligible to Teach Status



When asked what the focus (i.e. primary or post-primary) of their teaching qualification was, 24% of primary school teachers and 28% of primary school principals reported that their qualification focused on post-primary education, with 5% of post-primary school teachers and no post-primary school principals reporting their qualification focusing on primary education. Teachers and principals were also asked to list any other qualifications they were currently working towards, 66% of teachers and 65% of principals are currently not doing so. Of those who are, the qualifications for teachers include, among others, MEd, MA, and BSc, and for principals include, PhD, EdD, MPhil, MBA, PQH, and Diploma in Management.

INSET Courses Attended

The main focus of the questionnaire was to determine the types of in-service training courses teachers and principals in Irish-medium schools had attended in the previous two years. They were asked to provide details of the courses, along with whether they were delivered in English or Irish. There were 598 attendances at INSET courses by teachers and 98 attendances at INSET courses by principals during that period, working out at an average of approximately 6 attendances per teacher and 5 attendances per principal. This is not to say that there were 598 different INSET courses offered for teachers and 98 different INSET courses offered for principals, many of the attendances were at the same course. The number of attendances ranged from one to thirteen by any one teacher, and none to thirteen by any one principal.

Overall 45% of INSET courses attended by teachers were on curricular areas, for example, literacy, ICT, and numeracy, with the remainder on non-curricular areas, for example, Special Needs, Assessment, and Behaviour Management. For principals, 31% of INSET courses attended were on curricular areas, for example, ICT, literacy, and numeracy, with the remainder on non-curricular areas, for example, Management/Leadership Training, Assessment Training, and Teaching/Learning

Strategies. Although there was a wide range of titles listed by the teachers and principals, they have been grouped into manageable categories in the charts below.

Figure 10: Types of In-Service Training Courses Attended by Teachers in the Previous Two Years

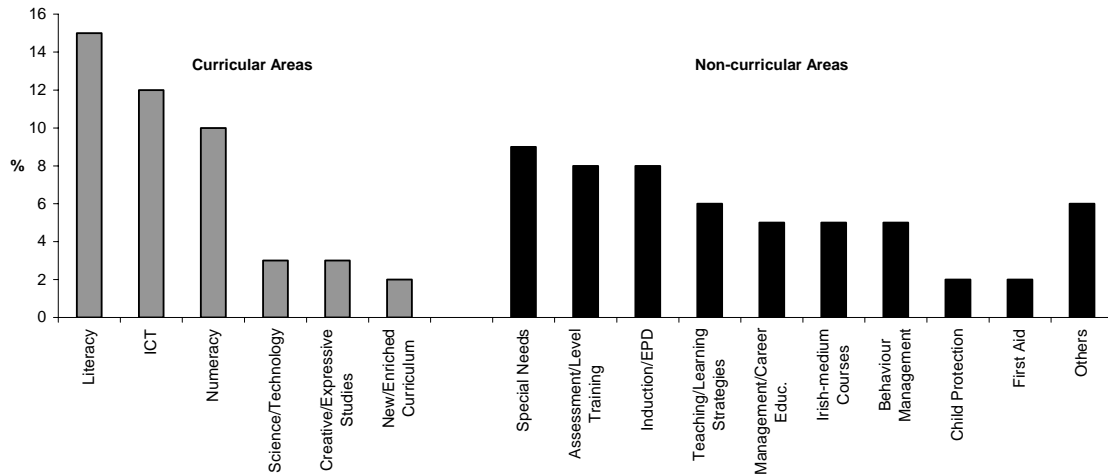
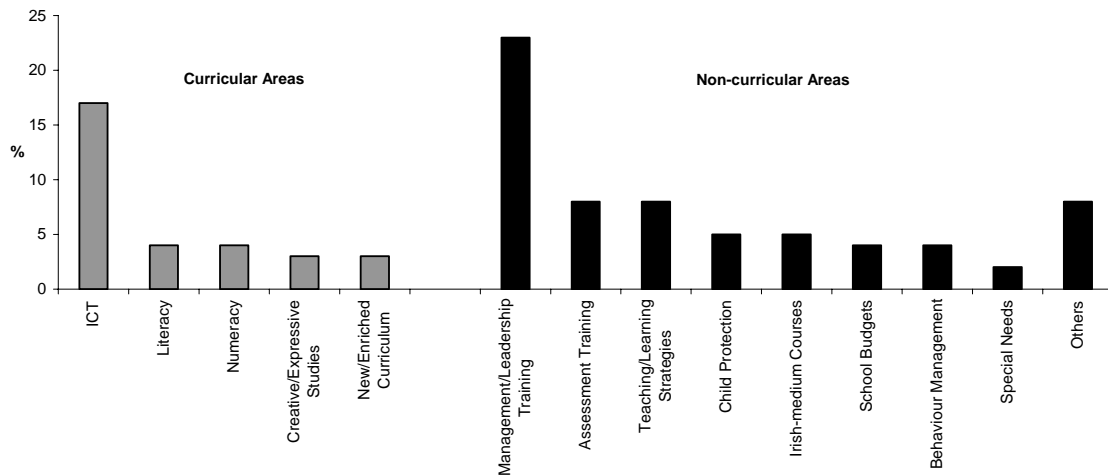


Figure 11: Types of In-Service Training Courses Attended by Principals in the Previous Two Years



The majority of INSET courses attended by teachers were provided by ELBs (78%), followed by CCEA (9%), and RTU (2%), the remaining 11% were provided by a wide variety of organisations. For principals, the majority of INSET courses attended were provided by ELBs (59%), followed by RTU (22%), and CCEA (6%), the remaining 13% were again provided by a wide variety of organisations. Regarding the delivery of the INSET courses attended by teachers, 87% of all attendances were at courses delivered in English, 10% at courses delivered in Irish, and 3% a combination of both. For principals, 89% of all attendances were at courses delivered in English, 10% at courses delivered in Irish, and 1% a combination of both. Remember that many of the attendances were at the same course.

Relevance of INSET Courses

Teachers and principals were asked to identify, from a general perspective, how relevant they found the INSET courses they attended to teaching and learning in their classroom (for teachers), and to their current role (for principals). From the charts below, it is evident that only 11% of teachers and no principals found them to be of low or very low relevance, with 56% of teachers and 88% of principals reporting them to be of high or very high relevance.

Figure 12: Relevance of INSET Courses Attended by Teachers

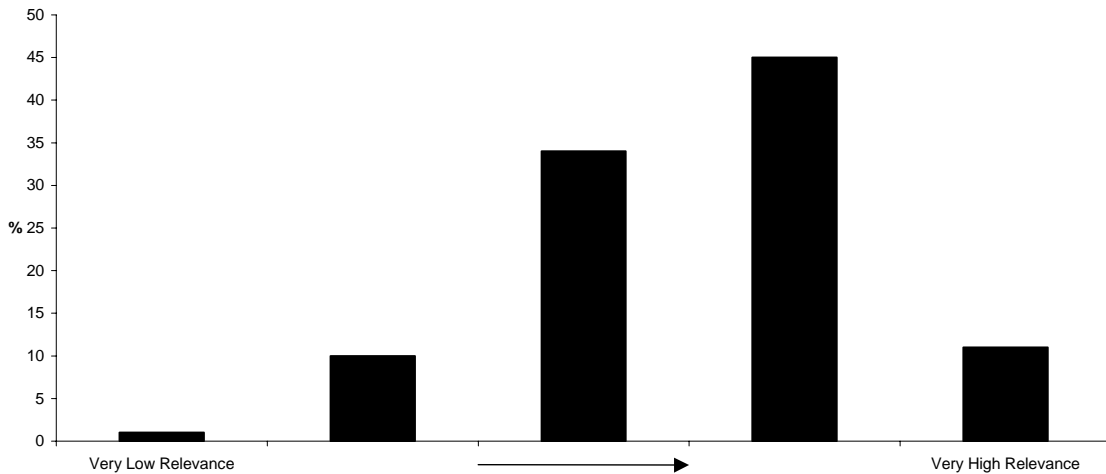
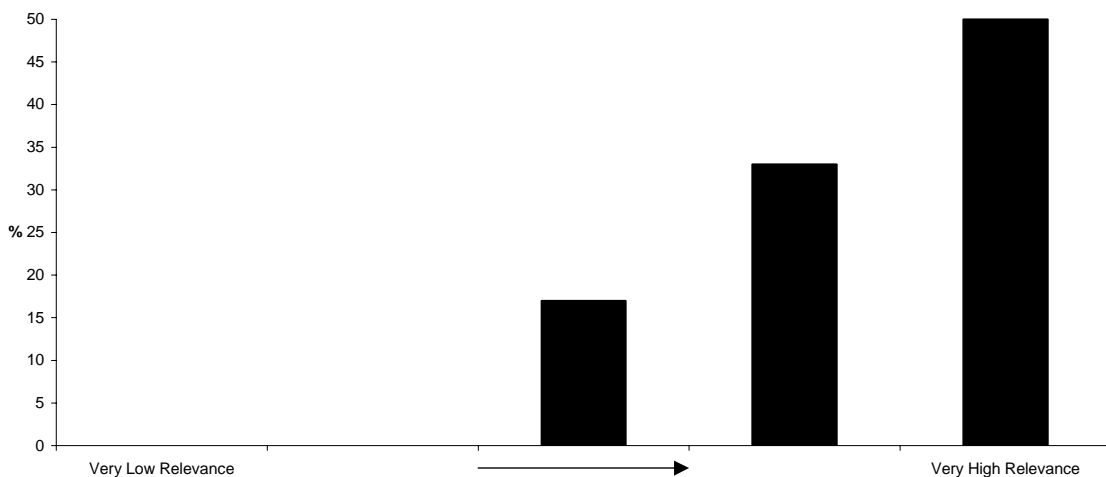


Figure 13: Relevance of INSET Courses Attended by Principals



For teachers, INSET courses on literacy and numeracy were more frequently reported as being the most relevant to teaching and learning in the classroom. 7% of courses referred to as being the most relevant were simply noted as Irish-medium courses regardless of the specific type of course. Seven teachers felt that none of the INSET courses they

previously attended had much relevance to teaching and learning in their classroom. For principals, INSET courses on management/leadership training were more frequently reported as being the most relevant to their role as principal in the school, followed by ICT, behaviour management, child protection, and a variety of others.

Figure 14: The Most Relevant INSET Courses Reported by Teachers

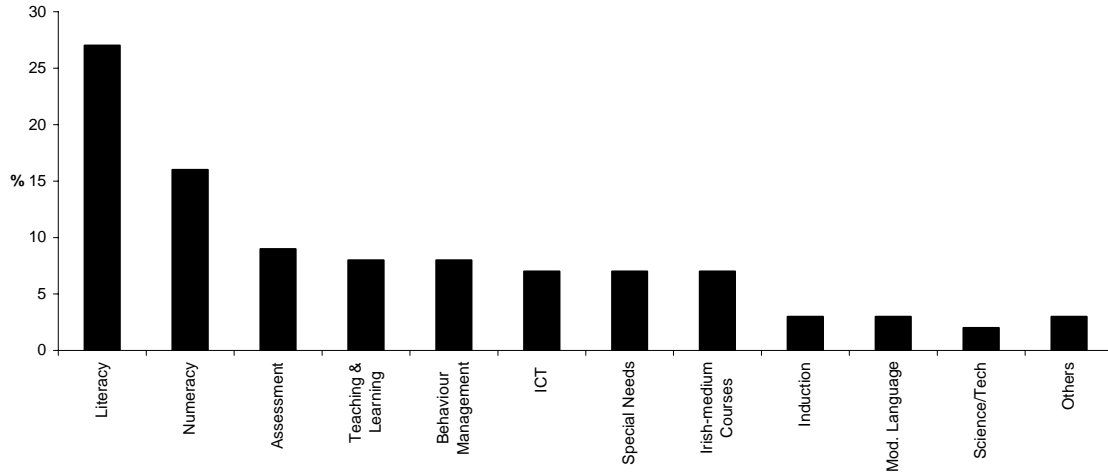
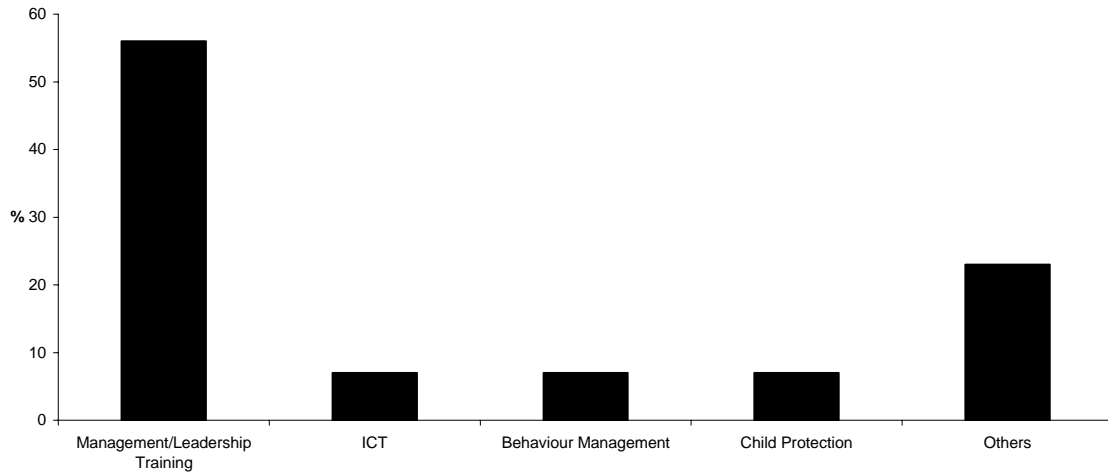


Figure 15: The Most Relevant INSET Courses Reported by Principals



Benefits of INSET Courses

Teachers and principals were also asked to identify, from a general perspective, how beneficial they found the INSET courses they attended in relation to their professional development. From the charts below, it is evident that only 17% of teachers and no principals found them to be of low or very low benefit, with 44% of teachers and 65% of principals reporting them to be of high or very high benefit.

Figure 16: Benefit of INSET Courses Attended by Teachers

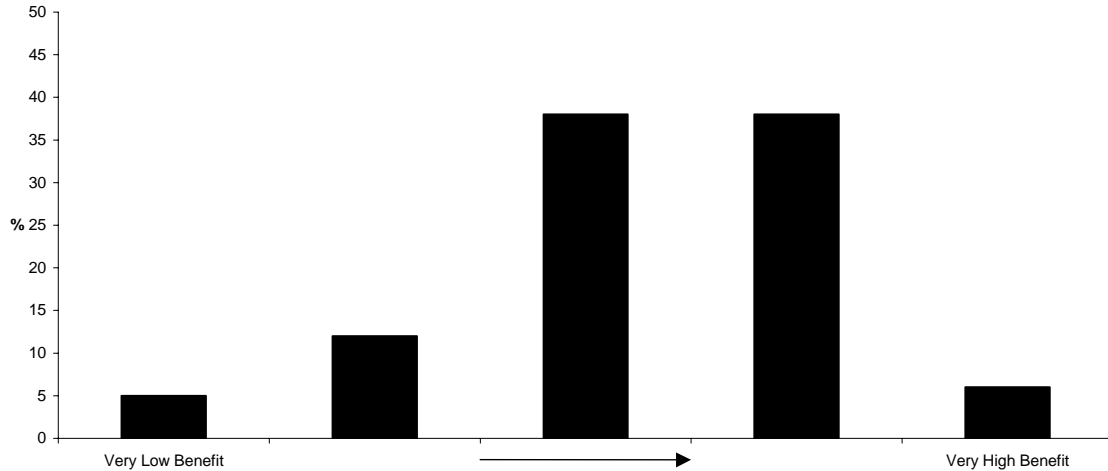
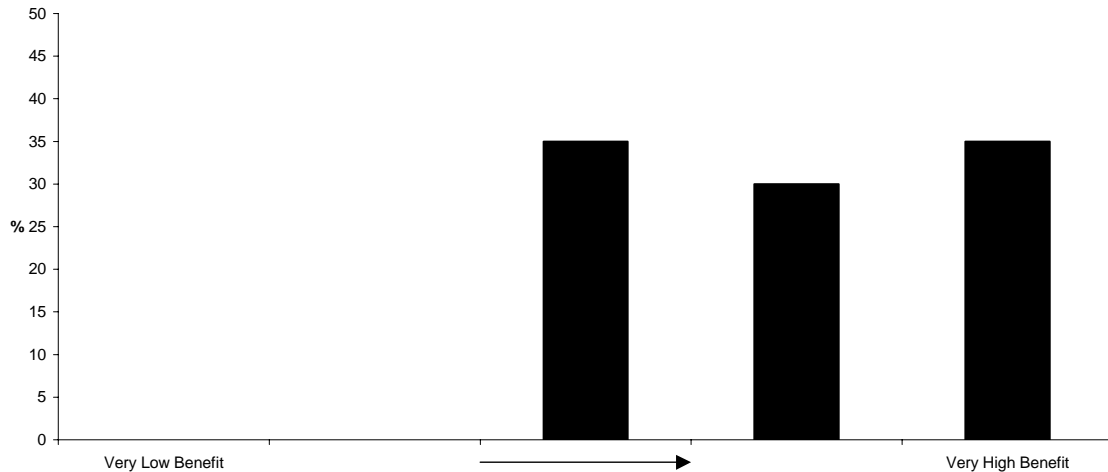


Figure 17: Benefit of INSET Courses Attended by Principals



For teachers, INSET courses on literacy were more frequently reported as having provided the most benefits to teachers' professional development, followed by induction training. 5% of the courses referred to as providing the most benefits were simply noted as Irish-medium courses regardless of the specific type of course. Fifteen teachers felt that none of the INSET courses they attended had provided much benefit to their

professional development. For principals, INSET courses on management/leadership training were again more frequently reported as providing the most benefits to their professional development, followed by assessment training, teaching and learning, behaviour management, and a variety of others.

Figure 18: The Most Beneficial INSET Courses Reported by Teachers

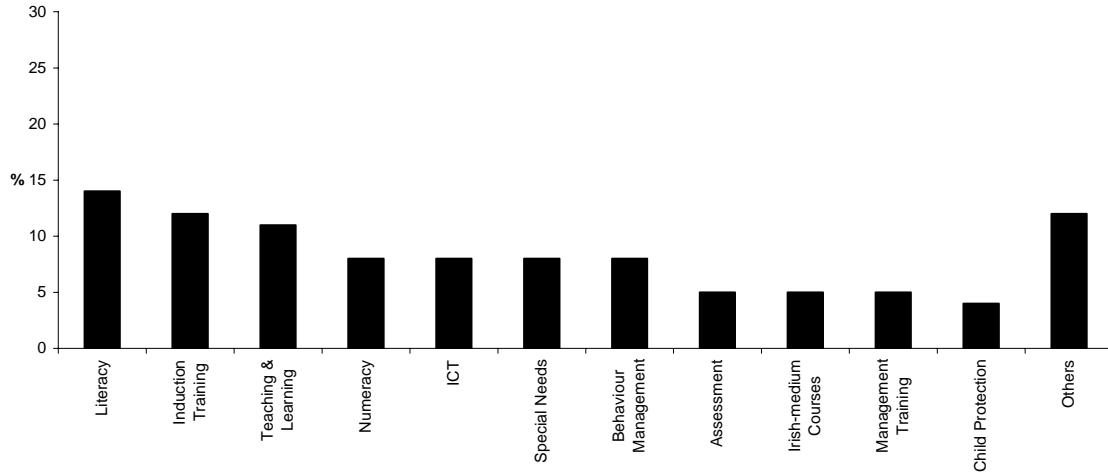
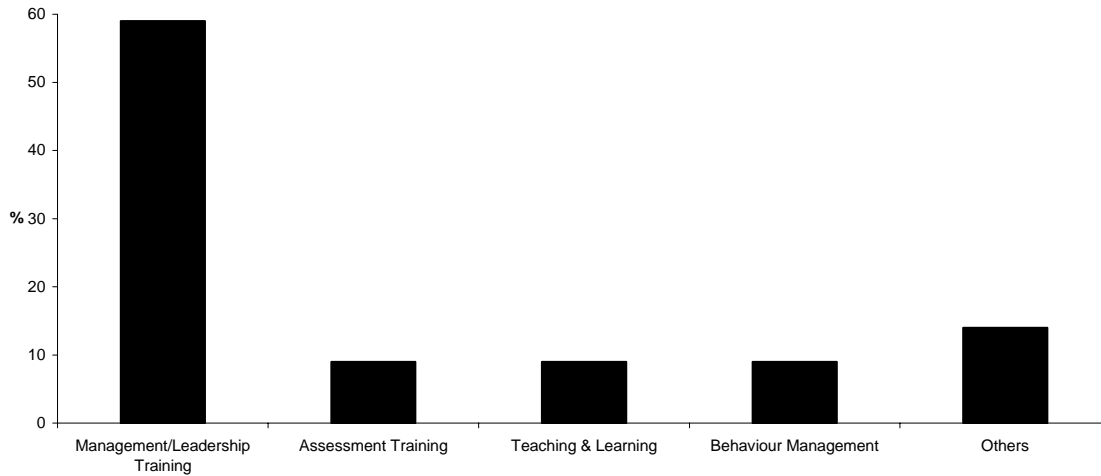


Figure 19: The Most Beneficial INSET Courses Reported by Principals



Quality of INSET Courses

Teachers and principals were further asked to rate, from a general perspective, the INSET courses attended in terms of the quality of delivery, content and resources. From the charts below, it is evident that only 14% of teachers and 12% of principals found them to be of low or very low quality, with 49% of teachers and 56% of principals reporting them to be of high or very high quality.

Figure 20: Quality of INSET Courses Attended by Teachers

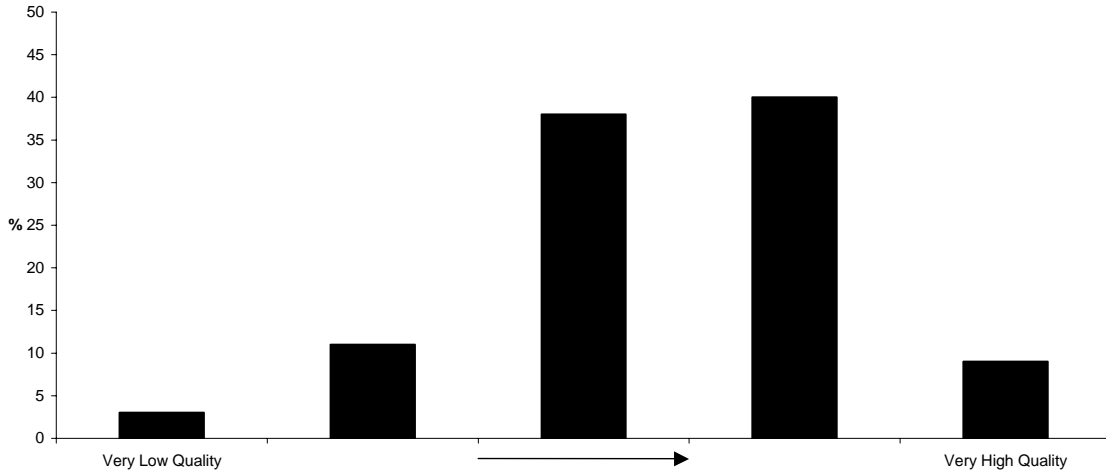
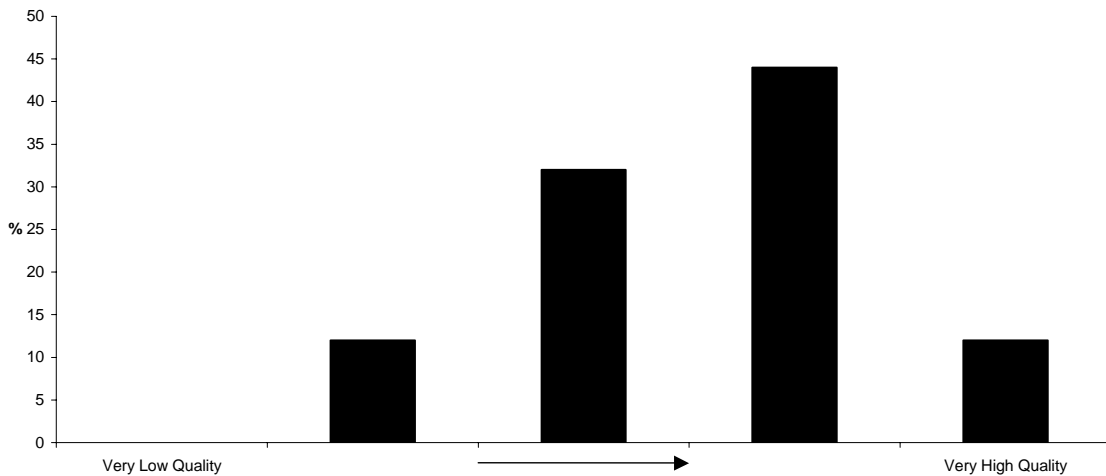


Figure 21: Quality of INSET Courses Attended by Principals



For teachers, INSET courses on literacy and numeracy were more frequently reported as being best in terms of the quality of delivery, content and resources. 8% of courses referred to as being best in terms of quality were simply noted as Irish-medium courses regardless of the specific type of course. Fifteen teachers felt that none of the INSET

courses they attended had been good in terms of the quality of delivery, content and resources. For principals, INSET courses on management/leadership training were more frequently reported as being the best in terms of the quality of delivery, content and resources, followed by assessment training, and a variety of others.

Figure 22: The Best Quality INSET Courses Reported by Teachers

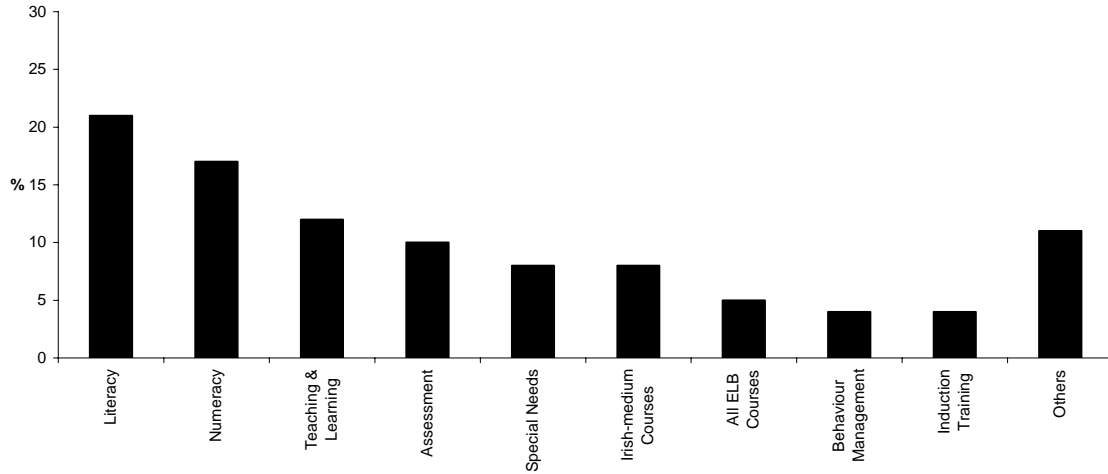
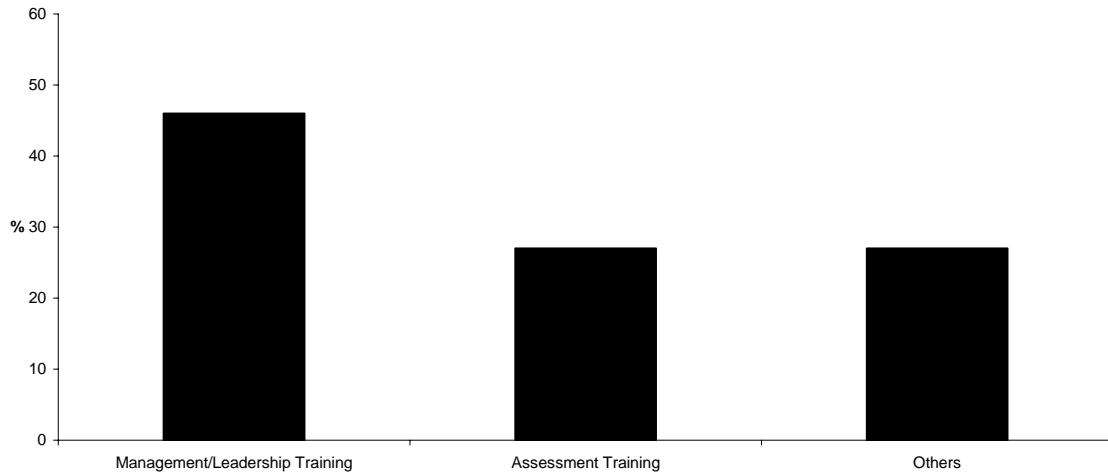


Figure 23: The Best Quality INSET Courses Reported by Principals



Relevance, Benefits and Quality of INSET Courses

Teachers' Responses

The reasons cited by teachers as to why INSET courses attended were most relevant to teaching and learning in the classroom, most beneficial to their professional development, and the best in terms of the quality of delivery, content and resources are varied.

INSET courses in literacy and numeracy were reported as being most relevant when they provided informative, practical ideas, activities and strategies that could be easily and constructively applied to improve teaching and learning in the classroom, particularly if they were backed up with good resources. Benefits to professional development were made through raising teachers' awareness of new techniques to implement the literacy and numeracy strategies, as well as enabling them to compare standards and disseminate information to colleagues. High quality was identified when the presenter was well organised, had excellent communication skills, and had a sound knowledge of the subject area.

The course was directed at improving and making staff more aware of ways to improve aspects of literacy in the classroom. Gave good practical examples of ways to help, which I have since endeavoured to put into practice.

This was a very informative course on progression in maths in P6. It explained the topics that need to be covered and the level leading up to the 11+ in a very clear, concise and practical manner.

Very high benefits in terms of updating ideas and skills in teaching literacy in school, making contact with other teachers and comparing standards.

It encouraged the use of differentiation in maths with the whole class working on practical activities, but most importantly it showed how to manage the different groups – who should be doing what and when.

I learned how to produce action plans for teaching mathematics and can in turn teach this to rest of the staff.

Speaker was well prepared and extremely competent. She was enthusiastic and there were plenty of practical ideas, not just theory.

Very useful because it explained a lot of simple, highly practical games to use to convey mathematical concepts to class. Also provided ready-made resources that could be photocopied.

INSET courses in ICT and other curricular areas were most relevant, beneficial and of high quality when they provided practical advice for developing teachers' skills, and on how to use ICT as a learning tool across curriculum subjects. This was also true when

providers were aware of possible problems involved in class teaching, for example, pupil motivation.

Very good practical help given on use of various computer programmes applicable to different class groups.

Analysed particular programmes such as 'text tease' and 'RM graph' and illustrated practical ways to use them in a range of curricular contexts.

The course involved practical work that was enjoyable and relevant to teaching art and design in the classroom.

Lots of examples of activities, which are easy to organise and are effective in teaching movement and music with early years pupils.

Felt courses I have attended to date were presented in a friendly and helpful manner. The handouts I received have been advantageous and the thoughts/ideas generated by those who presented the ICT training have been very useful for myself especially since I haven't been teaching very long.

Taught me how to teach history to the students in a lively, interesting and motivating manner.

INSET courses in assessment (level training) and examinations were considered to be most relevant and beneficial when they provided teachers with practical information and guidance on classroom assessment at all stages, giving them the confidence to assess and determine levels of pupils' work. In addition, they were most relevant when they provided teachers with appropriate guidelines on how to prepare pupils for examinations, as well as the marking of coursework.

Very useful for all teachers. Examples of work in English/Irish were very useful at different levels. Very helpful to teachers in deciding which level a pupil is at.

Essential information and guidance given with respect to preparing pupils for exams and marking coursework.

Gave me a deeper insight and knowledge into assessment, especially the assessment units at the end of Years 4 & 7 (literacy and assessment).

Most beneficial as it gave me practical experience in choosing levels for pieces of work and discussing my reasons for doing so with other teachers and CCEA staff. It was useful to me as an assessment co-ordinator and P4 teacher, even more so as the course was in Irish.

INSET courses in teaching and learning were most relevant and beneficial when they provided teachers with an insight into cognitive development, as well as practical

strategies to cater for the different types of learning ability in their classroom. High quality was evidenced when the speaker was animated, knowledgeable and interesting.

Gave me ideas on how to differentiate for different abilities within my classroom.

Very compelling and comprehensive course. It dealt with different types of learners and different methods of teaching needed to suit the learner.

Gave me a deeper understanding of how children learn, the working of the brain, different learning preference (visual/auditory/kinaesthetic) and the importance of the physical aspects of learning, e.g. music/exercise/sleep.

To be able to teach we need to know how people learn and how the brain works. I find it easier now to identify types of learners and therefore adapt my teaching methods to their needs.

Helped immensely with planning. Encouraged me to consider how children learn as well as what they learn. Analysed concentration span of children and introduced idea of 'brain gym' as a tool to maximise learning and minimise behaviour problems.

INSET courses in behaviour management and special needs were most relevant and beneficial when they gave teachers the opportunity to examine the psychology of behavioural problems and special educational needs, by providing guidance and knowledge about the different strategies that could be used to manage difficult social behaviour in the classroom. High quality was apparent when providers were enthusiastic, experienced and knowledgeable in the subject area.

Helped by providing new strategies for improving behaviour in the difficult classroom.

This course has been useful, as it has enabled me to take a more structured approach to my pupils' work with special needs and their difficulties.

Most beneficial as it enabled us to familiarise ourselves with the Code of Practice as well as procedures and regulations in the context of Irish-medium education.

Very informative, provided information that was very useful – good strategies of control in a non-confrontational way.

The course was well put together, interesting and contained a lot of relevant and structured advice.

Those running course seemed to be very experienced in their field, and are in continued and close contact with children with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder).

INSET courses in management training were beneficial to professional development when they provided practical information and strategies to develop teachers' skills in becoming effective in their designated roles.

Has enabled me to be more effective as a teacher representative, primarily in terms of understanding people's problems and how to deal with them (both problems and people).

Excellent course, which provided practical strategies for improving self-management skills, developing confidence, and a positive ethos.

Courses were very informative – dealt with various issues relating to post of designated teacher in a relevant and interesting way. Resources which would be very useful were made available.

Irish-medium INSET courses were reported by some teachers as being most relevant and beneficial because they focused on strategies for teaching curriculum subjects through a second language. These teachers were able to take the ideas, strategies and resources provided during the courses and deliver them in their classroom without the need for translation. Irish-medium INSET courses also provided the opportunity to meet and talk with other teachers from the Irish-medium sector and were presented by an excellent cross-section of speakers.

Focused on CCEA assessment levels and on the strategies to develop literacy in the Irish-medium classroom.

The Irish-medium courses were particularly helpful because they attracted other teachers in the Irish-medium sector.

This course was very useful as it addressed many common mistakes made by those working through the Irish language.

The ideas given were readily usable without having to translate or prepare lots of resources. You simply could use what was already available in the classroom.

This course was invaluable in helping address uncertainties I had about using particular aspects of language in class.

Gives teachers in Irish-medium schools chance to meet and discuss various issues.

All resources and information given all through Irish. Nothing had to be translated.

Covered both key stages in relation to attainment targets and was delivered bilingually, resources as well.

There were however comments from other teachers who, even though they felt INSET courses to be of high quality and most relevant to teaching and learning in the classroom, were concerned with the lack of Irish-medium material and resources provided during INSET courses. This often meant that Irish-medium teachers were faced with an additional workload of having to translate these materials before they could use them in the classroom.

There were some excellent ideas and resources, which we wouldn't have been using. We changed our English textbooks because of advice and information received during that training, but again teachers in Irish-medium schools need to translate the resources.

Introduced new ideas for teaching of language, new reading strategies, writing etc. A major disadvantage was that anything given in line of teaching notes and resources were through the medium of English and left myself as an Irish-medium teacher, who already has a work overload, to translate any resources (including the framework) to make it beneficial for my own use.

A fair amount of teaching ideas were discussed but a lot were irrelevant to us as Irish-medium primary teachers, e.g. phonics.

Delivery and content very good, although again nothing with particular relevance to Irish-medium education. Resources sometimes helpful, but based on English.

Course was delivered in an enthusiastic way, very enjoyable and informative. Unfortunately all rhymes, etc. in English. Irish would be of great help.

Resources sometimes helpful, but based on English generally. It would be helpful if resources without language or easily-translated resources were pinpointed.

All of the courses delivered by the Board were delivered to a high standard but made little or no provision for those working in Irish-medium education.

Principals' Responses

The reasons cited by principals as to why INSET courses attended were most relevant to their current role, most beneficial to their professional development and the best in terms of the quality of delivery, content and resources are outlined below.

Management and leadership INSET courses were considered to be most relevant and beneficial by the principals when they provided them with the skills and strategies to manage and motivate staff, develop school policies and run their school in an effective manner. This was also true when they gave them the opportunity to network with other principals, explore both theoretical and practical elements of school management, and ultimately build up their confidence in their ability to fulfill their role. High quality was achieved when the providers held their attention, and supplemented information with excellent resources.

Courses were appropriate to my role as principal. Focused on the acquisition of new skills and strategies. I was able to select which aspects of the courses offered were most appropriate to my individual needs.

Ideas for effective leadership, staff management, formation of policies raising school standards.

Gave me up-to-date knowledge and information which I needed to run a school. I have met other principals. Adds to my confidence.

After five years in post it is of great benefit to have time to hear of latest developments in education and communicate with others in same situation.

Gave me space to think about the role, met with colleagues in similar position. Drew upon the experience of facilitators. Very good hand-outs. Theory of management explored.

Provided a chance to discuss with other principals problems they have in relation to managing a school, dealing with staff, motivating staff. However as the only principal from an Irish-medium school it was difficult for others to appreciate my situation. Course providers had basic knowledge of Irish-medium system.

All slick and timed and humorous and organised. The course has been run often and it works well. Variety of sessions, lots of interaction, excellent resources, though some of them could have been issued in advanced of the course.

INSET courses on child protection were also considered to be highly relevant and beneficial by principals because it provided them with practical information that enabled them to develop school policy and train staff in the area of child protection practice within the school. High quality was apparent when providers sustained the principals' interest by being very knowledgeable of the issues in question, and when they kept the information focused and to the point.

In my role as designated officer it gave me the information and knowledge I needed to carry out my role and to train staff members.

Clarified what a school should have in place in relation to child protection, advice in areas to address and things to avoid.

Assessment training courses were also considered by principals to be highly beneficial to their professional development because these gave them the confidence to set and determine appropriate assessment levels for pupils in the school. High quality was evidenced by the provision of examples of how to mark and grade school work, and when providers gave precise specifications of the agreed standards for different levels. This was also true when principals were able to discuss possible issues of concern. Principals

also considered courses that dealt with teaching and learning to be most beneficial because they provided them with an insight into the different types of learning abilities within a classroom and enabled them to work with teachers to set in place proper strategies that would enhance learning among pupils. Behaviour management courses were also deemed by principals to be most beneficial when they offered techniques of identifying and coping with possible behavioural problems that could arise in the school. The knowledge gained at these courses enabled principals to take a more objective, rather than a narrow view of difficult pupil behaviour in the school.

INSET Courses Specific to Irish-medium Sector

Teachers and principals were asked to identify the types of INSET courses they would like to see being offered specifically to the Irish-medium sector and provide reasons why.

Teachers' Responses

INSET courses most frequently identified by the teachers encompassed all strands of literacy. A strong view expressed through the teachers' comments was that literacy courses, as they presently stand, do not meet the needs of Irish-medium schools. The teachers felt that the resources and guidelines provided at literacy courses were usually geared towards the English-medium classroom and, despite what some providers believe, were not easily transferable to the Irish-medium setting.

Course through medium of Irish to look at resources available to teachers in Gaelscoileanna, and the way they can use them.

The literacy courses I have attended recently all provided worksheets and Big Books for use in class. It would be so wonderful to attend a course in Irish literacy and leave with some resources that could be used in the classroom.

I feel that the content of the courses are not adapted to pupils who are learning through a second language. And, while the content of the curriculum is similar, the different approaches to its teaching should be recognised.

One aspect of literacy training identified by teachers was the need for INSET courses that provided guidance and support on how to teach English in an Irish-medium setting. This would, according to teachers, allow them to achieve a balance between the teaching of Irish and English in the classroom and ensure that their pupils are fully competent in both languages when they leave primary school.

Not everyone on staff is of the one opinion as to how to teach English.

A programme should be laid out giving precise details of what should be taught to Gaelscoil children and when. A greater emphasis must be placed on the teaching of English to Gaelscoil children.

How it should be taught, how to achieve a balance between both (English and Irish) to ensure pupils are equally competent in both languages in P7?

Our pupils are expected to be just as competent in English at the end of P7 as a pupil leaving an English-medium school. How do you achieve this?

Pupils have been immersed in Irish for nearly three years [English is not taught formally until P4], how do you best achieve a balance between two languages to ensure they are equally competent in both languages at end of KS2?

Another aspect of literacy training that teachers felt had been neglected in Irish-medium education and therefore needed development, was courses and resources in Irish for spelling strategies, teaching phonics and phonographix.

Courses available so as to develop skills, within the Irish language, in spelling strategy.

Appropriate spelling schemes are required urgently.

It would be good to get tips on what are the simple rhyming words like 'hen', 'pen', 'men', etc. in Irish and how to make it fun for the children to learn.

I feel a course on phonographix would be of great help to all teachers especially when working with two alphabets.

INSET courses giving guidelines on teaching pupils to read and write creatively, as well as structured play were also felt by teachers to be important for effective delivery specifically in the Irish-medium classroom.

Have never been on a course, which gave pointers on the teaching of reading.

Ideas for encouraging and inspiring children in KS1 to write.

Structured play has a large role in language development at KS1 and is essential in a Gaelscoil for acquisition of Irish.

The need for INSET courses being offered in music, drama and physical education specifically to Irish-medium schools was also identified by some of the teachers to redress what they felt was a lack of training and resources in this area.

To gather more songs, poems and plays in Irish. We only covered English songs, etc. on PGCE course.

I know very few Irish songs and tunes for Irish-medium education.

As the music co-ordinator I could benefit from training through Irish if possible.

A pool of already translated songs/games would be useful. It is daunting at present.

To develop language appropriate to dance/game and gym.

Teachers also identified INSET courses on assessment training as an area that needed to be delivered specifically to teachers in the Irish-medium sector.

The descriptors for various levels in English-medium assessment, I feel do not apply to Irish-medium.

How do you assess the level of Irish? Nothing to compare.

Another important issue frequently raised in the teachers' comments was the problem of terminology in Irish. This was an issue that spread across the teaching of most subjects in the curriculum. Teachers felt that Irish language courses with a focus on terminology would help to alleviate this problem and improve their own level of Irish.

Any course on the Irish language, terminology, or how to teach Irish as a second language. There are courses available on every other topic except this area.

I feel the standard of Irish, both written and spoken is not high enough to enable teachers to teach and create resources.

Teachers' spoken Irish must be of a very high standard – a better standard than what it is at the moment in some cases.

INSET courses on numeracy, science/technology and geography, specifically for teachers in the Irish-medium sector, were deemed necessary to provide guidelines and an awareness of mathematical, scientific and geographical terminology in the classroom. This would ultimately build teachers' confidence in teaching different concepts and how to express them through Irish.

Teachers are struggling with maths terminology. This has not been helped by the lack of a maths scheme in Irish at KS2.

Helpful if relevant terminology could be provided. All teachers should be aware of and use the proper terminology from early on, so that the children are more familiar with and can use it more naturally by KS2.

Reinforce awareness of use of mathematical language in everyday situations. Build on teachers' confidence in delivering mathematics through the medium of Irish.

For language purposes to be sure we are using correct terminology with children.

Due to the lack of Irish-medium resources in ICT, teachers feel that there should be an INSET course to suit Irish-medium needs.

There is a wealth of material available in English but these need to be translated into Irish before KS1 are able to benefit fully from Classroom 2000.

Wide range of available programmes but all in English.

How to maximise ICT as a learning tool in the Irish-medium classroom.

INSET courses in management specifically for the Irish-medium sector were also pinpointed by some teachers as being necessary to address the problems currently experienced in many schools. Also, beginning teachers commented that there is a need to provide INSET courses in induction training, so they can network and discuss issues of common interest with colleagues in the same position.

Management training for members of management team. Lack of experience on how to run a school, in particular people management.

Beginning teachers have specific concerns that are not addressed at present. Important that new teachers meet with colleagues who are teaching in the same medium. Extra workload could be somewhat relieved.

Principals' Responses

Principals were asked to identify the types of INSET courses that they would like to see being offered specifically to principals in the Irish-medium sector and provide the reasons for their choice. Training in all aspects of school management and leadership development were the most popular type of courses identified by the principals as an area they felt needed to be offered specifically to Irish-medium schools. This type of training would also involve staff management and school policy development, as well as how to develop good relationships with Boards of Governors and encourage good practice within schools.

INSET and support would be very beneficial to any principal struggling to deal with role of principal/teacher.

Irish-medium principals tend to be relatively inexperienced. Need practical advice on role.

To provide opportunities to develop confidence, 'know how' on daily tasks, administration and problem solving, etc.

The management of new staff, very important.

Good practice with Boards of Governors and uniformity of process within sector.

To develop good relationships with dysfunctional Boards of Governors.

Principals also felt that the development of a regional forum or the introduction of cluster group meetings would enable them to discuss issues of common interest and to share experiences/advice.

Forum to share experiences, good practice, etc.

Provide face-to-face opportunities for advice/mutual support/practical assistance. Exchange visits and opportunity to discuss issues – especially for new principals.

Opportunities for principals to meet as a group to discuss and explore issues relevant to Irish-medium principals; exchange resources and approaches. Experience practice and issues in Republic of Ireland.

Very practically oriented courses. Principals in Irish-medium schools need to be communicating/supporting/helping each other.

The next most popular type of courses identified by the principals of Irish-medium units were on the Irish language, which could help to develop their competence level in speaking Irish to staff and pupils.

Important to be able to communicate with pupils in Irish.

I only have O level Irish and the class in town for furthering language skills is on the wrong night for me. I would love to speak Irish but do not have the opportunity to learn.

We have all trained for teaching in English-medium schools.

INSET on literacy was also deemed by teaching principals as being a course which they felt should be offered specifically in Irish-medium schools.

Courses to guide level of literacy/English in Irish-medium education.

As literacy co-ordinator I have concerns regarding level of literacy in English for many K.S. 2 pupils.

Courses to outline the guiding principles of teaching and working through the medium of Irish were identified by some principals. They felt this could ensure that principals and staff in schools and units were more aware of the rationale behind Irish-medium education and were better placed to promote the sector and answer queries often asked by parents. These types of courses could also incorporate bilingual developments from a local and international dimension.

Helpful to understand many aspects of Irish-medium education.

I am unsure of this [the principles of Irish-medium education] and am often asked questions by parents that I cannot answer.

To develop an understanding of ethos, empathy and practical implications.

To be more informed and better qualified to advise parents and to promote Irish-medium education.

Lessons from our European neighbours in bilingual development and innovation.

Other types of INSET courses in special educational needs, ICT, pastoral care, Irish-medium resources, assessment, and examinations were also identified by principals.

Special educational needs in the Irish-medium sector – teaching to all ability classes in the Irish-medium unit.

Computing in school and help with use of IT in the classroom.

Anti-bullying strategy very important.

Assessment for K.S.2 literacy levels in English and Irish.

Baseline assessment – development of literature is not suitable in English-medium.

To see how questions are translated for public exams.

INSET Courses to be delivered in the Irish Language

Teachers and principals were asked which INSET courses they attended in the past and delivered in the English language, should be delivered in the Irish language, and why they feel this should happen.

Teachers' Responses

Regarding literacy courses, some teachers felt that all literacy-related courses should be provided through the medium of Irish for a variety of reasons: it is the language through which the children in school are taught; the strategies used in English-medium cannot always be applied to Irish-medium; it could help make resources for literacy available in Irish; it could develop teachers' literacy skills and provide strategies that teachers could use in classroom; it could address teaching literacy in the context of Irish-medium education; it could encourage teachers to use and develop more the material given at INSET courses; it could promote language development; and it could reduce the workload and time teachers in Irish-medium education spend translating resources.

Should be delivered through the medium of Irish because it is taught through the medium of Irish.

The methods for teaching English are often not applicable to the teaching of Irish, especially very often as a second language. A more up-to-date method of teaching spelling/word patterns, etc. is needed badly.

It's not the fact that the courses are in English that is the problem, but the courses do not take into account that teaching subjects through the medium of Irish requires a different perspective/approach. What's appropriate in English is not necessarily appropriate in Irish.

The 'phonics' part of the programme was of little use to Irish-medium teachers.

Brilliant course, brilliant resources, but all in English. If courses were available in Irish, teachers would use more frequently. Why are different schools translating resources and not sharing them?

Although both courses were given in English and provided me with excellent ideas, I had to translate guidelines and resources into Irish which unfortunately is very time-consuming. Language development doesn't take into consideration how much time is spent on oracy in an Irish-medium classroom.

This early intervention programme should be available in the Irish-medium sector to children who have particular difficulties in reading and writing. With a trained Reading Recovery teacher in school, techniques and strategies would be available to all teachers thus impacting upon the literacy teaching and learning within the school.

Courses very useful in giving ideas/resources which help in classroom situation: if resources were available in Irish, it would reduce time spent by teachers translating paper work.

While there are very good courses on offer in many subject areas through the medium of English, there is a dearth in Irish. We, in Irish-medium schools, attend such English courses as individuals and proceed to translate resources for ourselves and our classes. There is very little co-operation between schools in this field, causing many of us to double up on each other's already weighty workload.

For numeracy courses, teachers felt that INSET delivered through the Irish language would go some way to overcome language difficulties and make teachers more aware of the appropriate levels for different age groups.

I think it is imperative that Irish-medium teachers have such courses delivered in Irish, as there is great emphasis on development of mathematical language. It would reassure schools that their pupils are attaining an appropriate level in this area, and that KS1 pupils have their language skills stretched, so all mathematical terminology is not left to KS2.

A language difficulty often arises in this field. Teachers need to be made aware of the level of language appropriate for age group levels, etc.

All Early Years teachers would then be using the same standardised language relevant to topics, etc. and suitable for children.

INSET courses in ICT, delivered in Irish, could help alleviate the problem of having to translate the materials and may lead to teachers gaining more confidence in using ICT in teaching curriculum subjects.

Some teachers were of the view that all INSET courses should be delivered in the Irish language mainly because: Irish-medium schools “*should have equality in education*”; teachers use the medium of Irish when teaching; and there is a need to provide resources and terminology for teachers to teach in an Irish-medium classroom.

Equality in education: if Irish-medium schools are available the government should provide appropriate training and resources.

Would help to give parity of esteem to Irish-medium education.

So that teachers in Irish-medium sector could attend these courses together and avail of the information delivered in the language which we use to teach.

Courses required in Irish as we are teaching in Irish. Also providers need to be aware of problems of teaching in another medium.

All courses to be in Irish-medium (maths, geography, etc.), very important for terminology, etc.

All courses which relate to subject areas are needed in Irish purely in terms of providing resources from courses in Irish, e.g. use of Irish terminology. Other courses relating to induction, pastoral care, etc. are okay in English.

However, while the views expressed by the majority of Irish-medium teachers showed an overwhelming desire to have INSET courses delivered through the medium of Irish, some also revealed that they do not want this to happen at the expense of the content and delivery of the course being of a lower standard.

On the other hand, I have no objection to attending courses in English and listening to a person who knows his/her subject and then applying that information to my own situation, rather than attending a course with someone who speaks Irish but really has no knowledge/experience with the subject in question.

It would be fantastic to have experts with Irish, however there are few Irish speakers with expert knowledge on literacy/numeracy, etc. I feel that it is better to gain in-depth knowledge through the medium of English.

Principals' Responses

School management and leadership development courses were the most popular type identified by principals, followed by courses in literacy, the Irish language, numeracy and assessment.

Irish is a core subject (should have in-service on Irish in the curriculum) and it is equally valid and necessary to provide training on literacy focused on Irish in an immersion context.

A detailed scheme of work could be drawn up at such a course outlining the delivery of English in Irish-medium schools.

To ensure a much more accurate and precise delivery of the Irish language in the classroom.

The eradication of blatant 'Béarlachas' [English dressed up as Irish] being delivered to some Gaelscoil students.

A gaping void in advice on assessment instruments, standardised tests, etc., appropriate in an immersion context particularly for Irish in the curriculum as the medium of instruction.

Support and Encouragement Offered for INSET Courses

Teachers and principals were asked about the type of support and encouragement offered to them when wishing to attend INSET courses.

Teachers' Responses

Responses from the majority of Irish-medium teachers indicated that the support and encouragement they received was very positive. This positive aspect to supporting the teacher was apparent if an INSET course was deemed particularly relevant to a teacher's post or responsibility, and if it was beneficial to the needs of the school.

The school is very supportive that we as teachers develop our skills as teachers in order to improve our teaching and support our colleagues.

All courses are encouraged by the school management and there is no problem getting substitute cover.

You are encouraged to attend if it is beneficial to you or it will be beneficial to the pupils who are in your class.

We are given plenty of support and encouragement to choose courses which interest and benefit us in our posts of responsibility. Substitute teachers are booked in advance.

While the majority of teachers reported positive support and encouragement, and did not feel there were difficulties obtaining substitute cover to release them in order to attend INSET courses, some did however claim their attendance at these courses was sometimes dictated by the availability of appropriate substitute cover and the problem of funding this cover.

I am supported and encouraged to attend courses providing there will be sub cover available on that day.

Encouraged to attend INSET, although funding substitute cover is a problem for the school.

Comments from some of the teachers revealed that information on INSET courses was generally made available in the school via the staffroom.

At the beginning of the year the principal informed staff that the calendar for all CASS courses is posted on the staffroom notice board. All staff then need to do is express their interest in a course to the principal and she organises for them to attend and provides substitute cover.

However, not all the comments received from Irish-medium teachers reported positive support from the school. Comments from some revealed they received little or no support and encouragement from the school when they wanted to attend INSET courses.

The principal of the school is extremely reluctant to allow staff to attend training of any kind. Unless the teachers themselves initiate enrolment/participation in courses, no effort is made to bring class teachers up-to-date on these strategies.

To be honest, I feel that the general opinion regarding INSET courses in our school is that it is a 'privilege' to be allowed to attend a course, instead of an essential part of teachers' professional development, which in turn can impact on development of the school as a whole. Due to lack of substitute teachers (supposedly), it is quite rare for teachers to attend courses during school hours.

Some noted that the school does not make them aware of INSET courses.

The courses available are not made known to the staff at the start of the year, this would help.

The only courses I have attended in recent years have been courses/sessions within the school during an exceptional closure or during directed time. Other than these, I am never made aware of courses or they don't seem to be advertised in the school.

Others illustrated reluctance on the part of the teacher to ask for permission to go on INSET courses.

It's difficult to put the principal under pressure when there is a lack of substitutes. Monetary aspects also figure. There was no problem when the ELB was paying as part of induction, they said I had no problem last year.

The school is independent [non grant-aided] at present. I have not been informed that I would be permitted to attend courses.

Some teachers felt that only colleagues with responsibility posts are encouraged to go to courses.

Nobody really attends courses other than those with responsibilities (apart from whole school course). We're not given an opportunity and I would be hesitant to ask to attend some.

Principals' Responses

Many principals felt that their school was indeed offered support and encouragement to attend INSET, due to it being an important part of school development.

We see staff development as an important aspect of our whole school plan. All staff are encouraged to participate in INSET which will enhance the teaching and learning of the school.

Teachers are encouraged to attend courses that will keep them up-to-date on the latest developments in teaching within their subjects.

INSET is seen as an integral part of the school's development and therefore encouraged.

ELBs and other bodies send information to school. Teachers are asked to specify interest, and according to the courses are encouraged to attend. Getting sub can impede, but this has seldom happened.

I prioritise the courses I wish to attend and if sub teachers are available, I avail of relevant training.

Some principals point out however, that attendance at INSET courses is often dictated by the availability and funding of substitute cover.

This is privately dictated by budgeting and sub cover considerations whilst employing a policy of encouragement for teachers. It can be difficult to identify sub. teachers, and when available, they tend to be older and so more expensive. In addition, sub. costs are capped and so bring more unavoidable expense and pressure on the school budget.

Problems Encountered in Attending INSET Courses

Teachers and principals were also asked about whether they had experienced problems in relation to their desire to attend INSET courses.

Teachers' Responses

The main problems experienced reflect those mentioned previously such as, finding suitable substitute teachers to cover their release from the classroom, as well as the issue of funding substitute cover. The lack of substitute teachers often means that schools have to rely on unqualified cover to allow teachers to attend courses. This inevitably leads to teachers having to spend time preparing work to leave for their class in their absence. Other issues identified include, the lack of suitable courses for the Irish-medium sector, the lack of management support in the school, and the problem of transport for teachers.

There is a lack of sub teachers and those who do come in are mostly unqualified, therefore a lot of time has to be spent preparing work to be left for the children.

Management appears to have little or no interest in the professional development of staff and does not appreciate our/my need to attend courses and be aware of the latest development in the curriculum.

Principal can be reluctant to give permission.

Principals' Responses

Regarding problems experienced, one of the main issues identified by the principals in releasing teachers or themselves to attend INSET courses was again the lack of suitable substitute teachers to cover their absence, as well as the funding of substitute cover.

The main difficulty is finding qualified teachers to cover classes so that teachers can be released to attend relevant courses.

Our biggest problem is getting sub. teachers. Up until this year we had no qualified subs., I have had to use people who do not have a teaching qualification and in some instances people without degrees.

Small sums of funding available to cover sub. teachers.

Other problems identified include the content of the INSET courses and the language in which they are delivered, making them not always applicable to Irish-medium education. Principals called for an awareness-raising exercise on the part of the providers in relation to the specific needs of Irish-medium education.

As well as subject delivery for teachers the whole area of how it is delivered orally needs to be looked at in detail.

I would identify bilingual issues as an area of neglect in INSET. I am convinced that an examination of constructive analysis of Irish/English and subsequent teaching strategies are urgently required.

The only problem is that virtually all of the courses relate specifically to English-medium schools.

However, there are a number of comments from principals who reported that they or their teachers have experienced no major problems in wishing to attend INSET courses.

No major problems. Sub. difficult to find but generally we have succeeded. It is difficult to release more than two teachers on any given day. In general teachers who specify interest in courses are encouraged and allowed to attend.

CONCLUSION

There was a general perception among many teachers and principals that current INSET provision did not fully address or cater for the needs of Irish-medium education. This in turn created many challenges and difficulties for those working in the Irish-medium sector thus having an effect on pupils who attend Irish-medium schools. One of the main issues was the lack of sufficient INSET currently available for staff through the medium of Irish. This served to fuel a perception that it eliminated any benefits that they could receive from attending courses. There was also a view put forward by some staff that Irish-medium education did not enjoy the same level of attention as English-medium education, and this was particularly true among beginning teachers who felt they did not receive the level of guidance and support as teachers in English-medium schools did, with reference being made to feeling 'isolated' and 'struggling' in the present system. There was also a feeling that many INSET providers were not aware of the particular challenges Irish-medium teachers have to face in the bilingual classroom. One of the most salient challenges cited in this respect was the lack of good quality resources in Irish-medium education to use in the classroom, i.e. textbooks and other written resources including those given at INSET courses.

If the courses were run in Irish, there would be a greater understanding of and more empathy with the challenges and difficulties facing Irish-medium teachers.

I feel that more officers with Irish would be important with expertise ranging across all subject areas and special needs and assessment. I find that many on the Board have no idea of the problems we face and on every course we have to repeat our needs. I don't feel that this is always attended to.

I feel I do not receive adequate support from the Board or DENI as a young teacher, although other groups such as Gaeleagras um Shainriachtanais Oideachais, Comhairle na Gaelscoilaíochta, and a local group have done a great deal to make my job easier. From talking to beginning teachers in the Irish-medium sector and from my own experience we feel isolated without the support and guidance that is provided for our English counterparts.

There is a definite lack of resources in Irish-medium education in certain subjects, i.e. science/music/drama/PE. Even lesson plans in Irish or planners (yearly/monthly/weekly) in these subject areas would help teachers immensely with their own individual plans.

It is essential that all programmes of study in all areas and for each K.S. are published in Irish. This would greatly reduce the frustration caused and is a basic linguistic right.

No specific reading, spelling or phonic scheme for Irish-medium education pupils, no reading books for pupils with SEN.

The lack of good quality resources for Irish-medium education often means teachers have to spend hours of extra time translating and adapting the English language resources

provided. Some felt that having to translate resources and materials provided to them at INSET courses often resulted in them not being used in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers felt that pupils in Irish-medium schools who worked with translated materials had to make do with poor quality copies, unlike their English-medium counterparts. Teachers also referred to being encouraged to introduce ICT as a learning tool across the curriculum yet, as they point out, there is a lack of computer software available in Irish-medium education and when their pupils do use the computers, they have to revert back to English.

The main difficulty is teaching resources, particularly those which you receive when you attend courses – good as they are, you must translate them before you can use them. This is very time-consuming, also it begs the question – are we meeting the needs of the children, particularly in language development?

There is some excellent software available for various areas of the curriculum, again these are in English and any worksheets downloaded from the Internet have to be translated. All the new resources available through C2K are also in English. What about Irish-medium schools?

The shortage of suitably qualified teachers in the Irish-medium sector was also raised as a problem by many teachers. This often results in having to take on additional work to cover for staff shortages or having to teach subjects they are not qualified to teach.

One of the biggest problems in Irish-medium school/units is the fact that most teachers have to teach subjects for which they are not qualified, especially where more than one subject is involved.

A common view advocated by teachers was that the provision of INSET courses specifically for Irish-medium education would go some way to address and help eliminate the difficulties presently faced by many in this sector. INSET courses through the medium of Irish could, according to teachers, help them to develop their language skills and become more competent in teaching through a second language. This would ultimately benefit both teachers and pupils in Irish-medium schools, and address the problems associated with terminology used in teaching various aspects of the curriculum. Many teachers were also of the view that because they were trained to teach through the medium of Irish, it would seem feasible that their professional development needs should be facilitated in the language with which they teach. The lack of good quality resources is clearly an area of concern for some teachers who feel it needs urgent attention. Suggestions indicate that this could be addressed in the short-term by the co-ordination and the sharing of resources within the Irish-medium sector, or through the introduction of cluster group meetings, which could go some way to help and support those working in Irish-medium schools.

REFERENCES

Andrews, L.S. (1995) *The Irish Language in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom: The Training of Primary and Post-Primary Teachers*, in A. Dekkers (ed) *Teacher Training of Minority Languages for Primary and Secondary Education*, Fryske Akademy: Mercator Education.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (2003) *Three Year Training Plan 2003-2006*, Belfast: Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Day, E.M. and Shapson, S.M. (1996) *Studies in Immersion Education*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Education and Training Inspectorate (1999) *A Survey of Provision for Special Educational Needs in Irish-Medium Primary Schools*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.

Education and Training Inspectorate (1999) *Focused Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=182>)

Education and Training Inspectorate (2000) *Focused Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=704>)

Education and Training Inspectorate (2001) *Focused Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=180>)

Education and Training Inspectorate (2001) *Follow Up Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=181>)

Education and Training Inspectorate (2002) *Follow Up Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=1397>)

Education and Training Inspectorate (2002) *General Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=1407>)

Education and Training Inspectorate (2002) *Follow Up Inspection Report*, Inspection Services Branch: Department of Education.
(<http://www.denidata.nics.gov.uk/insp/viewdocument.asp?DocID=1807>)

Mac Póilin, A (1992) *Irish-Medium Education in Northern Ireland – a preliminary report*, Belfast: ULTACH Trust.

APPENDIX

The Department of Education (DE) Research Report Series is designed to provide easy access to research findings for policy makers, researchers, teachers, lecturers, employers and the public. This reflects the high value which DE places on the wide circulation of research results to ensure that research has the maximum impact on policy and practice in education.

Research cannot make decisions for policy makers and others concerned with improving the quality of education. Nor can it by itself bring about change. But it can create a better basis for decisions, by providing information and explanation about educational practice and by clarifying and challenging ideas and assumptions.

Any views expressed in the Research Report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Education.



Department of
Education

www.deni.gov.uk

AN ROINN
Oideachais

MÁNNYSTRIE O
Lear



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

RATHGAEL HOUSE, 43 BALLOO ROAD, BANGOR, CO DOWN BT19 7PR
TELEPHONE: 028 9127 9279 FAX: 028 9127 9100