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NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH LEVEL DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS IN IRISH FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE IRISH MEDIUM SECTOR - APPENDICES

by RSM McClure Watters (formerly FGS McClure Watters)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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Needs Assessment & Feasibility Study for the Development of High Level Diagnostic Tools in Irish for Children with Special Educational Needs in the Irish Medium Sector

Public Sector Consulting

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Name	Role / Organisation
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Orlagh Ní Thuathail	Bunscoil Phobal Feirste
Máire Nic Sheáin	Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh
Maighread Ní Chonghaile	Gaelscoil Éanna
Louise Mulholland	Gaelscoil Éanna
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2 APPENDIX 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we present a review of relevant literature covering the following:

- Bilingualism
- Immersion and Submersion Education
- Assessment of Young Bilinguals
    - Monolingual Assessment
    - Ecological Assessment
    - Dynamic Assessment
    - Observation
- Dual Language Conceptual Testing
- Criterion Referenced Assessment

Note that this literature review also includes specific commentary on current assessment of SEN in Irish Medium Education (in Ireland).

Introduction

Legislation and policy in Ireland emphasise the need to consider assessing and teaching through Irish. The Education Act (Ireland, 1998) calls for the Minister to establish a body of persons to advise on the teaching of Irish and the provision of education through the medium of Irish, "including matter relating to the curriculum .... and assessment procedures employed in those schools..." [31.4(b)]. The NCCA (2007) comment on the lack of appropriate standardised assessment tools for Irish and for Maths through Irish and emphasise the importance of providing psychological services and assessment through Irish. In their policy on the use of psychometric tests in Ireland, the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) (2006) provides guidance on good practice, which includes issues of fairness in testing in relation to individuals from different groups. This policy also gives attention to testing in more than one language and directs that test developers be sensitive to issues of content, culture and language; that test administrators can communicate clearly in the language in which the test is administered; that the appropriate language version of the test is administered or bilingual assessment is conducted.

However, in a submission to the advisory group on reasonable accommodations at the certificate examinations (RACE), educational psychologists in Ireland expressed concern that "no appropriate tests are available in the Irish language" (NEPS, 2007, p. 13). With regard to Gaeltacht students, NEPS claim that data scores from available standardised tests in English are of doubtful validity and reliability. This concern was also expressed in an international review of the procedures used to diagnose a disability and to assess special educational

needs (Desforges and Lindsay, 2010) which was recently commissioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). While the authors of the report recommend a broad range of assessment approaches, they consider that standardised testing has an important role to play in Ireland. Few tests used in Ireland have been developed for an Irish population and as such there is a need to investigate the norming of some assessment tools using an Irish standardisation sample. Recent developments by the Educational Research Centre in Drumcondra have begun to address this issue. A test of Irish, Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta agus Lan-Ghaeilge (TGD-G) (2010), based on the Primary School Curriculum, has been developed. The test, which aims at Infants to 6th class, has been normed on pupils in Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna.

Children who are within their first year of attending an Irish medium school (Gaelscoil) can towards the end of the school year be considered to be Irish-English speakers, by virtue of which they can be considered bilingual. A broad definition of bilingualism is "people who use two (or more) languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (Grosjean, 1999, p.1). At present there are no assessments readily available to assess the early literacy skills pertaining to this cohort of young Irish- English speakers. As outlined the paucity of assessments available to children attending Gaelscoil's has been identified as an area of concern by Government agencies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) (2006), National Educational Psychologists (NEPS) (2006) and Comhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) (2010).

Immersion education involves a child being immersed during school time in a language that is not the language of the wider community. In the majority of cases the target language of immersion would be different from the child's first language (L1); thus the language of the school becomes their second language (L2). Whilst there is a wealth of literature on the experience of children being taught through a language other than their first language there is a paucity of research into the particulars of the Irish experience. The majority of the literature available on immersion settings comes from countries such as America and Canada, therefore whilst care was taken to include any research on the Irish model of immersion education the bulk of literature referred to comes from the Canadian and American experience. At present whilst studies have been conducted on assessing bilingual children (children who speak two languages) there is a dearth of information pertaining to how best to assess children's literacy in immersion education settings where the child is being taught through the medium of a language that is not the language of the wider community. Throughout this review we define the particular group of bilinguals who are the focus of studies.

Firstly, it is necessary to examine definitions of bilingualism with particular emphasis on the form of bilingualism that relates to the Irish Gaelscoil context. A distinction will be drawn between bilingualism as it occurs in a Gaelscoil setting and bilingualism as it occurs in other parts of the globe. The advantages and disadvantages of using a variety of assessments with bilingual children of different kinds will be examined.

Bilingualism

Grossjean refers to bilinguals as “people who use two (or more) languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives” (Grosjean, 1999, p.1). Bilinguals can be broken into many differing sub groups. These groups are distinguishable by the age of second language acquisition, motivations for acquiring a second language and the effect that different forms of bilingual education can have on the child’s language. Perceptions of bilinguals’ language skills create a further distinction in people’s viewpoints on bilingualism.

Children who acquire both of their languages simultaneously whilst acquiring speech are referred to in the literature as simultaneous bilinguals. These children can communicate in and understand both languages from the beginning. McLaughlin, Blanchard, and Osanai (1995) consider that simultaneous bilingualism occurs when the second language is introduced prior to the child’s third birthday. Children who acquire the language of home as their first language (L1) and acquire an additional second language (L2) through informal (street, media) or through formal (schooling) means are referred to in the literature as sequential bilinguals (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 1984; Grosjean, 1984). McLaughlin et al (1995) consider that sequential bilingualism occurs when the second language is introduced after the child’s third birthday. The majority of children outside of the Gaeltacht (Irish speaking areas) can be considered to be sequential bilinguals, as they have the language of home (L1) established prior to acquiring their second language (L2) which they acquire through formal means, through contact with the school system (Bedore and Pena, 2008; Miller, 1988).

Valdés and Figueroa (1994) make a distinction between those who choose to acquire a second language and those who acquire a second language out of necessity. Elective bilinguals are those who choose to acquire a second language. They would characteristically be from a language majority group (the language of the wider community) and would seek to add an additional language. As their first language is the language of the wider community they can usually add the second language at no apparent cost to their first language. This is referred to as additive bilingualism as they are adding to their language base. In contrast with this, circumstantial bilinguals acquire a second language out of necessity usually due to their circumstances. Baker (2001) makes reference to immigrants whose circumstances make it necessary to become bilingual in order to operate in the majority language that surrounds them. As a result of this their first language is in danger of being replaced by the dominant second language that surrounds them and this is referred to as subtractive bilingualism. Baker refers to this form of bilingual education as ‘submersion’ education.

In the case of a child attending a Gaelscoil, their parents have elected for them to become exposed to and to acquire a second language. For the majority of these children their first language is that of the wider community, therefore they can add a second language at no apparent cost to their first language and these children could be classified as elective bilinguals in an additive bilingual environment. It could be argued that once the children are in the Gaelscoil they could be deemed to be circumstantial bilinguals, as they find themselves in an environment whereby circumstances mitigate to make it necessary for them to acquire another language in order to communicate. This is just one example of how distinctions and definitions of bilingualism whilst helpful are not always straight forward.

There are two contrasting view points to people's perceptions of a bilingual's language and cognitive abilities. The first is a fractional viewpoint, which perceives bilinguals as having the same language skills and ability as two separate monolingual speakers contained within one person. The second perception takes a more holistic viewpoint of bilinguals; it doesn't set out to separate their language abilities and by so doing separate the person into two separate entities but rather it perceives the bilingual as a unique linguistic entity with strengths and weaknesses across both of their languages (Grosjean, 1982, 1999). These perceptions play a major role in the assessment of bilinguals and the interpretation of results and this will be discussed in more detail later.

Grosjean (1982, 1999) adapts a holistic view and warns that it cannot be assumed that bilingual children are two complete monolingual children in one. This viewpoint is endorsed by Baker who states that a bilingual child's "levels of language proficiency may depend on the contexts and frequency of use. Communicative competence may be stronger in some domains than others" (Baker, 2000, p. 17). An example of this within the Irish context would be where Gaelscoil children have language dominance in one language socially and in another academically. Baker describes the bilingual child as a "complete linguistic entity, an integrated whole" (Baker, 2000, p. 17). Further support for this holistic viewpoint is offered by Abudarham (1998) who refers to Kessler (1971). Kessler suggests that no one can be completely bilingual, in that one language is always more dominant than the other. Grosjean (1999) furthers this theory by explaining the rationale behind it. As the majority of bilinguals have acquired their languages at different points in their lives, they will use their languages for different purposes, with different people and in different settings. Therefore, it stands to reason that "certain domains and topics are covered by the lexicon of one language, others by the lexicon of the other language, and some few by the two" (Grosjean, 1999, p.2). These factors are crucial factors when it comes to assessing bilingual children to ensure care is taken to recognise and to treat them not as two fluent speaking monolinguals but to recognise that they are 'bilingual'.

Immersion and Submersion Education

Within the Irish context children who acquire the additional language of Irish usually acquire this through contact with the school system. In the Irish republic the language is compulsory in the curriculum but children will experience it differently across settings. There is a difference between the degree and function of second language usage in these settings (Baker, 2001). The degree of second language use in an English medium setting would entail Irish being taught for one lesson a day. In contrast, in an immersion setting language acquisition occurs whereby the second language (Irish) is the medium of instruction for 50% to 100% of the school day. The function of the language differs within a Gaelscoil as children must use the Irish language to communicate with school personnel and to access a broad range of subjects across the curriculum. It is not confined to 'Irish' class but it is considered to be "the working language of the school" (Gaelscoileanna, 2010).

Immersion education first began in Canada in the 1960s (Manharyam, 2002). Since then immersion programmes have spread to other parts of the globe. In Ireland there has been considerable growth in Gaelscoileanna, with Irish medium education being one of the fastest

growing fields of education in Ireland over the past thirty years. Outside of the Gaeltacht there are approximately 40,000 children attending Gaelscoileanna around the country (Gaelscoileanna, 2010). Immersion in the Irish language can take the form of early total immersion, whereby all subjects are taught through Irish and English is not introduced until senior infants and in some instances total immersion can be practised until second class (in the Canadian experience third grade) (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004).

Within immersion education, as children are immersed in the target second language there has been a concern in relation to the impact immersion has on their first language. Much research into French immersion and its impact on English literacy has been conducted in Canada. Findings revealed that initially the French immersion students lagged behind their monolingual English schooled peers in English literacy. Following a year of formal English literacy instruction French immersion students catch up with their English schooled peers (usually by the end of grade 3). Furthermore, findings indicated that the bilingual immersion students have the added advantage of obtaining stronger scores in French literacy than their monolingual counterparts (Cummins, 1984; Genesse, 2004; Swain and Lapkin, 1982). It is worth noting that the research conducted assessed both the bilingual children's and monolingual's literacy skills in the areas of English literacy and subsequently French literacy and they were marked on each test separately. The notion of the initial delay in the French immersion students could be questioned when one considers Grosjean's (1999) theory of looking at a bilingual's complete linguistic ability as opposed to viewing them as the sum of two separate parts. The question arises as to whether this delay would have been apparent had the young bilingual children been assessed across both of their languages and their knowledge of concepts in the area of literacy been credited.

Cummins (1984) offers an explanation for the perceived gains following a year of instruction in English literacy. He refers to an interdependence model: "experience with either language can promote development of the proficiency underlying both languages" (Cummins, 1984, p 143). The idea is one of transference across languages, in that skills acquired (in the minority or majority language) will transfer across to the second language (Cummins 2000). Yet despite the evidence of academic gains, French immersion schools have reported high rates of attrition, with the rationale offered being that when the child struggles with reading acquisition they are then transferred to an English school (Cummins, 1984, 1998, Trites, 2008).

Whilst the literature may indicate that children in immersion settings are reported to benefit from the immersion system, it is worth noting that immersion education is voluntary and people choose to partake in it, which would imply that they have an interest or some background in the language of immersion. This implies that self-selection factors, interest and motivation need to be taken into account (Genesse 2004, Swain and Lapkin 1982). One cannot assume that immersion education would work for all if the element of choice were removed. Genesse issues a word of caution: "there is a bias to report the results of successful programs and consequently, the published results cannot be construed as evidence that bilingual education for majority language students is successful to the same extent in all

settings" (Genesse, 2004, p.5). This element of bias may inflate claims of success within the immersion systems.

The experiences of children in an immersion and a submersion setting differ greatly. The element of choice distinguishes both experiences. In immersion both parents and teachers have committed themselves to the acquisition of a second language (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 1984). The more advantaged socio-economic status of immersion parents plays a role (Baker, 2001; Frederickson and Cline, 2005). Teachers in immersion schools are able to understand both of the child's languages, although they promote communication in the second. In the early years they do not discourage the child from using their first language until they have acquired sufficient second language to communicate. This being the case children tend to hold both of their languages in high regard as each of their languages are valued. Immersion children typically enter the immersion system with little experience in using the second language and this creates an even playing field. In contrast, in a submersion setting many teachers are unable to understand and communicate using the minority child's first language. In some instances the child may be discouraged from using their first language (Baker, 2001). This may result in the child not holding their first language in as high a regard as the dominant second language (Frederickson and Cline, 2005). Unlike their peers in immersion settings, when a minority language child attends a majority language school, they do not enter on an equal footing in respect of their ability in the language of instruction of the school in comparison to their peers.

Not surprisingly, children in submersion settings do not tend to perform as well as their monolingual peers or their peers in immersion education (Frederickson and Cline, 2005). However, given the differing elements involved in both language acquisition experiences any attainments or lack thereof may not be directly contributed to the educational programmes themselves.

Irish immersion education and early literacy

The interaction of assessment and different early literacy practices in Gaelscoileanna will now be discussed. A study was conducted on emergent literacy in Gaeltacht and all-Irish schools by Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir in 2004.

Ní Bhaoill's (2004) study revealed that there are a variety of practices across Gaelscoileanna with regard to the order in which language formal reading commenced. The authors state that teachers in Gaelscoils in the Republic reported that no guidance is offered in this area in the Primary Curriculum in English (Ireland,1999). The only guidance offered in relation to emergent literacy in Irish is that children should not begin reading in both languages simultaneously. The authors state that teachers expressed a "great need for clearer guidance" (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004, p.5). Teachers' request for greater clarification was shared by teachers in a recent all-Ireland study of special education practices in Gaelscoileanna (COGG, 2010). These factors mean that any form of early assessment carried out in Gaelscoils will need to be flexible to allow for the variety of practices across these schools.

In Ní Bhaoill's survey, Gaelscoileanna were queried on the frequency of administration of various assessments in Irish. Of the eighty eight schools that returned the surveys, 28.4% used no form of diagnostic assessment. The authors state that there is a need for standardised and diagnostic tests in Irish to assess children's learning in these schools. This opinion is shared by Ó Murchú (2003). COGG's recent research showed that teachers continue to express concern over the lack of appropriate assessment tools available to them (COGG, 2010). Teachers in the COGG study mentioned that in the absence of suitable assessment they rely on observation, an area that can be fraught with bias (Conor and Boskin, 2001).

A Scottish study conducted an audit of the processes involved in identifying and assessing bilingual learners suspected of being dyslexic (Deponio, Landon, Mullin and Reid, 2000). They found on one hand that bilingual dyslexics were not being identified and that teachers were using observational methods to monitor the situation rather than confirming dyslexia. On the other hand, bilingual pupils were being inaccurately diagnosed with dyslexia. The study suggests as an explanation that screening procedures for bilingual pupils are inadequate. The literacy difficulties that they experience may relate to "cultural schemata" (p. 39) rather than lack of phonological awareness.

Some recent forms of assessment that are available to assess Gaelscoil children's Irish literacy are 'Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathliteartha cht (ÁML)' (2007) and 'Measúnú Aonair Fáthmheasa ar Ábaltacht Léitheoireachta Bhunúsach' (2006). These assessments assess phonological awareness, sight word recognition and writing. Potential drawbacks with these assessments are that they are assessing children as fluent speaking monolinguals and not recognising them as bilinguals. Length of time spent on administering these tests also poses an issue as they need to be administered in a one on one setting and are therefore unsuitable for whole class screening. The level of difficulty of the Irish versions may too challenging for children in their first year of school. The latter test in particular is unsuited to children at the end of junior infants who are within their first year of acquiring literacy skills.

Assessment of young bilinguals

The over representation of bilingual children in special education has long been an area of concern. Researchers have attributed much of this over representation to the use of inappropriate assessment procedures (Brown, 2004; Cline, 2007). Within the UK the issue of over representation of bilingual children in special education was also attributed to inappropriate forms of assessment and the 1996 Education Act reflects this thinking when it states "A child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of the home is different from the language in which he or she will be taught" (Education Act, 1996). This is equally of relevance to children attending a Gaelscoil. As has been discussed, teachers and educational agencies have expressed concern over the lack of appropriate assessments for this cohort of young bilinguals of whom the majority are being educated in a language that is different from the language of the home.

Historically, bilinguals have been regarded from a fractionalised viewpoint and seen as two monolinguals in one. This misconception has resulted in unfair expectations and negative

conclusions been drawn pertaining to both linguistic and cognitive ability (Bedore, Pena and Rapazzo, 2001; Grosjean, 1999).

One such study was conducted by MacNamara in 1966. Mac Namara's study set out to compare the academic attainments of children in an English medium school with children in a Gaelscoil. He assessed the children's non-verbal IQ, English and Irish literacy skills along with problem and mechanical arithmetic. It is worth mentioning that the Gaelscoil children's arithmetic was assessed using the medium of Irish. Mac Namara's findings revealed that in the area of English reading comprehension the children in the Gaelscoileanna obtained similar scores as their peers in English medium schools. In the area of mathematics however, the Gaelscoil children performed below their English medium counterparts by eleven months on problem arithmetic. MacNamara concluded that the teaching of problem arithmetic through Irish had hindered the children's progress. Cummins (1984) questions the methodology employed to assess the children and brands the arithmetic assessment as unfair. Cummins argues that had test been administered in the children's dominant language of English that they would have obtained higher scores. It could be counter argued that the Gaelscoil children had been taught arithmetic through the medium of Irish and acquired all of their terminology on that subject in Irish, therefore had the test been administered in English that this could equally be unfair.

Recent research has revealed the benefits of bilingualism and few would regard being bilingual as a cognitive disadvantage for children. Many argue that bilingualism can be of benefit even to children with learning disabilities as they have mastery of two languages (Cummins, 1998). Yet the phenomenon of inappropriate assessment of bilingual children means that there is often either an over representation of bilingual children in special education due to inappropriate assessment (Brown, 2004) or an under representation due to lack of appropriate tests (Cline, 2007). Inappropriate assessments can result in assessors making errors based on inaccurate results and these errors are highlighted within the literature (Cline, 2007; Hall, 2001). A false positive result occurs when a learning difficulty is diagnosed when none is in fact present. A false negative occurs when a learning difficulty is not correctly identified. For example, where the child's difficulties are attributed to a lack of proficiency in the language of testing and appropriate help and support is not provided. In some instances testing is delayed until the child acquires the second language (Bedore et al, 2008). Both of these can have serious consequences either through lack of early intervention for a real difficulty or through an erroneous placement in special education. Studies conducted on various forms of assessment for bilingual children will now be explored.

Monolingual assessments: When using single language/ monolingual tests on a bilingual child one is assuming that they are fluent in all domains (social/ academic) of that language. Grosjean (1999) postulates that assessors should view bilinguals "not so much as the sum of two (or more) complete or incomplete monolinguals but rather as specific speaker-hearer who has developed a communicative competence that is equal, but different in nature, to that of the monolingual" (Grosjean, 1999, p.2). Therefore monolingual assessments are not suited to bilingual children. Further evidence of this is supported in a study on bilingual children conducted by Escamilla (2000).

Escamilla (2000) conducted research in the United States on the assessment of language and literacy skills of a group of bilingual Spanish and English speaking children in Kindergarten. Escamilla's findings highlight how inappropriate assessment occurs and the effect that inaccurate assessment procedures can have on a child's education. Escamilla reports on a five year old boy who when assessed by his teacher on his knowledge of colours, could name three colours in Spanish and three colours in English. A monolingual peer in the same class demonstrated knowledge of five colours in English. The bilingual child was considered to be underperforming in his individual languages and it recommended for transfer to a monolingual English class. In contrast his monolingual peer who named five colours was deemed to be performing well. If the assessors had applied Grosjean's (1999) approach, the bilingual child would have been scored across both his languages and been credited for knowing six colours in total and could therefore be deemed to be doing even better than his monolingual peer. As a result of scoring his languages separately and using monolingual standards, inaccurate conclusions were drawn. Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) postulate that judgments made from monolingual assessments can lead to inaccurate claims pertaining to a child's ability and they caution that a "diagnosis of inappropriately low expectations can result in reduced learning opportunities or misdiagnosis of a specific learning difficulty" (Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2000, p. 115).

Whilst Escamilla's study relates to a bilingual child in a submersion education environment her study is equally of relevance when considering the assessment of bilingual children in an immersion school. At the end of a year of being immersed in a second language at school young children will have their language of home but by virtue of the second language immersion they will also have their academic language or language of school. They may have vocabulary and understanding of that vocabulary that is exclusive to both settings. Therefore, it could be argued, to separate their knowledge of a concept in half by scoring each of their languages separately is discrediting their total knowledge of a given concept.

English monolingual assessments are occasionally translated into a second language. Hall (2001) highlights that cultural factors need to be taken into account with direct translations of English tests. A further factor that would render these tests as inappropriate for bilingual children is syntax, as levels of language difficulty when translated can render tests unreliable and invalid across a variety of translations (Hall, 2001). An additional factor that would render these tests unfair is that these tests are normed on monolingual groups (Bedore and Pena, 2008).

Ercikan, Gierl, McCreith, Puhan and Koh (2004) use the term "test adaptation" to communicate the process involved in translating tests from one language to another, taking into consideration testing procedures and item format in addition to direct translation. However they stress that test adaptation can affect test comparability and thus validity and fairness for children taking the test. The comparability of different language versions of assessment tools cannot be assumed and "empirical examinations of comparability is essential to validity of interpretations" (p. 319).

Ecological Assessment: This takes the child's 'ecosystem' into account as a possible reason for lack of progress and adaptations to this can facilitate progress. Cummins (1984)

and Baker (2000) support this notion of assessing the child's learning environment and not always assuming the problem lies within the child. An assessment of the child's environment can provide us with some invaluable insights as it can identify further factors that may be contributing to difficulty such as socio-economic status (Brown, et al 2006). A complete picture can be generated of the child's language ability outside of the school, such as at home or in church (Frederickson and Cline, 2005, National Council for Special Education (NCSE), 2010) and this would help to identify whether the child has the capacity to learn and be articulate in other settings.

In an international review of assessment procedures for special educational needs (Desforges and Lindsay, 2010), recommendations made are "grounded in the perspective that special educational needs (SEN) are best viewed within an interactionist/ecological framework, giving due weight to within-person factors as well as a broad range of environmental factors, both those that provide support and cause stress to the individual" (p. 164). The authors recommend a framework for assessment of children and young people with SEN which reflects this interactionist/ecological model (also referred to as a biopsychosocial model) and involves the use of a broad range of assessment methods and tools. This model would involve assessment of within-child factors, environmental factors, policies and resources within the school. An assessment process that incorporates an examination of change over time as influenced by active intervention and curriculum-based assessment is advocated. Furthermore, assessment should be seen as an ongoing process rather than a one-off diagnostic procedure.

Dynamic assessment: The aim of dynamic assessment is to eliminate lack of experience as a factor for poor performance (Huer and Saenz, 2003). Its format is pre-test, teach and post-test. If children still under perform following being taught then the child may have a particular difficulty.

Brown, Huerta, Hernandez and Pena (2006) conducted a study to test the theory that dynamic assessment could be used as "a way of distinguishing between culturally and linguistically based learning differences and true learning disabilities" (Brown et al , 2006, p.26). Brown et al describe the case of Rita, a seven year old girl in the second grade who met the criteria for identification for a specific learning disability on the basis of a traditional battery of standardized measures. Rita's verbal strengths were not noted until the implementation of the dynamic assessment intervention sessions. In the post test Rita's verbal abilities were demonstrated. The use of dynamic assessment gave a better picture of Rita's true abilities and learning style.

Brown et al's study (2006) emphasises the risks of using one method of assessment when identifying a learning difficulty and the inappropriateness of using standardized tests that are normed on monolingual populations with bilingual children. Dynamic assessment does have some disadvantage, "the greatest of which may be time" (Huer and Saenz, 2003, p.186) as designing assessments and interventions collaboratively can be time consuming. Other issues with dynamic assessment include reliability and validity, as dynamic assessment may be open to bias as teachers rely on their own judgments in designing and scoring tests (Huer and Saenz, 2003).

Observation: In the absence of appropriate assessments, observation is a favoured method of identifying bilingual children who may be experiencing difficulty. Care needs to be taken with observation of bilingual children as although a child may appear to be articulate and socially competent in their second language this may not be a reflection of their academic abilities. Swain and Lapkin (1982) refer to Genesse (1976) who states that below average students in total early immersion programs acquire functional competence in speaking and understanding French to the same extent as average and above average students in the same French immersion program.

Observation can be open to teacher's bias when reporting findings. A qualitative study conducted by Connor and Boskin (2001) on teachers' choices of assessment materials and knowledge of second language learning in young pre-literate children revealed the risk of bias in teachers' observations. During the course of the study they noted that the bilingual special education teacher stated that she believed that she was able to determine a child's language ability or need for special education referral without the help of outside educational observers or standardized testing. Connor and Boskin report that "it is interesting to note that this teacher mistakenly found second language constructs in the transcript of the single monolingual child" (Connor and Boskin, 2001, p. 30).

One of the more disturbing findings of the study was that four of the six participating teachers displayed a lack of knowledge of second language learning and associated bilingualism with disability. This was evidenced by the teachers' responses to the children's transcripts such as "he appears to have bilingual issues that may impact his ability to process language'....'difficulty expressing ideas clearly- ESL issues?'" (Connor and Boskin, 2001, p. 30).

It may be hard to generalise the findings from this study as a relatively small sample size was used and all three schools were from the same region. It is worth noting that bias was witnessed in the case of the bilingual special education teacher, which would indicate that bilingual educators are not exempt from demonstrating a lack of understanding of bilingual children's abilities. This is of relevance when considering the risk of relying on observation as was noted as practice in the COGG (2010) study on educators in Irish immersion schools.

In respect of the identification and assessment of special educational needs, the Code of Practice states:

The identification and assessment of the special educational needs of children whose first language is not English (and/or Irish in the case of Irish-medium school) requires very careful consideration. Lack of competence in the language used in the school must not be equated with, or allowed to mask, learning difficulties as understood in the Code. The child's needs should be considered in the context of his or her home, language, culture and community. Where necessary to ensure full understanding of the measures the school is taking, use should be made of interpreters and translators; and assessment tools should, as far as possible, be culturally neutral and applicable to children from a range of home backgrounds (DE, 1998, p.8).

Cline (1998) dispels the myth that tests can be "culturally neutral" and claims that the purpose of testing is to make predictions in a cultural context. A modest aim, according to Cline, is to reduce test content that is strongly biased against particular cultural groups. Items should be checked to ensure that language will have a common meaning for all who take the test and that the activities described will be equally familiar. However, Cline also claims that it is not as simple as substituting one set of materials for another. One must also consider sources of bias outside the assessment instrument such as the process of referral and reporting.

Cline (1998) cautions against the assessment of bilingual children with SEN in their home language only. He argues that for many bilingual children the use of each of their languages is domain-specific. For example, using their home language in the assessment of educational concepts (e.g. relating to Science) may make the task harder for the pupil.

Dual language conceptual testing

Bilingual children use their languages for different purposes in different settings therefore it stands to reason that they will be stronger in different domains of each language. Grosjean (1999) advocates that bilinguals should be studied in terms of their total language repertoire and assessed across both their languages.

Grosjean and Soares (1984) conducted a study on English word recognition and noted that bilingual children were significantly slower that their monolingual counterparts at identifying a non-word. The explanation offered was that the bilingual children were searching the lexicon and knowledge they have of words in both languages. Further evidence of this in the literature is referred to as 'code switching' or 'interference' whereby the bilingual will mix their languages when speaking. This phenomenon is more commonly witnessed when bilingual children are conversing with other bilinguals (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 1984).

Research to support assessing bilingual children 'across' their languages using dual language assessment and thus assessing their 'conceptual vocabulary' was conducted by Abudurham (1997). Abudurham assessed 392 Spanish and English speaking bilingual children in Gibraltar. He used the British Picture Vocabulary scales (BPVS) which is normed on English speaking British children. A Spanish and a separate English version of the test were used to assess the children. The results were as follows: The majority of children scored below the 'norm' on both individual tests. When their 'conceptual' vocabulary was scored which entailed only scoring once for each item named in either language, the majority fell within the 'normal range'. Pena, Bedore and Rappazzo (2003) conducted a cross linguistic assessment utilising conceptual scoring on a group of bilingual Hispanic children in a submersion education environment and their study yielded similar results to Abudurham's.

In the US, Garcia (2000) conducted a study on a mixture of both monolingual and bilingual eighth graders. Garcia's study set out to examine the effects of a dual language Spanish-English math test by comparing it with a monolingual English version of the same test. The findings indicated that the students who were less proficient in English performed better on the dual language assessment. Students perceived the dual language booklet as useful. This was evidenced by students with more than three years exposure to English who state that

they found the dual language test useful for cross checking their answers, which further supports Baker (2000) and Cummins (1984) theory that bilinguals rarely deactivate both of their languages. A further advantage of dual language assessment is the timing. A dual language assessment can be conducted in one sitting and is therefore particularly suitable for use as a screening assessment.

In relation to bilingual children in an immersion setting, research was conducted by Ní Mhurchú in 2005 on a group of fifty four children from a Gaelscoil. The children assessed ranged in age from five year to eight years. They were assessed using the Boehm-3, a tool which measures fifty of the most frequently occurring concepts in kindergarten to second grade based on the US curriculum. The Boehm-3 was standardised on two populations, one being English speaking children and the other Spanish speaking children. The tests are administered in one language. The Boehm has two separate sets of normative data for each population. Ní Mhurchú adapted the administration of the Boehm 3 she first assessed the Gaelscoil children using only English instructions. On a separate occasion they were assessed using English and Irish instructions simultaneously. The outcomes were as follows: 68.5% scored higher when assessed in both languages, while 25.9% had the same score in both assessments. This suggests that dual language 'conceptual' assessment benefited 94.4% of the children in the Gaelscoil.

These studies would suggest that there is a need to recognise a bilingual child's total language repertoire and to assess and score them across their languages, as this appears to give a more complete picture of their true abilities. These studies further highlight the disservice of utilising monolingual tests and norms on bilingual children. Dual language assessment may represent a better prospect for realising a valid result for bilingual children than monolingual tests.

In the Irish context, Hickey (2007) details some of the difficulties children encounter when learning Irish reading. While Irish uses an alphabetic system that is familiar to English, it has a different set of rules to represent sounds and children are challenged by the Irish orthography. The most effective way for emerging readers to memorise sight words is to analyse the sounds in the spoken words (Ehri, 1992). Irish researchers (Ni Bhaoill and O Duibhir, 2004; Hickey, 2007) have called for deeper analysis of high-frequency words in Irish claiming that the lack of explicit instruction on how to deal with Irish orthography may result in poor decoding strategies. Hickey (2007) suggests that building more analytic exercises into Irish reading and less reliance on workbooks would help to develop more accurate decoding in beginning readers leading to automatic sight word recognition and reading fluency. To achieve this, teachers need to develop their knowledge of the Irish orthographic system and develop their skills in explicit teaching of sound-symbol relationships in reading. O Faolain (2006), a teacher in a Gaeltacht school, reports on developing a phonics programme in Irish for the teaching of reading in the Gaeltacht as the revised primary curriculum does not have the same emphasis on word analysis and phonics in its approach to reading in Irish as the English curriculum does. This has implications for the assessment of Irish reading and the assumption that skills acquired in phonological awareness and phonics in English may be transferred to Irish reading.

Criterion referenced assessments

Grosjean's (1999) holistic view of the bilingual child as a complete linguistic entity as opposed to two monolinguals in one would imply that it would be unjust to directly compare bilingual children with monolingual children (Bedore and Pena, 2008). Monolingual assessments tend to be normed on monolingual populations. To assess a bilingual child using a monolingual assessment would mean disregarding their total language inventory and a failure to recognise them as bilinguals. Such practices can result in unfair comparisons being made and lead to misdiagnosis (Escamilla, 2000).

A solution offered is the use of criterion referenced tests. A criterion reference test will generate a profile of the child's abilities based on what they can and can't do in each area. A criteria is set for mastery of a subject and mastery of the given criteria is required to perform well in the test. The benefits of criterion referenced testing for educators is that this form of testing provides feedback on areas in which the child is performing well and underperforming (Baker, 2001). Advantages for the bilingual child are that unlike standardised or norm referenced tests they will not be compared with other children but will be assessed based on their performance on the expected criteria for success of a given task. This form of assessment is acknowledged as being a fairer method of measuring a bilingual child's abilities (Frederickson, 1992; Frederickson and Cline, 2005).

Conclusion

The literature indicates warranted concerns over the inappropriate assessment of bilingual children[1]. Such inappropriate assessments can result in erroneous judgments being made and children being wrongfully placed in special education settings.

The literature advises against the use of monolingual tests on bilingual children. Monolingual testing used on bilingual children doesn't recognise a bilingual child's true language abilities and fails to recognise them as 'bilinguals' with abilities across two (or more) languages. The research warns against direct translations of English tests as this can alter the level of difficulty of the test. It advocates comparing bilingual children to other bilingual children and to avoid the use of tests normed on monolingual populations alone. Criterion referenced tests are advocated in an effort to avoid directly comparing bilinguals with monolinguals. The literature highlights early predictors of later literacy achievement that operate as predictors across languages. Dual language testing across both of the child's languages with conceptual scoring across both languages gives a more accurate portrayal of the child's abilities.

The research points to the need for further research in the development of appropriate assessment tools. Murphy (2011) is currently developing an assessment tool that will focus

[1] Note: these conclusions are mainly drawn from research carried out on children who use a minority language and are learning a majority language e.g. Polish children in NI. The children from IME who are the focus of this study are already using a majority language i.e. English and are learning a second minority language. There is very little research with majority language learning a minority language and it would be unwise to assume that the conclusions drawn were the same for both groups.

on the early predictors of literacy ability in young bilingual children in their first year in an immersion school. The initial part of the assessment will comprise a dual language whole class screener. Criterion referencing will be used to identify those who underperform. Subsequently those children who underperform will be assessed in depth in both their English and their Irish literacy skills. They will be scored across both of their languages to obtain a conceptual score of their abilities. It is hoped that a fair and accurate profile of their abilities will be evidenced and appropriate steps taken to mediate in any areas of apparent difficulty[2].

[2] The test being developed by Murphy is only at an exploratory level and is being piloted to test feasibility. Development is being self funded as part of a Masters degree programme in St Patrick's College. The rationale behind it has a sound basis, taking into account issues raised in the literature review. It is envisaged that it would be used by teachers and not restricted to psychologists.

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3 APPENDIX 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 The Review of the Irish-Medium Education Sector

3.1.1 Introduction

Arising from Bain's recommendation within the Report of the Independent Strategic Review of Education (Bain report, December 2006), which suggested that DE should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for Irish-medium education, DE initiated a review of Irish Medium Education to provide the basis for that policy. The objectives of the review were to consider the development of IME to date, identify issues to be addressed and recommend how to continue the development of IME to ensure high quality provision and outcomes. The **Review of Irish-Medium Education (DE, 2009)** includes some key issues which are relevant to the assessment of SEN.

3.1.2 Characteristics of Immersion Education

The Review of Irish-Medium Education (2009) describes the distinctive role that Irish-Medium education plays within the education system, as it seeks to provide a range of vibrant settings to meet the educational and linguistic needs of pupils. The sector aims to provide high-quality education for children who will leave school as competent and confident bilinguals with the added benefits that bilingualism brings.

The Irish-Medium sector, in common with all sectors of education has its main focus on the children under its care, to nurture their educational, social physical, emotional, personal, linguistic, developmental, intellectual and spiritual needs. In addition, Irish-medium Education is characterised by linguistically and culturally distinctive characteristics and unique aspirations. These can reflect the fact that schools' interactions often extend to them supporting, and being supported by, the wider existing and developing Irish-language community.

Irish-medium Education develops bilingual pupils, proficient in both Irish and English. Immersion is a form of education to develop bilingualism – this occurs when a child whose first language is English is taught through the medium of Irish. Children in the same classroom who have Irish as their first language will also experience a bilingual education, leading to proficiency in Irish and English, though this will not be an immersion experience for those children.

'Immersion education' is widespread across the world and exists in several different varieties. The following characteristics are common to all types of immersion education:

a) The 'immersion' language is not the students' first language.

b) The students not only learn the immersion language but also learn other important subject matter through the medium of the language.

c) The teacher is a highly fluent speaker of the language, and very often a native speaker.

d) The teacher provides the students with substantial exposure to the immersion language, through teaching and other interactions, giving a strong impetus to the development of students' comprehension skills.

e) The teacher does not force the students to speak the language, and initially allows them to speak in their first language if they so wish.

f) Students' initial expressions using the immersion language tend to be through songs, poems, games, and phrases. Gradually, of their own volition, they develop spontaneous expression through the immersion language.

3.1.3 Benefits of Immersion Education

The Review of Irish-Medium Education (2009) cites an ETI study which noted the cognitive benefits of bilingualism including:

- language acquisition;
- cognitive and academic development;
- the self-confidence and self-esteem of the children; and
- problem-solving abilities, with children who are less afraid to get things wrong.

The majority of research studied by the ETI highlighted that immersion education, dual language immersion, bilingual education (bilingualism) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) are positive for the recipients/ learners in terms of both second language acquisition and overall cognitive development. The ETI research found that other beneficial spin-offs that can be developed include: positive attitudes to multiculturalism, inclusivity, openness, tolerance and acceptance of 'otherness'.

The Review highlights research demonstrating other benefits including:

- Research which found that bilingual people are better at multitasking;
- Research which found being bilingual exercises the brain and dramatically lessens age-related mental decline.
- Research which found that pre-school children who are bilingual are quicker to understand the symbolic function of letters and score twice as high as monolingual children in recognition tests of written characters. Bilingual children who have been exposed to literacy and stories in both languages are advantaged in learning to read.
- Research which shows that bilingual children perform better in school when the school teaches the mother tongue effectively and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language. By contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and its

development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined.

3.1.4 Current Models of Immersion in Irish Medium Education

A range of approaches are currently employed to deliver Irish-medium Education in Northern Ireland. These include:

- i) **Free-standing Irish-medium schools, both primary and post-primary**. These aim to provide a total-immersion setting for the children for whom Irish is not their first language, as they are educated, grow and develop.
- ii) **Irish-medium Units at primary and post-primary schools**. These are attached to a host, English-medium, school, typically where there are insufficient pupils to establish a free-standing school. These also aim to provide an immersion experience for the children for whom Irish is not their first language, with all the teaching in the unit normally being conducted through the medium of Irish.
- iii) **Irish-medium Streams at English-medium post-primary schools.** In these arrangements a group of pupils learn some of their subjects through the medium of Irish, and others through the medium of English. This is a partial-immersion approach for children for whom Irish is not their first language who transfer from Irish-medium primary provision.

3.1.5 Irish-Medium Education – Challenges for the Sector

The Review notes that there are a number of challenges facing IME including: demographic trends, changes in the educational landscape and issues around teaching, leadership and management and at an overall level - sustainability. Many of these are challenges shared by the other schools.

- **Demographic Trends.** A key challenge facing the school sector as a whole – including the IM sector - is the declining school-age population, a trend that is expected to continue into the future. By 2016, the primary school-aged population is predicted to decrease by almost 7%, while the post-primary school-aged population is expected to decrease by more than 12%.

  However, the number of pupils accessing their education through the medium of Irish has increased every year from 1996 to 2007 (from 870 to 2,653 for Primary and from 179 to 632 for Post Primary). Furthermore, ***projected*** demand for IME show an increase. The Review states that this provides a challenging backdrop for the future development of the IME sector, which is managing growth whilst the larger educational system is largely focusing on managing contraction.

- **Educational Landscape.** Another area presenting challenges for the IME sector and highlighted in the Review is the ongoing changes being made to the educational landscape - though changes in the structures within which public services are delivered

and education policies. This includes modernization of the educational infrastructure, Review of Public Administration (and proposed new arrangements by which schools will be supported through the Education and Skills Authority); changing education policies and ensuring access to appropriate ICT support through the C2K system.

- **Educational Challenges - Teaching, Leadership and Management.** The ETI analysed the challenges specific to teaching, leadership and management in the Irish-medium Education context, which included:
  - the comparative youth and inexperience at all levels;
  - around 90% of principals having been in post for seven years or less;
  - 40% of teachers and 70% of principals having no specific Irish-medium element to their teaching qualification;
  - 25% of primary teachers and principals having received post-primary teacher training;
  - very few teachers in the Irish-medium sector having been pupils in the sector themselves;
  - very few teachers in the Irish-medium sector being native Irish speakers, with a minority who are not as competent in the language as one would like;
  - very few parents have sufficient Irish to support their children's education through the medium of Irish;
  - a large percentage of teaching principals; and
  - a severe shortage of resources.

  In addition to this analysis, the results of formal Inspection visits to Irish-medium settings identified other areas for attention – including SEN support:
  - Child Protection arrangements;
  - Leadership and management, including the enhancement of School Development Planning with a focus on learning and teaching;
  - Access to and use of ICT;
  - Special Educational Needs support;
  - The use of unqualified teachers; and
  - Governance support for schools as they develop.

  Challenges raised by representatives of the sector – for Principals and Teachers - include:

- difficulties in sourcing available substitute teachers with high-quality Irish-language skills for work in primary and post primary schools;
- the lack of specialist teachers in some subjects, which in the post-primary phase may lead to teachers being asked to teach beyond their specialism;
- the comparative youthfulness of teachers and principals. This can bring advantages such as enthusiasm, openness to new ideas and up-to-date knowledge and teaching skills along with disadvantages such as inexperience, not least in responding to external demands on the school from policy changes which affect curriculum, assessment, examinations, reporting, learning and teaching.
- the training available to date has not always provided teachers with the most appropriate skills for the particular challenges they can face. Examples of this include those trained for post-primary education working in the primary phase, or teachers being appointed to an immersion setting without training in, or experience of, immersion education.
- the high proportion of teaching principals (a consequence of the small size of the schools).
- the shortage of native Irish-speakers among teachers, and the issue of language development among teachers for whom Irish is a second language.
- the challenges faced by those parents with insufficient Irish to support, with confidence, their children's education (though the evidence is that this is not having an undue impact on overall standards of educational achievement).
- the lack of appropriately qualified fluent Irish speakers for employment as leaders and assistants in Irish medium pre-school centres.

These challenges, some of which will also apply to English-medium settings, can lead to a range of undesirable consequences, including:

- Principals being distracted from important tasks because of insufficient secretarial support to deal with administrative and clerical tasks;
- The needs of beginning teachers being overlooked because of more visible pressures, a particular risk in small schools with teaching principals;
- School Development Planning in which the focus on learning and teaching is insufficiently developed; and
- inadequate monitoring and evaluation arrangements which are not sufficiently developed to ensure an appropriate focus on improving provision and raising standards.

- The Review summarises the challenges faced by the Irish-medium sector under the overarching heading – **Sustainability**. It notes that the Bain Report recommended: *"The*

policy for sustainable schools in NI should ensure that all schools are sustainable in terms of the quality of the educational experience of children, enrolment trends, financial position, school leadership and management, accessibility, and the strengths of their links to the community." Addressing sustainability and all its attendant issues is considered to be the underpinning challenge to be addressed for the Irish-medium sector.

3.1.6 Bilingualism and Immersion Education

The Review of the Irish-Medium Education considers current issues for bilingualism and immersion education, drawing on experience from research and from other jurisdictions. It makes the following points:

- **The Additive Bilingualism Enrichment Principle**

"Recent studies into Immersion Education tend to argue against the rigid separation of both languages and suggest that in gaining control over two language systems, the bilingual child has had to decipher much more language input than the monolingual child who has been exposed to only one language system. Thus, the bilingual child has had considerably more practice in analysing meanings than the monolingual child. It seems clear that the child who has mastered two languages has a linguistic advantage over the monolingual child.

This conclusion suggests that educators in immersion programmes should be conscious of the potential for enhancing children's awareness of language by encouraging them to compare and contrast aspects of their two languages. This implies that the separation of languages that characterizes most immersion programmes should become less rigid as students progress through the primary school and into post-primary education. This is known as The Additive Bilingualism Enrichment Principle."

- **The Linguistic Interdependence Principle**

"Evaluations of bilingual programs in which students are instructed for all or part of the day through a minority language, consistently show that students, who may speak either the majority and/or the minority language at home, experience no long-term academic retardation in the majority language. This suggests that first and second language academic skills are interdependent, i.e., manifestations of a common underlying proficiency. This is known as The Linguistic Interdependence Principle."

- **International Models of Bilingual Education**

The review notes that there are many varieties of immersion language education, practised in different countries and other areas. These varieties of immersion education differ from each other mainly in relation to the starting point (early - delayed - late) and the extent (total or partial) – hence models are referred to as: 'early total', 'early partial', 'delayed total', 'delayed partial', 'late total' or 'late partial'.

The 'early' varieties tend to begin at pre-school level or at the start of primary education. This version is the prevalent model used in Northern Ireland. The 'delayed' varieties tend to begin at some point between the ages of eight and fourteen and the 'late' varieties tend to begin after that, including with adults.

The report recognises the inherent difficulties in comparing models from different countries, due to differences in local educational arrangements, in culture and in attitudes to languages and language diversity. It draws out some features from the wide variety of approaches used to develop children in a range of settings into highly competent bilinguals:

- *"Pre-school experience is common in Scotland, but less so in the south of Ireland;*
- *In Scotland a range of flexible approaches are used, including a 3-18 completely Scottish Gaelic-medium (GM) school in Glasgow (the only GM school in the city), GM units and classes and schools where one or more subjects are taught through Scottish Gaelic.*
- *In Wales, a network of 'forest schools', youth clubs and camping/ sporting activities through Welsh is organized for schools. A series of competitions (through annual meetings organised by the youth organisation Urdd Gobaith Cymru) is a prestigious way of promoting Welsh language and culture for ages 7-12 at local, county and national level.*
- *A variety of bi-lingual programme models is used successfully on various sociolinguistic contexts. These models range from 100% minority language in the early grades, for example in Canada with French immersion, to 50/50 programmes throughout primary school in some dual language programmes in the USA. Others simply using the minority language to teach content subjects (e.g. Geography) at post-primary level as in parts of Germany/UK.*
- *There is a variety of 'early partial immersion' models. In France, partial immersion education is 50/50 in approach for French/ Breton and French/Basque programmes. International schools in Japan also adopt a 50/50 model.*
- *In Estonia, Russian-speaking children are initially taught only through Estonian, with increasing amounts of Russian introduced as they progress through school."*

3.1.7 Key Recommendation – High Level Diagnostic Tools in Irish

One of the challenges considered within the Review of the Irish-Medium Education is the availability of suitable educational resources including support for children in Irish-medium settings with special educational needs. A specific recommendation has been made to investigate the development of high-level diagnostic tools for the Irish medium sector as follows:

Recommendation 17: Support for Special Educational Needs

i. The Education and Skills Authority should develop the capacity to meet the special educational needs (SEN) of children through the medium of Irish where possible, with a particular emphasis on those needs that are most acute. This would require appropriately skilled SEN support staff with high-quality Irish-language skills, which could be developed, for example, through bursaries.

ii. The Project Board recommends that, where SEN support is not available through the medium of Irish, children should receive as much support as possible through the medium of English, making full use of the C2K infrastructure and other resources to optimise the availability and specificity of the support. In these circumstances the Education and Skills Authority should ensure that the support is sensitive to the needs of the children learning through Irish. Best practice should be disseminated, including taking account of the specific context and issues relevant to Irish-medium Education, and engaging with schools and teachers on these issues.

iii. Teachers in Irish-medium Education must make best use of the available support for SEN, and should be supported through the sharing of existing best practice in SEN; examples from immersion education contexts, and particularly from the Irish-medium sector, should be included. This should be promoted and assisted by the Education and Skills Authority and other support agencies, using ICT as appropriate, drawing on sources on an all-Ireland and east-west basis from English-medium settings as well as immersion language contexts. ICT will have a key role to play in the realisation of the available benefits for pupils and their teachers.

iv. The development of high-level diagnostic tools for the Irish-medium sector should be investigated, informed by experiences within Ireland and Britain on both an all-Ireland and east-west basis.

Source: Department of Education – Review of Irish Medium Education (2009)

3.2 The Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish-English) Children

3.2.1 Introduction

The Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish-English) Children (DE & POBAL, 2009) report includes findings from a research project which was focused on children aged 3 to 16 in IM education. The aim of the research was:

1. to identify the special educational needs of bilingual children;
2. to investigate the support needs of bilingual children and their parents;
3. to recommend the structures which need to be put in place within the appropriate sectors;
4. to inform future planning based on projections of growth in the IM education sector;
5. to raise awareness among professionals of the specific requirements of bilingual (Irish – English) children with special needs; and

6. to provide a benchmark for professionals within the appropriate sectors in their attempts to improve provision.

The research was carried out between September 2006 and September 2008; data collection carried out in IM schools and other agencies from January 2007 through to May 2008.

In this section, we set out key findings from the POBAL report covering the following issues which are of particular relevance to this study:

- Bilingualism and Immersion Education – key issues from an international literature review covering current theory and thinking;
- IM and SEN - Key Statistics on the prevalence of SEN in the IM Sector
- Attitude to Current SEN Provision within the IM Sector;
- Assessment of SEN in the Irish-Medium Sector;
- External SEN Support Services;
- Recording of SEN and referral procedures;
- Support for Teachers and Pre-School Staff; and
- Recommendations – key recommendations relevant to this study.

3.2.2 Bilingualism and Immersion Education

Introduction

The Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish-English) Children (DE & POBAL, 2009) report notes that international literature highlights the cognitive, social and cultural benefits of bilingualism for children and young people who experience special educational needs (SEN). It goes on to cite Döpke, 2005 and Cummins, 2000 stating that researchers recognise the importance of the additional opportunities and skills which bilingualism offers children and young people who face certain challenges in life as a result of their additional needs. The report casts a note of caution however - drawing on a paper by Baker (2007) which highlights that in spite of a growing body of evidence in support of the advantages of bilingualism for children with special educational needs, international literature cites examples of parents of bilingual children experiencing learning difficulties who have been advised by professionals to raise their children monolingually

The POBAL report includes a review of international literature covering bilingualism and immersion education and the needs of bilingual children who require additional help and support with their learning. This provides some useful definitions and theory to underpin this study. Key findings are presented below.

Bilingualism and Immersion Education

- **Cummins' Threshold Theory (1976)** – differentiates between children who develop high second language (L2) skills at no cost to the first and who, therefore, benefit from

the associated cognitive advantages, and children who do not adequately acquire two languages and consequently, do not make the same cognitive gains. Academic success in an immersion education setting relies on reaching a threshold level in L2. The attainment of this threshold level is influenced by social, attitudinal, educational and cognitive factors, which are likely to be found in an immersion education setting (Cummins, 1976).

- **Terms commonly used in relation to bilingualism:**
  - **First language (L1) maintenance** describes the case of minority language pupils who receive a significant proportion of their education in their mother tongue without excluding the majority language;
  - **Second language (L2) immersion** is when majority language children are educated predominantly through the second language;
  - **Submersion** occurs when minority language children are educated in a majority language setting;
  - **Additive bilingualism** – the result of a positive experience of first (L1) and second (L2) languages with L1 adding to L2;
  - **Subtractive bilingualism** – the result of the mother tongue (L1) being submerged by the majority language (L2).

Irish Medium Immersion Education

Immersion education occurs when students are immersed in, and educated through the medium of a second language, where language and content are taught simultaneously. The term 'immersion education' covers variations in programme types based on, age of the children, length of time spent in the programme and balance of, and exposure to, the languages in question.

IM immersion reflects the Canadian model, as implemented by the St. Lambert experience, in which English-speaking children were educated through the medium of French (Maguire, 1991). There are notable differences between the Canadian and the Irish immersion models, not least that the Canadian model involves two dominant languages of French and English, while the Irish model involves one dominant language and one minority language (Mac Corraidh, 2008). This characteristic of IM immersion leads to its classification as a heritage language immersion programme (Scullion, 2004).

Literacy in the Irish Medium Sector

It is generally accepted that the **Common Underlying Proficiency theory** applies to literacy, as it does to language acquisition, that ***skills and strategies acquired in the first language are transferred to the second*** (Cummins, 2000).

Cummins' developmental interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 1976) states that language skills do not have to be relearned as part of the second language acquisition

process. If the child's language skills are strengthened in the first language (L1) these skills will be transferred to the second language (L2).

Neil et al. (2000) discuss biliteracy within the context of immersion education programmes. Within early total immersion education settings in Canada, for example, early literacy skills are acquired in the immersion language, which is a second language for most students.

Cummins and Swain, (1986 as cited by Neil et al., 2000:43) stated that pupils from an immersion system achieved high levels of proficiency in the second language while developing normal levels of proficiency in their first language.

Kennedy (2007) examines the **effect of IM education on children's English academic competence**. The research, carried out on children aged 8-9 and 11-12 in an IM and EM school, concludes that **IM education does not impede the children's English academic progress** and that, despite lesser exposure to English education, **the children in IM schools showed equal academic proficiency to the children educated through the medium of English** (Kennedy, 2007).

General practice in the IM sector, at present, is that the foundations of reading are developed in the target language (Irish) before formal teaching of English begins (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007).

SEN and bilingual children

Cognitive advantages of bilingualism are now widely recognised, both internationally and in the local context (Baker, 2007 and McKendry, 2006), however, there is evidence to suggest that bilingualism is sometimes blamed for problems and difficulties which bilingual children may experience, particularly with regard to academic achievement (Cummins, 2000).

Although limited, research into the needs of children who experience SEN suggests that **bilingual children with SEN are being disadvantaged as a result of lack of understanding of bilingualism amongst professionals, inaccurate assessment procedures and inappropriate support for bilingual children identified as having special needs** (Baker, 2006).

There is an obligation to address the issue of appropriate assessment and support for bilingual children on moral and ethical grounds, and legal grounds (legislation including Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 (UNCRC, 1990); the right to education - included in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Human Rights Act 1998 and which came into force in 2000); Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) and the Equality (Northern Ireland) Order 2000; the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SENDO)).

When examining the issue of bilingual children who experience SEN it is important to differentiate between bilingual children from a minority language background and bilingual children who are so as a result an immersion education programme. For the purposes of the POBAL review the group 'bilingual children' can be divided largely into two groups:

- (a) **children whose first language is a minority language, who are learning a majority language as a second language** and who are, for the most part, members of an immigrant community, and

- (b) **children who are being educated in an immersion education programme whose first language, more often than not, is a majority language** and who are being immersed in a minority language.

However, some children who are being educated in an immersion education system are also being raised through the medium of the immersion language e.g. children in the IM sector whose home language is also Irish.

Most international research on SEN and the bilingual child focuses on minority language children who are immersed in a majority language, usually in an educational or community setting. While the situation of the minority language child immersed in a majority language differs from that of children in the IM sector who, more often than not, come from majority language backgrounds (English) and are immersed in a minority language setting (Irish), there are similarities in the two situations.

In general, it is accepted that bilingual children will meet the same problems and difficulties as monolingual children throughout their lives. The presence of a second, or in some cases a third language, may mean that bilingual / multilingual children who experience SEN might face additional challenges with regard to assessment, support and intervention and access to services (Baker 2007).

The Warnock Report (1978) anticipated **that approximately 20% of pupils would have SEN at some stage in their school career, and that approximately 2% of these children would require long-term, additional support and, therefore a statement of SEN**. Although the assumption is that these figures would be reflected in the bilingual population, research indicates that a number of factors influence the number of bilingual children identified as experiencing SEN (Baker, 2006; Deponio *et al*.,2000; Nic Annaidh, 2005). In some instances, an over-representation of bilingual children being referred to special education has been noted; in other cases bilingual children are under-represented.

Considering the situation in Northern Ireland, research carried out by Nic Annaidh (2005) highlighted **identification of SEN as one of the most common causes of concern among Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) and principals in the IM system, as well as fears that children educated in the IM sector are being under-represented in referrals for assessment for SEN**. **It is, therefore, difficult to ensure that statistics currently held on the number of children in the IM sector identified as experiencing SEN are accurate.**

The question of **provision for SEN in the IM sector has been recognised as an emerging issue in recent years**. (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006b; Mhic Aoidh, 2004; Shaw and McRory, 2004; Nig Uidhir, 2001, O'Hagan, 2000). Ó Coinn (2002) cites **unsatisfactory provision for SEN and insufficient SEN resources** amongst the challenges facing the sector at present. Nig Uidhir (2001) reports that while teachers in the IM sector are gaining a

lot of experience in the field of SEN on an individual basis, and while the support group GESO has been in existence since 2000 to support teachers, psychologists, parents etc, the **lack of adequate training and resourcing** is hindering improvement of the SEN provision available for children within the IM sector (:201).

The ETI survey (DE, 1999:2) reported that **'most of the schools are located in areas which have suffered from high levels of unemployment, social deprivation and the effects of a long period of civil unrest**'. Boyle (2005) examined the issue of SEN in the IM sector in the context of the relationship between social deprivation and achievement. Boyle (2005:105) cites Mortimore and Whitty (1997) who suggest that the issue of social deprivation and SEN is strongly linked to that of social deprivation and levels of achievement. Boyle (2005:90) reports that the salient issues emerging from the research were: '(1) age and experience of the teaching staff in the IME sector and the growth of the sector; (2) resources; (3) SEN provision; and (4) intervention programmes'. Considering that **most of the research on the issue of SEN within immersion programmes has been carried out based on the French immersion education system in Canada where the majority of schools are in middle class areas, Boyle (2005:105) recommends that further investigation be carried out on SEN, social deprivation and bilingualism in the local context**. Furthermore, the research highlights the issue of **threshold levels in Irish, and the impact of poverty on language development and underachievement.**

Identification and assessment of SEN

Historical perceptions that bilingualism is a contributory factor in the underachievement of bilingual children have been discredited on methodological grounds and in light of a greater understanding of equality issues (Cummins, 1984). **There is a body of evidence supporting claims that bilingualism makes a positive contribution to children's cognitive and affective development** (Hickey, 1997; Neil et al., 2000; McKendry, 2006). Various studies have been carried out in order to investigate the achievement of bilingual children in immersion education programmes in comparison with their monolingual peers. Neil et al. report 'broad agreement in current research findings that point to an **equivalent or favourable performance among total immersion pupils in comparison with English medium peers**' (2000: 58).

A well documented assessment-related issue is the importance of differentiating between language difficulties and learning difficulties. The need for accurate and appropriate assessment for bilingual children was highlighted by a number of court cases in California during the 1970s. Such cases have clearly impacted on the assessment of bilingual children to date. Following the litigation of the 1970s in California, a see-saw effect between over-referral of bilingual children for special education and an underestimation of SEN in bilingual children has been witnessed in America, thus underlining the importance of accurate assessment (Baker, 2006). He cautions that **bilingual children risk being misdiagnosed and deprived of the necessary support systems to assist them with their education if accurate, fair and non-discriminatory assessment procedures are not followed**. He advocates a number of **factors that must be taken into account when assessing a bilingual child for SEN:**

- the possibility that the child's difficulty may be temporary;
- the need for a wide diversity of measurement and observation devices and ensuring the tests are culturally appropriate reflecting the language and culture of the child;
- the choice of assessor;
- ensuring the language used in assessments is appropriate to the child;
- the use of interpreters, if necessary;
- consideration of external factors such as the school environment, the input of the child's teacher and the type of test used (Baker, 2006).

Frederickson and Cline (1996: 4) have also warned that **'thinking solely in terms of a stark choice between 'language problem' and 'limited learning ability' is a gross oversimplification'**. They voice concern that such a mindset could result in the use of an inappropriate assessment procedure, which does not take cognisance of the other factors which may influence the underachievement of bilingual children. Peer (1997), cited in Everatt et al. (2000), identifies mitigating factors influencing bilingual students' learning, such as home background; cultural differences; impoverished language skills; speech and vocabulary development and inefficient memory competency. Rogers and Pratten (1996) **caution against the dangers of maintaining a 'language difficulties' hypothesis until a learning disorder has been officially diagnosed**. They note that, while this method may avoid political pitfalls for professionals brought about by a misdiagnosis, such as charges of racism or employing culturally biased assessment procedures, it deprives the child in question of the additional support which they require, which may in turn have a detrimental effect on the child's future education and self-esteem.

IM practitioners and other multiagency partners, e.g. educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, are challenged to differentiate between language difficulty and learning difficulty when making decisions regarding the identification and provision of support and intervention for pupils. Frost (2000) refers to research on the identification of dyslexia in bilingual children (Hall, 1995) which highlights two common errors to be avoided when diagnosing a learning difficulty:

- *'false positive labelling'* i.e. diagnosing a learning difficulty where one is not present; and
- '*false negative labelling'* i.e. failing to diagnose a learning difficulty where, in fact, one exists.

Long and Clarke (2008:6), in the context of assessing for dyslexia in IM schools, acknowledge 'that there is a risk that the possibility of dyslexia is masked by insufficient mastery of Irish as the language of tuition and/or English as the second language that is formally taught'. **They call for research 'in order to understand better the transfer of skills and the possible confusions arising from learning to read in two different alphabetic systems' (6).**

This highlights a further challenge, which is the absence of appropriate assessment tools such as the standardised tests which are available to EM pupils. The ETI *Survey of*

Provision for SEN in IM Primary Schools (1999) reported that schools were making 'steady progress in developing a system of identifying and recording concerns related to the behaviour and learning difficulties of individual students.' However, the survey noted that a significant deficiency in the identification of SEN in IM schools was the lack of standardised reading tests (DE, 1999: 4).

Valdés and Figueroa (1994), as summarised in Baker (2000), propose **three possible solutions to the issue of assessing bilingual children; ensuring the use of curriculum assessment contexts which are 'appropriate, comprehensible and meaningful to the child', temporarily banning all testing of bilinguals until such times as more appropriate tests are available and the introduction of bilingual norms, more curriculum based and portfolio type assessment and, a greater cultural and linguistic awareness of bilinguals.** While reporting that many favour the third proposal, Baker argues that such changes in assessment procedures only represent the beginning of what is needed to remedy the problem. Baker urges that what is needed is a radical 'shift in the politics and policy dimensions of assessment' of bilinguals (Baker, 2000:135).

One form of assessment for SEN used with bilingual children is **norm-referenced** tests whereby one individual is compared with another (Baker, 2006). This method of assessment has, however, been **criticised for basing the norms on the test scores of monolingual majority language children** which may, therefore, disadvantage bilingual children (Baker, 2006 and Frederickson and Cline, 1996). Damico (1991), cited in Cloud (1994), advocates abandoning norm-referenced assessment in favour of a **descriptive communicative-assessment approach**. Although criticised by some, Ortiz and Garcia, as discussed in Cloud (1994:256), favour the use of norm-referenced language assessment instruments, supplemented by other assessment procedures that describe 'both receptive and expressive skills in the first and second languages.'

Cloud (1994) advocates **'ecological assessment',** as documented by Heron and Heward (1982), in which the child's learning environment, the teacher's expertise, the curriculum and the amount, and nature, of the instruction as well as the child's own personal characteristics, are examined. Such information allows the development of an instructional programme which is unique to the child's individual needs (Cloud, 1994). Research carried out by Deponio *et al.* (2000) on children learning English as a second language, highlights the importance of an 'inter-agency approach' to assessment of bilingual children, in which a member of the school management team (SMT), class teacher, learning support, English as an additional language (EAL) support and, a professional proficient in the child's first language all participate in the assessment process.

Another form of assessment used is **Curriculum Based or Curriculum Related Assessment (CRA), or criterion referenced testing**. CRA seeks to establish what the child can do within the context of the curriculum used and, to identify areas in which progress can be made. Possible assessment procedures within the realms of CRA range from informal observation to highly structured assessment of class work. Whatever the procedure used, it is imperative that the assessment methods used are non-biased and non-discriminatory (Baker

2000). Frederickson and Cline (1996: 6), however, caution that 'CRA can only be a non-discriminatory approach if the curriculum itself on which the assessment is based is non-discriminatory.'

Recent research in the field of assessment of bilingual children has led to a move towards **ipsative assessment** which charts the progress of the individual child over time, and compares his/her achievement with their prior attainments, as opposed to those of their peers (Gravelle, 1996 and Cummins, 2000)

In the context of the IM sector, Long and Clarke (2008) emphasise **the benefits of ongoing observation and informal, curriculum-based, and metacognitive assessment.** Given the lack of standardised assessment materials in the Irish language for the identification of SEN in the IM sector, as previously discussed (DE, 1999; Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), teaching practitioners in the IM sector, therefore, **employ a combination of formal and informal assessment techniques** (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007). Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) list **observation, informal assessments and running records as the most frequently used forms of assessment used by teachers in IM and Gaeltacht schools in the south of Ireland**. Recent work by Clay and Nig Uidhir (2007) has resulted in the publication of assessment material for early literacy in the IM sector, *Áis Mheasúnaithe don Luathlitearthacht*. Their work involved a redevelopment of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2006), discussed in Clay and Nig Uidhir (2007). This resource consists of six standardised tests in Irish to facilitate the assessment of children's early literacy in Irish. The results of the assessment in Irish will assist teachers in assessing pupils' Irish literacy development and in identifying children who require additional support. The resource will allow teachers to plan appropriately to support individual children with their literacy development in Irish (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007).

Language used in assessment

It is not only the assessment strategy which impacts on the outcome of assessment of bilingual children. **The language through which the assessment is conducted can also influence the accuracy of assessment** (Baker, 2000). **It is well documented that learning difficulties are evident across languages and for that reason, criterion of cross-lingual evidence is recommended when assessing a bilingual child** (Baker, 2000:132).

Much of the international literature on bilingual children who experience SEN is based on research involving children whose first language is a minority language, for example Spanish or Portuguese, and who are learning a majority language, such as English, as a second or additional language (Cummins, 2000 and Baker, 2006). Baker (2000:124) asserts that such bilingual children are often tested in their weaker, second language (the majority language), 'inaccurately measuring both language and general cognitive development'. Ambert (1986), cited by Cloud (1994), highlights the **danger of misidentification of SEN if a child is assessed in a language which they have not yet fully mastered, or if he/she is assessed against the performance indicators of native speakers**.

The theory behind the advantages of bilingual assessment of a bilingual child can be found in Cummins' theory of language development (Cummins, 1984). **Cummins' theoretical framework identified two facets of language development**:

- **Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS)** which refer to visible aspects of language acquisition such as pronunciation, basic vocabulary and grammar and
- **Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** which covers the semantic and functional meaning of language.

Following this theory, while BICS are essential for social interaction and communication, they have little bearing on academic achievement. **It is the development of CALP which is vital for educational attainment.** Furthermore, Cummins stated that, **while second language learners may acquire BICS within two years of beginning to learn the language, it can take between five and seven years to acquire CALP. For this reason, bilingual children who appear to educators to have mastered the second language, may not be assessed accurately according to their linguistic needs and may be misdiagnosed as a result.**

Frederickson and Cline (1996) highlight the dangers created for a child who has English as an additional language and who appears to educators to be fluent in English and is, therefore, assessed using resources designed for children with English as a first language. They express concern that the child may be diagnosed as having learning difficulties to explain his/her academic underachievement, when, in actual fact, the child has not adequately developed his/her CALP skills necessary for academic success. Landon (1999), discussed in Deponio *et al*. (2000), suggests that development of good phonic skills in early literacy may mask difficulties in comprehension. When difficulties are identified at a later stage, the child is judged to have difficulties with phonic awareness or have perceptual problems when, in fact, the child's difficulties may arise from cultural unfamiliarity with the text.

The literature on the assessment of bilingual children who speak a majority language as a second, or additional language, indicates some disagreement in respect of the language of assessment (Cloud, 1994). Research carried out by Miramontes (1987), as discussed in Cloud (1994) showed that the **assessment of a child's reading skills in their native (minority) language improved the accuracy of the identification of a learning disability**. On the other hand, Willig (1986), cited in Cloud (1994), states that **assessment of bilingual children should be conducted in their strongest or dominant language i.e. that which 'is more developed, is preferred when the two languages are equally appropriate** and intrudes on the phonological, syntactic, lexical or semantic system of the other' as defined by Mattes and Omark (1984, discussed in Cloud (1994), and not necessarily their native tongue. Baker (2000:132) affirms that **bilingual children with a majority language as a second, or additional language, 'must be assessed in their stronger language', using tests and diagnostic materials in that language, but that 'ideally, assessment should be bilingual'.**

In the context of the IM sector, it is recognised that standardised assessment materials in Irish are limited (DE, 1999; Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004; Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007). **Children from the IM sector are usually assessed by an educational psychologist who does not**

speak Irish and without Irish language assessment materials (Nig Uidhir, 2001). Research in the IM sector indicates that there are varying levels of language competence and variations in pupils' experience of, and exposure to Irish across the sector (Nig Uidhir, 2001 and Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004). Nig Uidhir (2001) observes that students from the IM system in the north of Ireland sitting GCSE and A level examinations are offered a choice of language according to which they believe to be their stronger language. **The fact that some students choose to sit the paper in English and some in Irish is evidence of varying levels of language competence and confidence to write in academic format, and reflective of differing language experiences amongst students in the IM sector. For this reason, Nig Uidhir affirms it is important that the choice remains with the students themselves** (Nig Uidhir, 2001).

Use of translated material

In addition to the language in which assessment is carried out, the type of language used can also influence the outcome of the assessment. Baker (2000:132) **identifies the difficulties posed by the use of translations of assessment materials from one language to another, which may produce 'inappropriate, stilted language.**' Moreover, he asserts that assessors must take cognisance of language variations, and ensure that assessment materials reflect such variations in order to avoid a scenario where a child is misdiagnosed for using language which is natural to them (Baker, 2000). Peer and Reid (2000:4) argue that 'problems of cultural and linguistic bias, differing syntax and structure' render the scores of translated tests unreliable and therefore, invalid.

Mac Corraidh (2002) examines the issue of translated assessment materials in the IM primary school context. He refers to the added task placed on children from the IM sector who sit an Irish translation of an examination paper which was originally designed in English, particularly if the language used in the translation does not reflect the natural language of children of that age.

The *All Wales Reading Test*, created to measure reading performance in children in Welsh Medium (WM) and EM schools, **represents a positive example in which the natural language of the children was taken into account in the assessment design process**. Designers of the test identified syntactical and lexical variations in regional Welsh dialects and employed strategies to ensure that the language used was as standardised as possible. To this aim, the age of the target group was taken in account when selecting particular literary forms, and **separate English language and Welsh language tests were created so the tests were not direct translations of each other** (Forbes and Powell, 2000).

Bilingual Co-workers

One means of overcoming the difficulty of language in a particular assessment, as suggested by international literature, is the **use of interpreters or bilingual co-workers**. Rogers and Pratten (1996) cite the work of bilingual co-workers in the Leicestershire Educational Psychology Service who work alongside educational psychologists in assessing the needs of bilingual children referred to the service. They report that 'the rapport that is established

between a child and an adult who identifies with the child in terms of language and culture is very important'. The role of the bilingual co-worker involves 'legal assessment of special educational needs, school based work accompanying the educational psychologist, family work accompanying an educational psychologist and a social worker, independent family work and independent teaching/counselling' (:83).

O'Hagan (2000) cites The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' handbook, *Communicating Quality 2* (1996) which advocates the use of a bilingual coworker service in order to provide speech and language therapy in the language of choice, to take the client's home language and culture into account, to contribute to the diagnosis process between first and second language difficulties, and to empower the carers of bilingual clients to participate in management of the client's speech and language difficulties. O'Hagan's research (2000) highlighted a number of difficulties experienced by the parents of bilingual children, who speak Irish, when accessing speech and language therapy services in Northern Ireland. O'Hagan reports that there are no Irish language co-workers in the speech and language therapy service in Northern Ireland, and suggests that the consequences of this may be reflected in the negative experiences reported by some respondents to his research (O'Hagan, 2000:203-204).

Assessment and intervention for bilingual pupils (Dyslexia)

The effectiveness of appropriate intervention for dyslexia depends very much on early identification (Peer and Reid, 2000). A range of assessment tools is available for the identification of dyslexia. Everatt *et al.* (2000) cite the *Aston Index* (Newton and Thompson, 1976), the *Bangor Dyslexia Test* (BDT) (Miles 1993), the *Dyslexia Screening Test* (DST) (Fawcett and Nicholson, 1996) and the *Phonological Assessment Battery* (PhAB) (Frederickson et al., 1996). These tools were, however, developed for use with monolingual English-speaking children.

While Everatt *et al*. (2000) suggest that assessment measures suitable for bilingual children may be derived from English language dyslexia tools, particularly those related to phonological processing, they also highlight the need to take into account factors influencing the education and assessment of bilingual children such as home background, cultural differences, impoverished language skills, speech and vocabulary development and inefficient memory competency (Peer, 1997, cited in Everett *et al*., 2000), in order to suitably adapt dyslexia screening materials.

Turner (2000) summarises **a number of assessment procedures currently available for screening for dyslexia in bilingual children, whose first language is a minority language and second a majority language; in this instance, English.** The new edition of the ***British Ability Scales*** **(BAS II)** as discussed in Elliott *et al*. (2000), for example, **is recommended for educational psychologists as a means of differentiating between language difficulties and specific learning difficulties. The second edition of the *British Picture Vocabulary Scale*, a receptive vocabulary test, is recommended for teachers' use when working with EAL children. Thirdly, Turner suggests testing arithmetic skills, as a means of screening for dyslexia, in cases where the assessor does not speak the**

child's first language. He recommends tests such as DAS, *Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children* (WISC), BAS and the *One Minute Number Tests* which allow for the identification of underachievement in written calculation skills, particularly difficulties with division and subtraction, which may be indicators of dyslexia.

Immersion education

In the context of an immersion education programme, **it is recommended that children with learning difficulties remain within the immersion education system and receive appropriate remedial support there**. As a result, children can still develop communicative skills in the second language (Bruck, 1978, cited in Neil *et al*. 2000). It is reported that **children with learning difficulties benefit from the immersion education environment when learning a second language as language acquisition through immersion does not rely on drills, memorisation of patterns and repetition** (Das and Cummins, 1982, as cited in Neil *et al*., 2000). Early research studies suggested that some children are predisposed to experience learning difficulties in early immersion education (Trites (1976), cited in Cummins (1984). This has been strongly criticised by Cummins (1979) and Stern *et al*. (1976) on conceptual, methodological, and statistical grounds (Cummins, 1984). Cummins (1984:169) supports Bruck's work for being 'considerably more convincing from a design standpoint' and which concluded that children with speech and language and learning problems make equivalent progress in the immersion education system as in monolingual programmes and should, therefore, remain in the immersion system.

Irish Medium education

The importance placed on the issue of provision for SEN has been well documented (Ó Coinn, 2002; Mhic Aoidh, 2004 and Nic Annaidh, 2005). Mhic Aoidh (2004) asserts that in addition to the challenges in relation to adequate provision for SEN and inclusion faced by EM schools**, IM schools face additional challenges regarding the most appropriate provision for pupils experiencing SEN and the role of English reading and writing for pupils experiencing learning difficulties**. In her examination of the issue of SEN in the IM sector in the north of Ireland, Nig Uidhir (2001) cites international literature (Bruck, 1978, cited in Neil *et al*., 2000; and Cummins, 1984) **which advocates that pupils with additional needs remain in immersion education, but also suggests that any advantage afforded to the child by immersion education will be nullified if basic assessment and diagnostic materials are not available through the medium of the immersion language**. This viewpoint is highlighted also by Neil *et al*. (2000:49) who stress that adhering to the school of thought that **children experience SEN ought to remain within the immersion programme 'assumes participation in an additive bilingual environment where good remedial services are provided.**'

Mhic Aoidh (2004) points out that efforts made in IM schools to be as inclusive as possible are often thwarted by a **lack of facilities and poor quality accommodation**. As a result of such circumstances, **it sometimes happens that parents are advised to remove their child from the IM system in favour of special education, or EM education sometimes viewed as the 'safe' option for meeting the needs of children experiencing SEN** (Mhic

Aoidh, 2004). Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) also make reference to the experience of parents being advised to transfer children who are experience learning difficulties to an EM school. They refer to research carried out in Canada by Harley (1991) on reasons why children with reading difficulties left immersion education. Harley (1991) sought to identify if beginning to read in the second language (L2) had influenced the children's leaving. The research concluded that there was **no evidence to suggest that beginning to read in L2 impacted negatively on the children's literacy, and that there was every chance that children who left the immersion system as a result of reading difficulties would have experienced the same difficulties had they have begun to read in their first language** (L1) (Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir, 2004).

Transferring a child from one system to another may involve a number of distinct disadvantages. Amongst the specific disadvantages of removing a child from an immersion education system, international literature on this topic cites loss of confidence; feelings of failure; loss of friends, of social network, and of sense of community; and a greater likelihood of failing to learn the second language as a subject than as a method of communication acquired like the mother tongue (Mhic Aoidh, 2004). Furthermore, Bruck (1978/79, 1980, discussed in Cummins, 1984) suggests that switching schools may also lead to tension within the new school if the teachers resent the extra work which that child may represent.

Within the IM sector, the child who is moved from an IM school to an EM school may also be disadvantaged if the teacher is unaware that, for the most part, children in IM education do not begin formal English literacy until Year 3 or Year 4, and so uses reading tests in English to assess the child's ability (Nig Uidhir, 2001). Nig Uidhir (2001) advocates further cooperation between IM and EM sectors as a means of facilitating the transition for children who transfer from IM to EM schools.

Despite limited research on provision for SEN in the IM sector, a number of suggestions have been put forward concerning the education of children with SEN within the IM sector including: the foundation of a university based SEN Chair for the IM sector which would advise organisations on SEN provision for pupils in the IM sector, and undertake research in the field (Nic Annaidh, 2005). Other suggestions for meeting the needs of children in the IM sector include greater classroom-based support, specialist professionals able to provide the range of required treatments available, as well as act in a peripatetic and resource development capacity, in each of the specialist centres in the north of Ireland, and the provision of trained assistants and teachers who could go into IM schools to assist children who require additional support (Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, 2006c).

POBAL Conclusion on Literature Review

The international literature supports the need for appropriate, culture-fair assessment which takes into consideration a child's bilingualism or multilingualism in the assessment of SEN. The danger of mistaking possible language difficulties experienced during the acquisition of a second language with learning difficulties, and vice versa, is well documented. Furthermore, while some examples of good practice have been recognised and celebrated, the literature highlights the need for understanding amongst all professionals working with bilingual children

of the concept of bilingualism; of the specific needs of bilinguals and their parents/guardians; the need for adequate and appropriate resources; and equal access to support services for bilingual children.

In order to ensure that adequate educational and health provision is made for bilingual children with additional needs, it is necessary to be aware of the number of children involved. Research highlights concern regarding accurate identification of SEN amongst bilingual children, both in an international and local context (Baker, 2007; Deponio et al, 2000, and Nic Annaidh, 2005). When considering the issue of provision for bilingual children and their families, it is important to take into account the varying degrees of bilingualism which exist within the various bilingual communities. There are wide range of linguistic variations within the IM sector, in which the vast majority of children come from an English-speaking home background and are being immersed in the Irish language at school. The linguistic proficiency of parents within the IM sector is greatly varied, ranging from little or no Irish to a high level competency in the language, with some children being raised through the medium of Irish in the home. These variations must be taken into consideration during assessment procedures and when planning packages of support for children with additional needs and their families.

3.2.3 IM and SEN - Key Statistics

The POBAL report analyses data relating to pupils registered as SEN in the academic year 2006-07 and notes the following:

Levels of SEN in the IM Sector

- Around 17% of pupils in IM primary and post-primary settings are recorded as experiencing SEN and three most frequently reported SEN are: moderate learning difficulties (35%), mild learning difficulties (19%) and SEBD (15%).
- Around 5% of children in IM at the preschool phase are recorded as experiencing SEN.
- Incidence of SEN in the IM primary and post- primary phases reflects the overall incidence from other sectors in the north of Ireland (17%). The data indicate an under-representation and under-reporting of pupils at pre-school and post-primary school levels (5% and 14%, respectively).
- The percentage of key stage 2 IM pupils recorded on the SEN register is closest to the norm of the percentage recorded in other sectors however there is a lower percentage of IM pupils, in relation to the norm across all sectors, on the SEN register at pre-school foundation stage and at years 10, 11 and 12.

Stages of Code of Practice / Statements

- As is the case in other sectors, there are about ten times as many pupils recorded on stages 1-3 of the Code of Practice as there are recorded on stages 4 and 5.

- Overall, just less than 1% of pupils in the IM sector have a statement of SEN which is around a quarter of the overall percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN in other sectors. The report concludes that "The data, therefore, raise questions regarding identification and referral of pupils in the IM sector who experience needs requiring more specific, long-term support, and therefore, a statement of SEN."

SEN Categories

- Just over half of IM sector pupils on the SEN register present with moderate or mild learning difficulties with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) being the other significant category of SEN recorded. The most frequently reported categories of SEN in the IM primary and post-primary phases are moderate and mild learning difficulties (35% and 19%, respectively) and SEBD (15%).

- In the IM pre-school phase the most frequently reported category of SEN is speech and language difficulties (59%).

- Cognitive and Learning is the largest SEN area reported in IM primary settings which resonates strongly with the picture for primary settings for all sectors. Areas of SEN not recorded in the post-primary IM sector are Communication and Interaction, Medical Conditions/Syndromes and Physical.

- ASD represents the most frequently cited category of need among those with statements. ASD represents 39% of the statements of SEN in the IM sector.

- There is a greater diversity of needs in the IM primary phase than the post- primary phase.

- The profile of SEN types recorded on the SEN register in IM primary and all schools are broadly similar. There are some differences evident in the profile of SEN types in IM post primary settings and all schools – but given the low numbers of pupils in IM post-primary settings, this is not unexpected. The following table shows the key findings.

Table 3-1: Breakdown of SEN in primary and post primary schools (IM and all sectors) 2006-07

	SEN area	IM	All Sectors
Primary	Cognitive and Learning	60%	62%
	Social, Emotional, and Behavioural	17%	12%
	Communication and Interaction	12%	15%
	Physical	3%	2%
	Medical Conditions/Syndromes	2%	5%
	Sensory	1%	2%
	Other	5%	2%
	Total	100%	100%
Post Primary	Cognitive and Learning	72%	57%
	Social, Emotional and Behavioural	26%	19%
	Sensory	2%	2%
	Medical Conditions/Syndromes	0%	10%
	Communication and Interaction	0%	6%
	Sensory	0%	2%
	Physical	0%	2%
	Other	1%	4%
	Total	100%	100%

Source: DE & POBAL: The special educational needs of bilingual (Irish-English) children (2009)

3.2.4 Attitudes to Current SEN Provision within the IM Sector

- Some respondents reported aspects of current provision to be satisfactory namely the ethos of IM schools; good relationships between pupils and teachers, between teachers and parents and between IM settings; **access to support services**; and the expertise, experience, and diligence of teachers in the IM sector.

- Overall, responses from the IM sector indicate a **high level of dissatisfaction with current provision for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning**. The vast majority (74%) of respondents from the IM primary phase indicated their opinion of SEN provision in IME as unsatisfactory, 38% of respondents from pre-school phase and 34% from post-primary phase.

- In the primary and post-primary sectors, 24% of those who rendered SEN provision in IME as satisfactory (23% at primary and 35% at post-primary), quoted external support services. Concerns regarding current SEN provision reported by respondents from the IM sector included the provision of appropriate assessment procedures and support services for pupils in the IM sector who require additional support with their learning; and also assessment materials.

- **Pre- school respondents:**
  - Of the 39% of pre-school respondents who rated SEN provision in IM sector as satisfactory 67% referred to the availability of external support as a positive aspect
  - Of the 38% of pre-school respondents who rated SEN provision in the IM sector as unsatisfactory, the main reasons (amongst others) they quoted involved the lack of - : appropriate provision (20%); qualified Irish-speaking staff (20%); external support (13%); information (13%).
- **Primary and post-primary respondents**
  - Of the primary and post-primary respondents who rated SEN provision in the IM sector as unsatisfactory, the main reasons (amongst others) they quoted involved the lack of -: resources in Irish (28%); assessment tools (21%); services in Irish (15%); and appropriate support (10%).

3.2.5 Assessment of SEN in the Irish-Medium Sector

The POBAL report examines the assessment practices for pupils who have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning; the evidence presented in the report is as follows:

Assessment practices and materials - conclusions

- There is evidence that IM primary and post-primary settings are employing literacy and numeracy assessment materials in Irish available to them and, in some cases, adapting assessment materials in English to assess pupils' progress.
- There currently exists no standardised means by which educational psychologists can assess pupils' Irish literacy development. The lack of assessment materials in Irish means that pupils from the IM sector are, for the most part, assessed through the medium of English using assessment materials which have been designed for monolingual English-speaking children.
- While educational psychologists reported that assessment of cognitive ability in English provides an accurate profile of pupils' ability for pupils whose first language is English, they highlighted the challenges posed to psychologists by the lack of materials by which to assess pupils' literacy development in Irish, the use of assessment materials which contain vocabulary and instructions with which pupils may only be familiar in Irish, and the assessment of those pupils whose first language is Irish.
- Current assessment practices do not take account of pupils' bilingualism and risk failing to profile pupils' strengths as well as areas of weakness. The research findings indicate concerns among teaching practitioners and educational psychologists that the lack of assessment materials in Irish hinders teachers in providing statistical data on pupils'

attainment to enable them to monitor progress and to make accurate, evidence-based referrals to the educational psychology service.

- While teachers currently have access to some assessment materials in Irish to assess early Irish literacy development, there is clearly a need for ongoing development of assessment materials in Irish for all pupils including KS2 and post-primary level pupils. Teachers require standardised means of assessing pupils' Irish ability to enable them to monitor pupils' progress, to plan realistic targets, and to provide statistical data on pupils' progress as they progress through primary school to post-primary level.

Assessment practices and materials – key findings

- As in all schools, IM schools place a high level of importance on teachers' professional judgement in the identification of SEN in the first instance; (as noted in the Review of Irish-Medium Education, the proportion of young, inexperienced teachers is greater in the IM than in any other sector.)

- Schools use a combination of assessment procedures to assess pupils including assessment materials in Irish, assessment materials in English adapted for use in Irish, and standardised assessment material in English with pupils who have begun English literacy;

- Schools report using assessment materials in Irish available to them, for example *Áis Mheasúnaithe sa Luathlitearthacht* (Clay and Nig Uidhir, 2007), materials provided by IM CASS, NfER maths (National foundation for Educational Research) and InCAs in Irish (Northern Ireland Curriculum, 2008b);

- While teachers in the IM sector have developed strategies to identify and assess SEN, they report that the lack of standardized assessment materials restricts the statistical data they can provide in relation to pupils' Irish literacy development;

- Teachers expressed concern that assessing pupils through the medium of English only does not provide an accurate measure of pupils' areas of strength and areas of weakness;

- Educational psychologists highlighted the challenges posed to psychologists working in the IM Sector. While respondents reported that standardised assessment materials in English provide an accurate profile of pupils' ability for pupils whose first language is English, they reported that psychologists are unable to assess pupils' Irish literacy which may therefore, cause a delay in accessing appropriate support;

- The class teacher plays a crucial role in the identification of SEN and involves observation, professional judgment, consultation with SENCO and use of a wide-ranging set of assessment results including Irish, English and numeracy;

- Educational psychologists working with IM pupils carry out their work in the vast majority of cases (81%) using English only, none of them use Irish only, while around one fifth (19%) use combination of Irish and English;
- 28% of the Educational Psychologists interviewed prefer courteously to maintain the Irish language dynamic of IM schools and allow IM pupils the facility of interpretation;
- There are no means of carrying out standardised assessments of IM pupils' Irish literacy which teachers believe can negatively impact on accessing SEN support for IM pupils as it complicates the process of referral to Educational Psychologist services;
- Most of the educational psychologists interviewed believe that the assessment of cognitive ability and numeracy skills through the medium of English provides an accurate profile of pupils in the IM sector whose first language is English. The assessment of children whose first language is Irish is less straightforward. They are aware that care must be taken when assessing bilingual children using assessment tools designed for monolingual English-speaking pupils and report that the absence of standardised tests in Irish is a challenge for them.
- Educational Psychologists indicated that having to wait until an IM pupil commenced English literacy study formally at year 3 or 4 can lead to a delay in accessing additional support
- Assessment materials designed for children who have been exposed to one language only, do not take account of IM pupils' bilingualism and translating them creates further difficulties
- The majority of Educational Psychologists (75%) indicated through the qualitative questionnaire resources would be effective or very effective in meeting the needs of IM pupils.
- IM teachers feel sometimes uneasy about making judgments about pupils using professional judgment only and not authenticated by standardised tests in Irish.

3.2.6 External SEN Support Services

Key findings

- For the most part, IM primary and post-primary settings currently are accessing the generic SEN support services provided by ELBs. The vast majority of support services are made available through the medium of English.
- There is a high level of dissatisfaction with the support provided by SEN-related support services in terms of providing appropriate support for pupils in IM education. Reasons offered include the current lack of: provision of support service in Irish, understanding of IM sector among professionals and, resources and assessment materials in Irish.

- While a significant majority (81%) of the educational psychologists in this study indicated that they had a full or general understanding of bilingualism, just over half of them claimed that they had a full or general understanding of the IM sector. While 31% of them received training in bilingualism, only 5% had received minimal training on the IM sector. Responses from educational psychologists, for example, highlight a willingness to avail of training on the IM sector should training be made available.

- Educational psychologists reported that, for the most part, current assessment practices provide an accurate profile of pupils whose first language is English;

- Educational psychologists are unable to assess pupils' literacy progress in Irish owing to the lack of assessment materials in Irish which may result in a delay in the provision of appropriate support. Three major challenges to their work in IM sector cited by them included a lack of personal Irish language competence (24%), the lack of assessment materials in Irish (20%) and accurate diagnosis of learning difficulties (12%);

- Educational psychologists generally feel that they understand IM pupils' needs

- Educational psychologists aim to minimize challenges to their work in the IM sector by cooperating with members of staff, the use of non-verbal assessment instruments, thorough assessment while considering theories of bilingualism and immersion;

- Responses indicate a need for further awareness raising among health and education professionals in respect of the ethos and pedagogies of the IM sector in order to improve provision for pupils in the IM sector and provision for pupils who received some part of their primary education in an IM school and are now being educated in an EM primary or post primary setting. Almost three quarters of educational psychologists in this study (72%) said that they would welcome and benefit from training on the IM sector: improved understanding and awareness of IM sector (64%); improved understanding of pupils' needs, increased understanding of assessment practices and improved understanding of approaches taken to literacy in Irish and English in IM sector.

- Recommendations to support the work of educational psychologists in the study included "*standardized assessments in Irish, improving their personal Irish language skills, training on IM pedagogy, a liaison officer, afterschool support for children with no Irish at home, additional resources in Irish, and peripatetic and outreach support services through the medium of Irish*".

- The three improvements for their provision most cited by educational psychologists were standardised assessment materials in Irish (32%), outreach/peripatetic support in Irish (32%) and support for parents (23%).

3.2.7 Recording of SEN and referral procedures

- The data indicate some variation in the recoding of SEN across the IM sector. Some respondents reported using a "sub-stage" of the Code of Practice before officially

registering pupils on Stage 1 of the Code. Other respondents reported that pupils are recorded on Stage 1 as soon as they are identified. 32% of IM primary teachers and 10% of IM post-primary teachers in the study feel the need to use a stage before stage one in the Code of Practice for a range of reasons.

- Responses indicate that teachers use their professional judgement to decide if pupils ought to be registered on the Code of Practice immediately or if they require additional time to adapt to the IM immersion education environment. Responses also suggest that other factors such as the lack of assessment materials in Irish can result in teachers feeling uncertain regarding moving pupils from one stage of the Code to another.

- 69% of respondents from the IM primary phase and 81% from post-primary claimed that health problems are recorded on the SEN register.

- The data indicate that the vast majority of respondents from the IM primary phase report having full or general understanding of the Code of Practice (55% full, 40% general) and the stage of the Code, and of the in-school referral process (60% full, 40% general). There is a significant difference between reported levels of understanding in IM primary and IM post-primary phases where a significant proportion of respondents indicated little or no understanding of the Code (9% full, 41% general, 31% minimal, 19% no understanding) and in-school referral procedures (24% full, 40% general, 12% minimal 24% no);

- There is clearly a need for further professional development in the IM post-primary phase to inform post-primary practitioners of the Code of Practice and referral procedures. With regard to external referral processes, the data indicate some uncertainty among respondents in the primary and post-primary phases. However, a much greater percentage of respondents from the post-primary phase (50%) reported having minimal or no understanding of the referral procedures involved when making a referral to educational psychology and for a statutory assessment, than those in the primary phase (16%).

- Responses from educational psychologists give the impression that there should be more referrals to them from the IM sector. Some Educational Psychologists indicate concern at the low level of referrals to them from the IM sector.

3.2.8 Support for Teachers and Pre-School Staff

- The proportions of respondent in the pre-school, primary and post-primary phases which found educational psychology services effective were 23%, 69% and 34% respectively;

- Guidance, based on national and international research and best practice is needed as to the timing of the beginning of formal study of English and the place of English in addressing the additional needs of SEN pupils.

- A number of practitioners from the IM pre-school, primary, and post-primary phases are accessing the generic SEN support services example, CASS, educational psychology, behavioural support etc. Respondents indicated their appreciation of support services which take account of the IM sector and providers who are willing to work with IM practitioners to provide resources in Irish.
- IM practitioners face challenges in accessing support, particularly in the IM pre-school phase where some respondents indicated a need for information and awareness raising in respect of SEN support for practitioners. In the primary and post-primary phases the principal issues are around:
  - advice and guidance regarding SEN in the IM sector,
  - the identification of SEN,
  - support for teachers in recently established schools,
  - support for newly and recently qualified teachers,
  - communication between teachers and external professionals,
  - the issue of English language and literacy and biliteracy for pupils with SEN in IM education and
  - appropriate provision for pupils in IM settings in areas of social disadvantage.
- There is a need for IM-specific support which takes account of the challenges and complexities of identification and assessment of SEN and teaching the curriculum through the medium of a second language in an immersion education programme.

3.2.9 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the report makes recommendations on how the IM sector can improve its capacity to provide for SEN children, including a recommendation to develop and provide standardised Irish literacy assessment tools (although not a recommendation for high-level diagnostic tests).

Recommendation 13: Providing Irish language assessment tools

DE should encourage resource providers to gather, assess and disseminate assessment materials currently in use in IM schools and should commission research into: producing standardised Irish language literacy assessment and diagnostic tools, perhaps on an all island basis, to meet pupils' needs. These should include:

a) curricular resources, including further development of a graded reading scheme in Irish and a spelling scheme in Irish;

b) specialized SEN resources to support pupils with ASD, SEBD, ADHD, partial sight, SLT resources; and

c) literacy and numeracy tools for the assessment of Irish language and literacy

4 APPENDIX 4 – STATISTICAL PROFILE OF IRISH MEDIUM SECTOR

4.1 Introduction

This section presents a statistical profile of the Irish Medium sector in Northern Ireland regarding the number of schools / units, number of pupils and teachers, and prevalence of Special Educational Needs.

4.2 Schools & Units and Enrolments

Table 4-1 shows the number of Irish Medium schools and units and enrolments in 2009/10 by type of school (voluntary and private pre-school centres, primary and post-primary). In total there are 58 IM schools and 11 IM units with 4,045 pupils enrolled across all of these. The majority of pupils (80%) are enrolled in schools rather than units and by school type, the majority (73%) are in primary schools.

Table 4-1: Number of, and Enrolments in Irish Medium Schools and Units (2009/10) – by School Type

School Type	Irish Medium Schools/ Units 2009/10		Enrolments in Irish Medium 2009/10	
	Schools	Units	Schools	Units
Voluntary and Private Pre-School Centres	35	-	435	-
Primary	22	9	2,253	681
Post primary	1	2	561	145
Total	58	11	3,219	826

Note: Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes
Source: NI Schools Census 2009/10

Table 4-2 shows the number of pupils by Irish Medium and non-Irish Medium education. This shows that overall the number of pupils in Irish Medium education (preschool, primary and post-primary) accounts for about 1.3% of all pupils

There are differences across the school types as there is a much greater proportion of pupils in primary schools in the IM sector compared with other school types.

Table 4-2: Enrolments in Irish Medium Schools and Units as % of All – 2009/10

School Type	Irish Medium		Non-IM		All		IM as % of ALL
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
PreSchool	435	11%	6,309	2%	6,744	2%	6.5%
Primary	2,934	72%	160,837	51%	163,771	51%	1.8%
Post primary	706	17%	147,053	47%	147,759	46%	0.5%
Total	4,045	100%	314,199	100%	318,274	100%	1.3%

Note:
- Preschool - Figures include pupils in Irish medium schools only. There are no Irish medium units in the preschool sector.
- Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes
- * denotes fewer than 5 pupils
- # denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils

Source: NI Schools Census 2009/10

Considering the distribution of IM schools and units by ELB, it is evident that the majority of pupils are enrolled in schools and units in 3 of the 5 ELBs - with almost half in the BELB (45.4%), and around one fifth in each of the SELB (21.3%) and the WELB (18.6 %).

Table 4-3: Number of, and Enrolment in Irish Medium Schools and Units (2009/10) – by School Type and ELB

ELB	Irish Medium Schools / Units – 2009/10								
	Primary			Post-Primary			Primary + Post-Primary		
	Schools / Units	Enrolment	Enrolment (%)	Schools / Units	Enrolment	Enrolment (%)	Schools / Units	Enrolment	Enrolment (%)
BELB	8	1,091	37.2%	1	561	79.5%	9	1,652	45.4%
NEELB	5	285	9.7%	-	-	-	5	285	7.8%
SEELB	3	250	8.5%	-	-	-	3	250	6.9%
SELB	7	647	22.1%	1	129	18.3%	8	776	21.3%
WELB	8	661	22.5%	1	16	2.3%	9	677	18.6%
Total	31	2,934	100%	3	706	100.0%	34	3,640	100.0%

Note: Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes
Source: NI Schools Census 2009/10

4.3 Teachers (FTE, Age, Pupil: Teacher Ratio)

Table 4-4 presents the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers, their average age and pupil-teacher ratio for the 22 IM primary and 1 IM post-primary schools in Northern Ireland.

Table 4-4:
Number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Teachers, Average Age of Teachers and Pupil-Teacher Ratio for Individual Irish-Medium Schools in Northern Ireland (2009/10)

School Name	School type	Mean Age	FTE Teachers	Pupil: Teacher Ratio
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	Primary	28.20	4.40	13.18
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	Primary	35.13	15.00	17.47
Gaelscoil na bhFal	Primary	40.00	9.00	21.44
Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh	Primary	29.56	8.06	21.58
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain	Primary	29.86	7.00	15.14
Scoil an Droichid	Primary	34.56	8.80	14.20
Gaelscoil na Mona	Primary	34.40	5.00	19.00
Gaelscoil an Lonnain	Primary	37.00	3.00	17.33
Bunscoil Cholmcille	Primary	34.67	9.00	16.44
Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh	Primary	30.57	7.00	17.29
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	Primary	34.13	8.00	18.50
Bunscoil an Traonaigh	Primary	37.33	3.00	12.00
Gaelscoil na gCrann	Primary	30.75	4.00	15.50
Gaelscoil na Daroige	Primary	26.00	2.00	19.50
Gaelscoil an Chaistil	Primary	31.20	5.00	16.40
Gaelscoil na Spéiríní	Primary	28.00	3.00	8.00
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	Primary	41.25	3.40	15.88
Gaelscoil Eanna	Primary	28.00	3.52	9.65
Scoil na Fuiseoige	Primary	36.25	8.00	14.75
Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	Primary	34.20	4.40	12.73
Bunscoil an Iuir	Primary	33.67	6.00	18.17
Gaelscoil Uí Neill	Primary	31.88	7.60	17.24
Colaiste Feirste	Post-primary	34.43	44.98	12.47
All I-M Primary	Primary	33.5	134.2	
All I-M Post-Primary	Post-primary	34.4	44.98	

Notes:
1) The teacher numbers are based on a reference week in the autumn term: 23-27 November 2009.
2) The following types of teacher are included when calculating the Pupil: Teacher Ratio:
   - full-time (FT) permanent teachers;
   - part-time (PT) permanent teachers;
   - temporary teachers filling vacant posts, secondments or career breaks.
3) Excluded from the teacher element of the calculation are:
   - substitute teachers covering illness or other short-term absences;
   - peripatetic teachers
4) Pupil figures are taken from the Annual Schools' Census conducted in October 2009.
5) Teacher and pupil numbers are expressed as full-time equivalents, with part-time hours being converted on the basis that a full-time working week is 32.4 hours.
6) The pupil - teacher ratio for individual schools is created by FTE pupils / FTE teachers.

Source: Teacher Payroll and Pensions Administration System 2009/10

Primary Schools

In 2009/10, there were 134.2 **full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers** employed in Irish medium primary[3] schools, representing some 1.7% of FTE teachers in primary[4] schools. This compares with 2004/05, when the number of FTE teachers in Irish medium primary[3] schools was 105.1, some 1.3% of FTE equivalent teachers in all primary[4] schools.

The **mean age of teachers** in Irish-Medium[3] primary schools was 33.5 in 2009/10, in comparison to the mean age (41) of teachers in primary[4] schools excluding Irish-Medium[3] primary schools.

The **pupil: teacher ratio** for all Irish medium primary[3] schools was 16.6 in 2009/10. This compared with a pupil: teacher ratio of 20.4 for primary[5] schools not in the Irish medium sector. The pupil: teacher ratio for all grant-aided primary[5] schools in 2009/10 was 20.4.

Post-Primary Schools

The following statistics have been produced for IM post-primary schools, however there is only one such school in the north of Ireland therefore, they must be interpreted with caution.

In 2009/10, the number of **FTE teachers** employed in the Irish medium post-primary school was 45.0. This is some 0.5% of FTE teachers in all post-primary schools and 0.8% of FTE teachers in non-grammar schools. In 2004/05, the number of FTE teachers in the Irish medium post-primary school was 32.9, some 0.3% of FTE teachers in all post-primary schools and 0.5% of FTE teachers in non-grammar schools.

The **mean age of teachers** in the Irish-Medium post-primary school was 34.4 in 2009/10, in comparison to the mean age (40.6) for teachers in post-primary schools excluding Irish-Medium primary schools.

The **pupil: teacher ratio** in the Irish medium post-primary school was 12.5. This compared to 14.3 for all non-grammar post-primary schools and 14.6 for all post-primary schools in 2009/10.

Summary

The number of FTE teachers in the Irish Medium sector has increased in both primary and post-primary sectors between 2004/05 and 2009/10 (by just over a quarter and just over a third respectively).

Teachers in the Irish-Medium sector are younger, on average than those elsewhere: 7.5 years younger on average in primary schools and 6.2 years younger on average in post-primary schools.

[3] The figures are based on Irish Medium Schools only. IM units are not included.
[4] Includes preparatory departments of grammar schools and teachers in nursery classes.
[5] Includes preparatory departments of grammar schools and pupils and teachers in nursery classes.

The pupil: teacher ratio is lower in Irish-Medium schools than in other schools – the difference is more pronounced in primary schools: 16.6 vs 20.4 in 2009/10 for primary schools; and 12.5 vs 14.6 in post-primary schools.

4.4 Special Educational Needs – By Stage, ELB and Irish Medium/ English Medium

The two tables overleaf compare the levels of SEN in the IME sector and the Non-IM sector by type of SEN and type of school (primary and post-primary).

Table 4-5:
Primary schools pupils broken down by SEN stage and Irish Medium/ English medium schools and units - 2009/10

TYPE	ELB	SEN stage												Total	
		0		1		2		3		4		5			
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Non IM pupils	Belfast	16,955	10.54	1,843	1.15	2,473	1.54	1,179	0.73	154	0.10	551	0.34	23,155	14.40
	Western	22,126	13.76	1,358	0.84	2,570	1.60	1,648	1.02	164	0.10	664	0.41	28,530	17.74
	North Eastern	30,151	18.75	1,840	1.14	2,663	1.66	1,304	0.81	98	0.06	787	0.49	36,843	22.91
	South Eastern	27,782	17.27	1,337	0.83	2,910	1.81	1,115	0.69	193	0.12	1,080	0.67	34,417	21.40
	Southern	30,938	19.24	1,029	0.64	2,914	1.81	1,408	0.88	182	0.11	1,421	0.88	37,892	23.56
Total Non IM pupils		127,952	79.55	7,407	4.61	13,530	8.41	6,654	4.14	791	0.49	4,503	2.80	160,837	100.00
IM pupils	Belfast	776	26.45	95	3.24	125	4.26	69	2.35	#	#	#	#	1,091	37.18
	Western	543	18.51	25	0.85	50	1.70	34	1.16	*	*	#	#	661	22.53
	North Eastern	260	8.86	17	0.58	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	285	9.71
	South Eastern	201	6.85	19	0.65	22	0.75	*	*	0	0.00	*	*	250	8.52
	Southern	586	19.97	20	0.68	#	#	12	0.41	*	*	9	0.31	647	22.05
Total IM pupils		2,366	80.64	176	6.00	219	7.46	121	4.12	9	0.31	43	1.47	2,934	100.00
Total All pupils		130,318	79.57	7,583	4.63	13,749	8.40	6,775	4.14	800	0.49	4,546	2.78	163,771	100.00

Notes:
- Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
- * denotes fewer than 5 pupils
- # denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils

Source: NI School Census 2009/10

Table 4-6:
Post primary schools pupils broken down by SEN stage and Irish Medium/ English medium schools and units - 2009/10

TYPE	ELB	SEN stage 0		1		2		3		4		5		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Non IM pupils	Belfast	22,921	15.59	2,695	1.83	2,360	1.60	737	0.50	50	0.03	598	0.41	29,361	19.97
	Western	21,782	14.81	1,623	1.10	1,572	1.07	659	0.45	50	0.03	830	0.56	26,516	18.03
	North Eastern	28,774	19.57	1,214	0.83	937	0.64	676	0.46	33	0.02	804	0.55	32,438	22.06
	South Eastern	21,464	14.60	1,219	0.83	1,182	0.80	727	0.49	21	0.01	1,054	0.72	25,667	17.45
	Southern	28,821	19.60	1,066	0.72	1,070	0.73	596	0.41	29	0.02	1,489	1.01	33,071	22.49
Total Non IM pupils		123,762	84.16	7,817	5.32	7,121	4.84	3,395	2.31	183	0.12	4,775	3.25	147,053	100.00
IM pupils	Belfast	332	47.03	28	3.97	148	20.96	43	6.09	*	*	#	#	561	79.46
	Western	#	#	0	0.00	0	0.00	*	*	0	0.00	0	0.00	16	2.27
	North Eastern	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	South Eastern	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Southern	113	16.01	0	0.00	9	1.27	#	#	0	0.00	*	*	129	18.27
Total IM pupils		#	#	28	3.97	157	22.24	51	7.22	*	*	10	1.42	706	100.00
Total All pupils		124,220	84.07	7,845	5.31	7,278	4.93	3,446	2.33	185	0.13	4,785	3.24	147,759	100.00

Notes:
- * denotes fewer than 5 pupils
- # denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils

Source: NI School Census 2009/10

From the two preceding tables, we have produced a summary of the prevalence of SEN (by stage and by school type) for 2009/10. The table below compares the levels of SEN in the IME sector and the Non-IM sector by type of SEN and type of school.

Given the relatively small numbers in the IME sector relative to the overall school population, comparisons must be treated with caution – and in particular for the post-primary schools (total of 706 pupils). However, if we consider pupils in IM Primary schools (2,934 in total), we see that:

- the proportions with no SEN are similar in both IM and Non-IM (approx 80%) i.e. approx 20% with SEN;
- the proportions at each stage of the SEN Code are similar in both IM and Non-IM (slightly higher proportion at Stage 1 in IM and slightly lower proportion at Stage 2 and Stage 5 in IM sector);
- the number of pupils at Stage 4 & 5 (combined) is 52 in the IM sector (5,294 in non-IM) i.e. IM is about 1% of all at Stage 4 &5.

Table 4-7:
Pupils in Non-IM and IM Schools by SEN Stage (2009/10)

	% at each SEN Stage						
Primary	0	1	2	3	4	5	No. at 4&5
NonIM	79.6%	4.6%	8.4%	4.1%	0.5%	2.8%	5,294
IM	80.6%	6.0%	7.5%	4.1%	0.3%	1.5%	52
Total	79.6%	4.6%	8.4%	4.1%	0.5%	2.8%	5,346
Post-Primary	0	1	2	3	4	5	No. at 4&5
NonIM	84.2%	5.3%	4.8%	2.3%	0.1%	3.2%	4,958
IM	64.9%	4.0%	22.2%	7.2%	0.3%	1.4%	12
Total	84.1%	5.3%	4.9%	2.3%	0.1%	3.2%	4970

Note:
1. Figures include pupils in Irish medium schools only. There are no Irish medium units in the preschool sector.
2. Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
3. There is only one IM post-primary school therefore the figures must be interpreted with caution.
* denotes fewer than 5 pupils
# denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils
Source: NI Schools Census 2009/10

Applying a similar analysis to that in Table 4-8 above for the 2 preceding years, a similar pattern emerges for IM primary school pupils:

- the proportions with no SEN are similar in both IM and Non-IM (approx 80%)
- the proportions with SEN are fairly similar i.e. approx 20% with SEN (Non-IM) in 2008/09 and 2007/08 and 18% with SEN (IM) in 2008/09 and 16% with SEN (IM) in 2007/08;
- the proportions at each stage of the SEN Code are similar in both IM and Non-IM (slightly higher proportion at Stage 1 in IM and slightly lower proportion at Stage 2 and Stage 5 in IM sector);

- the number of pupils at Stage 4 & 5 (combined) is 53 in the IM sector (5,261 in non-IM) in 2008/09 and 43 in the IM sector (5,283) in 2007/08.

Table 4-8:
Pupils in Non-IM and IM Schools by SEN Stage (2008/09)

	% at each SEN Stage						
Primary	0	1	2	3	4	5	No. at 4&5
NonIM	80.4%	4.7%	8.0%	3.8%	0.5%	2.8%	5,261
IM	82.4%	5.2%	6.5%	4.1%	0.5%	1.3%	53
Total	80.4%	4.7%	7.9%	3.8%	0.5%	2.8%	5,314
Post-Primary	0	1	2	3	4	5	No. at 4&5
NonIM	85.2%	5.1%	4.5%	2.1%	0.1%	3.0%	4,652
IM	66.4%	2.8%	24.2%	5.4%	0.3%	0.9%	8
Total	85.1%	5.1%	4.6%	2.1%	0.1%	3.0%	4,660

Note:
1. Figures include pupils in Irish medium schools only. There are no Irish medium units in the preschool sector. Figures for primary and post primary include Irish Medium schools and units.
2. Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
3. There is only one IM post-primary school therefore the figures must be interpreted with caution.
* denotes fewer than 5 pupils
# denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils
Source: NI Schools Census 2008/09

Table 4-9:
Pupils in Non-IM and IM Schools by SEN Stage (2007/08)

	% at each SEN Stage						
Primary	0	1	2	3	4	5	No. at 4&5
NonIM	80.9%	4.7%	7.7%	3.4%	0.5%	2.8%	5,283
IM	84.1%	6.0%	5.1%	3.2%	0.6%	1.0%	43
Total	81.0%	4.7%	7.7%	3.4%	0.5%	2.7%	5,326
Post-Primary	0	1	2	3	4	5	No. at 4&5
NonIM	85.8%	5.0%	4.3%	2.0%	0.1%	2.8%	4,359
IM	82.0%	3.5%	9.3%	4.1%	0.3%	0.8%	7
Total	85.8%	5.0%	4.3%	2.0%	0.1%	2.8%	4,366

Note:
1. Figures include pupils in Irish medium schools only. There are no Irish medium units in the preschool sector. Figures for primary and post primary include Irish Medium schools and units.
2. Figures for primary include nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
3. There is only one IM post-primary school therefore the figures must be interpreted with caution.
* denotes fewer than 5 pupils
# denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils
Source: NI Schools Census 2007/08

4.5 Special Educational Needs – By SEN type and Irish Medium/ English Medium

The table overleaf compares the levels of SEN in the IME sector and the Non-IM sector by type of SEN and type of school. This highlights that there are a number of key categories of SEN which are prevalent in IM and Non-IM as well as across school types (although the incidence varies – however due to small numbers in the IM sector, when we break down SEN any interpretation must be treated with caution). The most common are:

- ***PreSchool***
  - Speech and Language Difficulties (51.44% of all those on the Code of Practice in non IM, 36.67% IM);
- ***Primary***
  - Mild Learning Difficulties (27.74% non IM, 21.48% IM)
  - Cognitive and Learning (19.97% non IM, 27.11% IM)
  - Speech and Language Difficulties (10.01% non IM, 11.44% IM)
  - Moderate Learning Difficulties (8.19% non IM, 4.05% IM)
  - SEBD (6.24% non IM, 5.63% IM)
  - Dyslexia_spld (6.95% non IM, 4.05% IM)
- ***Post-Primary***
  - Cognitive and Learning (11.72% non IM, 43.15% IM)
  - Dyslexia_spld (14.52% non IM, 0.00IM)
  - Mild Learning Difficulties (19.14% non IM, 14.52% IM)
  - Moderate Learning Difficulties (11.90% non IM, 15.32% IM)
  - SEBD (7.84% non IM, 5.65% IM).

Table 4-10:
Preschool / Primary / Post-primary pupils - Special Educational Needs - IM and Non IM comparison - 2009/10

	PRESCHOOLS				PRIMARY				POST-PRIMARY			
	Non IM pupils		IM pupils		Non IM pupils		IM pupils		Non IM pupils		IM pupils	
SEN Type	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
add_adhd	7	1.18	0	0	553	1.68	8	1.41	935	4.01	*	*
Anaphylaxis	10	1.69	0	0	216	0.66	*	*	194	0.83	*	*
Aspergers	*	*	0	0	496	1.51	13	2.29	738	3.17	6	2.42
Asthma	74	12.52	*	*	427	1.30	*	*	701	3.01	*	*
Autism	25	4.23	*	*	874	2.66	12	2.11	350	1.50	0	0.00
Blind	0	0.00	0	0	6	0.02	0	0.00	*	*	0	0.00
COG_notspecified	0	0	0	0								
Cognitive not specified	5	0.85	0	0								
COMM_notspecified	6	1.02	*	*								
Cognitive and Learning					6,568	19.97	154	27.11	2,730	11.72	107	43.15
Communication and Interaction					354	1.08	11	1.94	72	0.31	0	0.00
Cerebral Palsy	*	*	0	0	122	0.37	*	*	84	0.36	0	0.00
Deaf	*	*	0	0								
Dyspraxia_dcd	0	0	0	0	123	0.37	*	*	196	0.84	*	*
Diabetes	*	*	0	0	105	0.32	0	0.00	163	0.70	0	0.00
Down	*	*	0	0	103	0.31	0	0.00	26	0.11	0	0.00
Dyscalculia	0	0	*	*	29	0.09	0	0.00	43	0.18	12	4.84
Dyslexia_spld	0	0	0	0	2,285	6.95	23	4.05	3,383	14.52	0	0.00
Epilepsy	5	0.85	0	0	123	0.37	*	*	159	0.68	*	*
Interaction of complex medical needs	*	*	0	0	90	0.27	*	*	78	0.33	*	*
Mental Health Issues	0	0	0	0					28	0.12	0	0.00
Muscular dystrophy	0	0	0	0	14	0.04	0	0.00	16	0.07	0	0.00
MED_notspecified	0	0	0	0	187	0.57	6	1.06	599	2.57	*	*
Mild Learning Difficulties	19	3.21	*	*	9,122	27.74	122	21.48	4,459	19.14	36	14.52
Moderate Learning Difficulties	15	2.54	0	0	2,694	8.19	23	4.05	2,772	11.90	38	15.32
Mild/ moderate hearing loss	11	1.86	0	0	181	0.55	*	*	232	1.00	0	0.00
Multi-sensory impairment	*	*	0	0	10	0.03	0	0.00	6	0.03	0	0.00

Table 4-10:
Preschool / Primary / Post-primary pupils - Special Educational Needs - IM and Non IM comparison - 2009/10

	PRESCHOOLS				PRIMARY				POST-PRIMARY			
	Non IM pupils		IM pupils		Non IM pupils		IM pupils		Non IM pupils		IM pupils	
SEN Type	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Other medical conditions/syndromes	22	3.72	*	*	392	1.19	8	1.41	528	2.27	*	*
Other Physical	16	2.71	*	*	221	0.67	*	*	189	0.81	0	0.00
Other	10	1.69	*	*	533	1.62	9	1.58	1,110	4.77	8	3.23
Physical unspecified	0	0	0	0	34	0.10	*	*	40	0.17	*	*
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties	0	0	0	0	*	*	0	0.00	7	0.03	0	0.00
Partially sighted	5	0.85	*	*	116	0.35	*	*	131	0.56	0	0.00
Significant accidental injury	*	*	0	0	10	0.03	*	*	8	0.03	0	0.00
Spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus	*	*	0	0	49	0.15	0	0.00	37	0.16	0	0.00
SEB_notspecified	15	2.54	*	*	669	2.03	45	7.92	485	2.08	5	2.02
SEBD	16	2.71	*	*	2,052	6.24	32	5.63	1,827	7.84	14	5.65
Speech and Language Difficulties	304	51.44	11	36.67	3,293	10.01	65	11.44	501	2.15	*	*
Severe Learning Difficulties	*	*	0	0	142	0.43	*	*	98	0.42	*	*
Severe/profound hearing loss					98	0.30	*	*	85	0.36	0	0.00
Sensory not specified	0	0	0	0	38	0.12	0	0.00	33	0.14	0	0.00
Unspecified					553	1.68	16	2.82	246	1.06	0	0.00
Total	591	100	30	100	32,885	100	568	100	23,291	100	248	100

Notes:
- Preschools: Figures include pupils in Irish medium schools only. There are no Irish medium units in the preschool sector. Due to the fact that preschools data is collected at an aggregated level only, all needs are collected together so 'type 1' cannot be isolated.
- Primary: Figures include pupils enrolled in Irish medium units and schools. Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
- Post-primary: Figures include pupils enrolled in Irish medium units and schools.
- * denotes fewer than 5 pupils

Source: NI School Census 2009/10

5 APPENDIX 5 – EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY - STATISTICS

5.1 Introduction

Notes re: use of Education Psychology Service / availability of data:

- **Allocation of Education Psychology Service to schools "Time allocation":** Provides a process for dealing with school requests for Stage 3 Educational Psychology Consultations / Stage 3 referrals. The introduction of time allocation:
  - Ensures equal access to EPS and to quantify schools' entitlement to visits
  - Provides a guaranteed minimum number of visits per year
  - Allows schools to plan ahead as they will know frequency of EP visits
  - Allows schools to identify priorities in terms of needs / more choice in how they use EP time (individual assessments, consultations, etc.)

  BELB, WELB and SELB use this to allocate how much Educational Psychologists' time (as a minimum) that each primary school gets.
  - For example in SELB, schools with less than 50 pupils get 4 hours (equivalent to 1 assessment per annum), 50-100 pupils get 8 hours and > 10 pupils, time based on a formula based on school population, and a link to FSM
  - Formulae vary by ELB;
  - Concern that some schools have a need for more than their allocation whilst others do not use their full allocation.
  - Given that the Review of Irish-Medium education highlighted that some Irish schools were not entirely with the Code of Practice on SEN; it is possible that they may not be referring some children at Stage 3 and hence not using their full allocated time which could have implications for the numbers being statemented.
- **Tracking of referrals to Education Psychology Service and outcomes of these (including statements):** the way in which information is recorded varies within the ELBs so it can be difficult to ascertain underlying patterns of referrals / statements (both in IM and overall) and to make "like-for-like" comparisons. Although a new database – EMS – has been introduced, it is not being used consistently (ideally it should be used by Education Psychology Service, Education Welfare Officers and the SEN).

5.2 Referrals to Educational Psychology Service and Outcomes

5.2.1 NEELB

Table 5-1:
NEELB – Referrals to Education Psychology Service and Outcomes – IM Sector vs Others – 2009/10

	IM Sector – EP fluent in Irish	IM Sector – EP not fluent in Irish	IM Sector - Total	Others (English Medium)
No. of referrals to educational psychologists			10	1312
No. of referrals as % of school population			3.3% of IM pupils (300 in total)	1.8% of Non IM
outcome of referrals: no. of children diagnosed with Dyslexia			* (*% of all referred – literacy support)	213 (16% of all referred – literacy support)
outcome of referrals: no. of children diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties			-	182
outcome of referrals: no. of children diagnosed with Severe Learning Difficulties			-	16
outcome of referrals: no. of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder			-	35
outcome of referrals: no. of children diagnosed with Medical Difficulties			-	5
outcome of referrals: no. of children diagnosed with Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties			-	109
Outcome of referrals: no of children statemented			-	493
Source: NEELB				

5.2.2 SELB

Table 5-2:
SELB–Referrals to Education Psychology Service & Outcomes – IM Sector vs Others – 2009/10

	IM Sector – EP fluent in Irish	IM Sector – EP not fluent in Irish	IM Sector - Total	Others (English Medium)
No of cases in which educational psychologists are consulted (pre-referral)		24		524
No of referrals to educational psychologists		14 + 16 screening assessments		271
Outcome of consultation / referral – access another Board service		6 + 11 following screening assess.		158
Outcome of consultation / referral – advice provided		7		220
Outcome of consultation / referral – no. of children statemented		*		49

Notes:
1. Based on some (approx. 12 Psychologists) in SELB (includes all those attached to IM schools/units)
2. Total No. of Stage 3 Requests = 645
* denotes fewer than 5 pupils.
Source: SELB

5.2.3 WELB

Table 5-3:
WELB–Referrals to Education Psychology Service & Outcomes – IM Sector vs Others – 2009/10

	IM Sector – EP fluent in Irish		IM Sector – EP not fluent in Irish		IM Sector - Total		Others (English Medium)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No of cases in which educational psychologists are consulted (pre-referral)	29	64%	26	59%	55	62%	6,533	85%
No. of referrals to educational psychologists	16	36%	18	41%	34	38%	1,198	15%
No of cases: sum of consulted + referral	45	100%	44	100%	89	100%	7731	100%
Outcome of consultation / referral – access another Board service	8	18%	14	32%	22	25%	1, 045	14%
Outcome of consultation / referral – advice provided	25	56%	18	41%	43	48%	1,189	15%
Outcome of consultation / referral – no of children statemented	*	*%	0	0%	*	*%	286	4%

Notes:
In addition to statistics above:
-1 P7 Transfer review of a child with a Statement took place in the IM sector
-3 Stage 3 referrals to the EPS in IM sector progressed to Stage 4 but Statement was not completed within 09/10 timescale
Source: WELB

Table 5-4:
Irish Medium Schools/Units in WELB and enrolment totals

Name of School	Enrolment Number
Bunscoil an Traonaigh - Lisnaskea	36
Bunscoil Cholmcille - Derry	148
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir - Derry	148
Gaelscoil na Daroige - Derry	39
Gaelscoil na gCrann - Omagh	62
Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh - Strabane	121
St Canice's PS (Unit) - Dungiven	57
St Columbkille's PS (Unit) - Carrickmore	49
Source: WELB	

Table 5-5:
WELB: Summary of Referrals in IM Sector and Others

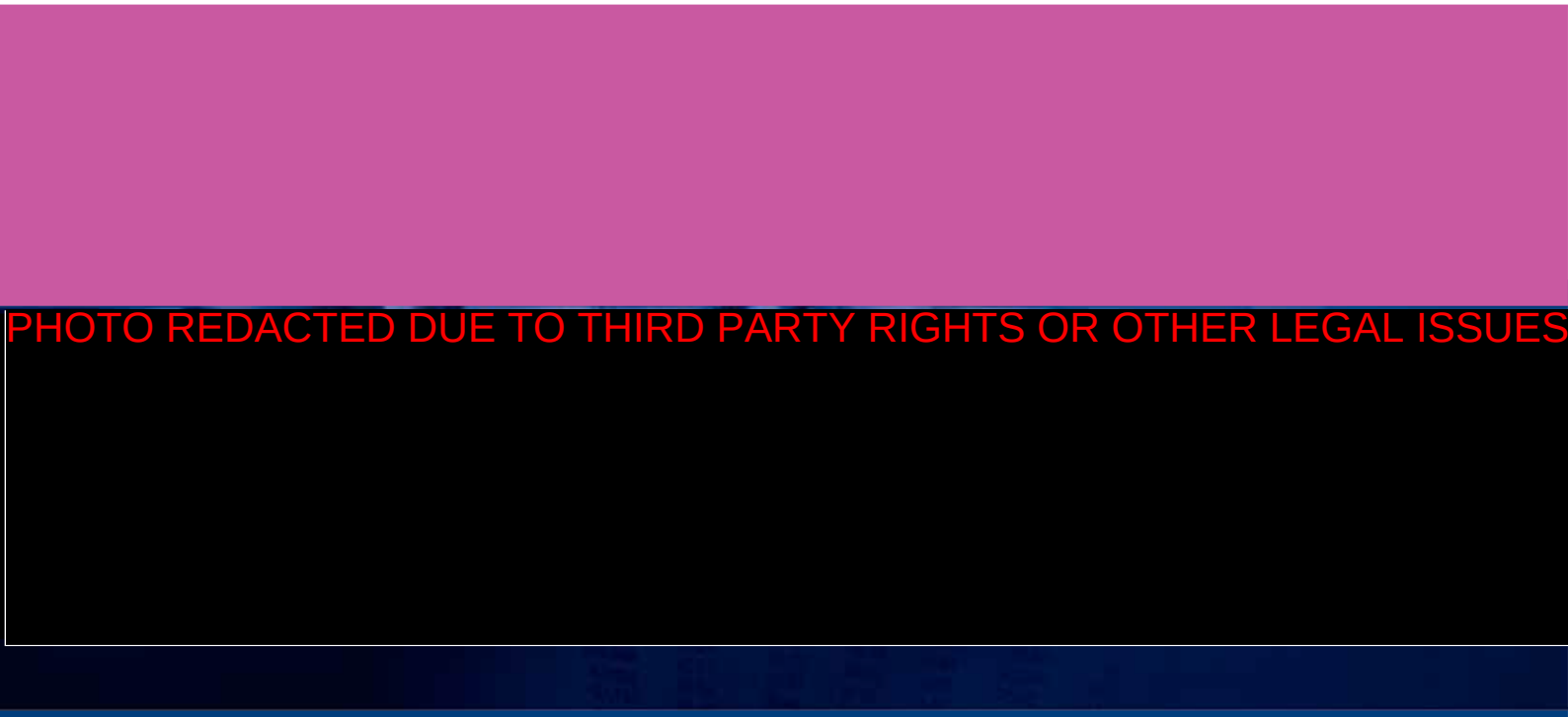
	IM Sector	Others	IM as % of all
Total no. of children attending schools	660	55,538	IM = 1.18% of all
Referrals to the EPS	5.15% of IM school population	2.15% of school population (English Medium)	IM referrals to EPS: 2.75% of all
Source: WELB			

5.3 Irish-Medium Sector - Access to Support for SEN

5.3.1 BELB Statistics

Table 5-6:
Children attending BELB Primary Schools / Accessing Peripatetic Support – IM sector vs All

Measure	% of all
Children attending IM primary schools in Belfast – from IM schools as % of all schools	4.35%
Children attending primary schools in Belfast who were referred in 2010 for additional support from the specialist service for children with Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia - from IM schools as % of all schools	8.2%
Source: BELB	



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

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