

PART 2: QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

The Department of Education and Skills is drafting a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. The views of stakeholders are being sought to inform the development of this Strategy. Outlined below are a number of key questions. You are invited to provide your feedback on each question. There is also a space at the end of this template for any other more general comments you may wish to make that are relevant to the issue of foreign languages in education. It would be important to note that the submissions received will be available for general distribution.

Email addresses (for correspondence):

Niamh Nestor: [REDACTED]

Agnieszka Matys: [REDACTED]

Bronagh Ćatibušić: [REDACTED]

Consultation carried out by:

CKU www.ckudublin.org

Forum Polonia: www.forumpolonia.org

Irish Polish Society www.irishpolishsociety.ie

Polish Complementary School, Dublin (www.polskaszkoladublinie.com/en)

Polish Complementary School, Dundalk (www.polskaszkoladundalk.com)

Polish Irish Educational Association (which runs the Polish Weekend School 'KLEKS' in Arklow, Co. Wicklow: <http://arklowpolskaszkola.org/index.html>)

POSK www.en.poskdublin.org

Together-Razem Centre www.together-razem.org

and Polish and Irish community activists employed in various Irish organisations and institutions:

Artur Banaszkiewicz (Forum Polonia, coordinator of "Vote! You are at home" campaign, Complementary School SEN Board member, education consultant)

Wojciech Bialek (Together-Razem Centre)

Bronagh Ćatibušić (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra)

Barnaba Dorda (Forum Polonia, IPS, POSK, organiser at SIPTU, coordinator of "Vote! You are at home" campaign)

Piotr Gawlik (Forum Polonia)

Sylwia Gołębiewska (Polish Complementary School, Dundalk)

Tomek Kostienko (Polish Scouts' Association, Parents' Council of Polish Complementary School SEN in Dublin, Polonia Razem, Forum Polonia)

Wojciech Kostka (Polish Irish Educational Association; Polish Weekend School 'KLEKS' in Arklow, Co. Wicklow)

Emilia Marchelewska (Cairde, CKU Centre for Counselling & Therapy, Forum Polonia)

Agnieszka Matys (Polish complementary School SEN, Dublin)

Niamh Nestor (UCD, Forum Polonia, IPS, Bilingual Forum Ireland)

Jarosław Płachecki (IPS)

Irena Suchecka (Crosscare, CKU – Centre for Counselling and Therapy)

Katarzyna Walkowska (Together-Razem Centre)

Introduction

In this submission, we would request that the Policy Development Team consider the needs of children in *all* our schools for whom English/Irish is not a first language (L1). We believe that the Policy Development Team should bear in mind the importance, for educational, cognitive, as well as social and economic reasons, of the maintenance and development of the L1 for this group as well as the development of the second language(s) (L2 (English and/or Irish)).

Ireland has experienced momentous change over the last two decades, with a sharp reversal in its traditionally outward-migration patterns to a very rapid increase in inward-migration, particularly noticeable after the accession of ten new EU Member States, including Poland, on May 1st 2004. The impact of this population change has been particularly striking in the pupil profiles of Irish schools. Approximately 12% of primary school pupils and 10% of post-primary school students were born outside of Ireland.¹

Since 2008, Ireland's economic woes have been well-documented, both nationally and internationally, and the onset of recession has seen a return to double-digit unemployment figures and net outward migration. This has led many to assume, perhaps simplistically, that the migrants who arrived in their thousands since the mid-1990s will now decide to return "home". The recent publication of data from Ireland's 2011 Census suggests the opposite. This is in line with international experience in this area.

In the case of the number of Polish nationals living in Ireland, there has been an almost 100% increase, from 63,276 Poles in 2006 to 122,585 in 2011. Of these, more than 25,000 are children and teenagers.² There are also increases reported for other non-Irish nationalities (e.g. Lithuanian, Latvian, Nigerian, Romanian, Indian, etc.), indicating that, contrary to public opinion, many migrants have chosen to remain in Ireland, hence making migration a 'permanent feature of Irish society'.³ Other studies have shown that the presence of children in families has a significant impact on a family's decision to remain or return, and that migrant parents do not wish to disrupt their children's schooling, often for a second or subsequent time, despite the challenging economic circumstances in which they may find themselves.⁴

Ireland's cultural and linguistic landscape is more heterogeneous now than ever before in its history.⁵ Two questions on Census 2011 dealt with linguistic diversity. The first asked about language spoken at home (other than Irish or English) and the second dealt with self-reported proficiency in English. This was the first time such questions were included on an Irish Census. A total of 514,068 people (11% of the total population) stated that they do not speak Irish or English at home. Of these, the largest group – 23% (119,526) – speak Polish. In schools, there are pupils from over 160 countries and up to 200 languages are spoken. For approximately 70-75%, English is not their first language.⁶ Across education, there is an imperative to

¹ Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2011)

² Personal communication (Central Statistics Office)

³ Ní Chonail (2010)

⁴ See Nestor (2013, 2014); Ryan & Sales (2011); Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001)

⁵ Ó Dochartaigh & Broderick (2006)

⁶ DES (2011)

support and capitalise on the multilingual abilities of young people, not only because of the currently much mooted economic benefits, but also because of the undeniable social, analytical and psychological benefits. On the part of the State, the DES has made various efforts in this regard. One example is the option to sit a language exam in various non-curricular EU languages at Leaving Certificate (LC) level. This was introduced by the DES in 2005. Currently, there are plans for a number of languages, e.g. Polish as an L1, to be introduced as a short course in the revised Junior Certificate (JC) cycle. On the community side, the complementary school sector is growing. The complementary schools, for the main part, run at weekends and provide tuition in subjects such as history, geography, the L1 (e.g. Polish) and (sometimes) maths. In Ireland, numerous communities have established complementary schools, e.g. Polish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian. The Polish school network is the largest, with 32 schools at present.

Ireland lacks a languages-in-education policy, despite recommendations from various quarters over the years.⁷ We greatly welcome, therefore, this public consultation and the opportunity to make a submission.

⁷ See, e.g. Ó Dochartaigh & Broderick (2006)

1. Raising Awareness

What measures should be undertaken to promote awareness, at national, community, enterprise and individual level, of the importance of language learning and to increase interest in and motivation for foreign language learning?

Year on year, thousands of children in Irish schools study a foreign language as part of the JC and LC. Many of these go on to study at higher level and graduate with a languages qualification or with a foreign language qualification that complements their primary qualification. Notwithstanding this, reports, firstly from educators at higher level, indicate that some students are leaving post-primary school and entering higher education with a lower than expected level of proficiency in foreign languages. Equally, reports from industry would suggest that some students are leaving higher education with a lower than expected level of proficiency and that they are unable to recruit the number of language graduates with the appropriate language skills and with sufficient language proficiency to fill the job vacancies available. One result of this is that recruitment is, instead, taking place abroad and L1 speakers are being hired directly in their home countries. Irish graduates are essentially being bypassed as part of this process.

As noted earlier, approximately 11% of Ireland's population speak a language other than English/Irish at home. Of these, the largest language community is the Polish-speaking community (119,000+ speakers of Polish). Of note also are the data released by the ESRI every year on births in Ireland. In 2004, 18% of all births were to mothers born outside of Ireland. By 2010, this figure had increased to 25% and has remained relatively steady ever since. It is undoubtedly the case that many of these children are being raised bilingually and biculturally. They represent a substantial percentage of Ireland's youth population, meaning that the future of Irish society at all levels is intimately tied to and intertwined with the futures of these children.

We are strong advocates for the encouragement of L1 maintenance in Ireland and for the development of bilingualism with English/Irish. Evidence from the Polish complementary schools (see Section 2 below) suggests, however, that oftentimes Polish (migrant) parents are not entirely convinced of the importance of maintaining Polish. One of the main motivations frequently cited (and supported by research in this area) behind the decision to emigrate with their families to Ireland was the potential for increased opportunities that would enable them to secure their children's futures, academically, socially and professionally. Many Polish parents see their futures and those of their children in Ireland⁸ and they are very concerned that their children will learn to communicate fluently in English (or Irish). We understand and agree that this is an important concern. However, parents sometimes believe that the maintenance of Polish is not as important as the acquisition of English/Irish and, in fact, may be detrimental to the child's acquisition of English/Irish. They are unaware

⁸ The majority of Poles who moved here after Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 have chosen to remain in Ireland and are not, contrary to public opinion, planning to move back to Poland. See, e.g. data from Ireland's Census 2011 as well as statistics from the Central Statistics Office in Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2008; see also Iglicka & Ziolk-Skrzypczak, 2010).

of the long-term benefits of bi- and multilingualism that have been well-documented in research.

There exists a substantial body of research evidence in support of maintaining and developing L1 proficiency among minority language children.⁹ Moreover, research data point to the positive benefits of L1 proficiency on the development of the L2. This has been articulated by Cummins (1981) as the Linguistic Interdependence Principle. There is a vast literature on bilingualism across various fields – linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology, neurology and psychology.¹⁰ While in some corners, opinion holds that multilingualism is not the norm, it is, in fact, monolingualism which is unusual across the globe. Approximately two-thirds of children in the world are being raised plurilingually.¹¹ The benefits of bilingualism are wide-ranging and have been well-documented over many decades. Raising children bilingually is beneficial for intergenerational family relationships, and thus for broader family, community and societal cohesion. Bilinguals may act as ‘bridges within the nuclear and extended family, within the community and across societies’.¹² Bilingualism has numerous cognitive benefits, including enhanced control for problem solving.¹³ Knowing two languages may enable the bilingual person ‘to think more fluently, flexibly and creatively’.¹⁴ Bilinguals pick up third, fourth, etc. languages more easily and they have an increased tolerance for diversity. Finally, there are numerous economic benefits associated with bilingualism. The language industry is growing four times faster than the global economy; however, there is a dearth of skilled multilingual speakers available to take up job opportunities.¹⁵ In Ireland, many multinational conglomerates have set up base (e.g. Google, PayPal, eBay), and they require a multilingual workforce to do business. Other economic opportunities also present themselves to bilinguals – governments need multilingual speakers to work on their behalf in embassies and consulates across the globe, and industries such as education, science, international transport, information technology, banking and tourism, among many others, regularly employ bilinguals.¹⁶

Recommendations:

- 1. Ensure that teacher training colleges promote and acknowledge the benefits of linguistic diversity and provide appropriate training for trainee teachers so that they may be enabled to provide well-informed advice to parents on this topic.**
- 2. Run a national (media) campaign to inform all parents, educators, etc. of the benefits of bilingualism and, in particular, of the importance of maintaining the L1. As part of such a campaign, Embassies, Consulates and various community organisations may be encouraged to play a pivotal role.**

⁹ See, e.g. Churchill (2003); Ramírez (1992); The Stanford Working Group (1993); Thomas & Collier (1997); Tseng & Fuligni (2000)

¹⁰ See e.g. Baker (2007); Bhatia & Ritchie (2012); Cenoz & Genesee (1998); Fishman (2001); Grosjean (2010); Myers-Scotton (2005); Romaine (1995)

¹¹ Crystal (2003: 69)

¹² Baker (2007: 4)

¹³ See, e.g. Bialystok & Craik (2010); Genesee (2007)

¹⁴ Baker (2007: 5)

¹⁵ GALA (2013)

¹⁶ Baker (2007: 5); Genesee (2007: 5)

Information may be disseminated to parents through the school. For this purpose, it is essential that principals and teachers are made fully aware of the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. It is not always the case that school managers are fully convinced of the importance of the L1. In addition, there should be a good communication system between home and school (e.g. through Home-School Liaison Officers), and user-friendly information needs to be provided to parents in their L1 where parents and school cannot communicate effectively due to a language barrier.

Recommendations:

- 3. The DES should issue a circular to all schools on the importance of maintaining the L1.**
- 4. Principals, teachers, early childhood care workers, home-school liaison officers, and school completion officers must be fully convinced and informed of the cognitive benefits of bilingualism and of the importance in encouraging both L1 and L2 (oral language and literacy). This can be facilitated through the Inspectorate, the Teaching Council, training colleges, in-service, pre-service, teaching union publications and the education centres.**
- 5. Schools and classrooms should be places where bi- and multilingualism is celebrated as part of an intercultural school curriculum. This in turn would underpin the development of an appreciation for multilingualism and multi-literacies among all pupils.**
- 6. Parents should be able to draw on an established advice network, e.g. One Voice for Languages, Bilingual Forum Ireland or school teachers, Home-School Liaison Officers, etc. in the school. It is important to note that information must also be available for parents in the L1.**
- 7. Both statutory agencies and voluntary bodies who deal with migrant issues should be encouraged to include an 'Information for Parents' section on their websites where the benefits of bilingualism would be outlined (e.g. NALA already has information on bilingualism on their website).**

Finally, health officers should be made aware of the benefits of bilingualism, particularly those who deal with pre- and post-natal care. One interesting example of work in a related area is in Wales where information on raising children bilingually (Slogan: "2 languages from Day 1") is distributed to families through midwives and healthcare workers¹⁷. While this initiative is primarily concerned with minority language maintenance, its success is such that it should be considered as an effective means of getting information to parents at a stage when they may still be deciding on the language(s) through which they would like to raise their child. Another interesting example of minority language revival initiatives is the success of promoting home literacy activities in New Zealand.

Recommendation:

¹⁷ See the Twf project: www.twfeymru.com/en-gb/home/Pages/default2.aspx. See also Edwards & Newcombe (2003, 2005)

8. Make health officers aware of the benefits of bilingualism, particularly those who deal with pre- and post-natal care.

We accept that L1 maintenance cannot realistically at present be expected to take place in the school. However, there are examples of best practice that are available for dissemination to teachers and schools as strategies for L1 maintenance during school time. At the individual school level, there have also been numerous initiatives and supports put in place to develop and maintain bilingual abilities among students. Some schools display multilingual signage, they translate school documents, they provide interpreters, when necessary and possible, for meetings with parents, and many create atmospheres of openness and tolerance for all diversity both within and outside of their walls. A small number of schools provide L1 classes for their students. This is a school-based initiative. Examples of this at primary level come from the two Dublin-based Muslim schools which have been providing Arabic classes for pupils since their establishment (one since 1993 and the other since 2001). Other schools take different approaches. For example, Scoil Bhríde Girls' National School (Dublin 15) teaches modern languages and includes the use of mother tongue in an integrated way during lessons. This example of good practice at the primary school level provides evidence of initiatives that develop translanguaging and language awareness among children. These types of initiatives are beneficial for all children, including children who are native speakers of the majority language. The benefits lie particularly in the areas of literacy and the learning of other curricular languages (e.g. Irish in English-medium schools). At post-primary level, language classes are offered to help students to prepare for their LC examination in a non-curricular language. Schools offering Polish include: Arklow CBS (Co. Wicklow), Errigal College (Co. Donegal), Hartstown Community School (Dublin 15), Coláiste Bríde (Dublin 22) and Moyle Park College (Dublin 22).

Recommendations:

- 9. Inform schools of the methods they may employ to encourage L1 maintenance and disseminate examples of good practice.**
- 10. Provide mandatory CPD for teachers in strategies they may use in the classroom to help maintain and develop the L1, pointing out to teachers that these activities are beneficial for *all* children.**
- 11. Provide funding and resources to schools who wish to offer L1 classes to their students in preparation for their LC examination in a non-curricular language.**

2. Supporting migrant languages in educational settings

How can we encourage our migrant children to become proficient in the language of their adopted community, while at the same time maintaining oral, written and cognitive academic language proficiency in their own mother tongue?

We recognise the importance of the development of English/Irish as an L2 in order to ensure that minority language children successfully access the curriculum and achieve academic, social and personal success. We find it regrettable that EAL (English as an additional language) provision in Irish schools has been greatly reduced in recent times. This is a regressive step, particularly in light of the research data in this area which point to the fact that, in order to fully develop academic language proficiency, children need at least 5 years to reach the same level of academic language ability as their native speaker peers.¹⁸ The recent budget cuts in this area will undoubtedly have very serious implications for pupils who do not speak English/Irish as an L1 and who may not yet have sufficient language to access the curriculum.

Recommendation:

12. Reverse the budget cuts in this area and increase EAL provision in Irish schools.

We view the erosion of EAL support in recent years as a development that runs contrary to the spirit of the Intercultural Education Strategy (IES)¹⁹. This period has concomitantly seen the erosion from the national agenda of a focus on intercultural education issues, as evidenced by the closure of IILT, the closure of the MLPSI, the removal of a permanent Minister for Integration, etc. Despite the fact that resources produced, particularly by IILT between 2003 and 2007 (prior to its closure in 2008), continue to be freely available online and have been distributed to all schools, teachers are often unaware of their existence. Equally, teachers are often unaware of the NCCA guidelines on intercultural education. A lot of these materials continue to be very relevant and could provide the basis for a renewed programme of CPD. Intercultural education benefits *all* children and should form an integral part of classroom learning and a whole-school ethos. International precedent indicates that making these issues a core concern at these early stages of integration will lead to more favourable outcomes for all.

Recommendations:

13. Place intercultural education at the centre of the national education agenda.

14. Put in place mandatory CPD for all educators on accommodating linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms, schools and communities.

¹⁸ See, e.g. Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981, 1984

¹⁹ DES and the Office of the Minister for Integration (2010).

In Ireland, many communities have set up complementary schools. Complementary schools 'serve specific linguistic or religious and cultural communities, particularly through mother-tongue classes'²⁰. Much has been written about complementary schooling in Britain where there is a long- and well-established complementary school network across many communities (e.g. Polish, Chinese, Pakistani, Somali, and many others), but virtually no literature exists on the complementary school system in Ireland²¹. This is most likely due to the relatively recent development of the complementary school system in Ireland. Complementary schools arise as a result of 'historical processes and attitudes towards language and culture in specific contexts'; schools are established 'as a response to dominant monolingual ideologies which ignore multilingualism as a result of having adopted the 'minority language as problem' view'²². Throughout the literature, these schools are referred to as 'safe spaces' where the 'transformation, negotiation and management of linguistic, social and learner identities take place'²³. The schools are sites where languages and cultures often hidden or ignored in the mainstream may flourish.²⁴

As well as Polish schools, which represent the largest network of complementary schools in Ireland, there are Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Russian and Ukrainian schools. These schools play a vital role in the long-term maintenance of bilingual abilities, yet they do not receive official recognition by the Irish state.

Currently, there are 32 Polish complementary schools which cater for more than 4,000 Polish children. The schools operate in two groups. First, there are five SPK (*Szkolny Punkt Konsultacyjny*) schools which are funded by the Polish Ministry of Education. These cater for 2,641 pupils and are located in Cavan, Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford. Secondly, there are 27 community schools. These are operated and financed by the communities themselves with (in most cases but not all) substantial support from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They cater for more than 1,500 pupils and they are located in several counties. In total, the number of schools per county are as follows: Co. Carlow (2), Co. Cavan (1), Co. Cork (1), Co. Donegal (1), Co. Dublin (6), Co. Galway (4), Co. Kerry (1), Co. Kildare (1), Co. Kilkenny (1), Co. Laois (1), Co. Limerick (2), Co. Louth (1), Co. Meath (1), Co. Mayo (4), Co. Sligo (1), Co. Tipperary (1), Co. Waterford (1), Co. Wicklow (1), Co. Wexford (1). The first Polish complementary school was set up in 2005 and since then the sector has seen exponential growth – there were 11 schools in 2009 and this number increased to 32 by 2014. The smallest school enrolls 15 pupils while the largest enrolls 829. Staffing numbers also vary, from two staff members to forty-three. On Saturdays and Sundays, pupils follow the Polish school curriculum in Polish (language), history and geography (and sometimes maths). The Polish Ministry of Education has prepared guidelines on curriculum and standards entitled Curriculum Principles for Polish Pupils Learning Abroad²⁵. This text provides the basis for developing local curricula for teaching Polish (language), Polish history, culture and geography, as well as studies on contemporary Poland.

²⁰ Creese & Martin (2006: 1)

²¹ Except McNamara (2013); Nestor (2014); Walsh (2013)

²² Creese & Martin (2006: 1); see also Creese et al. (2007)

²³ Wei (2006: 80)

²⁴ See Creese & Blackledge (2008); Martin et al. (2004)

²⁵ This document is available at http://www.polska-szkola.pl/file.php/1/podstawa_programowa_eng.pdf

The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Dublin supports the majority of the Polish schools in various ways by providing financial support and undertaking education-related projects. One example of a recent initiative is the organisation of intensive courses for students planning to undertake Polish at LC level. The first course was run in March 2013 in order to prepare students for the 2013 LC exam. The second course took place in late 2013 in order to prepare students for the 2014 LC exam. A second initiative was the organisation of workshops and talks for teachers and parents as part of conferences (organised in cooperation with University College Dublin) in 2011 and 2012.

The mainstream and complementary school sectors in Ireland work in parallel. Although both systems share the same clients (children and parents) and have shared interests, actors within each system remain unaware of the activities of the other. This absence of interconnectedness creates a system which is less efficient, less productive, and, ultimately, less beneficial for the children it purports to serve. The mainstream and complementary school sectors should build links for various reasons.²⁶ Research has shown that mainstream teachers, who may previously have held negative opinions about complementary schooling, benefitted greatly from visiting their local complementary school. They witnessed and acknowledged the professionalism and commitment of their peers in the complementary school and they recognised the strong cultural ties that existed between the teaching staff, the young people and their families.²⁷

However, once they actually witness their community colleagues helping children to learn in cramped community flats or draughty church halls, they recognise the dedication and professionalism involved. Complementary school teachers have to find strategies that work for multi-level, multi-age classes and engage the attention of children who have already had a full day's schooling. Many find creative answers to this challenge, producing their own resources since almost none exist or can be afforded. Furthermore, their relationship with their students is built on a deep knowledge of their shared cultural background, excellent links with parents and a strong desire for children to succeed so that the community as a whole can progress. There is much here for mainstream teachers to learn.

Furthermore, the return visits by the complementary school teachers to mainstream schools benefitted the children by bringing together their two previously 'parallel' educational worlds.

There is a further imperative for mainstream and complementary schools to create links. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that when a child presents with, for example, reading difficulties, mainstream teachers are often uncertain as to whether the child has a literacy difficulty or if the difficulty is simply that the child is not yet sufficiently proficient in English/Irish to access the curriculum successfully. At present, there are few supports in place in mainstream education for children (whose L1 is not English/Irish) who may be experiencing literacy difficulties. Children whose L1 is not English/Irish may be inappropriately diagnosed (or not diagnosed at all) with literacy difficulties because of a lack of resources, knowledge and appropriate training. It is not beneficial or desirable to assess the child only through the language of the mainstream. At the very least, the child must be assessed in her/his L1 as well.

²⁶ See Kenner et al. (2010)

²⁷ Kenner et al. (2010)

Very often, complementary schools employ speech and language therapists. In order to create a full and accurate picture of students' learning experiences, both mainstream and complementary schools should join forces. Likewise, ongoing training, both at the pre-service and in-service stages, is vital in order to equip mainstream teachers to fully deal with the needs of children whose first language is not English/Irish.

Recommendation:

15. Mainstream and complementary schools should be encouraged to make links whether it be through partnerships around curriculum, cultural events or the joint assessment of pupils.

State recognition of the complementary school sector needs to be forthcoming. While some may overly concern themselves with the possibility that "recognition" must always entail finance, this is not the sole form of recognition available. The complementary schools play a crucial role in Irish education. They form part an integral part of the education sector and contribute in a myriad of ways to the educational outcomes of our young people. However, this contribution is generally overlooked and undervalued.

Recommendation:

16. Provide suitable spaces in which the complementary schools could be run with costs borne by the State.²⁸

These would ideally be school buildings which would be offered to communities for use as complementary schools at weekends. This type of scenario is already suggested in DES Circular M18/05 (16/05) which recommends that school premises should be made available for local community use. It is not always the case that the recommendations in this circular are borne out in reality. O'Mahony (2013) notes that the provision of suitable space could be a start but is not sufficient in the long-term if Ireland hopes to develop the language abilities of young people.

Recommendations:

17. O'Mahony (2013) suggests cooperation between the NCCA and embassies/consulates in the development of comprehensive language curricula from junior infants right through to LC. These curricula, he envisages, could be delivered online with schools simply having to devote a certain amount of time per day to L1 learning.

18. O'Mahony (2013) recommends that accreditation be explicitly set at native speaker level, and that students be provided with the opportunity to sit the equivalent of the LC in their mother tongue, i.e. a Polish student would take the *Matura* in the Polish language rather than the LC Polish language exam. (A possible incentive would be bonus CAO points.)

19. State recognition should come in the form of stronger partnership in policy implementation.

²⁸ Also suggested by O'Mahony (2013)

At a time when the DES is striving to improve and increase literacy levels in Irish schools, migrant-led schools play a very important support role in this work. The maintenance and development of the first language (e.g. Polish) can play a vital role in the successful acquisition of the second language (English/Irish) (as noted earlier). One of the organising pillars of Polish schools is the fostering of the Polish language, and, in the implementation of DES policy, this makes their role crucial. In this and other areas, a strong partnership between educators in both the Irish and Polish (and other migrant) communities will bring positive social benefits for all.

3. Learning and Teaching

How can foreign language learning be supported for students from post-primary educational settings and thereafter? You may wish to concentrate on one educational sector.

There are a number of supports in place throughout mainstream Irish education for the maintenance and development of bilingual abilities. These are as a result of initiatives that have been taken by the State as well as individual schools. At State level, the DES published an Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010-2015 (IES) in 2010. The IES identifies ten key components and (based on these) five high level goals of intercultural education. Among these is the recognition that knowledge of the language(s) of instruction is crucial for academic success.²⁹ The IES also acknowledges the importance of valuing the minority student's L1 and of encouraging L1 maintenance, noting that this will enhance L2 acquisition and support identity development.³⁰

Recommendation:

20. Extend the Intercultural Education Strategy beyond 2015. In the revised document, make a stronger case for L1 maintenance and explicitly outlines the reasons for this, by pointing to the vast literature on the benefits of bilingualism.

In 2011, the DES published The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 (henceforth, the LaN Strategy). The LaN Strategy makes particular mention of students whose first language is not English/Irish³¹:

While some students may acquire a level of competence in English or Irish and become able to converse socially, their acquisition of communicative language may mask a deficit in academic language skills that are needed to succeed at school. A further barrier for migrant students is their parents' lack of knowledge of English, in some cases, and of the Irish education system.

As noted earlier, research data point to the positive benefits of L1 proficiency on the development of an L2. The LaN Strategy acknowledges this indirectly when it states that migrant students 'require extra language support *which builds on their mother tongue knowledge* to achieve better literacy and numeracy outcomes in English and Irish'.³² However, it does not flesh out why this is the case and, in particular, how teachers may build and capitalise on already existing capacities and skills in the

²⁹ DES, (2010: 46)

³⁰ DES (2010: 40)

³¹ DES (2011: 64-65)

³² DES (2011: 64; our italics)

mother tongue. Furthermore, the LaN Strategy acknowledges indirectly the existence of complementary schools and other community-led educational initiatives when it states that³³

All initial teacher education courses and ECCE training programmes [should] include mandatory modules to raise awareness among teachers and ECCE practitioners that some migrant students will be receiving informal support in their mother tongue in out-of-school educational settings

The LaN Strategy does not expand on what these 'out-of-school educational settings' may be nor does it highlight the vital contribution of the community, through efforts at home or outside of the home, for example, in complementary schools, to the development of literacy and numeracy skills in the mother tongue.

Recommendation:

21. Issue a circular to all schools explicitly informing educators of the types of out-of-school settings in which children may be learning. Inform educators as to the vital contribution complementary schools make. Explicitly outline to educators how L1 maintenance impacts on L2 acquisition.

The Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) supports foreign languages education in post-primary schools. There is no such body at primary level in mainstream education, and modern languages do not form a core part of the primary curriculum. The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) saw its funding withdrawn in December 2011 as part of budgetary cutbacks. The final report of the MLPSI notes that Ireland lags behind its European partners in the development and implementation of policy around early language learning, and that we are, in fact, the only European country that does not include modern language teaching as part of its primary school curriculum.³⁴

Policy developments in the area of early language learning have moved at a much more significant rate in other European countries [than in Ireland]. Indeed, some countries are now also focusing on language learning at pre-school level and it is increasingly common for primary education to offer more than one modern language. (...) Ireland is the only European country where in practice modern languages are not taught as part of its primary curriculum.

We suggest that it is more than feasible for schools to offer a modern foreign language as part of the primary school curriculum and, in fact, that this should be made a core requirement of the curriculum. We suggest that schools should be allowed choice in the language introduced, e.g. Polish or other L1 languages of the pupils in the schools. This provision could, if appropriately implemented, allow for greater liaison between mainstream and complementary schools and create opportunities for creating a "shared space". This may, in turn, benefit complementary schools that may struggle to find suitable rooms for lessons (as has been the case with some smaller complementary schools). This would also require and encourage parental involvement.

³³ DES (2011: 69; our italics)

³⁴ MLPSI (2012: 7)

Recommendation:

22. Reinstate the MLPSI and make foreign language learning mandatory in primary schools.

At post-primary level, students have the option of studying a number of curricular languages to LC level. These include: Irish, English, Ancient Greek, Arabic, French, German, Hebrew Studies, Italian, Japanese, Spanish and Russian. Since 2005, the State Examinations Commission has also made it possible to sit a LC examination in "non-curricular EU languages". These provisions have been made in accordance with commitments made under Article 149 of the Treaty of Nice which states that 'Community action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States'.³⁵ There are fifteen such language examinations on offer: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Modern Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian and Swedish. Students may opt to sit a non-curricular EU language exam if they meet the following criteria:

- (i) Be from a member state of the EU
- (ii) Speak the language of the exam they would like to take
- (iii) Have followed a programme of study leading to the LC
- (iv) Be sitting LC English
- (v) Not have opted to sit any other non-curricular EU language exam

Table 1 (below) outlines the numbers of students who have sat Polish at LC level since it was introduced in 2005. The total number of students sitting non-curricular EU languages has also been provided as has the percentage of these who sat Polish only. The final column shows the percentage of those who achieved an A, B or C grade in Polish.

Table 1. Polish at Leaving Certificate level, 2005-2014³⁶

Year	Polish	Total no. sitting non-curricular lgs	% sitting Polish of non-curricular lgs	% A/B/C grade in Polish
2005	<10	71	<14%	n/a
2006	20	150	13%	95%
2007	53	254	21%	92.4%
2008	171	541	32%	94.7%
2009	328	817	40%	90.5%
2010	451	1,050	43%	95.8%
2011	574	1,262	45%	88.7%
2012	707	1,370	52%	91.8%
2013	769	1,470	52%	91.2%
2014	750	1,485	51%	tbc

Table 1 shows that the number of students sitting Polish has risen rapidly since 2005. Since 2012, more than half of all students sitting non-curricular EU language exams

³⁵ See <http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ex&sc=eu>

³⁶ Source: State Examinations Commission (www.examinations.ie)

took Polish. Of these, a consistently high percentage have been awarded an A, B or C grade in the exam.

There are a number of issues to be addressed around the availability of Polish at LC level. Firstly, students are restricted to taking one non-curricular EU language exam only as the fifteen non-curricular EU language examinations are run concurrently. This inherently fails to recognise that a child may come from a bilingual home where more than one EU language is spoken. Secondly, the young person must be sitting the "traditional" LC. This rules out the possibility of a young person who has followed, for example, a Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) course to sit an exam in Polish. The LCA is composed of a series of courses which, in turn, are comprised of various modules. One of these modules is "Modern Languages". The choice of languages available is French, German, Italian or Spanish. Thirdly, there are no oral or aural components to the non-curricular EU language exams. It is worth noting that curricular languages such as Irish and French award a substantial percentage of the total grade for oral and aural components (50% at both higher- and ordinary-level LC Irish; 45% at both higher- and ordinary-level LC French). Whether the lack of an oral and aural component for the non-curricular EU languages is due to issues around resources is unclear. However, the introduction of these would bring innumerable benefits. The availability of a written exam only may marginalise those students who may not have had experience of writing or reading in their L1 for some time as well as those who may have literacy difficulties in their L1. If these young people are not receiving some form of formal preparation either at home, through private lessons or through a complementary school, the exam may prove challenging.

Recommendation:

23. Review the provision of non-curricular EU examination subjects by allowing students to sit more than one of these exams; allowing others besides LC students to sit these exams (e.g. LCA students); and introducing aural and oral components.

4. Teacher Education

How can we ensure an adequate and ongoing supply of highly-skilled, professional teachers/trainers of foreign language at all educational levels to meet ongoing and emerging needs?

It is encouraging to note the increasing numbers sitting non-curricular EU languages, in particular Polish, at LC level (see Section 4). Recent developments at JC level are reassuring. Preparations are underway (with the PPLI) to introduce Polish as an L1 as a short course for the new JCSA. The benefits of the introduction of languages, such as Polish, earlier in the education cycle cannot be overstated. These include the maintenance of literacy skills at an earlier age as well as the gains to be had from institutional recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity and the concomitant social, psychological and economic benefits. However, there is still work to do. The issue of the recognition of qualifications is one area that needs to be addressed if qualified Polish teachers are to be employed to teach, for example, short courses at JC level. Currently, a teacher qualified to teach Polish (or any other non-curricular language) at post-primary level is unable to register under Teaching Council Regulation 4 (which refers to post-primary level) because Polish is not a “curricular” subject.³⁷

Recommendation:

24. The Teaching Council should consider redefining the terms “curricular” and “non-curricular” as they are used within their Registration Regulations. After all, these “non-curricular” languages already receive institutional support in the form of an LC examination. An extension of this support to allow teachers to register in the manner appropriate to their profession would be a positive step forward.

The DES published its literacy and numeracy (LaN) strategy in 2011.³⁸ The LaN Strategy makes a number of important points in respect of L1 maintenance and its impact on literacy and numeracy development. It calls for mandatory pre-service modules for all teachers to enable them to address the literacy and numeracy needs of students whose L1 is not English/Irish. Furthermore, it recommends that teachers should upskill in the areas of literacy and numeracy assessment, monitoring and recording.³⁹

Recommendation:

³⁷ See The Teaching Council [Registration] Regulations (200: 13-15)

³⁸ *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life. The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People. 2011-2020.* See:

https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/lit_num_strategy_full.pdf

³⁹ DES (2011: 69)

25. Ensure that there is mandatory CPD for all teachers, both at pre- and in-service levels, that enables them to address the literacy and numeracy needs of pupils and students for whom English/Irish is not their L1.

Finally, ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the teaching staff of schools. There should also be materials available in schools to reflect the diversity of L1s in the pupil cohort.

Recommendations:

26. Recognise the teaching qualifications of native speakers of other languages in order to enable them to teach in Irish schools

27. Provide a diversity of materials in the classroom that reflect the L1s of the pupils in the classroom

5. Assessment and Qualifications

How can enhanced flexibility, choice and continuity in foreign language learning programmes, their assessment and accreditation be provided, particularly at Further and Higher Education?

6. Assuring Quality

What measures should be in place to support quality assurance measures, evaluation processes and research projects and to provide a knowledge and evidence base for policy making in the area of foreign languages?

7. Supporting Multilingualism in Business and Society

How can we promote a multilingual society and support service providers, both public and private, in meeting emerging needs?

a) What role can the education system play?

- b) *What role can employers play in enhancing the linguistic skills of their employees, particularly their Irish employees?*

8. Other Comments

Please add any other comments you may have below that you believe are relevant to the development of the Strategy.

We recommend ongoing research on the complementary school sector in Ireland. In particular, it would be pivotal to find out more about how these schools function to provide 'safe spaces' for the expression of cultural and linguistic identity, how they draw on cultural and linguistic capital to maintain community cohesion, how the children themselves view the schools and their positioning within them as sites of cultural and linguistic transmission, and how the schools are viewed within the mainstream culture. All these questions and more currently remain unanswered in Irish education.

Recommendation:

28. Commission and fund research on the complementary school sector in Ireland

There are approximately 200 different languages spoken in Ireland nowadays, and this is well-reflected in the diverse pupil profiles in many schools. However, the actual number of children involved is unknown. This is due to the fact that schools are not required to collect data on the L1s of the pupils in their care. This should be rectified as soon as possible.

Recommendation:

29. Instruct school management to collect data on the L1(s) of the pupils in their schools

Finally, we would strongly recommend that the Policy Development Team consider as a central concern the issue of L1 maintenance and the development of bilingual abilities. We, as a team, are well-placed, due to our acquired knowledge and research experience, both previous and current, to discuss this issue. This would offer distinct advantages for policy purposes and provide much-needed support and benefits in turn for the individual and for society as a whole.

Should the Policy Development Team so wish, we would be more than happy to meet in order to discuss further the benefits of multilingualism, L1 maintenance and international experience in these fields.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to make this submission.

Submission to the Department of Education and Skills on its Foreign Languages in Education Strategy.
Consultation carried out in the Polish community and others concerned with migrant education in Ireland.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this template. Your feedback will help to inform the development of the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy

Please email this template to foreignlanguages@education.gov.ie , or post it to: Tim O'Keeffe, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1