

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: University of Ulster</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 28A Modern Languages and Linguistics – Celtic Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study: Language Policy and Planning in Northern Ireland</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research carried out within the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute has had a direct impact upon government policy in Northern Ireland and has led to major benefits for the community. Our research into language rights, language and identity, the Irish language in Northern Ireland and minority languages in general has underpinned our collaboration with government in the development of language policy. This collaboration has resulted in our participation in a thorough examination of education through the medium of Irish: <i>Review of Irish-Medium Education (RIME)</i> and our development of a comprehensive languages strategy for Northern Ireland: <i>Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (NILS)</i>. The implementation by government of the recommendations contained in these reports has impacted significantly on the community. Major impact will be demonstrated in the area of education, in particular Irish-Medium education (IME), but also in relation to the business sector and social cohesion.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>A significant body of practical and theoretical research in the area of language policy and planning has been developed over many years within the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute. The publications of Nic Craith, Mac Mathúna, Ó Corráin and de Brún in the area of minority languages, language politics, language rights and linguistic identity, and research developed in a number of published doctoral theses on language conflict and migrant languages have directly influenced our recommendations to government. Indeed, the above research led directly to our being invited by government to participate in the review of Irish-Medium education and to develop a comprehensive languages strategy for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>De Brún was invited to join the group which authored the <i>Review of Irish-Medium Education</i> because his research into how the Irish language fared in Northern Ireland prior to 1972 had a significant impact on the thinking behind the establishment of the review: “Dr de Brún was appointed to the Project Board on the strength of his published research into the history of the Irish language and of the historical and cultural background to the development of Irish-medium education.” (Corroborating statement from Eve Stewart, Head of Irish Medium and Integrated Education, Department of Education for NI). De Brún’s research (in particular 2006) highlighted the failure of statutory agencies in Northern Ireland to engage fully with the Irish-medium education sector, not having appreciated its significance as a progressive movement for cultural and social regeneration. This was a vital contribution to establishing the context for the Review, namely the need to address a deficiency in public policy towards the Irish language. Accordingly, one of the Review’s key recommendations proposed that the Department of Education should “ensure that Irish-medium education is considered systemically throughout policy development” (See <i>Review of Irish-Medium Education Report</i> p.xxi). Acting directly on this recommendation, the Minister for Education established a Standing Group on Irish-Medium Education chaired at under-secretary level and all policy branches are now required ‘to ensure that Irish-medium education is embedded in the policy development process from the outset’ (see evidence base: DE Action Plan 2012, p.28,29).</p> <p>In relation to <i>Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy (NILS)</i>, as a statement from the Department of Education who commissioned the strategy, says: “The Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute at the University of Ulster led by Professor Ó Corráin has a strong record of research in languages and identity, the Irish language in Northern Ireland and minority languages in general and this research underpinned the findings of the Strategy and made a particularly important contribution to those sections which examine the position of Irish within the community and explore social integration and mutual understanding” (Corroborating statement from Russel Welsh, Head of Curriculum Development, Department of Education).</p>

The research carried out by Nic Craith (2003, 2006, 2010) on the importance of official status for languages underpinned our recommendations to government, in particular the recommendation that the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages must be fully implemented in Northern Ireland (see NILS pp. 55, 57, 59); and research carried out by an ICSRI doctoral student and subsequently published, *Migrant Languages in the Public Space: A Case Study from Northern Ireland* (McDermott, 2011) underpinned our recommendations on immigrant languages (NILS p. 58).

This underpinning research is distilled into *Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy* (NILS) published by the Department of Education (DENI) in 2012. The Strategy, which was launched by the Minister for Education on 16 November 2012 (minister's speech at <http://news.ulster.ac.uk/podcasts/ODowd.mp3>), provides a comprehensive investigation of the current state of languages in Northern Ireland and makes 39 recommendations as to how languages can be promoted as a key skill for life, within the educational sector, within the business sector and as an important element of social cohesion. The immediate research contained in the report was carried out between 2006 and 2011 by Ó Corráin (ICSRI, University of Ulster), Gillespie (University of Ulster) and Johnston (QUB). Our final recommendations were underpinned by research into public attitudes towards languages, information being gathered by means of public consultations with stakeholders and key interest groups (see NILS pp. 74-77), and through questionnaires placed on the NILS website (the main questionnaire being made available in 15 different languages). In total, 1,402 questionnaires were completed, providing quantitative and qualitative information used in the strategy. This public-focussed research was published in our report, a key finding being that a large majority of respondents are in favour of language learning commencing within the educational system at as young an age as possible (NILS p. 14) with strong support being expressed for the introduction of modern languages into the primary curriculum (NILS p. 20).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

As evidence for the quality of the underpinning research, it can be indicated that Mac Mathúna, Nic Craith, Ó Corráin and de Brún were entered in our Celtic Studies submission for the 2008 RAE when 100% of our output was graded as internationally recognised and 75% was deemed world-leading or internationally excellent.

- Ó Corráin, Ailbhe and S. Mac Mathúna (eds.) (1998) *Minority Languages in Scandinavia Britain and Ireland*, Studia Celtica Upsaliensia 3, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensia, Uppsala, 220 pp.
- Mac Mathúna, S. (1999) 'Irish as a Minority Language', in *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Celtic Studies*, Volume One, edited by Ronald Black, William Gillies, Roibeard Ó Maolaligh, Tuckwell Press, East Lothian, Scotland.
- Nic Craith, Máiréad (2003) *Culture and Identity Politics in Northern Ireland*. Palgrave, Macmillan. 248 pp. ISBN 9780333793862
- Nic Craith, Máiréad (2006) *Europe and the Politics of Language: Citizens, Migrants and Outsiders*. Palgrave Macmillan. 260 pp. ISBN 978-1-4039-1833-8
- de Brún, Fionntán, ed. (2006) *Belfast and the Irish Language*. Four Courts Press. ISBN 1-85182-939-3
- Ó Corráin, Ailbhe (2009) 'Identity as a Cognitive Code: The Northern Irish Paradigm'. In *Cultural Identities and National Borders* ed. Mats Andrén, Thomas Lindqvist, Ingmar Söhrman, Katharina Vajta, Centre for European Research, Gothenburg, pp. 35-48 ISBN 978-91-89608-24-0
- Nic Craith, Máiréad (2010) 'Linguistic Heritage and Language Rights in Europe: Theoretical Considerations'. In *Cultural Diversity, Heritage and Human Rights*. Eds: Langfeld, Michele, Logan, William and Nic Craith, Máiréad, Routledge, pp. 45-62. ISBN 978-0-415-56367-3
- Gillespie, J., D. Johnston and A. Ó Corráin, (2012) *Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy*, Department of Education NI, Belfast, 90 pp.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

A number of key recommendations made in the *Review of Irish-Medium Education* have been implemented by government, resulting in significant benefits for the Irish-speaking community. As indicated above (see underpinning research), acting directly on Recommendation 21, the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) has established a Standing Group on Irish-Medium Education chaired at under-secretary level and all policy branches are now required to make sure that Irish-medium education is embedded in the policy development process from the outset (see Irish Medium Education DE Action Plan 2012, pp.27-8).

Recommendations that additional resources be made available to the IME sector have resulted in CCEA receiving over £1 million to devote specifically to the Irish Medium sector (See DE Action Plan 2012, p.17). As a result of the report's recommendations, £152k funding has been made available for the Irish-language youth sector (See DE Action Plan 2012, p.17), staff within the ICSRI have delivered specialised language training to IME youth workers, and the number of Irish-medium youth groups/clubs has increased considerably as a result. Our recommendations have also led to bursaries of up to £2000 being provided for teachers in IME schools to take up places on MA courses in Irish (See DE Action Plan 2012, p.13) and a significant number of teachers have availed of the bursaries provided to enrol on the MA in Irish at the University of Ulster. The recommendation that teacher training for IME teachers should include a compulsory period of study in the Gaeltacht (Recommendation 14.iii) has led to DE funding Gaeltacht courses for PGCE students. Deficiencies in the provision of training for IME schools identified in the review (see Recommendation 14) have been addressed in a number of key areas, for example through the funding of increased PGCE places for post-primary and accredited training for pre-school teachers (see DE Action Plan 2012, pp. 11-17).

Department of Education policy on funded pre-school provision has been revised in the light of Recommendation 2, and registered Irish-medium providers with sufficient children will now receive funding even where English-medium provision is available in the area (DE Action Plan p.1). Measures have also been taken to ensure sustainable provision in the IME sector (Recommendations 6-10). Most notably, area-based planning and federated leadership models have been implemented, sub-standard accommodation is being replaced and, where required, new accommodation provided as part of DE annual major/minor works programmes (see DE Action Plan pp. 3-7).

Key recommendations contained in *Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy* (NILS) have also been implemented and are having a substantial effect upon the community in Northern Ireland. Government has made NILS available on the Department of Education website and encouraged all schools in Northern Ireland to download it (see http://www.deni.gov.uk/languages_for_the_future.pdf).

As a result of Recommendation 1.3 (NILS p. 13), a Northern Ireland Languages Council Steering Committee was established (April 2013) with support from the Department of Education. The steering committee is tasked with establishing a NI Languages Council to provide an umbrella organisation for stake holders, provide advice on language matters and oversee the implementation of the NI Languages Strategy. Twenty organisations were represented at the launch of the Steering Committee, including representatives from the business sector, community organisations and the education sector (see Sources to corroborate: NILS website). Ó Corráin, one of the co-authors of *Languages for the Future: Northern Ireland Languages Strategy* is a member of the NI Languages Council Steering Committee. Government has given its support to our recommendation that learning opportunities for sign languages should be improved (Recommendation 3.2, NILS p. 31, see also discussion p. 60 and Recommendation 9.3 p. 61), and in 2012, with the support of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and DENI, a new Sign Language Interpreter Course was established at Belfast Metropolitan College (See evidence base).

Following our recommendations that steps be taken to vigorously promote our indigenous languages (Recommendations 11.1 and 11.2, p.63), the Minister for Education announced (3 October 2012) that he was providing £230,000 in funding to support programmes to encourage children, parents and the wider community to develop their Irish language skills (see corroborating statement from Russel Welsh, Head of Curriculum Development DENI); and DCAL is now preparing a consultative document containing proposals for the development of

specific strategies for the promotion of Irish and Ulster Scots (Sources to corroborate 4). The Department of Education has also extended its Primary Languages Programme (NILS Recommendation 2.3) to include the teaching of Polish along with Irish and Spanish at primary level (evidence base). The Department of Education is now promoting languages in pre-primary provision (Recommendation 2.2) and in keeping with Recommendation 3.1, schools are now being encouraged to widen their curriculum to include Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), i.e. the teaching of other subjects and topics through a new language. Government has also acted on our recommendation that non-traditional languages be promoted (Recommendation 3.3) and, with the support of both the Northern Ireland and Chinese governments, the Confucius Institute was launched at the University of Ulster and courses in Chinese established (see <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/confucius/launch.php>).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-de/news-de-190912-odowd-presented-with.htm>

<http://news.ulster.ac.uk/podcasts/ODowd.mp3>.

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-de/news-de-031012-odowd-announces-funding.htm>

www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/language-cultural-diversity-r08/consultation-on-the-strategy-for-protecting-and-enhancing-the-development-of-the-irish-language.htm

www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/nils/

http://www.deni.gov.uk/de_newsletter_jan_2007.pdf

Report on Political Monitoring (NI Assembly) – Meeting of the Employment and Learning Committee, QUB (October 19, 2011). Available from University of Ulster Press Office.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Employment-and-Learning/Minutes/Template11/>

http://www.deni.gov.uk/85-schools/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/schools_-_types_of_school-irish-medium_schools_pg/16_schools-types_of_schools-reviewofime_pg.htm

http://www.deni.gov.uk/review_of_irish-medium_education_report_english_pdf_.pdf