

Language Teacher Education in Ireland, North and South: Policy, provision, practice, and implications

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Abstract

The European Union considers modern languages among the basic skills or key competencies required by all its citizens and is concerned to promote excellence in the teaching and learning of languages as well as greater diversity in the range of languages available to learners in the Member States, as witnessed by the recent European Commission Action Plan, Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006. This consideration, the changing socio-cultural demography of Ireland, the need for more joined-up thinking in the context of language teaching in schools, and in the context of language teacher education in particular, form the back-drop to this paper. Among the challenges facing modern/world languages' education in Ireland identified in the paper are, lack of a languages' policy, lack of a languages' strategy, and lack of an integrated language curriculum and by implication, lack of a coherent, whole school approach to language teaching and learning. The paper refers to positive signs that are occurring in this context as well, e.g. official recognition to Irish as a working language in the European Union and in the Official Languages Act in Ireland (2003). The paper reports on the recent first ever all Ireland cross-border conference in the context of language teacher education. It outlines the background, aims, and content of the conference, and includes findings from a study about the impact of autonomous language teaching and learning supported by the European Language Portfolio in the context of post-primary teacher education in Ireland. The paper shows data from the first ever survey on language teacher education provision, policy and practice across primary and post-primary teacher education colleges in Ireland, North and South. The paper is timely as initial teacher education is on the cusp of change, e.g. from September 2014 the Professional Diploma in Education will have been replaced by the Professional Master of Education, a two-year full-time program. The paper has implications for Irish as well as international readers, and aims to support anyone wanting to bring about improvement in this important area.

Keywords: pre-service language teacher education; All Ireland context; multicultural; Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS)

The Background

Modern Languages (ML) education, including Irish, in Ireland North and South, constantly alternates between states of concern and optimism. The take-up of languages in UK schools has fluctuated over the years, but the trend on the whole is downwards. Post-primary study of languages flourished for a while with the introduction of compulsory languages at Key Stages 3 and 4 in the National Curriculum in Britain and the Northern Ireland curriculum (1988, 1989 respectively), but the introduction of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum in September 2007 makes ML optional at Key Stage 4 (age 14-16), and is likely to affect adversely the numbers of pupils choosing language study, as has been the case in Britain, where ML numbers have fallen off alarmingly since KS4 languages became optional in 2002 (CILT, 2006). In Britain, languages in the primary school have been promoted in recent years in order to offset this trend and motivate pupils through an early start in languages, but this may be placing too great a burden of expectancy on the primary sector. Nevertheless, the growing support for languages in primary school is important and will develop.

The Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative (MLPSI) and the Post-Primary Languages Initiative in the Republic of Ireland have done much to increase diversification of provision (Post-Primary Languages Project, online; NCCA Primary Languages, online) but also raise the question of the relationship between English, Irish, and Foreign Languages in provision. Sadly, MLPSI has now ceased due to lack of funding. Diversification in Modern Languages in the post-primary sector has also been an area of focus in Northern Ireland (Neil & McKendry, 2006). The requirement of a modern language for matriculation to the National University of Ireland ensures the numbers of pupils choosing to study a ML to Leaving Certificate (18+) level, where French remains the most commonly learnt language. However, there is no guarantee that the requirement of a modern language for matriculation will continue. Indeed, signs are not good.

The traditional view of diversification, focusing on Irish and the main European and world languages, must, however, be reconsidered in light of the new demography and linguistic landscape of Ireland, North and South, with the recent influx of large numbers of immigrants and workers speaking languages not traditionally offered in our schools, and in light of increased levels of international travel, business and, in more recent days, emigration. There is lack of a clear policy with regard to the introduction of new languages to the curriculum in the Republic of Ireland that has led to a haphazard rather than a planned approach (Little, 2003). In recent years syllabi have been introduced for Russian, Arabic, and Japanese, and one for Chinese is soon to be introduced. Several primary and post-primary schools in Ireland already offer short courses in Chinese to their students. Current junior cycle reform in Irish post-primary education offers much potential. Several questions, however, arise in this context: should the junior cycle focus on supporting pupils in developing their common identity as Irish and European citizens at this level, and leave it until senior cycle for them to learn non-European languages? Or, should a variety of short language courses be introduced in junior cycle and in Transition Year in non-traditional foreign languages, (e.g. Chinese, Arabic)? Can these short courses be offered in ways that do not affect adversely the learning of European languages? What are the implications for teacher education? There is greater linguistic diversity across the island of Ireland today than ever before, and the need for Irish people to learn foreign languages for purposes of travel, business, or emigration has never been greater. These realities present challenges that need to be taken on board in the context of any decision about the introduction of new languages to the curriculum. In addition, education providers need to support all teachers in addressing the needs of English language learners (ELLs), (e.g. the School of Education at the National University of Ireland, Galway, offers input in pre-service teacher education in this context).

The increasing linguistic awareness among the general population is welcome. Allied to this is the long overdue recognition in 2007 of Irish as a working language in the European Union and the Official Languages Act in the Republic (2003), both of which are essential moves towards normalizing the situation of the language. A comparative overview of national language policies internationally would also be welcome and informative. Recent years have seen the emergence of Language Strategies in these islands. Strategies have been produced for England and Wales, while Scotland is focusing on the Curriculum for Excellence. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland has launched a Northern Ireland Languages Strategy while the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) intends to present a Strategy for Indigenous or Regional Minority Languages to the Northern Ireland Executive in due course (DCAL, online). The Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the Republic of Ireland has recently launched a consultation process for a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy for the Republic of Ireland and the Strategy that is due to be completed by summer 2015. Allied to these developments are the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Primary, Junior and Senior Cycle reviews in the Republic, with their respective demands on teachers and teacher educators. In addition, The Teaching Council in the Republic of Ireland and the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland were established in recent years, and they accredit all teacher education programs in their respective jurisdictions.

These issues should all be considered in the broad context of recent developments at national and European level in the area of language policy, provision and support. The European Union considers modern languages among the basic skills or key competencies required by all its citizens and is concerned to promote excellence in the teaching and learning of languages as well as greater diversity in the range of languages available to learners in the Member States, as witnessed by the recent European Commission Action Plan, *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*.

The Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS) Project

Section II of the Commission's Action Plan report discusses *Better Language Teaching* and devotes its Paragraph 3 to Language Teacher Training, where it notes,

Language teachers may often feel isolated, unaware of developments elsewhere with the potential to improve their work; they may not have access to adequate professional support networks; it is therefore important to facilitate contacts and effective networks between them at a regional, national and European level.

(European Commission, 2003)

With this in mind, the authors applied for and received funding from SCoTENS to organize a conference in Queen's University Belfast of language teacher educators, primary and post-primary, from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, in collaboration with NICILT, the Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, housed in the School of Education QUB. NICILT also serves as a resource and support centre for students on the Modern Languages' PGCE in QUB, the only post-primary PGCE for Modern Languages in Northern Ireland. Its sister organizations in Great Britain form the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT) UK partnership, in particular that of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT) in London, the UK government's recognized centre of expertise on languages at all levels, which includes teacher education. The conference took place in QUB the 13 and 14 November 2009.

A particular aim of the conference was to network and encourage collaboration among the varied sectors represented: North/South; Primary/Post-Primary; Irish/Modern Languages; English/Modern Languages/English as an Additional Language. The primary teacher education institutions in the Republic catering for Irish (Coláiste Phádraig Drumcondra, Marino, Mary Immaculate, Froebel) collaborate regularly through LMTG (Léachtoirí le Múineadh/Teagasc na Gaeilge) to develop resources and expertise for Irish. The SCoTENS conference presented an opportunity to widen and develop this approach. Modern Languages in Northern Ireland includes Irish, while a curricular distinction is made in the Republic between Irish and Modern Languages. A more integrated approach that involved a combining of resources and objectives across all languages, including English (Literacy) and English as an Additional Language was a key aim of the conference.

An Integrated Overview

The primary aim of the conference was to bring together Initial Teacher Educators from Ireland, north and south, from the various sectors: primary, post-primary/secondary, foreign languages, and Irish. The growing awareness of multiple literacies to include English as mother tongue and English as an additional language (EAL) is also recognized. 'Integrated Overviews' of languages education in the two jurisdictions were given in the first session of the conference, and these were followed by guest plenary sessions, and input from individual institutions.

Plenary Presentations

Language Education in Northern Ireland

Eugene McKendry of Queen's University Belfast gave an overview of languages in Northern Ireland. The retention of the post-primary Grammar/Secondary divide meant that languages were traditionally seen as grammar school subjects until the 'Languages for All' movement of the 1980s, although Irish was commonly taught in Maintained Secondary schools before this. Languages became compulsory for all pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 from 1992 under the Northern Ireland Curriculum, leading to a rise in the numbers of pupils taking GCSE towards the end of the 1990s. Under curriculum review, however, languages became optional at Key Stage 4 from 2007. Not surprisingly, the numbers taking languages are now dropping. French is still the most widely learnt language, although a policy of diversification from the 1980s has reduced its percentage. Irish is currently holding its position despite the particularity that schools must provide another language before offering Irish. This has

meant that with pressure on staff and pupils many Maintained Catholic secondary schools, particularly smaller ones, have had to drop Irish from their provision. Take-up of Spanish has markedly increased due to strong marketing and a positive popular perception. German is losing its popularity and the recent closure of the German department in QUB is likely to reinforce this trend. There is a current strategy to promote primary languages in the United Kingdom. Since 2010, all KS2 pupils in England have been entitled to study a foreign language.

In Northern Ireland local promotion of primary languages has been delegated to the Education and Library Boards. The main focus in this regard is on a peripatetic project for Spanish. The project now includes Irish and, towards the goal of inclusivity, Polish for local children.

The idea of an integrated view of languages provision would cover lifelong language learning, from the cradle to the grave, as promoted in the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme.. An integrated view would also suggest a strategy. As noted above, a Languages Strategy for England was introduced in 2002, and Scotland and Wales have also developed a more strategic approach. Languages for the Future: The Northern Ireland Languages Strategy was launched in September 2012.

Language Education in the Republic of Ireland

Jacinta McKeon of University College Cork focused on language education at post-primary level in the Republic of Ireland where Modern Languages and Irish are seen as two distinct curricular areas. She presented the current situation in modern languages and Irish, discussing policy, uptake, syllabus and assessment. The current situation of modern languages and Irish at primary level was also discussed. The final section of the paper summarized current issues and challenges.

In post-primary, a Modern Language is not a requirement. As Irish is not defined as a Modern Language it has its own classification of being compulsory up to Leaving Certificate. The National University of Ireland's Modern Language requirement for matriculation is seen as vital to maintaining the numbers studying a ML to Leaving Certificate level. French is by far the most commonly learnt language. The Leaving Certificate statistics for 2009 show that 78% of students studied a ML: 56% opted for French, 15% for German, 6% for Spanish, 1.5% for Italian and other languages. Recent trends have shown only slight fluctuation in the languages chosen.

The Post-Primary Languages Initiative encourages greater diversification, with Russian, Japanese, and Arabic offered. The Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative introduced MLs into many primary schools alongside Irish. However, as has already been noted this Initiative has ceased. However, more recently, some schools have, on their own initiative, introduced Chinese (e.g. primary school in the Claddagh, Galway).

The changing characteristics of learners in a more multicultural environment have brought greater attention to the needs of those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Many pupils are also recognized as having special or additional needs. The level of proficiency attained in language learning in general is a matter of concern, particularly with Irish. The lack of an integrated languages policy is a cause for concern. The current consultation on developing a Strategy in the Republic of Ireland deals with foreign languages but unfortunately does not include Irish or English.

The European Language Portfolio and student teachers

Patrick Farren of NUI Galway presented his PhD research on *The European Language Portfolio in Pre-Service Teacher Education: reflection, interaction and autonomy* (Farren, 2008). The study involved student teachers, supported by their educators (methodologist, supervisors, mentors and target language tutors) making use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) as a process tool in the context of teaching in the post-primary classroom. The study examines what educators, student teachers and post-primary pupils believed was the impact of autonomous teaching and learning, supported by the ELP. The findings were as follows:

- Autonomous teaching was understood to involve a more cooperative teaching and learning approach that is aimed at supporting pupils in accepting responsibility for learning.
- Autonomous learning supported pupils in developing self-confidence and the capacity to accept responsibility for learning that was linked to target language use.
- Educators supported student-teachers in developing self-awareness and self-confidence. Collaboration in Year 2 between mentors and student teachers in making use of the ELP was seen as helpful by student-teachers.]
- Negotiation between student teachers and pupils supported the development of pupils' self-motivation, and self-confidence, and led to an enhanced capacity to accept responsibility for learning. Pair-work helped pupils to develop target language proficiency.
- In general, the ELP was found to be a useful reflective framework that supported pupils in making decisions about their learning. The process supported them in developing more positive attitudes, and the capacity to accept responsibility for learning. Growth in pupils' metacognitive capacity was seen by educators to be a gradual process.

- Use of the ELP in the context of the student teachers' pedagogical project supported student teachers and pupils in accepting responsibility for expressing their own meanings in the target language.
- Writing critical reflections supported student teachers in their teaching, e.g. in clarifying what they were teaching, and in evaluating practice.
- Formative assessment, e.g. pupils self-assessing with reference to 'I can' checklists contained in the ELP, supported pupils in developing their capacity to accept responsibility for language learning. Pressure from inappropriate, external examinations hinders autonomous teaching and learning.
- The particular ELP model used in this study, developed by the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College, Dublin, would need to be made more user-friendly if it is to find general acceptance among teachers and pupils.

Patrick believes that a user-friendly, digital ELP would support a more integrated approach to the teaching, learning and assessment of all languages on the curriculum, as well as support intercultural understanding.

The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)

Dr Barry Jones, of Homerton College Cambridge, spoke on the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), a document for students undergoing Initial Teacher Education. EPOSTL encourages students to reflect on their didactic knowledge and the skills necessary to teach languages. They are helped to assess their own didactic competences and enabled to monitor their progress and to record their experiences of teaching during the course of their teacher education. The main aims of the EPOSTL are as follows:

- to encourage student teachers to reflect on the competences a teacher strives to attain and on the underlying knowledge which feeds these competences
- to help prepare them for their future profession in a variety of teaching contexts to promote discussion between student teachers and their peers and with their teacher educators and mentors
- to facilitate self-assessment of their developing competence
- to provide an instrument which helps chart progress.

ICT and the New Teacher

Edmund Ellison, a recent graduate of the QUB Modern Languages PGCE and currently following a Masters degree course on Educational Multimedia in QUB, gave a presentation on 'ICT and the Beginning Teacher', presenting current approaches to integrating ICT with ML teaching with illustrations from his ict4mfl website, supporting Irish teachers and students using multimedia resources.

Delegate Input

The organizers drew up a list of the institutions in their respective jurisdictions that provide initial teacher education for languages. While only QUB and its constituent colleges, Stranmillis and St. Mary's College, and the Open University deal directly with language teacher education in Northern Ireland, there are many more institutions in the Republic that provide language teacher education.

Modern languages ITE courses in the Republic of Ireland

Primary

Trinity College, Dublin.

BEd Primary

The degree of Bachelor in Education (BEd) is a professional degree that is intended to provide for the academic and professional requirements of primary school teachers. Until recently it was taught jointly by the School of Education in TCD and three associated Colleges of Education – the Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, the Froebel College of Education, Sion Hill, Blackrock, and Coláiste Mhuire, Marino. However, major structural changes have taken place in the last few years. However, NUI Maynooth recently established a "Froebel Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education" offers a B.Ed. degree . Since September 2010, incoming students of Froebel College have been accredited by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Marino Institute of Education is an associated college of Trinity College Dublin. Most degree and diploma programmes at Marino Institute are validated by TCD. TCD and the Christian Brothers are co-trustees of the Institute.

The incorporation of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and the Church of Ireland College of Education, Rathmines, into a new Institute incorporated into Dublin City University, was announced in June 2014. Mary Immaculate College is a Catholic teacher education college that is linked to the University of Limerick.

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	BEd; GradDipED
St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra	BEd; GradDipEd

Post-Primary

PME: Professional Master of Education (since 2014) formerly known as the Professional Diploma in Education.

MGO: Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (since 2014, and formerly known as the Dioplóma Gairmiúil san Oideachas (DGO), to cater for Gaeltacht and Gaelscoileanna education.

University College Cork	PME from 2014
University College Dublin	PME from 2014
NUI Galway	PME/MGO from 2014
NUI Maynooth	PME from 2014
Trinity College Dublin	PME from 2014
Dublin City University	PME from 2014
University of Limerick	PME from 2014
St. Angela's College, Sligo	PME from 2014 (Home Economics and Irish, post-primary)

Modern languages ITE courses in Northern Ireland

St. Mary's University College	BA, BEd Primary
St. Mary's University College	PGCE Primary (Irish-Medium)
Stranmillis University College	BEd Primary
Queen's University Belfast	PGCE Post-Primary
Open University	PGCE Post-Primary

PGCE/TICO, Irish-Medium Post Primary

In response to the demand for subject, specific teachers in the growing Irish medium post-primary sector, St Mary's University College, Queen's University Belfast (QUB), and the University of Ulster (UU) have formed a partnership to offer a one year PGCE/TICO (Teastas Iarchéime san Oideachas) programme to students interested in becoming teachers in Irish medium secondary education (IME). Additional places have been added to the PGCE intakes for QUB and UU ((currently four each) specifically for those applicants who wish to teach in this sector. Applicants apply to do their PGCE with either QUB or UU depending on their subject specialism, and St Mary's coordinates the Irish medium immersion element of the course. On completion of the course, these students will be awarded a Certificate in Bilingual Education from St Mary's University College in addition to their PGCE qualification from QUB or UU.

Delegate Input

All institutions were invited to complete a questionnaire prior to attending in order to supply basic data and allow information to be collected from institutions that were unable to send representatives. Contact has been made with the Open University's Modern Languages' coordinator based in England since the conference, and future collaboration has been assured. Questionnaire returns were received from all institutions except one. A representative from all these institutions was able to attend and present their ML course, except DCU and St. Angela's College, Sligo, and fortunately these institutions provided valuable information in their responses to the

questionnaire. The information contained in responses to the questionnaire and power-point presentations were very rich, covering linguistic and pedagogic aims, course structures and provision, and research.

Summary Analysis

A range of pre-service initial primary and post-primary teacher education programs are offered in both jurisdictions, both concurrent (undergraduate degrees) and consecutive (postgraduate certificates and diplomas).

All programs are subject to the regulations and accreditation of their respective teaching councils, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland and the Teaching Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta. The courses are organized in different ways across institutions. It is hoped that details on provision will be published on the NICILT website and in future publications.

Irish in the Republic

The main difference between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in language education is the provision for Irish in schools and teacher education in the Republic, where all pre-service primary teacher education programs offer Irish and its methodologies to all students. Various modes and patterns of teaching and learning are adopted in the various institutions: lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials, conversation groups, etc. There is a distinction between Academic Irish (Gaeilge Acadúil) as a specialist subject and Professional Irish (Gaeilge Ghairmiúil) for all primary student teachers. Teaching approaches are catered for to various degrees, as are literature, culture, conversation, etc. Some courses include immersion courses in the Gaeltacht. Some institutions provide for Irish as a first language (NUIG, Coláiste Phádraig elective), and cater for Gaeltacht and Gaelscoil education. Irish is also compulsory in post-primary education in the Republic of Ireland, and this is reflected in the post-primary teacher education provision.

Languages Offered

Primary

Some institutions in the Republic of Ireland provided support for modern languages as well as Irish, in primary schools, particularly French and German in the context of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, which introduced French, German, Italian, and Spanish to fifth and sixth classes. However, as noted, this Initiative has ceased.

St Mary's University College in Belfast focuses on Irish-medium education but also supports Irish in English-medium schools in its BEd Primary course. Stranmillis University College Belfast offers a twelve week language module, 4 hours per week, in its Year 4 BEd Primary course. Staff expertise covers French, German and Spanish.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum encourages primary schools to teach languages beyond English and Irish in Irish-medium schools. A website for primary languages has been developed by CCEA (the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment) on the curriculum website. The Department of Education (NI) introduced the Primary Languages Program, providing peripatetic support for primary schools wishing to deliver Spanish, then Irish and, more recently, Polish at Key Stage 1. CCEA and the Education and Library Boards currently provide most teacher support and training for primary languages in Northern Ireland.

Post-Primary

In post-primary education in the Republic, a Modern Language is not a curricular requirement although Irish is compulsory up to Leaving Certificate. From 2000 the Post-Primary Languages Initiative sought to diversify the teaching of languages in second level schools in the Republic, with Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Russian as the target languages. More recently, Chinese has been introduced in some schools in Transition Year, and has been offered in the Junior Certificate examination from 2014. No official rationale for the selection of foreign languages has been offered.

The original Northern Ireland Curriculum (1989) required post-primary schools to offer one of French, German, Spanish or Italian. They could then offer Irish as well to fulfill the statutory requirements for Modern Languages. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 now requires 'Any official language of the European Union (other than English and, in Irish speaking schools, Irish).' Since September 2007 a language is no longer compulsory at Key Stage 4 (age 14-16), which will affect the number of student teachers admitted to the Modern Languages PGCE in the future. The Queen's University Belfast Modern Languages PGCE makes specialist provision for French, German, Irish and Spanish.

School Experience and Supervision

All student teachers gain practical experience in the classroom during their teacher education program through school placements. NUI Galway moved to a 'block' only model in 2011. From 2014 teacher education programs offer student placements in two different types of school (Vocational/Comprehensive/Community/Secondary).

The Teaching Council of Ireland requires post-primary student teachers spend a minimum number of hours in school. The length of the teaching practice can vary for the different undergraduate years of the BEd. There have been moves to develop a more formal system of mentoring in the context of partnership schools in the context of the PME and MGO.

Target Language Proficiency

Support for the development of student teachers' target language proficiency is central to the undergraduate BEd primary level teaching programs of Irish as an academic subject. Gaeilge Ghairmiúil for all primary student teachers is found in all BEd courses in the Republic. Students on the University of Limerick BA (Education) in Languages taking a language *ab initio* do 6 hours of language per week in first and second year. Students studying a language with Leaving Certificate or equivalent have 4 hours per week.

Postgraduate courses assume that students accepted on the course have achieved a good level of language competence in their undergraduate studies, although some concern was expressed at the language competence of many students, even those who had good honors degrees. Time pressure means that specific language reinforcement or development sessions are not timetabled in all institutions. NUIG timetables one hour per week for part of the year with language tutors drawn from the French, German, Spanish, and Italian departments. All institutions provide support and encourage students to work on their academic language in the university resource centre, language centre or other specialist centre.

All participants saw the need to create conditions that support student teachers in developing target language proficiency. Where appropriate, language specific sessions are conducted in the target language. Micro-teaching sessions support use of the target language in classroom teaching. Feedback on language accuracy is given in all institutions to individual students on university based work, and following observation of lessons on school experience. Gaeltacht courses for students on primary teacher education courses are a valued element. The third year of the BA (Education) in Languages in the University of Limerick is spent abroad in work/academic placements in the countries where the target languages are spoken.

Staff Provision

Full-time members of staff serve the undergraduate courses in all institutions, although the Gaeilge Ghairmiúil staff is particularly stretched in all institutions in the Republic where staff have to cater for the whole primary student body. The modern languages module in Mary Immaculate is delivered by a full-time lecturer, seconded from another area (Microteaching). St Mary's Belfast has seven members of staff including a writing fellow to cover the BEd, BA and PGCE IME primary and post-primary.

QUB post-primary PGCE has one full-time lecturer and teaching fellow, with some tutor support to supervise school experience and guest inputs to the university teaching blocks. At NUIG invited target language post-primary teachers offer several support workshops that complement the methodologies course offered by a full-time member of staff in the context of the PME and MGO. The NUIG methodologist contributes to other areas of education programmes in addition to languages. Not all post-primary education programs in the Irish Republic have full-time methodologists. The methodology input in these areas is supplied by staff members from schools who combine school and university duties.

Conclusion

Participants agreed that the opportunity to confer with colleagues from Ireland, North and South, and across the spectrum of language teacher education, primary and post-primary, had been very valuable. They also agreed that there was the basis in the conference inputs from ITE institutions for ongoing research into the current state of modern language teacher education in Ireland, North and South. Several innovative pedagogical tools, including ICT tools, were examined and were found to support more effective teaching and learning. The conference will hopefully lead to continued effective networking and collaboration. It is worth noting that in October 2014 Network of foreign language post-primary teacher educators, members of which work in six different Irish universities (National University of Ireland, Galway, and Maynooth, University College, Dublin, University College Cork, Trinity College, Dublin, University of Limerick), collaborated in giving a common response to DES's Framework for Consultation on Foreign Languages in Education Strategy for Ireland. Our response suggests the need for a more integrated languages curriculum that includes Irish and English as well as English as an Additional Language in addition to foreign languages.

We have seen that there have been major curriculum and structural changes in teacher education in the Republic of Ireland in recent years. Amalgamations and incorporations have become 'buzz' words. Traditional institutes and colleges are facing harsh economic conditions and changing demographics, and new relationships have been forged between institutions. There is need for openness, transparency, democracy, and equality, and there is of course need for continuous professional development if our common future is to be shaped in a positive way.

The traditional view of diversification, focusing on Irish and the main European must be reconsidered in light of the new demography and linguistic landscape of Ireland, North and South. As already noted a Languages Strategy for England was introduced in 2002, and Scotland and Wales have also developed a more strategic approach Languages for the Future: The Northern Ireland Languages Strategy was launched in September 2012, and a Foreign Languages in Education Strategy for Ireland is expected in summer 2015. It is our hope that language teacher educators from Ireland, North and South, will continue to collaborate and to build bridges between north and south, and east and west, and that each of us will come to appreciate the unique contribution that the other has to offer.

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