



National College of Art and Design

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**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**Essay/Assignment Cover Sheet**

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**Course:** Joint Hons Fine Art and Education

**Submission Date:** 20/12/2024

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**Essay/Assignment title** The under-resourcing of Gaelchólaistí in Ireland.

Criteria	Ex	VG	Good	Fair	Poor	Comment
Introduction (statement of problem, response to task)						
Range and use of appropriate sources						
Development of argument (analysis, interpretation)						
Conclusions (application, findings, outcomes)						
Presentation, language, academic conventions						

Please tick Y/N for Profile of Needs

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**General comment:**

**Indicative grade:**

**Tutor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## The under-resourcing of Gaelchólaistí in Ireland.

*“The kids need a level playing field ...there isn't a level playing field when it comes to resources.” (O’Boyle, 2024)*

The under-resourcing of Irish schools throughout the country is a clear example of where the curriculum has had a socially negative impact in Ireland. Throughout my time as both a student in these schools and completing an eleven week placement there, I have experienced first-hand the continuous under-resourcing of translated books, supplies and learning aids, and a severe lack of advancement of technology and ICT in the classroom. If Gaeilge is one of our national languages, and Gaelcholáistí are expected to offer a high standard of education, while also developing a learners cognitive ability and cultural identity (Anraí, 2019), why is there an obvious disconnect between this rationale and the resources available to Irish-Medium schools?

From personal experience, I have found resourcing within Irish-medium post-primary schools to be of a lower standard than their english-medium counterparts. For example, throughout my time as a student in this setting I can recall multiple instances of subject specific books either not offering an Irish version of current material, or there being no Irish translation available at all. This meant that on top of the work we as students were expected to complete, we often had to translate information ourselves, resulting in possible mistakes or mistranslations that often flew under the radar, putting students at a disadvantage. As a teacher, the effect of this lack of resourcing creates an even more severe burden as myself and colleagues were tasked with creating a variety of necessary resources for our students in order to not only aid their learning, but to enable it through Irish in the first place. This not only adds to educators workloads, but places a great amount of pressure and responsibility upon them as they are now the creator of the material they must provide their students for state examinations. There is a lack of resources, and there is a lack of support for Irish-medium educators. (O’Boyle, 2024)

Take for example the Visual Studies book for the Visual Art curriculum at second level; the current textbook that is encouraged to be followed by the curriculum is Appreciating Art from Gill Education. There is no Irish translation of this book, and students within Gaelcholáistí must rely on the English version and their own, or their teachers' translations. With no agreed vocabulary to rely on, students are at risk of coming across a completely different translation when sitting their exam, which could result in a lesser understanding and a lower grade through no fault of their own. Queen's University Belfast spoke with Irish-medium practitioners and published their findings, highlighting key issues such as the pressure educators face to create accurate material, and the “resource gap” between English-medium and Irish-medium schools throughout the country. Throughout their report the observation of the wealth of information, resources and materials provided to english-medium schools is not available and has never been made available for educators in their departments, these teachers are made to constantly translate, create, alter and edit their lessons, resources and material in their free time in order to offer the best education they can to their students, all while receiving no support, credit or compensation. (O’Boyle, 2024).

This year, Minister Norma Foley was successful in her push to extend the free school books scheme to the senior cycle (Kierans, 2024). This is a positive result in regards to finances and accessibility, however, these books will be those recommended by the school and overarching curricula, which severely lack in Irish-medium books. With no push for these resources to be created and made available, teachers and students remain at a disadvantage and do not avail of this newly acquired resource. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta was established in 2002, and one of their key functions was to plan and coordinate the provision of textbooks and resources through Irish (Ní Dhonnabháin, 2015), and while they provide much needed resources and textbooks to some areas of the curriculum, such as maths and current reading material, they neglect many other subjects, such as practical subjects and other languages. This is a severe downfall on the part of educational bodies and those who create the curriculum considering Irish is our primary national language. A standardised set of curriculum based material and resources which include and provide for Irish-medium learning are necessary for the longevity and sustainability of Irish medium schools for both educators and learners.

Today there is a necessity for learners to be well versed in digital literacy and ICT skills as we enter a predominantly digital age. The long standing debate of whether or not to ban personal devices in the classroom continues to highlight the positives and negatives of their inclusion and exclusion. This argument was reignited with the announcement of phone pouches and locking systems being bought for post-primary schools in the 2025 budget this year (Casey, 2024). This announcement comes with an unspoken expectation that the ICT within schools will be current enough and readily available for students in all schools. While not an exclusive struggle of Irish-medium schools, it is a glaring issue in regard to accessibility to a new aspect of the curriculum, which is increasingly more difficult to access for Gaelcholaistí. Apps, games and websites that are routinely used by students in English-medium schools are unavailable for students who are engaging through Irish, as these resources are not offered as Gaeilge (O'Boyle, 2024). If one was looking for current and engaging games or online activities which are accessible to students in class, and accurate to both language and subject, it is a given that all Irish-medium practitioners would have to create their own, or depend on the good will of fellow educators to have created one prior. This lack of up to date and engaging resourcing puts a strain on educators as they struggle to keep up with not only the demand for resources and material, but also the new demand for digital inclusion and engagement in the classroom, which they must create themselves. This can cause many educators to burnout or place less care into their work and resourcing (O'Boyle, 2024).

*"You are being a translator, you're teaching content and you're teaching language at the same time" (O'Boyle, 2024)*

In conclusion, the under-resourcing of Irish schools throughout Ireland is a clear example of where the curriculum has had a socially negative impact. The lack of institutional support for educators and students alike has created an additional workload for educators within Irish-Medium schools and shifted the responsibilities of creating not only necessary education materials but also new ways of engagement through ICT. The lack of resourcing for Irish-medium schools undermines the country's national effort to preserve and promote its heritage and language (Anraí, 2019).

## Citations:

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