

HITZARGIAK – Languages illuminating each other

Name of the practice: Irish-medium Teacher Education

GENERAL INFORMATION

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2	Language	Irish
3	Working area (education, communication, teaching, leisure, administration...)	Irish-medium Teacher Education. Immersion context
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DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

1	Description of the practices	<p>Irish-medium Initial and Continuing teacher education. St Mary's University College was the first higher educational institution to provide Irish-medium initial teacher education courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level, in September 1996. The Team of Irish-medium Lecturing staff has many years' experience teaching in immersion schools. Staff are also very engaged in research into Irish-medium education and have contributed to key strategic developments in this area.</p> <p>Irish-medium staff collaborate with subject specialists across other curricular areas to ensure an enjoyable and enriching educational experience for our students.</p> <p>Students are supported in developing a high level of fluency and accuracy in Irish and in acquiring an range of teaching strategies appropriate to bilingual education contexts.</p>
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- 2** **Brief description of the practices**
- St Mary's University College is a Higher Education Institution in Belfast, Northern Ireland that specialises in teacher education as well as delivering a Liberal Arts programme. Initial Teacher education for Irish-medium schools was introduced by St Mary's University College in 1995. This initiative was a pioneering development in Ireland. Before this, student teachers for Irish-medium primary schools could only avail of education programmes in English and designed for the English-medium sector. St Mary's has made a unique contribution to Irish-medium Teacher Education.
- The Team of Irish-medium Lecturing staff has many years' experience teaching in immersion schools and has developed a programme that provides specialist teacher education for the Irish-medium primary and also for the post-primary sector. This has involved innovative work in developing a pedagogy that draws upon Content and Language Integrated Learning but also includes an important discrete language learning element. This blend of approaches is underpinned by the principles of immersion education. The Irish-medium provision in St Mary's has been expanded to include Masters Level modules, delivered as part of the Continuing Professional Learning programme for practising teachers, and also includes a dynamic course for Classroom Assistants in Irish-medium schools.
- College staff are also very engaged in research into Irish-medium education and have contributed to key strategic developments in this area. The Irish-medium Research Centre in St Mary's aims to make a valuable contribution to this developing sector. Academic research makes impact through a range of pathways – cultural, resources and services, and quality of educational provision. This work includes research carried out on the early years in Irish-medium schools, research into the various models of Irish-medium provision in Ireland, research on best practice in Irish-medium education. Much of the research to date has had a very practical focus and produced high quality materials for use by Irish-medium teachers.
- The College also produces learning materials for the Irish-medium schools. These resources and materials are produced in the Áisaonad where staff work in partnership with schools to develop high quality books for pupils.
- 3** **Precedents (reasons, needs...)**
- Initial Teacher education for Irish-medium schools was introduced by St Mary's University College in 1995. This initiative was a pioneering development in Ireland. Before this, student teachers for Irish-medium primary schools could only avail of education programmes in English and designed for the English-medium sector.

4	Objectives	To provide teacher education that ensures the development of professional competences and focus on the specific needs of the professional teacher in Irish-medium schools.
5	Main and close working areas	Initial teacher education for undergraduate and postgraduate Irish-medium students; M-level modules for Irish-medium teachers; development of resources for Irish-medium teachers.
6	Collaborating entities and their working areas	Lecturing staff expertise in immersion pedagogies and the principles of Irish-medium education work alongside staff who produce resources and learning materials for pupils.
7	Implementation period	This good practice has been built up in St Mary's University College, Belfast, over the last 20 years with the more recent developments in Teacher Education for postprimary schools.

FILE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

8	Expansion (number of influenced people, internal and external expansion...)	Permanent Staff- 4 Lecturing staff and 5 staff in Resource Centre.
9	Investment (economic, time, people...)	Main costs incurred are staff salaries.
10	Results	Provision of highly competent teachers for Irish-medium schools and excellent resources, e.g. Reading schemes, for immersion context.
11	Documentation, reference material	
12	Presentation video	http://www.smucb.ac.uk/images/pgce/stmarys_pgce_creativity.mp4
13	Other relevant information	