

What are the key challenges in identifying and supporting pupils with dyslexia in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and how might these be overcome?

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Enquiry Overview and Aims

The Aim of my study was to be able to offer practical solutions to overcoming some of the key challenges identified (see below). The focus was particularly important in my local context with the introduction of the 'Gaelic First' policy in 2020 and the shift towards increasing numbers of pupils being taught in GME within CNES. The question of providing equitable support and how we can ensure that pupils with dyslexia are identified and provided with the required support when learning in both Gaelic and English was the focus. A case study was carried out in a local primary/secondary school and included semi-structured interviews with pupils and staff in GME. There were significant challenges experienced in the planning, implementation and feedback stages mainly due to being a supply teacher working in different schools with an irregular work pattern. This made it more difficult to decide on a suitable focus for the study, to get access to talk to staff/pupils and to build trust and relationships within a short time frame.

Collaboration and Impact

My determination and the support of my line manager to facilitate collaboration with ASN and GME staff made the study workable. The staff were involved in shaping the focus of the study after identifying that this is an area that is challenging and were keen to develop their own understanding and professional knowledge in this area. The learning from the study was shared and this included discussing examples of positive practice, suggesting links being made with other local authorities offering GME provision and adapting useful resources currently in Irish Medium Education which could be transferred to GME, for example, questions and answers for families on dyslexia. The short-term impact of the project is the enhanced knowledge of available technology and resources to support pupils and the longer-term impact of the project is in relation to policy change and information being shared with families.



Key Challenges identified

1. Lack of confidence amongst staff in identifying pupils with dyslexia mainly due to knowing whether the challenges faced by the pupils are linked to becoming bilingual in Gaelic and English or a specific learning difficulty.
2. Lack of equivalent resources in Gaelic to support pupils, for example, Dyslexia Gold, Toe by Toe, The Word Whop, Barrington State reading scheme, Storyway to Spelling, Stride Ahead, Discovery online.
3. Uncertainty for parents/carers regarding the support available when choosing GME and whether pupils identified with dyslexia should move to English Medium.

"Don't know how to identify Gaelic in a pupil in GME"
Staff member

"definitely encourage them to stay in Gaelic"
Pupil

"A resource like Dyslexia Gold in Gaelic would be great"
Staff member

"not many Gaelic tests, can go undetected"
Pupil

"not sure if dyslexia or mixing up English and Gaelic"
Staff member

"Better to concentrate on one language"
Staff member

"would be good to free up staff, maybe a secondment to develop Gaelic resources"
Staff member

"I use Word Shark which is really helpful for spelling and reading"
Pupil

My Professional Learning Journey



My professional learning journey began when my son started attending GME and I became aware, both on a personal and professional level, of some of the issues being raised by other parents/carers in relation to dyslexia identification and support. In particular, concerns were expressed that the experience for pupils with dyslexia in GME was not equitable with English Medium. My learning has been influenced by critically reflecting on literature and research including the work of Fiona Lyon and Sarah MacQuarrie who recognise the urgency of producing support resources for bilingual education. In particular, looking at how reading can be assessed appropriately. My own learning was enhanced by becoming more aware of the assistive technology that is available and other resources for assessing Gaelic language and taking a leadership role in disseminating this information to colleagues.

Next Steps



1. To provide support and advice in updating Dyslexia Pathway document and develop FAQs for parents/carers about GME and dyslexia.
2. Build links with ASN teachers working in GME to share ideas for identification and support of dyslexia.
3. Continue to read relevant literature and develop knowledge of resources suitable to be adapted/translated for GME.