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## The Language of the Playground: Activists building consensus on the language policy and ethos of a new Gaelic immersion school.

Timothy Currie Armstrong

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

### Language ideology in Edinburgh and Gaelic-medium education

As an alternative pedagogical model, additive immersion education is clearly a success; by a range of measures and in a variety of contexts, students in immersion schools have been shown to equal and even surpass the attainment of their mainstream peers (For research on attainment in Scottish Gaelic immersion see: O'Hanlon *et al.* 2013; Highland Council 2009; Johnstone *et al.* 1999). However, as a tactic for language revitalization, the efficacy of immersion education is far less certain; while students may attain reasonable communicative competence in their classroom language, that competence does not always translate into much social use of the language outside of school (Dunmore 2014; 2016; O'Hanlon 2012). Parents and educators often hope that out-of-classroom spaces in the immersion school – the cafeteria, the hallways, and particularly the playground – might serve as sites where students can be encouraged to use the school language informally together, thereby normalizing the school language as a social language for use outside of the classroom. If immersion education is to function as an effective tactic for language revitalization, children would need to not only acquire full proficiency in the threatened language, but also be motivated to take the language out of the classroom and use it in their daily lives outside of the school, and then ideally, in the future as adults. This is a difficult aim, but it is not impossible or unprecedented, and language ideology plays a central role in this regard. If immersion schooling is founded on a clear revivalist ideology linking language and identity, an ideology that leads to a strong, independent school ethos and a coherent school language policy, immersion schools can both provide excellent bilingual education to their students and serve as an effective means for language revival in their communities (cf. Brenzinger and Heinrich 2013; Nahir 1998).

Immersion education does not always develop in this way, but it can, and this naturally raises the question, when it does, why? Why do some immersion schools develop a strong ideological focus and others less so? In this chapter, I will suggest that part of the answer may be found by examining the history of the establishment of immersion schools. All organizations are profoundly ideological, and the ideology of any given organization is to a greater or lesser extent a function of the wider ideological environment in which it was founded (Simons and Ingram 1997; 2004). Between 1997 and 2011, parents and other language activists in Edinburgh engaged in a long and difficult campaign to establish a dedicated Gaelic-immersion primary school in the city, and in the course of this campaign, the language policy and ethos of the proposed school were points of debate. Drawing on data collected for a social history of this grassroots campaign, I will show how out-of-classroom language policy in Gaelic-medium education (GME) was imagined and contested in the public sphere, and then, how parents and other language activists worked to build a consensus on what sort of language policy *they* would like to see for their new school. In this chapter, I will use these data to discuss how local language ideologies inform debates on micro-level language-in-education policy.

The social history that follows draws on a wide range of data that includes newspaper coverage of the Gaelic school campaign, letters to the editor and blog/newsgroup posts, official reports, City of Edinburgh Council meeting minutes and consultation documents, consultation submissions and commissioned research conducted in the course of the campaign, as well as data from extensive

archives of documents collected and preserved by the Gaelic-school activists themselves, including correspondences with officials and politicians, meeting minutes of activist groups, drafts of speeches, newsletters, campaign plans and lobbying documents. In addition, semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted with 13 key activists involved at different stages of the campaign, and together, this archive and interview data were analysed with a particular focus on the ideologies articulated in the debates around the development of GME provision in Edinburgh. In this analysis, the proposed Gaelic school is understood as an organization that is founded and that functions in its own historically-dependent ideological context. The linguistic and political ideologies that obtain in this context influence the form and function of the Gaelic school as an organization, and in turn, once established, the school itself serves as a key site where political and linguistic ideologies are circulated and reproduced in the next generation of Gaelic speakers.

The campaign to establish a dedicated Gaelic school in Edinburgh is notable for being particularly drawn-out and difficult. Parents and other activists began agitating for a Gaelic school in 1998 and the new school was not opened until September of 2013, about fifteen years later. The overall drive for a Gaelic school can be divided into two distinct campaigns: the first, unsuccessful campaign from 1998 to 2000; and the second, successful campaign from 2009 to 2011, separated by almost a decade of quieter but persistent lobbying. The parents and other activists organized their campaigns in the face of a powerful and pervasive ideology in Edinburgh, rooted in the Scottish Enlightenment (cf. Walsh 2006: 136–139), that understands Scottish Gaelic as a vestigial Highland language that has no place in Scotland’s modern and cosmopolitan capital city. As an example of a particularly concise articulation of this ideology, here is Gina Davidson, the Scottish Press Association’s 2013 Journalist of the Year, arguing in the Edinburgh Evening News against the Gaelic school:

Gaelic may well be a lovely, lyrical, ancient language and well worth keeping alive, but surely that should be in places where it is traditionally spoken, not in a modern, cosmopolitan city, where the only Gaelic word known to the most is ‘slainte’ [sic] (Davidson 2011).

In this ideological context, the debates around the development of GME in Edinburgh were strikingly contentious, and it is perhaps not surprising that it took more than a decade to convince the City of Edinburgh Council to approve a dedicated Gaelic school. In the following analysis, I will show how these larger ideologies about the appropriateness of Gaelic development in Edinburgh coloured the debates about language policy in the proposed school, among activists, politicians and in the public sphere in general.

## **Problems in the playground and out-of-school language use**

GME in Scotland is atypical in comparison to minority immersion education in many other countries in that GME in Scotland has been established predominantly as streams (or units) in mainstream English-medium schools, rather than as stand-alone, dedicated Gaelic-medium schools (cf. McLeod 2003; Rodgers & McLeod 2007). There are 59 schools in Scotland that offer Gaelic-medium primary education (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2016), but only five of these are dedicated, stand-alone Gaelic-medium schools, one of which is the new Gaelic school in Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the establishment of this school,

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<sup>1</sup> While most Gaelic provision in Scotland fits neatly into this simple binary taxonomy, there are a small number of schools/units that are more difficult to classify. In the Highlands and Islands there are schools like Bun-sgoil Shlèite (Sleat Primary School) that are designated as ‘Gaelic schools’ but with an English-medium unit, and in Glasgow there is also Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail (Glendale Gaelic Primary School) which is a dedicated Gaelic school in its own building, but that sits immediately adjacent to Glendale Primary School, an English-medium school.

Edinburgh was served by a single Gaelic-medium unit at Tollcross Primary School. This unit was established in 1988 with one teacher and seven children<sup>2</sup>, and then grew steadily over the years to the point that in 1997, the unit had 3 teachers and 58 primary students<sup>3</sup>, and was nearing approximately a quarter of the total school roll. Motivated in part by concerns about language policy and language use at Tollcross, parents in Edinburgh began campaigning for the establishment of a dedicated school in the city. Here is how one parent explained her concerns in a letter to the editor of the Scotsman newspaper:

When we first visited the unit, I expected to enter a Gaelic zone similar to what I had seen in a French school in the middle of Germany. Such a unit or school would have *only* the minority language spoken, from headmaster, janitor and secretary to every child on the playground. It would mean a complete immersion. It would give the minority language a more respectable status. ¶ However, the unit at Tollcross gives me the feeling of it being "tacked on" to a mainstream school. All of the central emotionally very important activities of the school are in English: weekly assembly, the Christmas play (with weeks of preparation), the Christmas fair, outings to theatre, concerts, etc. This gives everyone involved the feeling of Gaelic being inferior, a second language (Rhein 2000).

This letter demonstrates a common feature of the discourse surrounding school language policy in the debates about the proposed school in Edinburgh. In this letter, and in many other cases, language use in the playground is not simply named indicatively, but also metonymically, to stand for the language policy and linguistic ethos of the whole school (see also Aldekoa & Gardner 2002: 341). In this letter, the parent names the headmaster, the janitor, and the secretary, in addition to children in the playground, as people who should speak Gaelic in an immersion school, but in other instances in the data I collected, only the playground itself is invoked. In discourse about school language policy in these debates, language use in the playground appears to be understood as a bellwether for the vitality of Gaelic in the school in general and its normalization as a social language between the children; in other words, what language they might use if unsupervised or what language they might use 'naturally' together.

This parent implies that English was the language spoken in the playground to some degree at Tollcross, and this is supported by reports from the children themselves. As part of the on-going consultations about the proposed dedicated school, the City of Edinburgh Council conducted research in 2004 into parents', teachers' and students' perceptions of GME in Edinburgh (City of Edinburgh Council 2005). Three focus groups were conducted with GME students: one group from primary six and seven at Tollcross; one group in secondary one and two at James Gillespie's High School; and a final group in secondary three through five also at James Gillespie's. James Gillespie's High School is the local high school in the Tollcross catchment area with a Gaelic program for former Tollcross students. All three groups indicated that Gaelic use at school was at times problematic:

P6/7: Do you enjoy speaking Gaelic?

"Yes, but in the playground you sometimes have to speak English."

S3-5: Do you enjoy speaking Gaelic?

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<sup>2</sup> Accounts differ on the number of children in the unit when it opened with some sources claiming five and others seven.

<sup>3</sup> Accounts also differ on the number of children in the unit in 1998, with some sources claiming 58 and others 60.

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"If you speak it together, you get criticised."

P6/7: What has been good and what has been bad [about GME]?

"The others make fun of you and call you the 'Garlic group.'"

"You exclude some people if you use it in the playground."

S1-2: What has been good and what has been bad [about GME]?

"Others might feel excluded if you use Gaelic in the playground."

"In primary, the 'Garlic's'(!): in secondary it 'cuts you off a bit' from others."

(City of Edinburgh Council 2005: 13–15)

In the same survey, parents of GME students were asked: "Are you aware of your child using Gaelic outside of the school day?" and 89% answered that they were not (City of Edinburgh Council 2005: 8). This survey included parents of students from nursery to high school, so it is difficult to interpret, but nonetheless, it suggests that, at the time, students at Tollcross were not making much use of their Gaelic outside of class. If the peer reproval reported in the above study was causing GME students at Tollcross Primary School to form negative affective associations (cf. Smith-Christmas 2017) with informal Gaelic use on the playground and in other sites in the school, clearly this could militate against the students further development as confident, active Gaelic speakers outside of the school, and one can understand why some parents were concerned.

### **How is ethos, culture and language policy at immersion schools understood in Scotland?**

Concerns about language policy and language use in schools with Gaelic units was not limited to parents at Tollcross. Language policy and problems with language use in the playground were named as reasons that parents in Glasgow began organizing to establish a dedicated school in that city (MacNeacail 1999; Comann nam Pàrant 2000a: 26), and also featured in the highly contentious debates about converting Sleat Primary School on the Isle of Skye to an all-GME school in 2006 (Highland Council 2006: 2; see also Macleod 2008: 145–7). At the time of the Edinburgh school campaign, there was no specific national guidance available on language policy for schools that offer GME; rather, individual councils were charged with developing their own guidelines. In 2004, the Scottish Executive issued guidance to local councils stating that council GME policy should contain a commitment to a "bilingual ethos" in schools that offer GME, but the guidance was very general and did not define a bilingual ethos, did not specify how a bilingual ethos might be realized in concrete language policy in a school, or detail how a bilingual ethos might translate into actual Gaelic and English use in a school (Scottish Executive 2004; see also O'Hanlon 2010: 113–5 for a relevant discussion of the 'Language of the School' in taxonomies of immersion education).

As different communities around Scotland consulted on the establishment of dedicated Gaelic schools, various politicians, civil servants, educators and journalists entered the public debate on the question, often discussing their understanding of language policy in Gaelic schools and in schools with Gaelic units. Some commentators took strong issue with the fundamental notion of separate dedicated schools where only Gaelic would be spoken, calling the idea elitist, separatist, divisive, and even akin to apartheid. As an example, in an article and follow-up letter that appeared in the *Times Educational Supplement Scotland*, a secondary teacher, Hugh Donnelly, used just such language to describe the proposal to close the secondary Gaelic unit at his school and open a new 3–18 dedicated Gaelic school

in Glasgow. Here, in the following extract from his follow-up letter, he is refuting several correspondents who wrote letters in response to his initial article:

According to one correspondent, what we have here is the creation of a brand new socially inclusive, comprehensive secondary which is a welcome addition to educational choice for all Glasgow pupils regardless of class, creed, or ethnic diversity. Yet another makes the claim for a separate school and the promotion of a Gaelic ethos (whatever that might be) where the medium of instruction will be exclusively Gaelic. Indeed, Gaelic cultural uniqueness is argued as a justification for a separate and exclusive campus for Gaelic speakers.¶ Your correspondent alludes to the limitations of a big school where the opportunities for Gaelic pupils are diluted by the presence of others. ¶ Indeed, it is argued that Gaelic pupils just end up talking to their friends in English. (In Glasgow? Surely there would be elements of Scottish urban dialect creeping in also. Knock me down with a feather) (Donnelly 2004).

There is much that could be said about the political and linguistic ideologies that appear in this extract, in Donnelly's article, and the letters that followed it, but here I will comment briefly on just one point. Donnelly does pick up on a difficult contradiction that parents and other activists faced when framing their arguments for a dedicated school. On the one hand, activists argued that GME is simply the normal curriculum but taught through the medium of Gaelic, or "mainstream education delivered through Gaelic" as it was sometimes framed. Activists sought to reassure parents, politicians and the public that GME would be no more expensive than English-medium education (EME), but also, that GME did not represent a radical or divisive departure from mainstream Scottish education. But at the same time, activists were also arguing that dedicated Gaelic schools with a unique Gaelic culture or ethos and an all-Gaelic language policy were necessary to provide GME students with the best chance at developing their Gaelic/English bilingualism, to normalize Gaelic as a social language amongst the students, and to realize GME's full potential as a tactic in the Gaelic revival. As Donnelly identifies here, in this respect, activists *were* arguing that GME should be more than simply "mainstream education delivered through Gaelic".

### **The first Edinburgh Gaelic school campaign: establishing consensus**

Against this background debate in the national press, parents in Edinburgh began seriously agitating for a dedicated Gaelic school in the city in 1998. From the very beginning of the first campaign to the end of the final successful campaign in 2011, GME parents in Edinburgh worked diligently through their advocacy group, Comann nam Pàrant, to build a strong consensus around the goal of establishing a dedicated Gaelic school. As part of this consensus building process, Comann nam Pàrant held a series of meetings in early 1999, and the language policy of the proposed school was one important point of debate at these meetings. The most significant of these meetings was an open "information day" for parents held on March 20th at the University of Edinburgh, and after this meeting, Comann nam Pàrant published detailed proceedings. As part of the day, the parents broke up into smaller groups to discuss the future of GME in Edinburgh, and we can read in the published proceedings that at least one group explicitly discussed language use in the playground and language policy at the proposed school:

a fear that Gaelic will be the language of the school. Opportunities for this? Gaelic needs to move on from the classroom. Not extremism, just common sense. How is that achieved? Gaelic in the playground? Experience says not possible in English-speaking playground. Irish schools have varying success in this: Irish teachers must contribute ideas and incentives, rewards, etc; language of playground must be taught: this is done successfully in Ireland; resources needed,

e.g. tapes, children's culture [...] 'Gaelic ghetto' a concern for some; but this can be worse if done in units, cf. labels such as 'the Gaelics' [...] a non-Gaelic-speaking parent anxious about pressure being placed on his children through language difficulties: how to achieve Gaelic in playground without pressure (Comann nam Pàrant 2000a: 36).

After the meeting, parents continued to discuss language policy at the proposed school and questioned if expecting children to speak Gaelic in the playground might constitute an unreasonable infringement on their liberty (Comann nam Pàrant 1999a; MacNeacail 1999). In a follow-up meeting of Comann nam Pàrant held on April 27th, discussions on the proposed school continued, and parents took up the issue of language policy again. In response to concerns that an all-Gaelic rule might lead to students being punished for speaking English, the meeting reached a consensus that there was no support for compulsion, coercion or any draconian measures to enforce language policy in the playground. It appears from the meeting minutes that consensus on this point was an important step toward the meeting reaching a general consensus that, "We, the parent body, agree in principal that we want a Gaelic school for Edinburgh" (Comann nam Pàrant 1999b).

In the following year, the City of Edinburgh Council conducted a consultation on the proposal to move the Gaelic unit at Tollcross to a new dedicated school. The consultation included a survey of all the parents at Tollcross, both GME and EME, and even though a clear majority of the GME parents supported the move (89%), at a meeting on February 17th, 2000, the Council Education Committee voted down the proposal. Comann nam Pàrant had asked three GME students at Tollcross to give presentations at the meeting, and the students reportedly spoke eloquently of problems with out-of-classroom language use at Tollcross and of their desire to be educated in an all-Gaelic environment (Campbell 2000; Comann nam Pàrant 2000b). However, others at the meeting speaking against the proposal cited language use in the playground at Tollcross and the opportunity for GME and EME students to mix together as a reasons *not* to establish a dedicated school. A teaching representative reportedly called the proposal separatism (Comann nam Pàrant 2000b), and one councillor, Bob Cairns, was quoted as describing the proposal as a form of apartheid and that he found the idea of a school with children speaking only Gaelic frightening (MacLeòid 2000; Silvis 2000). In the end, the Education Committee voted 24 to 4 not to sanction a new dedicated Gaelic school. In explaining the decision in a letter to a parent, the convenor of the committee, Cllr Paul Williamson, made explicit reference to whole-school language policy:

Whilst the pupils might be surrounded by the Gaelic language to a greater extent [in a dedicated Gaelic school], it has been nobody's intention to prevent these pupils from speaking English in their free time. As bilingual pupils, the current arrangements [of a Gaelic unit in an English-language school] allow them to choose Gaelic or English as a form of communication outside classroom hours (Williamson 2000).

In this excerpt, Cllr Williamson has framed the question of school language policy using the neo-liberal language of free choice (cf. Armstrong 2014: 580; Clayton 2008; May 2003: 96–99), but of course, very little of a students' experience in compulsory state schooling in the UK could be considered truly free from constraint. Students' attire and deportment, language, movements through the school over the course of the school timetable, behaviour in the school and learning activities are all circumscribed by a comprehensive system of rules and norms over which the students have almost no voice. Cllr Williamson is not arguing here for a school without compulsion; rather, he is arguing against compelling primary students to speak the Gaelic language specifically. The decision of the Education Committee, and Cllr Williamson's rationalization of that decision, betray a normative bias in support of the use of the English language in Edinburgh, and it appears that this language ideology was

behind much of the tenacious opposition to establishing a Gaelic school in Edinburgh, a school that would have its own language policy that would privilege (and possibly enforce) Gaelic use. In its decision, the Education Committee recommended that the proposal for a dedicated Gaelic school be reconsidered in two years, but in reality, it was a decade before a proposal for a Gaelic school in Edinburgh was seriously considered again.

## **The second campaign: full immersion as the rallying point**

The second campaign was at least as tortuous and protracted as the first, but almost ten years later, it was organized and executed in a very different context in several respects, and these differences both informed the activists' approach to how they framed their campaign and also contributed to their success where the first campaign failed. Significantly, in the years leading up to the second campaign, as dedicated Gaelic schools were established in Glasgow and Inverness, and then, as these two schools grew and succeeded, the idea of a dedicated Gaelic school in Edinburgh appeared far less radical in 2009–2011 than it did in 1998–2000. As a consequence, parents had greater latitude to build the second campaign explicitly around the theme of the advantages of full immersion and a strong Gaelic ethos. Here is how Comann nam Pàrant described these advantages in their official response to the final consultation on the Gaelic-school proposal:

With Gaelic being the language of the whole school, there are more instances, and more diverse opportunities (playground, dining-room, assembly, trips, etc) to use Gaelic. [...] It is important that pupils see Gaelic as more than just a “classroom language”. As with any minority language, the perceived status and value attached to Gaelic is an important factor influencing retention and use by young people. [...] The more that the minority language features in the school experience, the stronger will be the pupils' competence and confidence in the language. The stronger the pupils competence and confidence in the language; the more likely they will be to use it in later life in work, home and in leisure (Comann nam Pàrant 2011: 7–8).

Around the time of the beginning of the second campaign, students reported that the language in the playground at Tollcross primary was still English (City of Edinburgh Council 2009: 45) and parents feared that this diglossia — Gaelic in the classroom; English in the rest of the school — was leading students to see Gaelic as a language only connected to schoolwork (Comann nam Pàrant 2009: 4). In the extract above, we see the parents making an argument that by extending Gaelic use to the whole school, students would not only develop better competency in the language, but would also be more likely to use Gaelic as adults, a key step toward creating a new generation of active Gaelic speakers and contributing to the revival of the language.

Again, in the course of the second campaign, some opponents did use emotive language like 'segregation' to describe the proposal for a dedicated Gaelic school, and the Gaelic-school activists were opposed by powerful local politicians and media organizations in the city, but in the end, by dint of carefully-planned and persistent activism, Comann nam Pàrant prevailed, and on October 27, 2011, the City of Edinburgh Council approved the establishment of a dedicated Gaelic school in the city, ultimately accepting in broad terms Comann nam Pàrant's arguments about full immersion:

The establishment of a dedicated school [...] reaffirms the Council's commitment to the preservation and development of the Gaelic language; a dedicated school offers the potential for a fuller immersion experience making fluency and bilingualism more likely educational outcomes; (City of Edinburgh Council 2011: 2).



While the Council's document in response to the consultation on the Gaelic school does not provide any detail about the language policy of the newly-approved school, it does name "increased exposure to the Gaelic language outside the context of the classroom" as a key advantage of a dedicated Gaelic school over a Gaelic unit in an English-language school (City of Edinburgh Council 2011: 16), strongly suggesting that the City of Edinburgh council accepted that whole-school language policy would be an important factor in the potential success of the new school, a significant shift in ideology from the position of the council in 2000. Extensive repairs were required to make the mothballed Bonnington Primary building in Leith ready to house the new school, Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce, delaying its opening by a year, but in that time, Comann nam Pàrant continued to rally parental support for the new school and advance its vision of GME in Edinburgh. Here is how they described that vision in November, 2012:

CnP is working towards a stated goal of taking **all** of our GME families with us when we move to Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce. It is also our vision that the new school will have a **Gaelic cultural ethos** and be a **flagship for Gaelic education** in Scotland, promoting the growth of Gaelic throughout the country (Comann nam Pàrant 2012: 2; emphasis in the original).

With the approval of the new school, the question of language policy in GME in Edinburgh passed from being a debate held in the public sphere to being a quotidian issue for parents and staff as they prepared to transition from GME provision in a unit at Tollcross Primary to all-school GME provision at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce. How language policy developed in the new school, while an interesting question, is beyond the scope of this study and its social-history methods. Nonetheless, if parents and other activists remain as closely involved in the day-to-day operation of the new school as they were in the operation of the Gaelic unit at Tollcross Primary, it is very likely that activist ideologies about language value and use in the school will strongly influence the continuing development of language policy and practice at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce.

### **What does a language policy for a Gaelic school look like?**

I have presented only a tiny fraction of the data collected on the ideological side of the struggle over a dedicated Gaelic school in Edinburgh, but I hope I have successfully (if briefly) illustrated two things: first, how language policy in the proposed school was imagined and contested by activists, politicians and the public, and how the question of out-of-classroom language use was central in the debates on the development of GME in Scotland; and second, how linguistic ideology delimits the scope for establishing minority language immersion education, that the arguments around the founding of immersion education in Scotland are ideologically charged, and that it is likely that these ideological contests influence the ethos and language policy in units and in dedicated schools once established.

Recently there has been research conducted, and also public debate, on the definition of GME, in terms of the curriculum and also in terms of the mix of Gaelic and English instruction at different levels (c.f. Nicholson 2014; O'Hanlon 2010; O'Hanlon, Patterson & McLeod n.d.). This debate has culminated in the publication of the document, *Advice on Gaelic Education*, by the Scottish Government education agency, Education Scotland (2015), which goes some way to clarifying standards of pedagogical good practice in GME. The research presented here demonstrates that a similar consensus-building debate is required on the ideology, ethos and language policy of Gaelic-medium schooling in Scotland. We still do not have clear vision among activists, policy-makers or educationalists of exactly what a 'Gaelic school' means in Scotland in terms of language-policy, ethos or ideology. How exactly should the two languages (Gaelic and English) be used throughout a Gaelic school, and how will Gaelic use be encouraged outside of class? What do we expect from the administration of a Gaelic school in terms of

leadership and guidance when it comes to establishing the ideology, ethos and language policy of a Gaelic school? Do we expect a relatively *laissez-faire* policy with regards to language use outside of class, that the school children themselves will ‘choose’ which language they prefer to use together, or do we expect an all-school policy for language use developed as an instance of a particular ideology about the purpose of the school and the purpose of GME in particular?

Indeed, what is the purpose of GME in Scotland? Discussions of school language policy around GME inevitably lead to deeper questions about the fundamental rationale for GME. Is GME solely established for the sake of the better education of the children involved, so these children can enjoy the cognitive and educational benefits of bilingualism, or are activists also motivated by GME’s perceived role as a tactic in the Gaelic revival, as a way to create the next generation young Gaels in Scotland? And are these two purposes in conflict – immersion education for the advantages of bilingualism and GME as a tactic in the Gaelic revival – or can these two aims be reconciled? Do we expect that a Gaelic school will teach the national curriculum, but through the medium of Gaelic, e.g. “mainstream education delivered through Gaelic”, or teach something else, a curriculum that is particularly ‘*Gàidhealach*’ in some way perhaps, a curriculum that fosters a clear link between the Gaelic language and students identity as Scots, or perhaps as Gaels? If a strong language ideology and language policy are advanced in a Gaelic school, will this put off those parents who are more interested in GME as immersion education for bilingual advantage, those without much interest in the Gaelic revival *per se*? And if so, is that necessarily a bad thing? Can GME providers realistically hope to satisfy all potential parents and all possible stakeholders?

These questions of language policy in minority language education are not unique to Scotland. Other educators in other countries have also struggled with the problem of ‘language in the playground’ at minority-language immersion schools. In her study of the establishment of an Irish-medium school as part of the urban Irish community development, the Shaw’s Road Gaeltacht, in Belfast, Ireland, Maguire observed that Irish use had to be deliberately encouraged in the school, and that, “in the school playground; there, constant supervision is required to halt the children’s tendency to turn to English” (1991: 123). Thomas and Roberts also show that Welsh-medium-educated school children in Wales tend to use English outside of class, and that while all the schools they studied evidenced a strong Welsh-language ethos, the children’s own perceptions of language policy in the playground was inconsistent. Not surprisingly, the tendency of children to use English socially outside of class was particularly strong among those children whose home language was English (Thomas and Roberts 2011; see also Price & Tamburelli 2016).

Experience has shown that effective minority-language education requires detailed and well-funded whole-school language policy and planning (Aldekoa & Gardner 2002), and while Scotland’s recent guidance document does contain a brief section on Gaelic use outside of the classroom and on the promotion of a Gaelic ethos in schools that offer GME (Education Scotland 2015: 32–33), and while in several places throughout the text, general mention is made of school language policy, of hiring Gaelic-speaking support staff, and of promoting a Gaelic school ethos, nowhere in the document do the authors clearly state what a Gaelic policy for a Gaelic school might actually look like in practice or engage with the difficult ideological questions raised in debates about language policy in Gaelic schools. Practically, how do you make “Gaelic the language of the School” (Education Scotland 2015: 32) as proposed in the guidance? What does that policy look like in detail and what sort of ideological work would be required to implement it? This research shows that school language policy in support of Gaelic is politically contentious in Scotland, and yet, there is still no national guidance available that addresses these issues openly.

But perhaps it is unrealistic to expect leadership from government agencies on this issue. Perhaps official organizations like Education Scotland simply are not in a position to take the lead on controversial ideological questions like those raised in this study. Rather, it is possible that on-the-

ground language activists are in a better position to advance this debate. We have seen that the parents and other activists in Edinburgh did not simply understand the proposed Gaelic school as a policy black box, but rather, that they had clear ambitions for the ethos of the proposed school. The language policy of the proposed school was contested throughout the campaign, at times in some detail, and indeed, the question of language policy was salient and controversial enough that the debate contributed to the long delay in establishing the Gaelic school. As GME expands and develops in the future, it is inevitable that this controversy will continue, and this consensus-building debate cannot be avoided if GME is to succeed in its educational and language-revival aims.

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