

Ni Laoire, Maire, 2003, *Student Attitudes towards Irish among Second Years in Three Mixed Second- Level Schools*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

This study examines attitudes towards the Irish language and to learning it among second year students in three mixed second-level schools. An historical overview of the fortunes of Irish is presented to contextualise the study, as well as to provide a broad framework for the subsequent literature review. This initially explores government policy towards Irish in schools since 1922 and is followed by a description of nationally based attitude surveys.

A questionnaire, comprising four discrete sections, returned by all students in the second year cohort under review (N=190), is the data-collecting instrument used in this study. It replicated many of the areas covered in the national surveys on ability in and attitudes towards Irish. The findings from the school-based research are analysed in that national context.

The major findings and conclusions indicate that students are broadly supportive of Irish as a symbol of ethnic identity, as well as of Gaelic games, music and dance and perceive their parents, principals and teachers as being equally supportive. They also articulate an aspiration towards increase usage of the language.

On the other hand, they find the language difficult and unenjoyable, perceiving it as dying and meaningless in terms of their day-to-day transactional communication if bereft of its classroom context. Finally, girls are more favourable towards the language than boys, in keeping with national trends.