



## Foghlam Tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an Alba: Roghainn agus Buileachadh sa Bhun-sgoil agus Tràth san Àrd-sgoil



### Gaelic-medium Education in Scotland: Choice and Attainment in Primary and Early Secondary School

This briefing summarises the results of a research project on why people choose or do not choose Gaelic-medium education and what its effects are on pupils' attainment.

Tha a' bhileag fiosrachaidh seo a' toirt seachad geàrr-chunntas air toraidhean pròiseact rannsachaidh air carson a bhios, no nach bi, daoine a' taghadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus a' bhuaidh a th' aige air buileachadh nan sgoilearan.

#### What is Gaelic-medium Education in Current Practice?

The research gathered evidence about the current practice of Gaelic-medium education. Gaelic-medium primary education begins with an immersion phase in which children study all of their subjects through the medium of Gaelic. English is typically introduced towards the end of Primary 3, but Gaelic remains the predominant mode of learning throughout primary. The aim is that pupils achieve equal competence in Gaelic and English by the end of primary school.

Gaelic-medium education in Scotland started in 1985. Pupil numbers increased rapidly until the late 1990s and since then have grown more slowly. In session 2008-9, there were 2,206 pupils in Gaelic-medium primary education and 397 in Gaelic-medium secondary education. There were two free-standing Gaelic primary schools and 58 Gaelic streams in primary schools that also provided English-medium education. One secondary school provided almost all subjects through the medium of Gaelic, and 18 taught some subjects using Gaelic. Most pupils in Gaelic-medium education do not understand Gaelic when they start pre-school, but some children have acquired Gaelic at home.

#### Dè tha ann am Foghlam Tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig An-dràsta?

Chruinnich an rannsachadh fianais air mar a tha foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ag obair an-dràsta. Tha foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig sa bhun-sgoil a' tòiseachadh le greis 'bogaidh' nuair a dh'ionnsaicheas a' chlann a h-uile cuspair tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Mas as trice bidh Beurla ga toirt a-steach faisg air deireadh Prìomh 3, ach is i a' Ghàidhlig am prìomh chànan ionnsachaidh tro bhliadhnaichean na bun-sgoile air fad. Is e an t-amas gum bi an aon chomas aig sgoilearan sa Ghàidhlig agus sa Bheurla mus cuir iad crìoch air a' bhun-sgoil.

Thòisich foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an Alba ann an 1985. Chaidh àireamh nan sgoilearan an-àirde gu luath gu deireadh nan 1990an agus tha iad air a bhith ag èirigh nas slaodaiche bhon àm sin. Anns an t-seisean 2008-9, bha 2,206 sgoilearan ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig sa bhun-sgoil agus 397 ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig san àrd-sgoil. Bha dà bhun-sgoil Ghàidhlig fa leth ann agus 58 aonadan Gàidhlig ann am bun-sgoiltean a bha a' tabhann foghlam meadhain-Bheurla cuideachd. Bha aon àrd-sgoil a bha a' teagasg cha mhòr a h-uile cuspair tron Ghàidhlig, agus 18 far an robh cuid de na cuspairean tron Ghàidhlig. Chan eil a' chuid as motha de chlann ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a' tuigsinn Gàidhlig nuair a thòisicheas iad san ro-sgoil, ach bidh clann a thog Gàidhlig aig an taigh a' dol ann cuideachd.

## Aims of the Research

*The research had two aims:*

To investigate the reasons why people choose or do not choose Gaelic-medium education at the primary and early secondary school stages.

To investigate Gaelic-medium pupils' attainment in primary and early secondary school, and to compare this with the attainment of their English-medium counterparts.

## What the Research Did

*Approach to investigating choice*

Eight primary-secondary school pairs were selected, covering the range of contexts in which Gaelic-medium education is provided. Interviews were conducted with the schools' headteachers and Local Authority Gaelic advisers (22 in total), with 55 parents of pupils in Primary 7 or Secondary 2 Gaelic medium and with 30 parents of pupils in Primary 7 or Secondary 2 English medium.

*Approach to investigating attainment*

Pupil attainment was studied mainly using two surveys conducted by Scottish Government statisticians in 2007: the Scottish Survey of Achievement, and the Survey of Gaelic Education. These enabled comparison of the attainment of Gaelic-medium pupils in Primary 5 and Primary 7 (168 and 140 pupils respectively) with three groups of P5 and P7 English-medium pupils:

- (i) All English-medium pupils in the Scottish Survey of Achievement's national sample (7,631 P5 and 7,829 P7 pupils).
- (ii) English-medium pupils chosen to match the Gaelic-medium pupils with regard to gender, socio-economic status and local authority area (164 P5 and 149 P7 pupils).
- (iii) English-medium pupils in schools which had a Gaelic stream (45 P5 and 36 P7 pupils).

## Amasan an Rannsachaidh

*Bha dà amas aig an rannsachadh:*

Sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air na h-adhbharan a bhios, no nach bi, daoine a' taghadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig aig ìre na bun-sgoile agus bliadhnaichean tràtha na h-àrd-sgoile.

Sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air buileachadh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig sa bhun-sgoil agus bliadhnaichean tràtha na h-àrd-sgoile, agus coimeas a dhèanamh eadar seo agus buileachadh sgoilearan ionnan riutha ann am foghlam meadhain-Bheurla.

## Na Rinn an Rannsachadh

*Modh-obrach anns an sgrùdadh roghainn*

Thaghadh ochd paidhrichean bun-sgoile is àrd-sgoile, a' riochdachadh an raon shuidheachaidhean far a bheil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ga thabhann. Rinneadh agallamh le ceannardan nan sgoiltean agus comhairlichean Gàidhlig nan Ùghdarrasan Ionadail (22 uile gu lèir), le 55 pàrant sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig ann am Prìomh 7 (P7) no Bliadhna 2 den àrd-sgoil (AS2) agus 30 pàrant sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla ann am P7 no AS2.

*Modh-obrach anns an sgrùdadh buileachaidh*

Rinneadh sgrùdadh air buileachadh sgoilearan, a' cleachdadh, airson na mòr-chuid, dà shuirbhidh a rinn luchd-staitistearachd Riaghaltas na h-Alba ann an 2007: an Suirbhidh Albannach air Coileanadh, agus an Suirbhidh air Foghlam Gàidhlig. Thug seo cothrom dhuinn coimeas a dhèanamh eadar buileachadh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig ann am Prìomh 5 agus Prìomh 7 (168 agus 140 sgoilear an urra) agus na trì buidhnean sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla P5 is P7 a leanas:

- (i) A h-uile sgoilear meadhain-Bheurla anns an t-sampall nàiseanta aig an t-Suirbhidh Albannach air Coileanadh (7,631 sgoilear P5 agus 7,829 sgoilear P7).
- (ii) Sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla a thaghadh airson freagradh ris na sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig a rèir gnè, inbhe shòisio-eaconamach agus sgìre ùghdarras ionadail (164 sgoilear P5 agus 149 sgoilear P7).
- (iii) Sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla ann an sgoiltean le aonad Gàidhlig (45 sgoilear P5 agus 36 sgoilear P7).

A postal survey was also undertaken of attainment in Primary 3, 5 and 7 and Secondary 2 in session 2008-9 in primary schools with Gaelic-medium provision and secondary schools which provide Gàidhlig (Gaelic for Fluent Speakers) as a subject.

## Findings: Choice

### *Choice of Gaelic-medium education*

There were two main reasons why people choose Gaelic-medium education. The first was heritage: of family, community or nation. Some parents regarded themselves as a 'lost generation' who had missed out on the family language, and thus wanted their children to acquire it.

Others cited allegiance to communities where Gaelic is spoken. Several linked the choice of Gaelic-medium education to a wider interest in Scottish culture, and a belief that Gaelic is an essential part of Scottish identity.

#### **Identity and choice**

*My grandparents were native speakers and both lost it. We just felt it was a shame that we hadn't learnt it, that my father hadn't learnt it and then I hadn't learnt it, and I just thought of all these people that lost the chance. So we just decided to try Gaelic medium.*

(parent, Highlands and Islands, non-Gaelic community)

The second main set of reasons for the choice of Gaelic-medium education was the perceived benefit of a child's becoming bilingual. Many parents had read about the research on bilingual education and bilingualism which suggests that being bilingual stimulates children's learning.

Rinneadh suirbhidh tron phost cuideachd air buileachadh ann am P3, 5 is 7 agus ann an AS2 san t-seisean 2008-9 ann am bun-sgoiltean le solarachadh meadhain-Ghàidhlig agus àrd-sgoiltean a tha a' tabhann Gàidhlig (do dh'Fhileantaich) mar chuspair.

## Toraidhean: Roghainn

### *A' roghnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig*

Bha dà phrìomh adhbhar a roghnaich daoine foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. B' e dualchas a' chiad adhbhar: dualchas teaghaich, coimhearsnachd no nàisein. Bha cuid a' faireachdainn gu robh iad nam pàirt de 'ghinealach caillte' nach d'fhuair cothrom cànan an teaghaich ionnsachadh, agus bha iad airson gum biodh i aig an cuid cloinne.

Bhruidhinn daoine eile air dàimh ri coimhearsnachdan far a bheil Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn. Bha grunn a' dèanamh ceangal eadar foghlam Gàidhlig agus an ùidh fharsaing ann an cultar na h-Alba, agus iad den bheachd gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig aig cridhe fèin-aithne na h-Alba.

#### **Fèin-aithne agus roghainn**

*My grandparents were native speakers and both lost it. We just felt it was a shame that we hadn't learnt it, that my father hadn't learnt it and then I hadn't learnt it, and I just thought of all these people that lost the chance. So we just decided to try Gaelic medium.*

(pàrant, seann-Ghàidhealtachd, gun mhòran Gàidhlig sa choimhearsnachd)

B' e an dàrna prìomh adhbhar airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a thaghadh am beachd gu robh e na bhuannachd do leanabh a bhith dà-chànanach. Bha mòran phàrantan air leughadh mun rannsachadh air foghlam dà-chànanach agus dà-chànanas a tha a' nochdadh gu faodadh dà-chànanas ionnsachadh leanabh a bhrosnachadh.

Two other reasons were mentioned in relation to the choice of Gaelic-medium education. One was that Gaelic-medium education attracted a particular kind of highly educated parent who thinks about education. The other was simply continuity (from pre-school to primary or primary to secondary): once pupils were in the Gaelic-medium system, there was reluctance to waste what had been learnt.

### **Bilingualism and choice**

*Studying the mechanics of a language gives children skills that they can transfer. They have a facility for picking up another language having studied one.*

(headteacher, Gaelic-speaking area)

Chaidh dà adhbhar eile a thogail a thaobh roghnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. B' e aon gu robh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig tarraingeach do cuid de phàrantan sàr-fhoghlamaichte a bhios a' smaoinichadh gu domhainn mu dheidhinn foghlam. B' i leantail an t-adhbhar eile (bho ro-sgoil gu bun-sgoil no bun-sgoil gu àrd-sgoil): aon uair 's gu robh sgoilearan anns an t-siostam mheadhan-Ghàidhlig, bha daoine aindeonach na bhathas air ionnsachadh mar-thà a chall.

### **Dà-chànanas agus roghainn**

*Studying the mechanics of a language gives children skills that they can transfer. They have a facility for picking up another language having studied one.*

(ceannard sgoile, sgìre Ghàidhlig)

### *Choice of English-medium education*

The research also investigated why people do not choose Gaelic-medium education when it is available. One reason was when children who are already at school move from an area where there is no Gaelic-medium education into a place where it is provided. Another common reason for choosing English medium was some parents' fear that they could not help their child with homework in a language they did not understand.

Some English-medium parents, although favouring the revitalisation of the Gaelic language, doubted if education was the best means to language maintenance, and thus had not chosen Gaelic-medium education for their child.

### *A' roghnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Beurla*

Rinn an rannsachadh sgrùdadh cuideachd air carson a bhios daoine a' roghnachadh an clann a chumail a-mach à foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig nuair a tha e ri fhaighinn. B' e aon adhbhar gu robh pàrantan cloinne a ghluais à sgìre far nach robh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ri fhaighinn gu sgìre far an robh, aindeonach an clann a thoirt a-mach às an t-sruth Bheurla. B'e adhbhar cumanta eile airson meadhan-Beurla a thaghadh gu robh eagal air cuid de phàrantan nach biodh iad comasach an clann a chuideachadh le obair-dhachaigh ma bha i ann an cànan nach robh iad a' tuigsinn.

Bha cuid de phàrantan meadhain-Bheurla a' cur taic ri ath-bheothachadh na Gàidhlig ach bha iad teagmhach an e foghlam an dòigh a b' fheàrr a thoirt gu buil, agus air an adhbhar sin cha robh iad air foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a roghnachadh don leanabh aca.

## Findings: Attainment

### *Attainment in English by Gaelic-medium and English-medium pupils*

Pupils in Gaelic-medium education, who are not exposed to English in the classroom until at least Primary 3, catch up with and overtake English-medium pupils in their command of English. By Secondary 2, whereas only one half of English-medium pupils had reached the expected level E in English reading and writing, three quarters of Gaelic-medium pupils had done so.

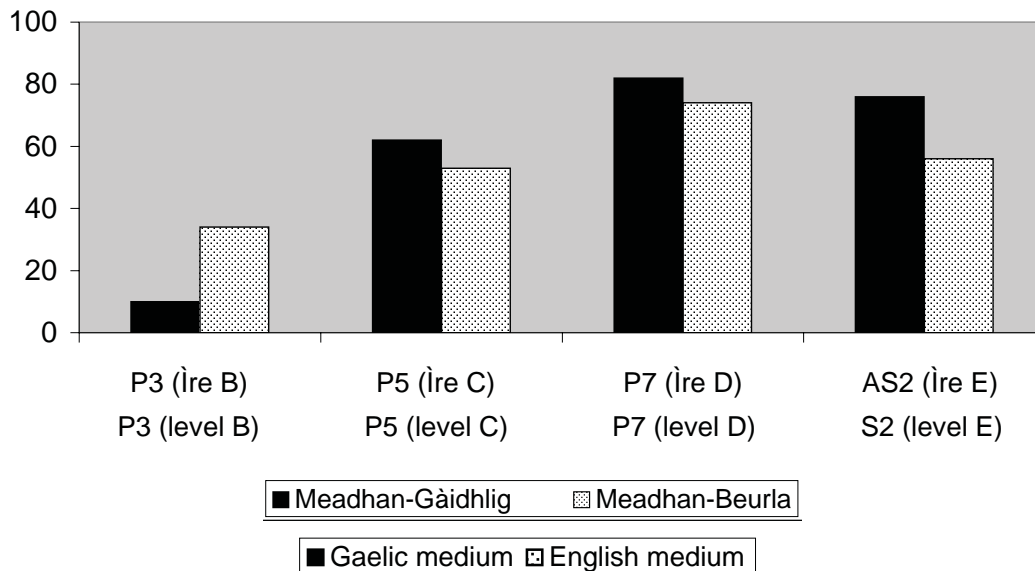
## Toraidhean: Buileachadh

### *Buileachadh sa Bheurla aig sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig agus sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla*

Bidh sgoilearan ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, nach eil a' faighinn Beurla san t-seòmar-sgoile gu Prìomh 3 co-dhiù, a' breith air agus a' dol seachad air sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla ann an comasan sa Bheurla. Ro AS2, ged nach robh ach dàrna leth nan sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla air Ìre E, an ìre iomchaidh, a ruighinn ann an leughadh agus sgrìobhadh na Beurla, bha trì cairteal nan sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig aig an ìre seo.

### **Buileachadh ann an leughadh na Beurla (ceudad aig no thairis air an ìre a th' air a taisbeanadh)**

#### **Attainment in English reading (percentage at or beyond level shown)**



Tùs: Suirbhidh nan Sgoiltean, 2009  
Source: Survey of Schools, 2009

*Gaelic-medium and English-medium pupils' attainments in Science and Maths*

In Science and Maths, the attainment of Gaelic-medium and English-medium pupils was broadly equal when Gaelic-medium pupils were compared with English-medium pupils of similar socio-economic status.

Thus Gaelic-medium pupils' attainment in other areas of the curriculum does not seem to be affected by their learning subjects through the medium of Gaelic (typically their second language).

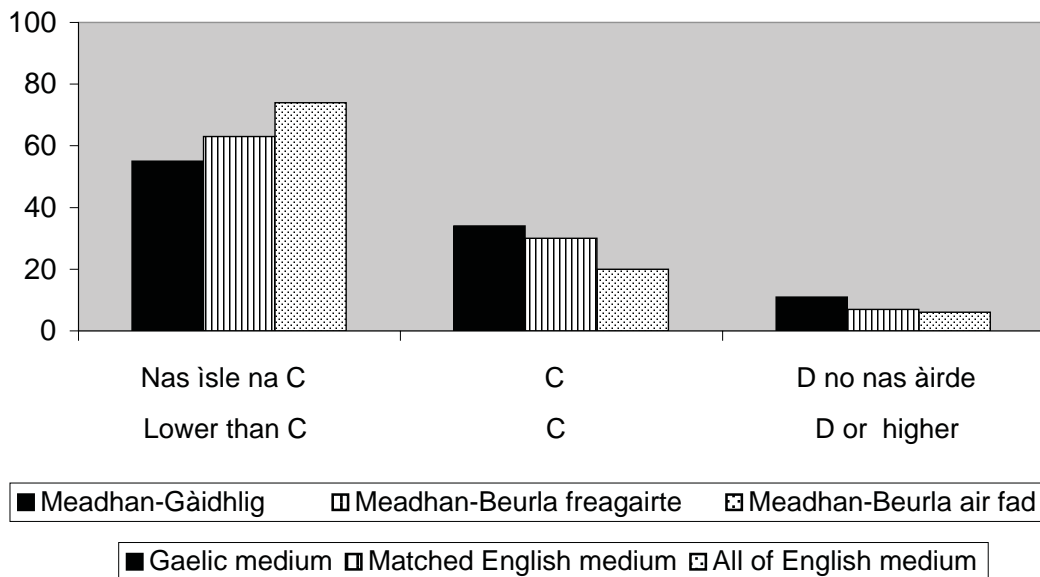
*Buileachadh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig agus meadhain-Bheurla ann an Saidheans agus Matamataig*

Ann an Saidheans agus Matamataig, bha buileachadh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig agus meadhain-Bheurla an ìre mhath co-ionnan nuair a chaidh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig a shamhlachadh ri sgoilearan meadhain-Bheurla den aon inbhe shòisio-eaconamach.

Tha e coltach, ma-thà, nach eil buaidh aig ionnsachadh tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig (mar as trice an dàrna cànan aca) air buileachadh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig ann am pàirtean eile den churraicealam.

**Buileachadh ann an saidheans: Prìomh 7 (ceudad aig an ìre a th' air a taisbeanadh)**

**Attainment in science: Primary 7 (percentage at the level shown)**



Tùs: Suirbhìdh Albannach air Coileanadh, 2007  
Source: Scottish Survey of Achievement, 2007

## *Gaelic-medium pupils' comparative attainments in Gaelic and English*

Gaelic-medium pupils' attainment in English had overtaken their attainment in Gaelic by the end of primary: 83% of Gaelic-medium pupils passed Level D Gaelic reading, compared with 93% achieving Level D English reading; the difference was similar for writing.

### **Conclusions**

These results are consistent with previous research. In relation to attainment, Gaelic-medium pupils acquire or develop an additional language without harming their attainment in other areas of the curriculum. People choose Gaelic-medium education because of this educational gain, and also because they value the language as part of their cultural identity.

## *Coimeas eadar buileachadh ann an Gàidhlig agus ann am Beurla aig sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig*

Bha buileachadh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig ann am Beurla air a dhol seachad air am buileachadh ann an Gàidhlig ro dheireadh na bun-sgoile: bha 83% de sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig air faighinn tro Ìre D ann an leughadh na Gàidhlig, an coimeas ri 93% a' toirt Ìre D a-mach ann an leughadh na Beurla; bha an aon seòrsa eadar-dhealachaidh ri fhaicinn ann an sgrìobhadh.

### **Co-dhùnaidhean**

Tha na toraidhean seo ionnan ri toraidhean rannsachaidh a rinneadh roimhe. A thaobh buileachaidh, bidh sgoilearan meadhain-Ghàidhlig a' togail no a' leasachadh cànan a bharrachd gun cron a dhèanamh air am buileachadh ann am pàirtean eile den churraicealam. Bidh daoine a' roghnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig air sgàth na buannachd foghlaim seo, agus cuideachd airson gu bheil iad a' cur luach air a' chànan mar phàirt den fhèin-aithne chultarach aca.

## Further information

The full research report may be obtained from Bòrd na Gàidhlig at:

[www.gaidhlig.org.uk](http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk)

The authors may be contacted at the University of Edinburgh:

Fiona O'Hanlon (Fiona.O'Hanlon@ed.ac.uk),

Wilson McLeod (W.McLeod@ed.ac.uk),

Lindsay Paterson (Lindsay.Paterson@ed.ac.uk).

## Tuilleadh fiosrachaidh

Gheibhear an làn-aithisg rannsachaidh bho Bhòrd na Gàidhlig aig:

[www.gaidhlig.org.uk](http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk)

Faodar fios a chur gu na h-ùghdaran aig Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann:

Fiona O'Hanlon (Fiona.O'Hanlon@ed.ac.uk),

Wilson McLeod (W.McLeod@ed.ac.uk),

Lindsay Paterson (Lindsay.Paterson@ed.ac.uk).

