English Language Support in Irish Post-Primary Schools

Policy, challenges and deficits

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May 2009

"The aim of language support is to ensure that each child has sufficient language skills not only to benefit from but also to contribute to the educational activities taking place in the school."

> Mary Hanafin, T.D., Minister for Education and Science, February 2005

"Language teaching [is] the ideal locus for intercultural contact."

> Council of Europe (2007), *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*

Executive summary

The English Language Support Programme (ELSP) is one of six projects that together make up the Trinity Immigration Initiative's research programme on Diversity, Integration and Policy (2007–2010).

Ensuring that newcomer pupils and students can access mainstream education is one of the greatest challenges posed by the recent increase in immigration into Ireland. The challenge at post-primary level is particularly acute for three reasons:
- The older newcomer learners are when they first enter the education system, the more they must learn in order to catch up with their English-speaking peers.
- The post-primary curriculum is delivered by subject specialists whose formation has not prepared them to take account of non-English-speaking students in their classes.
- Much English language support at post-primary level is delivered not by specialists but by mainstream subject teachers who need to fill their timetable.

The ELSP has set out to build on the work of Integrate Ireland Language and Training (2001–2008), taking as a framework IILT's English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (the scaled curriculum for English language support) and its version of the European Language Portfolio for learners of English as a second language at post-primary level. The ELSP's specific goals are
- to carry out an extensive survey of current practice in post-primary English language support;
- to analyse the language of the different curriculum subjects and to identify essential vocabulary, key concepts and dominant structures;
- to use this analysis to develop an extensive array of subject-specific materials that support learning at the three levels of the Benchmarks;
- to use the analysis of curriculum language to develop a fourth Benchmarks level that corresponds to the more advanced language requirements of the Leaving Certificate.

This report presents the results of our survey of current practice. Between June 2007 and September 2008 Zachary Lyons interviewed 85 language support teachers and coordinators in 70 post-primary schools, some of them on more than three occasions. The purpose of the survey was to elicit information on the organization and delivery of English language support and to canvas teachers' views on the specific challenges that they must respond to and the deficiencies in the system that they must overcome.

The survey findings do not make encouraging reading. In many of the schools represented the provision of English language support was poorly coordinated; in some it was downright haphazard. Effective and sustained communication between language support and subject teachers seemed to be a rarity, and in some cases responsibility for the integration of newcomer students fell entirely on the language support teacher. There was a widespread tendency to take a "deficit" view of newcomer students' lack of proficiency in English and to assume that they belonged in the same category as students with special educational needs.

In the view of the teachers surveyed, these inadequacies of provision and understanding were not helped by serious deficiencies in the system. They identified lack of appropriate teacher training, pre- as well as in-service, as the single most significant deficiency, closely followed by a lack of

English language teaching materials that take account of the demands of the different curriculum subjects. Only 57% of the teachers surveyed declared themselves happy with the progress their newcomer students were making.

The policy response of the Department of Education and Science to the English language needs of newcomer students reflects little knowledge of the realities of language learning. In particular, the DES seems wholly unaware that for the past thirty years international research has distinguished between the basic interpersonal communication skills required for social interaction and the cognitive/academic language processing required in education. Until the DES forges a more flexible policy that takes account of international research findings, large numbers of newcomer students in our post-primary schools will continue to be at serious risk of educational failure.

In March 2009 the DES sent a circular to schools confirming a reduction in funding for English language support. In the same month the ELSP launched a website that offers a wealth of teaching materials focussed on different curriculum subjects. The website will be developed continuously until the end of the project in the autumn of 2010. In this way we hope in some measure to ease the burden on newcomer students and their hard-pressed teachers.

Zachary Lyons and David Little   Dublin, 5 May 2009

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1   Introduction

1.1   The Trinity Immigration Initiative

The Trinity Immigration Initiative (TII; www.tcd.ie/immigration) brings together key strands of Trinity College Dublin's strategic plan in order to support the development of a more inclusive, multicultural Ireland. The TII's first activity is a research programme on Diversity, Integration and Policy that was launched in 2007 and will run until 2010. The programme comprises six interacting projects:
- Children, Youth and Community Relations
- English Language Support Programme for Post-primary Schools
- Migrant Careers and Aspirations
- Migrant Networks – Facilitating Migrant Integration
- National Policy Impacts
- National Survey of Immigrants in Ireland

1.2   The English Language Support Programme for Post-primary Schools

Ensuring that newcomer pupils and students can access mainstream education is one of the greatest challenges posed by the recent increase in immigration to Ireland. The challenge at post-primary level is particularly acute for three reasons:
- The older newcomer learners are when they first enter the education system, the more they must learn in order to catch up with their English-speaking peers.
- The post-primary curriculum is delivered by subject specialists whose formation has not prepared them to take account of ESL (English as a Second Language)[1] students in their classes.
- Whereas the Department of Education and Science (DES) funds teaching posts at primary level, it only pays for additional teaching hours at post-primary level. In many post-primary schools ESL classes are assigned to teachers who do not have a full timetable, which can mean that ESL support is both marginal and haphazard.

From the first the English Language Support Programme (ELSP) was designed to complement the work of Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT): David Little, Principal Investigator of the ELSP, was director of IILT until it closed in August 2008. Accordingly, it is necessary to summarize IILT's work in the school sector in order to make the aims of the ELSP fully comprehensible.

1.2.1 Integrate Ireland Language and Training

In March 1999, the DES established the Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU) as a two-year pilot project under the aegis of Trinity College Dublin's Centre for Language and Communication

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1   Throughout this report we use the term *English as a Second Language* (ESL) in preference to *English as an Additional Language* (EAL). For newcomer students, English is by definition a second language in psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic terms; on the other hand, the challenge of developing sufficient proficiency in English to meet the demands of the curriculum and public examinations is so great and unrelenting that "additional", with its apparent implication of choice, seems wholly inappropriate. On the whole the teachers who participated in the survey reported in Chapters 3 and 4 shared this view. We also use the term *newcomer* to refer to students from a migration background whose first language is not English, and we follow the convention of referring to primary *pupils* and post-primary *students*.

Studies. To begin with, the primary function of the unit was to co-ordinate the design and delivery of intensive English language courses for adult immigrants with refugee status, but in 2000 the DES commissioned the RLSU to support the teaching of English to newcomer pupils in primary and post-primary schools by

1. analysing the linguistic demands of the primary and post-primary curricula and identifying the language needed in order to participate fully in the educational process;
2. developing materials to support the learning of English as a Second Language in schools; and
3. presenting materials, teaching approaches and supplementary aids in an ongoing programme of in-service seminars for language support teachers.

In September 2001 the RLSU became Integrate Ireland Language and Training, a not-for-profit campus company of Trinity College Dublin; IILT took over all the functions of the RLSU.

IILT's analysis of the linguistic demands of the primary and post-primary curricula was based on the "action-oriented" approach of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), which describes what learners can do, what tasks they can perform, in their target language. The analysis yielded primary and post-primary English Language Proficiency Benchmarks, modelled on the first three of the six proficiency levels defined in the CEFR:

- A1 – the first identifiable level at which learners can combine elements of the target language into a personal if still very limited communicative repertoire;
- A2 – the level at which learners can begin to take the initiative in performing basic interactive tasks; and
- B1 – the level at which learners can maintain interaction, get their meaning across in a range of contexts, and cope flexibly with life in the target language.

Both sets of Benchmarks followed the CEFR in describing communicative proficiency in relation to five activities: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing; and both adapted the CEFR's "can do" descriptors to make them age-appropriate and domain-specific. The Benchmarks were first published in the autumn of 2000 and thoroughly revised in 2003 (IILT, 2003a, 2003b). By specifying learning outcomes at three levels, they were intended to facilitate teacher planning as well as the placement of newcomer pupils/students who brought with them some proficiency in English.

The first teaching/learning materials that IILT developed were versions of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which the Council of Europe designed as a companion piece to the CEFR (see, e.g., Little, 2002). The ELP has two functions. On the one hand, it provides a means of recording L2[2] learning achievement and intercultural experience; on the other, it aims to make the language learning process transparent to the learner and foster the development of learner autonomy (a stated goal of primary and post-primary curricula). The ELP has three obligatory components:

1. a *language passport* which is updated at intervals to capture the owner's gradually expanding linguistic capacity and identity by summarizing his/her L2 proficiency and experience of L2 communities and cultures;
2. a *language biography* which uses "I can" checklists organized by skill and CEFR level to support the reflective processes of planning, monitoring and evaluating learning; and

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2   For the sake of brevity we use L2 to refer to all languages not acquired in early childhood.

3. a *dossier* in which the owner collects work in progress and evidence of his/her developed L2 proficiency.

In the ELPs developed by IILT the "I can" checklists in the language biography were derived from the "can do" descriptors of the Benchmarks. Thus the ELPs that were based on the original Benchmarks and validated by the Council of Europe in 2001 were necessarily revised to bring them into line with the 2003 Benchmarks and revalidated in 2004 (IILT, 2004a, 2004b).

Teachers were quick to confirm that the three levels of the Benchmarks accurately reflected the English language development of their newcomer pupils and students. By providing ELPs based on the Benchmarks IILT hoped to support the development of the individual learner's proficiency in English (the ELP's pedagogical function) while providing teachers, principals, inspectors and parents with a dynamic record of progress (the reporting function). The design of both models took account of key principles that underpin the Irish primary and post-primary curricula: making pupils and students active agents in their own learning; basing learning on what is already known and on the immediate social and educational environment; integrating the development of new knowledge and skills; and accommodating individual differences. Together the Benchmarks and the ELP were designed to promote continuity from term to term and level to level. Because it showcases individual achievement the ELP can also help to raise students' self-esteem and self-confidence.

Between 2000 and 2007 the Benchmarks, the ELPs and an ever-expanding range of teaching/ learning and other support materials were mediated to teachers via a programme of twice-yearly in-service seminars. Regular interaction between IILT and English language support teachers ensured that materials were appropriately informed and focused. The number of primary teachers attending in-service seminars increased rapidly year by year, whereas post-primary numbers remained constant: by 2006, IILT was offering seven seminars for primary teachers in each round, but only one for post-primary teachers. This appeared to reflect the fact that many post-primary ESL teachers could not be released to attend in-service courses because they were chiefly teachers of mainstream subjects. In 2006, IILT revised the materials it had developed for primary ESL support and published them as a substantial teacher's handbook entitled *Up and Away* (IILT, 2006); the next year it did the same for the post-primary sector (IILT, 2007).

1.2.2 Building on the work of Integrate Ireland Language and Training

Working within the framework established by IILT's work, the TII's English Language Support Programme has the following aims:

- To carry out an extensive survey of current practice in post-primary English language support. The results of the survey are presented in this report.
- To analyse the language of the different curriculum subjects and to identify essential vocabulary, key concepts, and dominant structures.
- To use this analysis to develop an extensive array of subject-specific materials that support learning at each of the three Benchmarks levels and make them freely available to schools via the ELSP's website (www.elsp.ie). The website went live in February 2009 and by April 2009 contained some 65 subject-specific units, each unit comprising about 25 worksheets, as well as many other language teaching and learning activities.
- To use the analysis of curriculum language to develop a fourth Benchmarks level, B2. As noted above, B1 is the proficiency level at which learners can maintain interaction, get their meaning across in a range of contexts, and cope flexibly with life in the target language. In

other words, it marks the point at which post-primary newcomer students are able to participate fully in mainstream classes. However, in order to meet the demands of the public examinations students must develop the skills specified for B2, which include the ability to read extensively and develop effective written argument.

- To expand the ELP for newcomer students to include B2 checklists and a greater number of subject-specific pages.
- To further develop the ELSP website to include more detailed guidance for language support and mainstream subject teachers.

1.3 Structure and content of this report

Chapter 2 summarizes the challenge that large-scale immigration has brought to Irish education, describes the educational system and the policy framework within which English language support is funded and delivered, provides a brief overview of other aspects of provision for newcomers, and explains how our survey was conducted. Chapters 3 and 4 present the survey findings, focussing respectively on current provision as described by the teachers we interviewed and the challenges and deficits that they identified. Finally, Chapter 5 looks more closely at the linguistic demands of the post-primary curriculum and relates them to the goals of the ELSP.

2 English language support in Irish post-primary schools: the national context

2.1 The impact of immigration on education

According to preliminary figures, the population of Ireland at the time of the 2006 census was 4,235,000, the highest recorded figure since 1861. This represents an increase of 323,000 persons (8.2%) since the previous census in 2002 (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008). Significantly, approximately 10% of this population (420,000) "*had a nationality other than Irish*" (ibid.: 69), compared with 5.8% (224,000) in the 2002 census. At the time of the census there were 117,635 young people under 19 years of age in Ireland who were not born in the state (CSO, 2006). This increase in population is not evenly distributed. Schools in some parts of the country are experiencing a fall in enrolment, which tends to produce greater competitiveness between schools, while others have difficulty in coping with the increase in demand for places (Eurybase, 2007).

In what Kearney (2008: 143) has called "*a revolutionary development in Irish education*", Irish schools are now linguistically and culturally complex social institutions. In February 2008, the then Minister for Education, Mary Hanafin, pointed out that post-primary schools in Ireland were educating over 17,000 students from 160 nationalities.[3] Between them these students spoke 150 different languages.[4] Inevitably the system is challenged to find ways of effectively educating children and adolescents who are themselves immigrants or who come from immigrant backgrounds.

The difficulty of meeting this challenge is underlined by the fact that in country after country children from migrant backgrounds typically perform markedly less well on standardized tests of academic knowledge and skills than the rest of the school-going population (OECD, 2006, 2007). What is more, this difference commonly persists even after allowance has been made for their disadvantageous socioeconomic background (OECD, 2007). Students of immigrant and minority background are also much more likely than others to drop out of school before acquiring an academic or vocational diploma. They are also more likely to be found in lower-level schools in countries with stratified educational systems (Bender & Seifert, 1996; Seifert, 1998), and less likely to begin and to complete higher education (Lyons, 2008). However, the size of the gap in educational achievement between students from immigrant backgrounds and others varies across immigrant groups, types of educational outcome, and countries (OECD, 2006; Schleicher, 2006).

In Ireland issues related to English language support for newcomers have become an important concern for social and educational policy. The Department of Education and Science does not differentiate between national and non-national children, whatever their status. In common with their Irish counterparts, all newcomer children and adolescents are required to attend school on a full-time basis from the age of 6 to 16 and are entitled to continue in full-time secondary education

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3   DES press release, 28 February 2008: "*Schools must be responsive and dynamic as they meet the challenges of diversity – Minister Hanafin*" (www.education.ie).

4   DES press release, 19 July 2007: "'*Priorities for Education for the Next Five Years' – Address by Mary Hanafin T.D., Minister for Education and Science, to the MacGill Summer School, July 2007*" (www.education.ie).

up to the age of 18. While this policy grants newcomer students equality of presence, according to the research presented here it does not necessarily secure equality of participation or achievement. The views of language support teachers at the "chalkface" challenge the Minister for Integration's boast that "*Ireland has a unique moral, intellectual and practical capability to adapt to the experience of inward migration*" (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008: 7).

If post-primary education is to achieve its objectives, students must be fully proficient in the language of instruction. Low levels of educational attainment clearly have significant implications for social inclusion and social cohesion because they limit participation on an equal basis in society and the use of education for purposes of social and economic integration. It is a matter of common sense, but there is also ample research to confirm, that an inability to access the language of instruction contributes to educational underachievement (Schleicher, 2006). Among researchers and commentators who listen to the perspective of English language support teachers and mainstream subject teachers working with newcomers in Irish post-primary schools, the development of appropriate proficiency in English is consistently identified as "*one of the biggest challenges*" (ERSI, 2008: 3; see also ASTI, 2008; Deegan *et al.*, 2004; Devine, 2005; DES, 2006; EIW, 2007; Fionda, 2008; IVEA, 2007; Kearney, 2008; Keogh & Whyte, 2003; Lazenby-Simpson, 2006, 2007; LYNS, 2004; Naughton, 2008; Nowlan, 2007; TUI, 2006; Wallen, 2006; Yarr *et al.*, 2005).

> *Weak English language skills have been identified as a primary obstacle to accessing education in Ireland for the sizeable number of pupils … for whom English is not their native language. They also present a difficulty for teachers in the classroom, in addressing the often very different needs of both native and non-native English speakers in the same class, and ensuring newcomers' comprehension of what is being taught and participation in class activities.* (EIW, 2007: 118–119)

> *An inadequate linguistic repertoire in the language of the host society is the greatest barrier to the full development of the individual's potential within that society.* (Lazenby-Simpson, 2002: 4)

> *One of the main challenges facing teachers and schools is supporting learners from a wide range of diverse backgrounds whose first language is not the language of instruction.* (NCCA, 2005a: 162)

English is a second language for a growing number of students in Irish post-primary schools. In addition, many newcomer students bring with them limited, intermittent, or interrupted experience of schooling. They may also have been exposed to radically different curricular sequences, content objectives, and instructional methods. Although lack of proficiency in English is an obstacle to their academic success, cultural and socio-economic differences may also make participation in Irish schooling problematic.

Writing about a DES audit of more than 1,900 schools (426 post-primary schools were targeted but only 367, or 85%, responded – the remaining schools in the audit were primary), Flynn (2008) points out that many schools are using restrictive admissions policies to exclude students with special needs and the children of immigrants, and that this practice is, in effect, evidence of educational apartheid.[5] 26% of students in one Dublin vocational school were newcomers compared to 0.1% in an adjoining girls' secondary school, while the audit also showed that in one Dublin area,

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5   At present the only recourse available to a parent whose child is refused entry to a school is Section 29 of the Education Act (1998), which provides for an appeal to the Secretary-General of the Department of Education and Science when a school's board of management, or a person acting on behalf of the board, refuses to enrol a student, suspends a student for more than 20 days in an academic year or expels a student from the school.

fewer than 1% of students in one secondary school had special learning needs, compared with 17% in neighbouring vocational schools. This situation is confirmed by the present study, which finds that newcomer students account for 30% of the population in some rapid-influx schools, and between zero and 0.05% of the population in neighbouring schools.

An audit of post-primary school enrolment policies in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kildare, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Sligo, Waterford and Wicklow, conducted by the individual Regional Offices of the DES,[6] highlighted the growing diversity in Irish post-primary schools. Of 91,040 students in 367 schools
  - 8,199 were students with special needs;
  - 4,366 were international students whose first language was not English or Irish;
  - 973 were international students whose first language was English; and
  - 964 were students from the Traveller community.

The aim of the present report is to explore current practice in the design and delivery of English language support at post-primary level, the understanding and attitudes of language support teachers, and their responsiveness to the increasing diversity in Irish post-primary classrooms. We focus on language support teachers since in general they have the most immediate and extended contact with newcomer students. In doing so, we highlight the many potential points of leverage in the educational system for improving immigrant student achievement and emphasize the need for vision, leadership, integrated thinking and an appropriately resourced commitment to an equality and rights-based approach[7] to language support and intercultural education. Before we present the results of our survey, however, it is necessary to describe the structure of post-primary education in Ireland and summarize the policy response to large-scale immigration.

2.2 Post-primary education in Ireland

2.2.1 Basic structures

The Irish education system is best described as one of partnership between the state and various private agencies. This partnership has its roots in the nineteenth century when the State assisted the churches in the provision of primary schools. The Department of Education and Science is responsible for the administration of public education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels and of special education. It sets the general regulations for the recognition of schools, controls the curriculum and the public examination system, establishes regulations for the management, resourcing and staffing of schools, and negotiates teachers' salary scales. Over the years a system of rules and regulations has developed for the allocation of educational resources. Circular letters and ministerial statements are regular means of communicating with schools and educational bodies.

There are three types of post-primary school: voluntary secondary (394), community/ comprehensive (91), and vocational (247). Legally, all secondary schools are in private ownership, though

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6   The report is available at www.education.ie/insreports/des_enrolment_audit_report.pdf

7   A rights-based approach must ensure the right to equal treatment in terms of access, experience, outcomes, non-discrimination, fairness and accommodation of difference (ASTI, 2005: 3). This is in keeping with the statutes regulating schools' actions: the Education Act (1998), the Employment Equality Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Equal Status Act (2003), the Equality Act (2004) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004).

it is necessary to distinguish between fee-paying schools and non-fee-paying. In fee-paying schools (about 5%) parents or guardians pay fees to the school and the state pays almost all the salaries of recognized teachers; in non-fee-paying schools (most of which collect voluntary contributions from parents and guardians) the state pays capitation and other grants as well as teachers' salaries. Comprehensive and community schools are fully funded by the state and were established as a result of the government's "comprehensive" policy in the 1960s and 1970s. Vocational schools (and community colleges) are funded by the state via the Vocational Education Committees, which are responsible for their administration.

2.2.2 Mainstream post-primary teachers

Teachers at post-primary level in Ireland are subject specialists, whereas teachers at primary level are generalists. The majority of post-primary teachers have a bachelor's degree and receive their professional training in a one-year post-graduate diploma course at university. In 2006–2007 the number of teachers employed at post-primary level was 26,317 (full-time equivalents). At present about 60% of post-primary teachers are female and 40% male, but this gender imbalance is set to become more pronounced as the percentage of female students preparing to become post-primary teachers continues to increase (currently about 80%). However, the gender balance among school principals does not reflect the general situation. In voluntary secondary schools, 70% of principals are male and 30% are female; in vocational schools and community colleges, 65% are male and 35% are female; and in community and comprehensive schools, 80% are male and 20% are female.

Post-primary teachers are required to fulfil satisfactorily a one-year probationary period following graduation before being officially recognized for state incremental salary purposes. Verification of satisfactory probation is usually supplied by the school principal.

2.2.3 Goals and objectives of the school system

The Irish government and a wide range of social partners agreed a Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006–2016, *Towards 2016*. This document promotes a vision of Ireland (originally stated in the National Children's Strategy 2000) as a country

> *where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realize their potential.*

The following are among the goals which the Government and social partners set themselves in *Towards 2016*:

- *Every child should leave primary school literate and numerate.*
- *Every student should complete a senior cycle or equivalent programme (including ICT) appropriate to their capacity and interests.*
- *Every child should have access to quality play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.*
- *Every child and young person will have access to appropriate participation in local and national decision-making.*

The DES's *Statement of Strategy 2005–2007* defines its mission as follows:

The mission of the Department of Education and Science is to provide for high quality education, which will:

- *enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and*
- *contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development.*[8]

The same *Strategy Statement* includes the following goals:

- *We will deliver an education that is relevant to individuals' personal, social, cultural and economic needs*
- *We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all*
- *We will contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitive-ness*
- *We will seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in class-rooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education*
- *We will support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service*

2.3 Managing diversity: the policy response

2.3.1 Legislating for diversity in Irish schools

The Education Act (1998) provides the main legislative framework for Irish primary, post-primary and adult/continuing education, and vocational education/training by setting out the functions and the responsibilities of all key partners in the educational system. The Act makes formal provision for the education "*of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs*". It legislates for the establishment of boards of management for all schools; requires schools to prepare school plans and promote parent associations; lays down accountability procedures; and pays attention to the rights of parents and pupils and also of minorities, asserting that the system "*respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society*".

The Equal Status Act (2000) promotes equality, prohibits discrimination, harassment and related behaviour, and establishes a means to investigate and remedy discrimination. Section 7 of the Act addresses the question of discrimination in educational establishments: schools, whether private or public, are prohibited from discriminating in relation to

- the admission, or the terms or conditions of admission, of a person as a student to the establishment;
- the access of a student to any course, facility or benefit provided by the establishment;
- any other term or condition of participation in the establishment by a student; or the expulsion of a student from the establishment or any other sanction against the student (UN, 2005: 142).

2.3.2 English language support policy

Schools are obliged to enrol any child on behalf of whom an application for admission has been made, except where a refusal is in accordance with the admissions policy published by the school

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8   Available at www.education.ie/insreports/des_enrolment_audit_report.pdf

under Section 15 of the Education Act (1998). However, the admissions policy may not discriminate on grounds of nationality or legal status. The implications of this legislation are problematic, as Devine (2005: 53) points out, since schools are "*simultaneously required to protect their religious ethos and also respect the diversity in society at large*".

It is official policy that newcomer students should be placed in age-appropriate classes, unless their proficiency in English is deemed to be insufficient to allow them successfully to follow the curriculum of their peer group. In this case, school authorities may place them in a class one level or year below their peer group. It is recommended that such placements should be monitored closely with a view to reuniting the students in question with their peers when their proficiency in English improves. Newcomer students follow the same curriculum as their Irish peers, with the possible exceptions of Irish and religious education. Newcomers who are not native speakers of English are required to study only one of English and Irish, which means that the vast majority do not take Irish; and the Education Act (1998) stipulates that no student is required to attend instruction in any subject contrary to the conscience of his or her parents, which means that many newcomer students do not participate in religious education classes.

Policy directives from the DES are issued to post-primary schools in the form of circulars. Circular 0053/2007 was issued in March 2007 in order to "*assist schools in providing an inclusive school environment to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language and outline the resources that are available to assist schools in this task*". It defines an inclusive school environment as one that reflects values and affirms linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity, and it stresses the need for policies and procedures that promote and facilitate the inclusion of all children. The school's commitment to creating an inclusive environment should be evident in the school plan, parental involvement, equality of access to the curriculum, and the facilitation of professional development opportunities in whole-school and classroom practice. Newcomer pupils should be encouraged to maintain a connection with their own culture and language through curricular activities and displays.

According to DES policy, the allocation of additional language support teachers is intended to allow schools flexibility in the deployment of support, though it is recommended that pupils receive additional English language teaching in the classroom or in small withdrawal groups in addition to the support they receive from mainstream subject teachers. Circular 0053/2007 states that key features of effective language support provision include:
- a defined whole-school policy in relation to the identification of pupils requiring support;
- assessment of pupils' levels of language proficiency;
- programme planning;
- recording and monitoring of pupils' progress;
- communication with parents.

While duties and responsibilities vary from school to school, the Circular stresses that the roles of all school personnel as regards meeting the needs of pupils for whom English is a second language should be clearly defined and understood by all. Furthermore, expertise should be shared and good practice communicated and disseminated in order to optimize the opportunities pupils have for developing their proficiency in English.

Circular 0053/2007 provides details of the financial (grant) assistance available to schools and the criteria by which additional temporary teacher posts or portions of teacher posts (hours) are to be allocated. Schools with fewer than three non-English-speaking newcomer students are

expected to provide for their needs from the school's own resources. Schools in which between three and thirteen such students are enrolled receive grant assistance for a period of up to two years (according to the DES this is the period within which newcomer students should achieve sufficient proficiency in English for full participation in mainstream education). Schools that have 14 or more students with "*English language deficits*" are entitled to additional temporary staff according to the following tariff:

Number of pupils requiring English language support	Number of additional temporary teachers
14-27	1
28-41	2
42-64	3
65-90	4
91-120	5
121 or more	6

Circular 0053/2007 also states that English language support may be provided for more than two years when at the end of that period students still have significant English language deficits. Schools wishing to apply for such an extension of provision are required to submit details of the students' assessed level of English language competence and provide details of how the school has addressed their needs in the previous two years and how it proposes to optimize their opportunities in the additional year of language support requested. All allocations are subject to confirmation based on the inclusion of qualifying students in the school's certified October Returns,[9] and schools are advised by the DES to retain a copy of all relevant documentation for audit purposes.

In 2007 there were some 1,450 language support teachers in primary and post-primary schools, costing in the region of €120 million per annum (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008: 59), and in Towards 2016 the DES gave a commitment to increase this number to 1,800 by 2009 (ibid.: 58). This goal was abandoned as a result of spending cuts announced in the November 2008/ April 2009 Budgets, and Circular 0053/2007 was superseded by Circular 0015/2009, which states that "*the level of EAL support will generally be reduced to a maximum of two teachers per school, as was the case before 2007*". However, when we conducted our survey Circular 0053/2007 was in force, though (as we shall see) by no means all language support teachers were aware of its existence. Accordingly, we refer to its provisions in the present tense.

2.4   Other aspects of provision for newcomers

2.4.1 The Post-Primary Assessment Kit

The Post-Primary Assessment Kit was developed by IILT and distributed to schools by the DES

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9   "*The allocation process for language support teachers is an annual one and existing provision is not rolled over automatically*", Batt O' Keeffe, Minister for Education and Science, 4 November 2008, at www.oireachtas-debates.gov. ie/D/0665/D.0665.200811040051.html.

early in 2009. According to Circular 0015/2009 the kit will help schools to establish a newcomer student's level of English on arrival, monitor progress over time, and identify the point at which the student no longer requires English language support. Schools are not obliged to base all their applications for English language support on assessments carried out using the kit. However, they will be asked to use it if they are seeking additional English language support (more than two years) for particular students.

2.4.2 Support for home languages

The DES provides limited support for the development of newcomer students' proficiency in their home language. Immigrant groups can apply to the DES for funding to support the promotion and maintenance of their language and culture. Courses take place outside school hours (usually at weekends) and may use school premises by local agreement.

2.4.3 State Examinations Commission

The State Examinations Commission (SEC), established by statutory order in 2003, is responsible for the public post-primary examinations. In line with the commitment made by member states under Article 149 of the Treaty of Nice, which states that "*Community action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States*", the SEC provides examinations in "non-curricular EU languages", in which students may opt to be examined if they come from a member state of the EU, speak the language in question as a first language, have followed a general programme of study leading to the Leaving Certificate, and have been entered for the Leaving Certificate examination in English. Students are allowed to take only one non-curricular language. In 2009 examinations are offered in the following languages: Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Modern Greek, Finnish, Polish, Estonian, Slovakian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Danish and Dutch. Examination papers are based on the first foreign language final written paper of the European Baccalaureate: evidently it lies beyond the capacity of the SEC to design examinations appropriate to native speakers of these languages.

2.4.4 Intercultural education

Schools have autonomy regarding adaptations made to the school environment in recognition of the multicultural nature of their pupil/student enrolments. Many display signs, posters and artwork in the main languages and traditions of the cultures represented in the school community. Many promote cultural events during which the languages, food, dress, music and dance of the school's pupils/students can be showcased. There are examples, at both primary and post-primary level, of the involvement of parents, community leaders, embassy personnel and/or dignitaries in such events. However, debates about multiculturalism in post-primary schools are beginning to surface.[10]

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10 "*14-year-old Shekinah Egan's parents requested that she be allowed to wear the hijab to school in Gorey, Co. Wexford. Her school board of management granted permission but the principal referred the question to the Department of Education, which refused to provide the guidance sought. In practice, Muslim students have had permission to wear the hijab in a number of schools for some time. However, there is no consensus on the issue*"; www.ucc.ie/law/blogs/ ccjhr/2008/06/hijab-in-irish-schools.html. For a summary of arguments about the wearing of the hijab, see Hogan (2005). Under a Freedom of Information request made by Brian Hayes, T.D., it transpired that the DES had in fact issued guidelines in 2005, telling a Dublin teacher that she should allow a student to wear the hijab during PE. This clear directive contrasts with the lack of guidance given to a principal in Gorey Community School in 2008 when the same

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is responsible for developments in curriculum and assessment and the implementation of changes resulting from this work. It has distributed to all post-primary schools a publication entitled *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* (NCCA, 2006), which offers guidelines for teachers wanting to incorporate intercultural learning into their subjects. But whereas the NCCA has published *English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools: Guidelines for Teachers* (NCCA, 2005b), which discusses ways of integrating language and curriculum content, there is not yet a similar publication for the post-primary sector.

Lóchrann, a Centre for Intercultural Education at Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education, was opened by the then Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin, in November 2007. The aim of the Centre is to enhance the development of best practice in intercultural education in Irish primary schools, through its engagement in teaching, learning and research. Minister Hanafin anticipated that "*the work of the Centre will provide an invaluable resource for the continuous professional development of teachers in the area of intercultural education. By providing on-line training, the Centre has already engaged with over 1,000 teachers since it began its work this summer. This means that teachers across the country, from Tory Island to Cahirciveen, will have access to the same training and support as those that attend the Institute.*"[11] There is, however, no such centre for the post-primary sector.

2.4.5 Translation

Information on certain aspects of the Irish education system has been placed on the DES's website (www.education.ie) in Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Spanish and German. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB; www.newb.ie) provides a leaflet in eighteen languages, designed to help parents to ensure that their children access full education.

2.4.6 Office of the Minister for Integration

The Office of the Minister for Integration is charged with coordinating the DES's response to immigration with the responses of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform and the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (Office of the Minister for Integration, 2008). In this way the government intends to assist the integration process across a number of interrelated areas and to avoid duplication and gaps in provision.

2.4.7 Second Level Support Services (www.slss.ie)

From January 2009 the Second Level Support Service has offered a series of seminars for language support teachers. According to its website the objectives of the seminars are to

- *support the successful integration and participation of newcomer students in mainstream classes;*
- *bring practical T&L strategies to the EAL context;*

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issue arose. The teacher in this case was told that it was up to the school's board of management to decide whether pupils could wear Muslim headdress. At www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/ireland/article4450407.ece

11   DES press release, 23 November, 2007: "*Minister Hanafin opens Centre for Intercultural Education at Marino Institute of Education*" (www.education.ie).

- *support the EAL resource materials which have been sent to schools;*
- *facilitate the sharing of good practice among EAL teachers;*
- *support EAL teachers in giving newcomer students the language required to access the curriculum.*

2.4.8 English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA)

The English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA) was founded in 2006 in response to the growing number of newcomer students needing linguistic and cultural support. According to its website, it aims to support ESOL[12] teachers by establishing national, regional and local networks via ELSTA branches; by developing its website as a local/national/global discussion forum; by hosting on its website talks given at ELSTA events; and by inviting experts in ESOL teaching and interculturalism to upskill teachers. ELSTA is supported financially by Teacher Professional Networks; it also raises funds through its membership fee.

2.4.9 Research in progress

In 2007 the DES commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute to investigate the provision of language support in post-primary schools. At the same time the inspectorate is conducting a thematic evaluation of the provision for newcomer students, as is the OECD.[13] All three reports are expected in 2009. The Department of Education and Science is also conducting a value-for-money review of English as an Additional Language in primary and post-primary schools. This too is expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

2.5   The survey

The survey whose findings are presented in this report involved 85 teachers from 70 post-primary schools, selected on the basis of their self-identification as language support teachers and their willingness to contribute to the study. They were mostly recruited in the course of Zachary Lyons's regular contact with language support teachers and coordinators. Some teachers who had taken the H.Dip.Ed. course with him were also included, and he took advantage of contact he had with language support teachers during in-service training/continuing professional development. Finally, he used a snowballing technique, relying on the goodwill of teachers he already knew to help him make contact with suitable possible interviewees. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study; they were also informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any point; and they were given a guarantee of anonymity.

The schools involved in the survey represented 9.56% of the national total and included voluntary secondary schools (21), vocational schools and community colleges (28), and community and comprehensive schools (21). They also included single-sex and co-educational schools, urban, suburban and rural settings, and schools ranging in size from fewer than a hundred to more than 460 students. And they represented a diversity of management structures and socio-economic

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12 ELSTA's website glosses ESOL as "English as a Second or Other Language". In international language education discourse, ESOL stands for "English for Speakers of Other Languages".

13 The OECD review is exploring what are the best inclusive education options for children from migration backgrounds. Besides Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Austria, The Netherlands, and the Flemish Community of Belgium are contributing to the review.

intake (38% were designated as disadvantaged).

School enrolment of newcomer students ranged from 1.9% to 39.32%. 91% of the schools did not have an assigned language support coordinator, while 87% of the teachers were working concessionary language support hours to supplement their timetables. In other words, they had not been recruited as ESL teachers. Reflecting the gender distribution characteristic of the post-primary sector, 73% of the teachers surveyed were women and 27% were men.

An interview schedule was prepared and semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 minutes and 3 hours were conducted with the participating teachers (Appendix). Interviewees were asked to
- describe their teaching experience, length of stay in their present school, and current role and responsibilities;
- outline the provision of language support in their school;
- describe the school's approach to language support and its rationale as they saw it;
- explain what they saw as the main challenges and deficits of current language support provision and describe how it impacts on the newcomer students.

The semi-structured interview technique was chosen because "*it is a basic method of data gathering the purpose of which is to obtain a rich, in-depth experiential account of an event or episode in the life of the respondent*" (Fontana & Frey, 2000: 646). One of its main advantages is that it provides uniform information, which ensures comparability of data.

Between June 2007 and September 2008 Zachary Lyons interviewed 63% of the teachers once and 9.5% more than three times; 17.5% met him on more than three occasions to clarify issues. Meetings were held either in teachers' schools or in Trinity College. Analysis of the interview data followed inductive, grounded-theory procedures (Eisenhardt, 1989; Sutton, 1991). Conceptual categories were developed iteratively, moving back and forth between the data, relevant literature, and emerging concepts, the goal being to arrive at "thick" description. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

3   Key survey findings: provision

This chapter is concerned with levels of language support and approaches to implementation as reported in participants' responses to a number of probe questions (see Appendix), which were motivated by the themes articulated in Circular 0053/2007, namely:

- creating an inclusive school environment
- the role of the language support teacher
- assessment of pupils' levels of language proficiency
- allocation of additional teacher support
- useful materials and resources
- availability of support

As reported in Chapter 2, 85 language support teachers participated in the survey. Five were language support coordinators but were also active language support teachers, which was the key criterion for inclusion in the survey. The statistical presentation of findings (in which percentage values are rounded out) is supplemented by selected quotations from the interview transcripts.

3.1   Profile of the teachers surveyed

Figure 3.1 shows that 41% of the teachers surveyed were on a contract of Indefinite duration of less than 11 hours a week; only 17% were permanent or temporary whole-time, while 3% were student teachers.
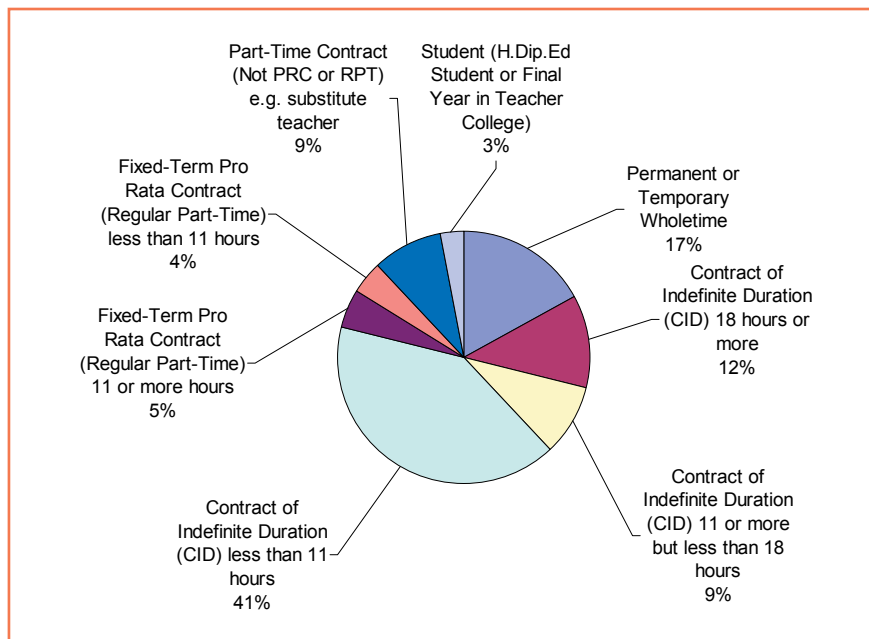

Figure 3.1: Employment status

Figure 3.2 shows that only 7% of the teachers surveyed were teaching a full language support timetable, while Figure 3.3 shows that the majority of participants had been providing language support for less than three years (84%), and 33% had done so for less than a year.
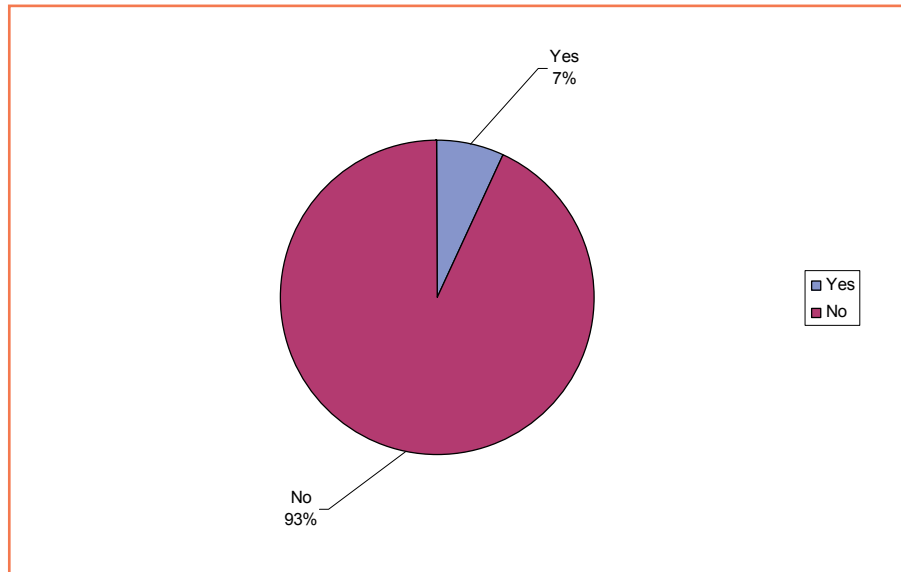
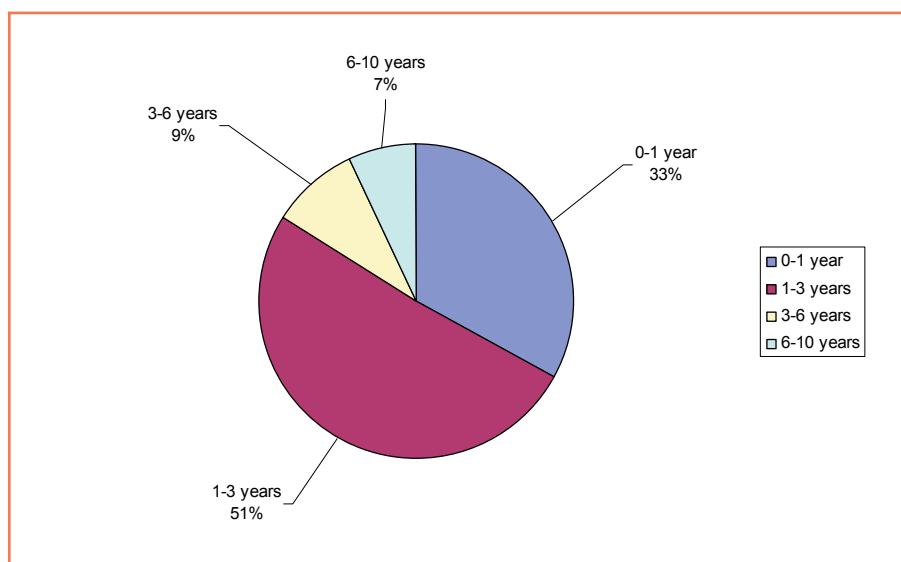**Figure 3.2: Are all your teaching hours language support hours?**

Figure 3.3: Number of years teaching language support

Figure 3.4 reveals that 92% of the teachers surveyed did not choose to become involved in language support; many were obliged to do so as a means of making up their teaching hours. This is an important finding since teachers are more likely to be motivated when they teach their major curriculum subject than when they do not. Significantly, Figure 3.5 shows that 88% of the teachers surveyed did not enjoy providing language support for a number of reasons, including timetabling, concerns they had about the allocation of hours, the temporary nature of the post, the DES allocation (two years' support for each student), the perceived lack of a curriculum and of appropriate models for language support, lack of collegiality, and pressures related to academic examinations. These and related issues are explore further in Chapter 4. Typical comments from language support teachers and coordinators were of the form, "*I'm just biding my time until I can get out*" and "*It's hard to be a good language support teacher when you are the only one who cares* [about newcomer students]."
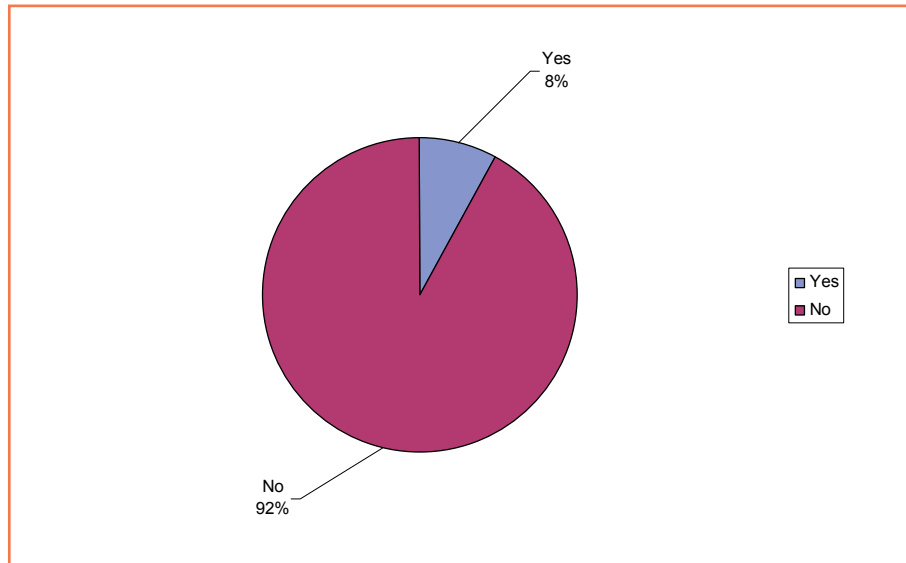
Figure 3.4: If you already had teaching hours, were you given a choice in taking on language support provision?
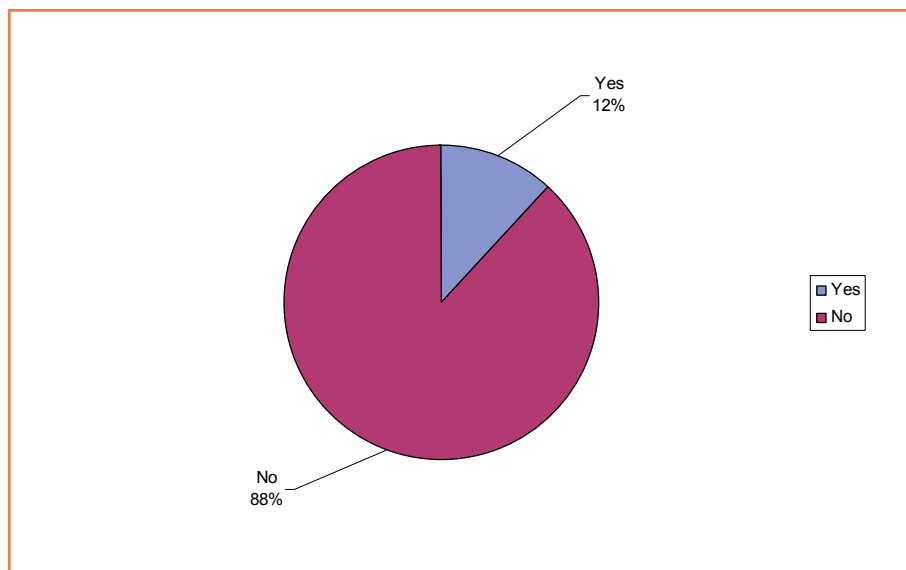
Figure 3.5: Do you enjoy language support?

Figure 3.6 indicates that teachers of English constituted the largest sub-group among the participants; there were no teachers of Mathematics, Science or Technology.

Figure 3.7 shows that 17% of the teachers surveyed were also involved in SEN (Special Educational Needs) and that 41% considered language support to be a part of SEN (Figure 3.8). "*I know we're not supposed to [say so] but it really is just a SEN issue*" (language support teacher). This contrasts sharply with international best practice and with DES guidelines. ESL learners have particular language learning needs, but these are not to be equated with special educational needs and they should not be grouped with SEN students.
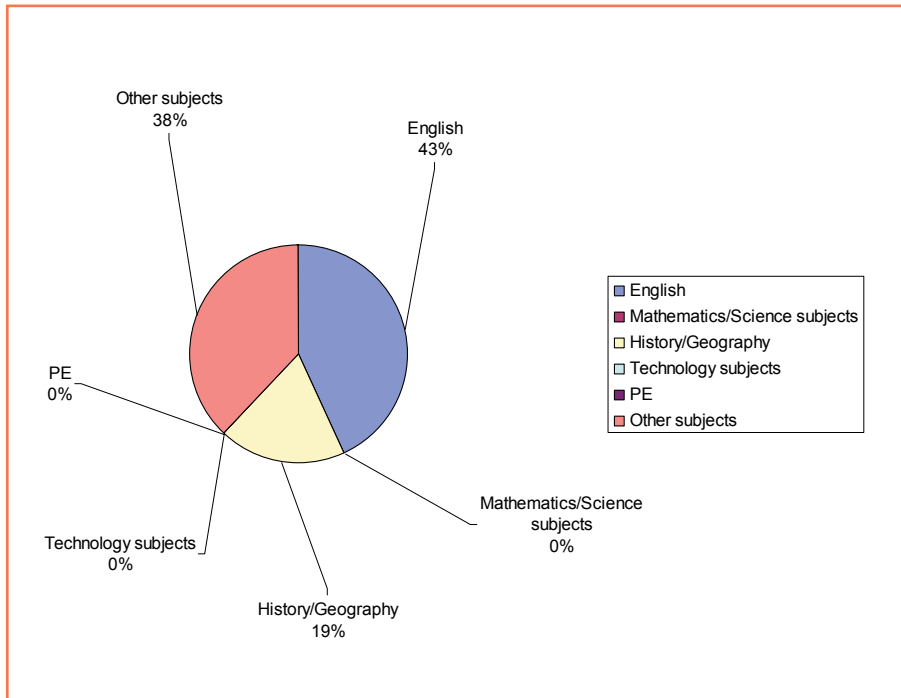
Figure 3.6: In addition ot your langauge support hours, what mainstrean subject do you primarily teach?
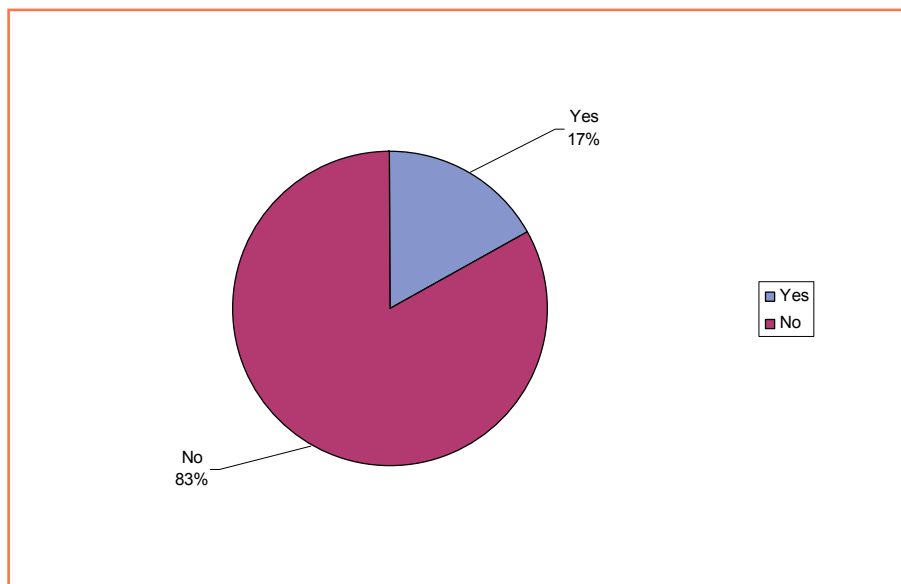

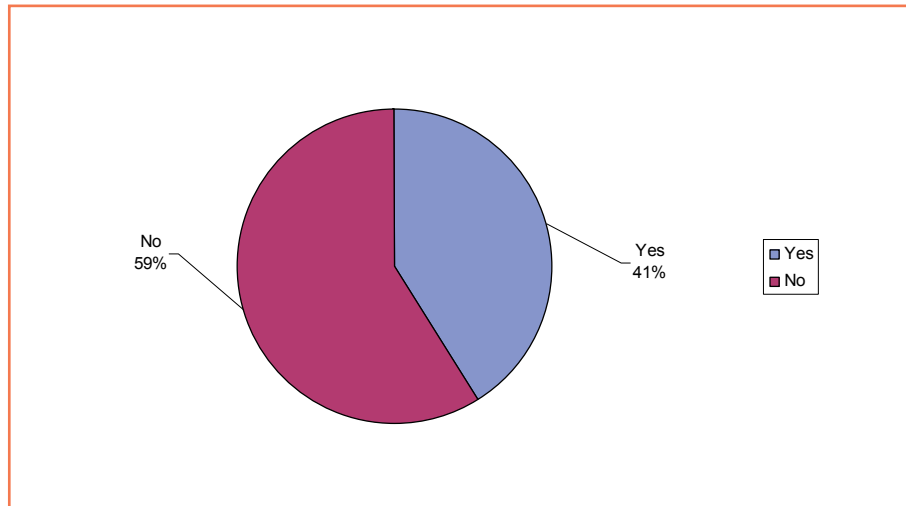**Figure 3.7: How many are involved in SEN?**

Figure 3.8: How many see language support as a SEN issue?
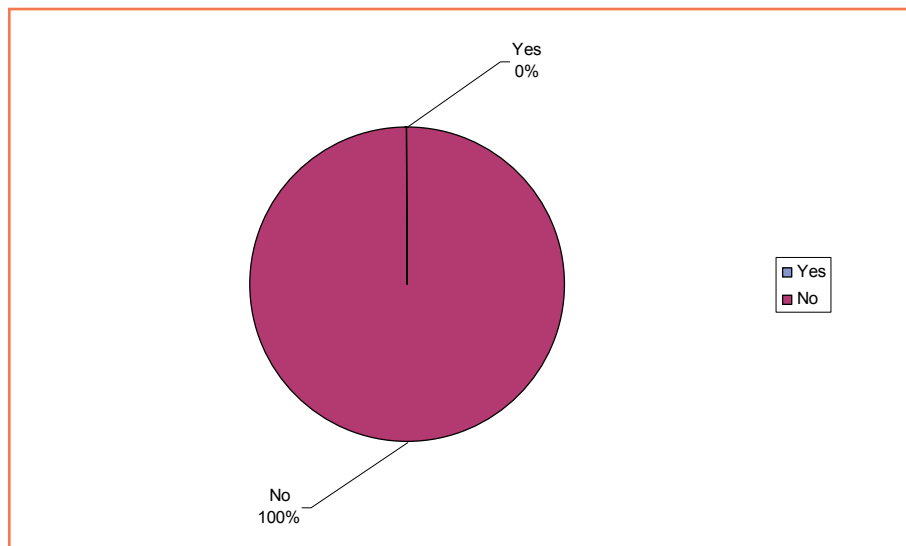
Figure 3.9: How many of you were born outside Ireland?

Figure 3.9 indicates that all language support teachers in this sample were born in Ireland. Some participants suggested that this monocultural background could have a strong bearing on teachers' capacity to respect otherness, accept diversity or fully engage with an intercultural negotiation of aspects of the curriculum, while others disagreed. "*How can I be expected to understand it when a male student doesn't want to reply to my questions in class?*" (female language support teacher).

3.2   Distribution of newcomer students across school types

Figure 3.10 shows that in the schools represented in the survey, the majority of newcomer students were to be found in Vocational, Community and Comprehensive schools and Community Colleges (70% of newcomer population of the schools represented in the survey) rather than in secondary schools – "*The convent next door has no international students while we up the road from them have 34! Now, how is that?*" (language support teacher).
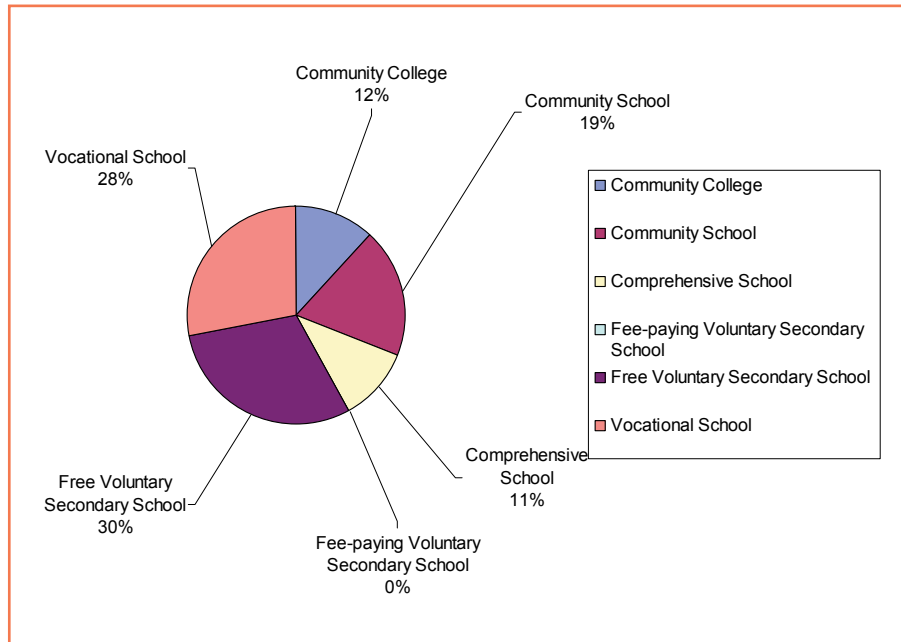
Figure 3.10: What type of school do you teach in?
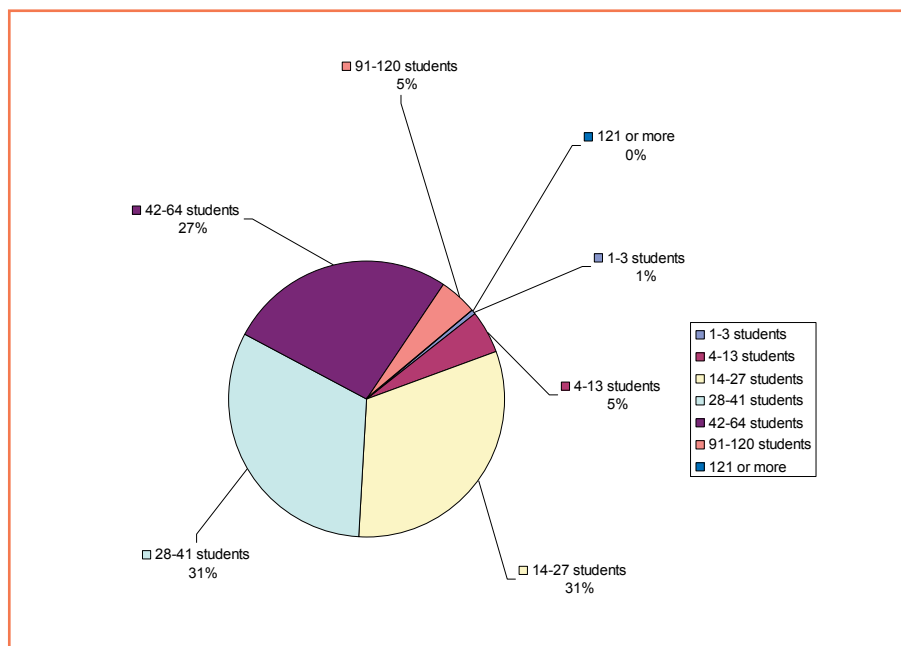
Figure 3.11: Number of newcomer students in your school?

31% of the schools represented in the survey had 14–27 newcomer students, 31% had 28–41, 27% had 42–64, and 5% had more than 91 (Figure 3.11). According to Minister O' Keeffe, moreover, OECD research in this field (PISA 2006) shows that Ireland is the OECD country with the highest distribution of newcomers across schools meaning that schools with higher concentrations of newcomer children are relatively unusual. ESRI data also shows that only a small percentage of schools have high concentrations of newcomer children.[14]

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14 Parliamentary Debates, 13 November 2008, at debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebate.aspx?F=DAL20081113.XML &Dail= 30&Ex=All&Page=35
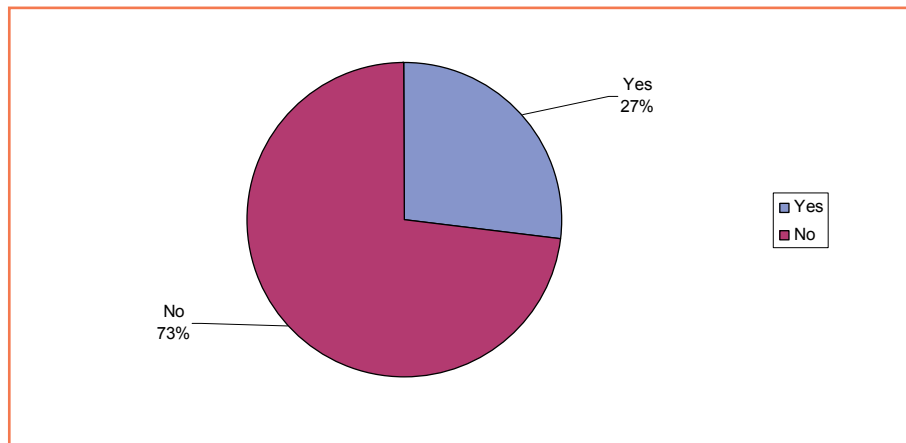
Figure 3.12: Has your school been assigned disadvantaged school status?

An interesting finding is that 27% of the language support teachers surveyed were providing language support in schools with disadvantaged status (Figure 3.12). If we compare this finding with Figure 3.11 above, we discover that 82% of these disadvantaged schools also had more than 30 newcomer students. "*You only have to look around to see that disadvantage goes hand in hand with large numbers of non-Irish students*" (language support coordinator).

3.3   Implementation of language support

Remarkably, only 41% of the participants were working in a school with a structured, planned reception/induction programme for newcomer students (Figure 3.13) and this percentage dropped to 31% if the student arrived in the course of the school year rather than at the beginning (Figure 3.14).
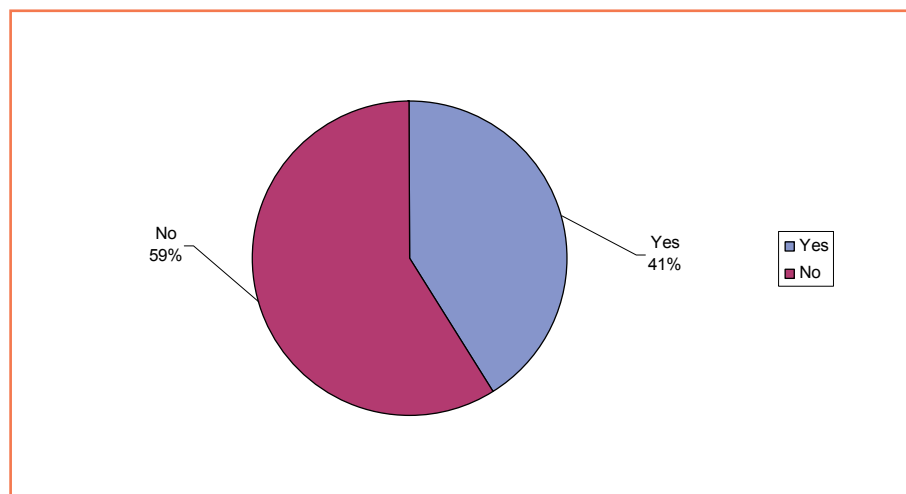
**Figure 3.13: Do you have a structured reception/induction programme
in place?**

Only 6% of the participating teachers were in schools that had adopted a whole-school approach to the induction of newcomer students, while in 45% of cases responsibility for induction fell entirely on the language support teacher (Figure 3.15) – "*It is seen as my job and no one else's*" (language support teacher).
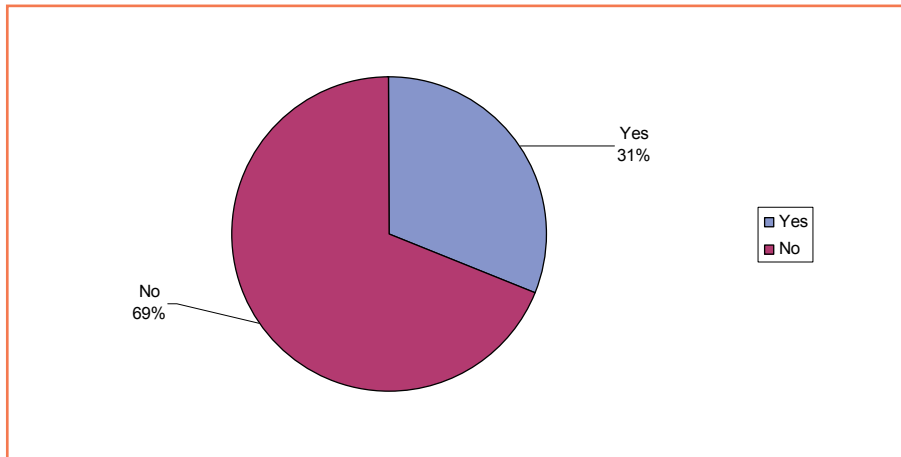
**Figure 3.14: Do you have a structured reception/induction programme
in place for students who arrive late in the school year?**
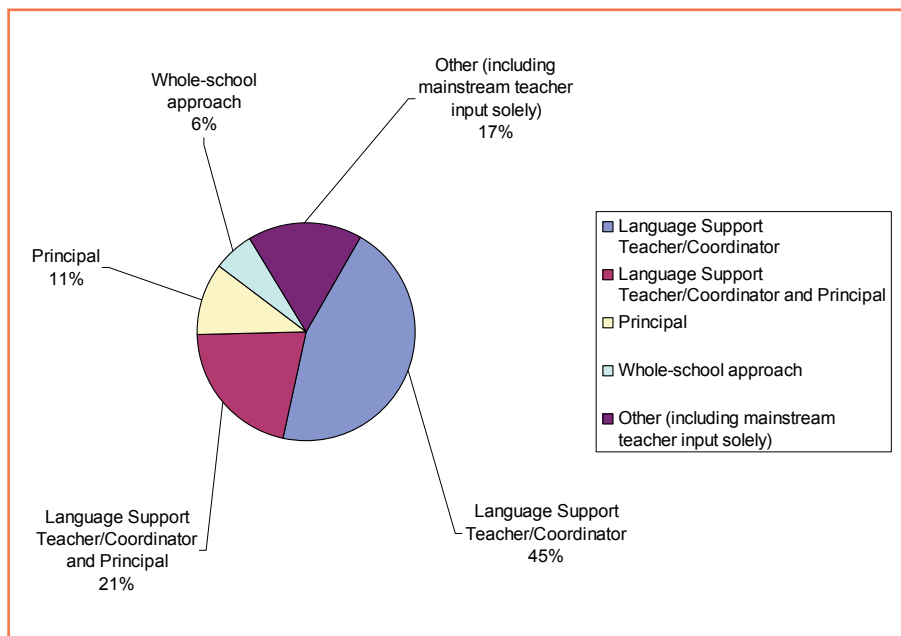
Figure 3.15: Who is responsible for overseeing the induction programme?

Figure 3.16 indicates that 34% of the teachers surveyed were working in schools with no explicit policy in place to deal with newcomer students, while only 9% were in schools that had a written policy on educational provision directly related to the needs of newcomer students.

The next three findings show that according to participants only 47% of the policies referred to in Figure 3.16 met the statutory requirements of the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000) (Figure 3.17); only 14% of these policies were regularly reviewed in schools with newcomer populations (Figure 3.18); and staff were made aware of these policies in only 11% of cases (Figure 3.19). It is striking that a large proportion of the teachers surveyed said they did not know whether or not such policies were in place, regularly reviewed or even communicated to teaching staff.
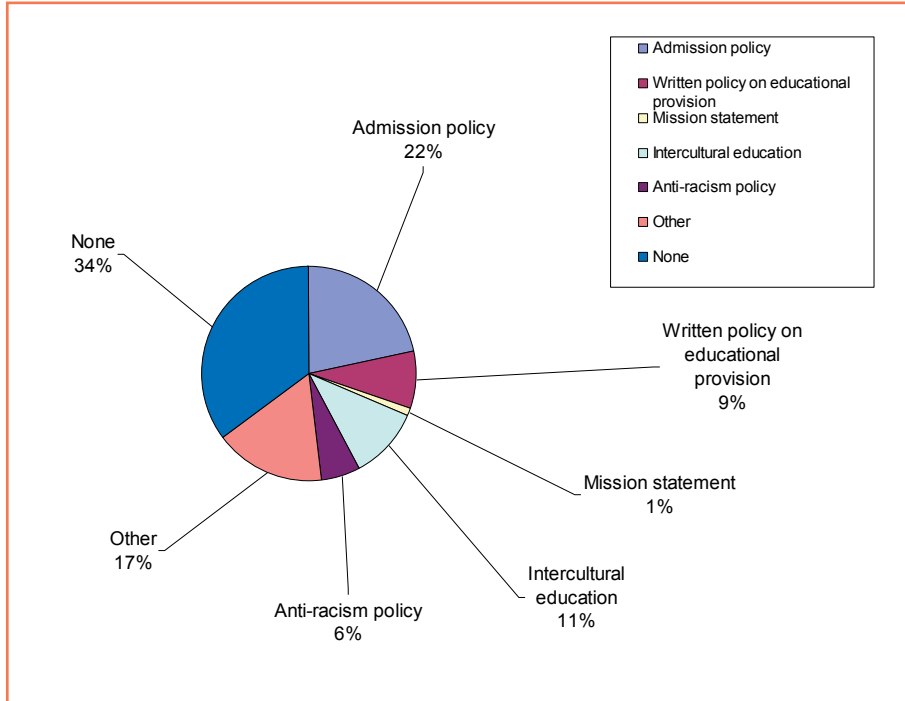
Figure 3.16: What school policies do you have in place to address the needs of newcomer students?
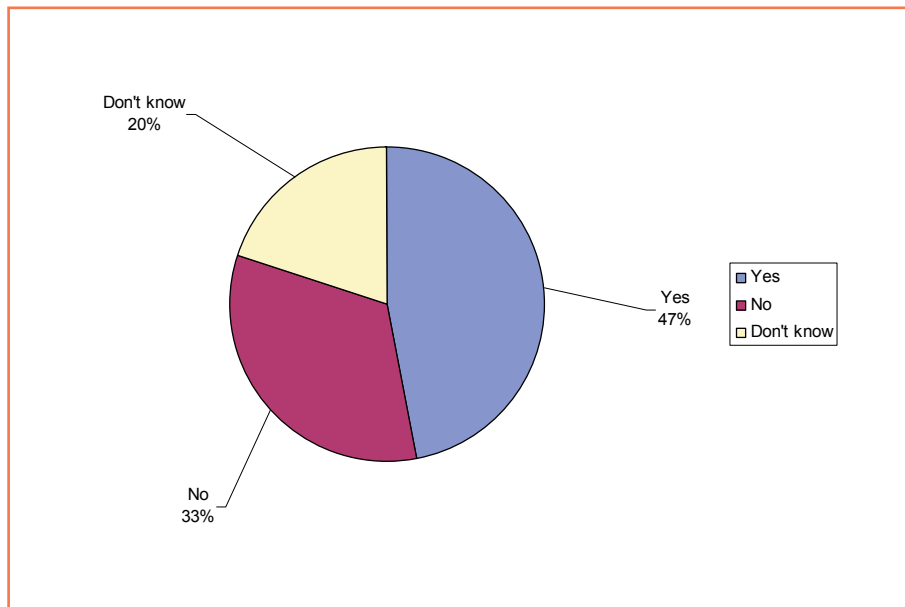
Figure 3.17: Do these policies meet statutory requirements in line with the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, and the Equal Status Act 2000?
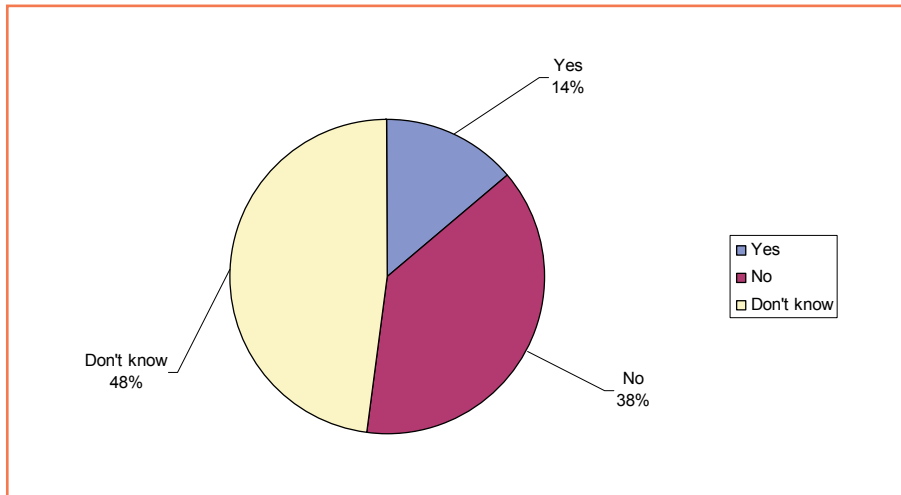
Figure 3.18: Are these policies reviewed regularly?
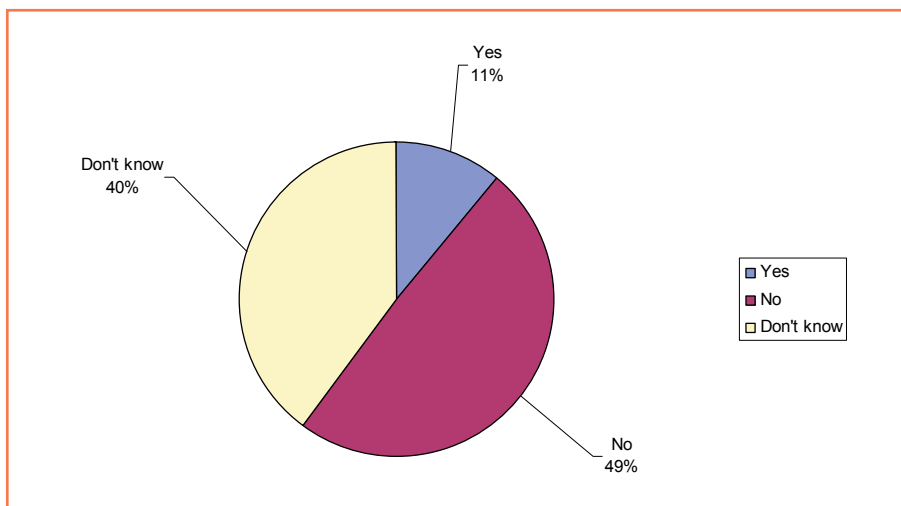
Figure 3.19: Are all staff made aware of relevant policies?
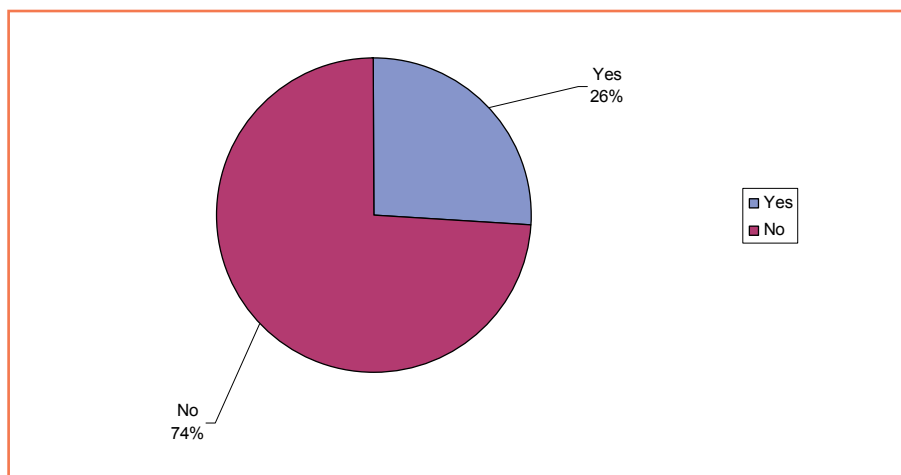
Figure 3.20: Do you have a peer support/buddy system in place in your school to help integrate newcomer students?

Research and good practice in post-primary schools in countries such as Canada, Sweden and Australia indicate that peer support/buddy systems form a useful component of well-structured induction programmes. Figure 3.20 shows that only 26% of the teachers surveyed were working in schools that had such a programme.
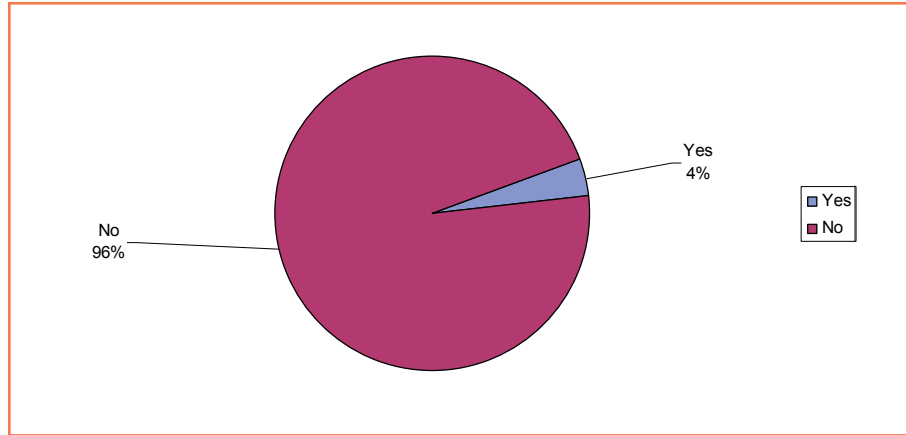
Figure 3.21: Is curricular and extra-curricular information provided in different languages?

Another element of international good practice is to provide curricular and extra-curricular information in different languages as part of the planned induction for newcomer students and their parents. As Figure 3.21 shows, only 4% of the teachers surveyed were working in schools that provided such information. "[Who] *has the time or the money to do it?*" (language support teacher).

3.4   Initial assessment of newcomer students' proficiency in English

Figure 3.22 shows that 84% of the teachers surveyed were working in schools that carried out some form of assessment of newcomer students when they arrived in the school. However, it is important to draw attention to the fact 16% did not, which suggests that newcomer students
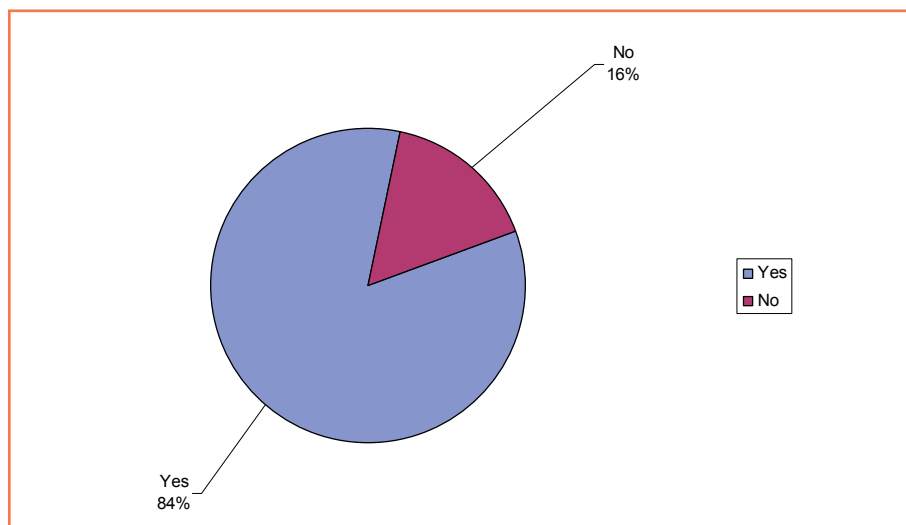
Figure 3.22: Do you assess newcomer students when they arrive in your school?

in such schools are assigned to classes solely on the basis of their age rather than their ability to understand the language of instruction (English in all cases in this survey). The implications of this are startling and must have a deleterious effect on the students' ability to engage with the curriculum and the broader school environment. When questioned about this, the teachers concerned indicated that newly arrived newcomer students were not assessed because there were no assessment tools and staff would in any case be uncertain how to interpret test scores. These teachers were then asked whether their school assessed all students (not just newcomers) on admission from primary school. Two teachers reported that such assessment was standard practice. However, they felt unable to provide a justification for the failure to assess newcomer students before assigning them to classes. "*It's just the way it happens, I guess*" (language support teacher).

Figure 3.23 shows that the Oxford Placement Tests (Allan, 2004, 2006) were by far the most common assessment instrument used by the teachers surveyed, though 64% expressed reservations about the cost. A fifth of those teachers who assessed newcomer students on arrival said that they used material derived from IILT's website and print resources (in particular, *A Resource Book for Language Support in Post-primary Schools*). Assessment was used primarily to place students in appropriate classes (61%) or to help inform the language support teacher's practice (18%) (Figure 3.24).
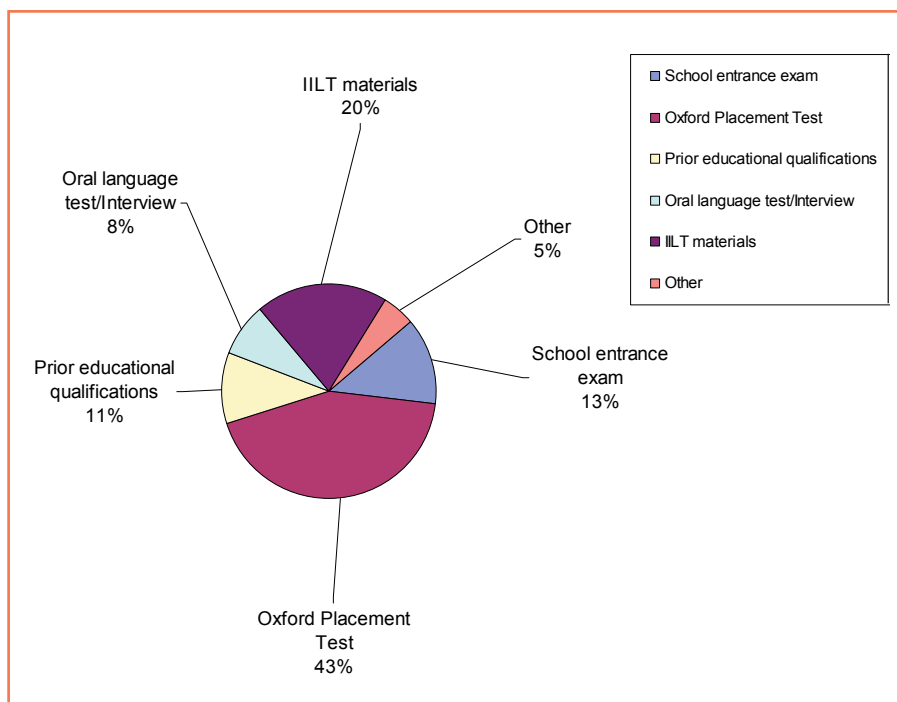
Figure 3.23: What tools do you use to assess the newcomer student?
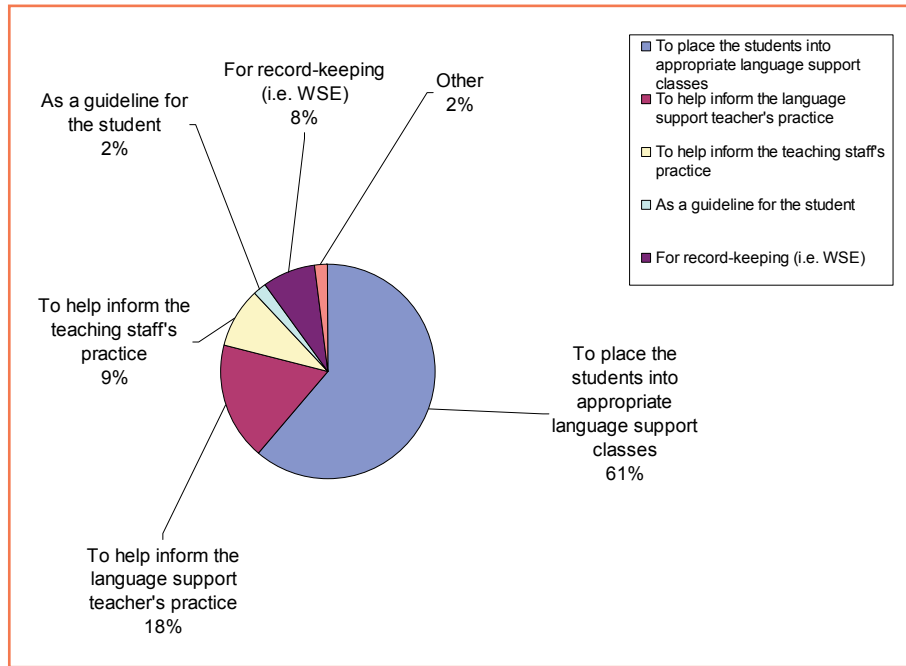
Figure 3.24: How do you use the results of this assessment?

3.5 Use of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the European Language Portfolio

Two thirds of language support teachers (67%) said that they used or had used the European Language Portfolio (Figure 3.25). However, this percentage fell to 36% when it came to using the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks that IILT developed as the curriculum for English language support in post-primary schools (Figure 3.26) as specified by Circular 0053/2007 – "*I'd like to and I know I should, particularly if the Inspector pops in, but I find it complicated and would welcome some training*" (language support teacher).
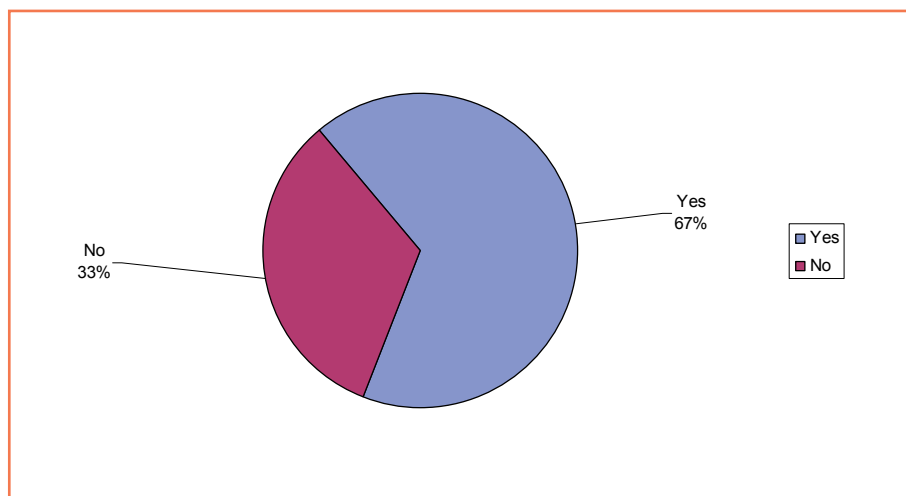
Figure 3.25: Have you used the European Language Portfolio produced by IILT?
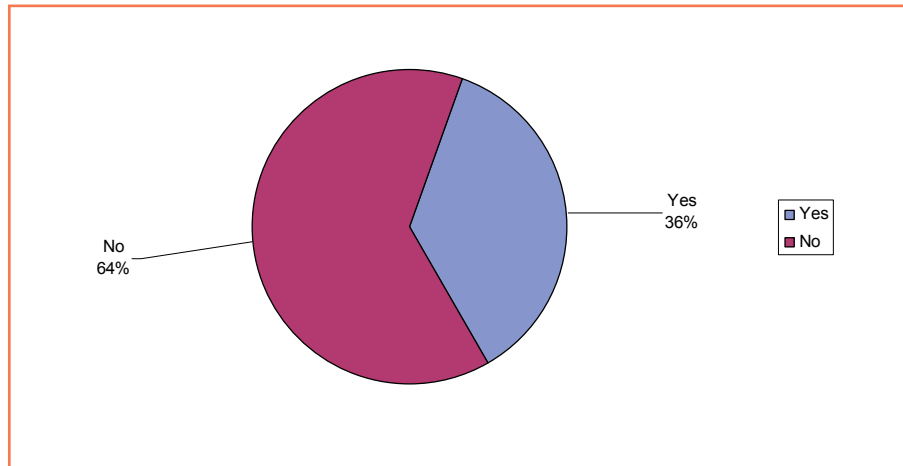
Figure 3.26: Have you used the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks produced by IILT, which are the suggested curriculum for English language support?

3.6 Where does language support take place?

Good practice and common sense suggest that a dedicated language support room is an important resource in a school that seeks to address the needs of newcomer students. Such a room serves a number of functions both for language support staff and for newcomer students. However, as Figure 3.27 reveals, 63% of the teachers surveyed were operating without such a resource. "*I had one but it got co-opted into a photocopying room over a midterm break*" (language support teacher).
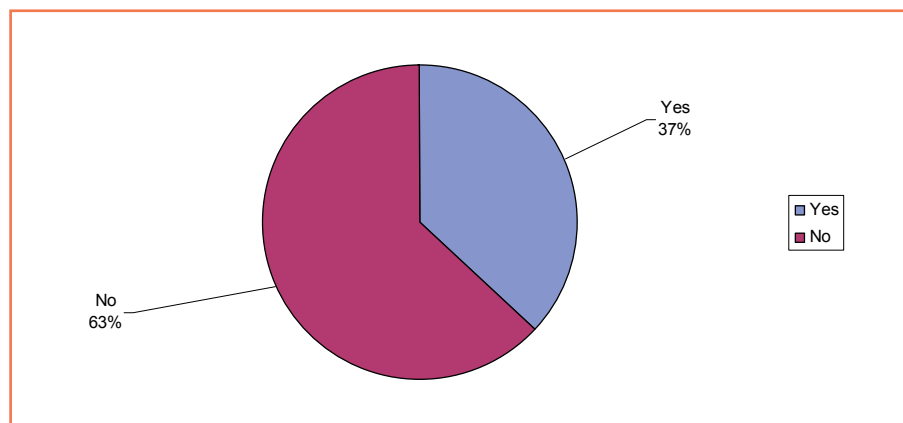
Figure 3.27: Do you have a dedicated language support room?

3.7 Managing the provision of language support

3.7.1 Student entitlement

70% of the newcomer students in 86% of the schools surveyed were entitled to language support on the basis that their home language was not the language of school instruction (Figure 3.28).
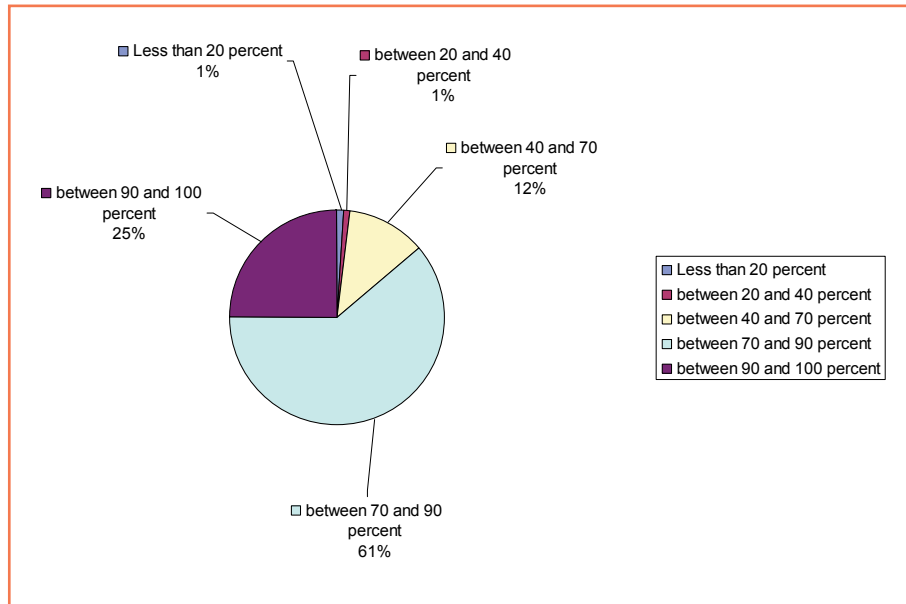
Figure 3.28: Percentage of newcomer students entitled to language support on the basis that their home language was not the language of instruction (English/Irish)

However, if we consider how many are entitled to language support on the basis of still being within their two-year entitlement (Figure 3.29), we see that this percentage drops significantly, with 70% of newcomer students being entitled in only 14% of the schools included in the survey. These findings suggest that there is a considerable discrepancy between entitlement based on language need and entitlement determined by the initial two-year limit imposed by DES. According to the language support teachers surveyed, the number of newcomer students who require language support because they can access neither the culture of the school nor the curriculum far exceeds those who are entitled according to the DES's two-year rule. This throws into relief
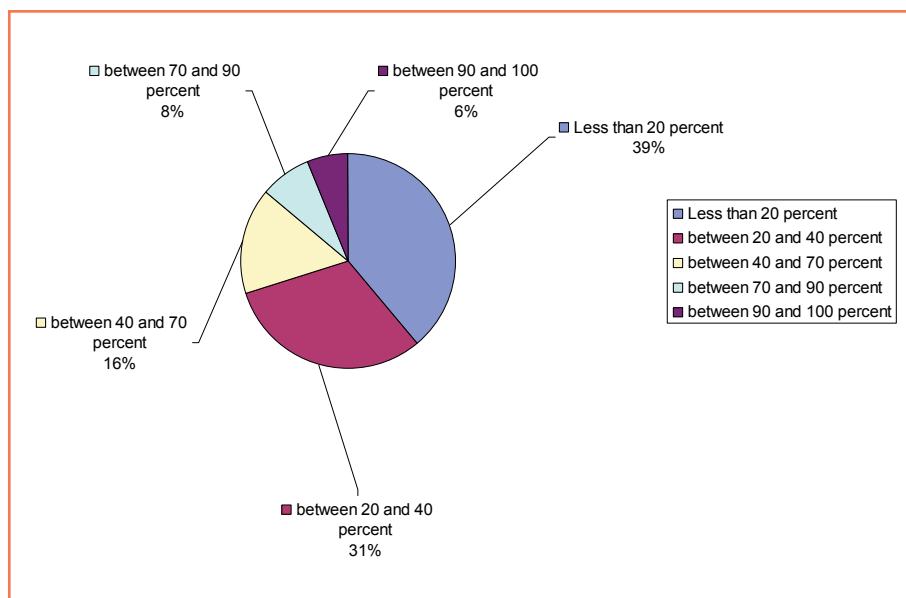
Figure 3.29: Percentage of newcomer students entitled to language support on the basis of still being within their two-year allocation

Figures 3.30 and 3.31, which show that 55% of newcomer students were still receiving language support even though they had exhausted their two years' entitlement at primary school, and that 62% were still receiving language support even though they had exhausted their two years' entitlement at post-primary school.
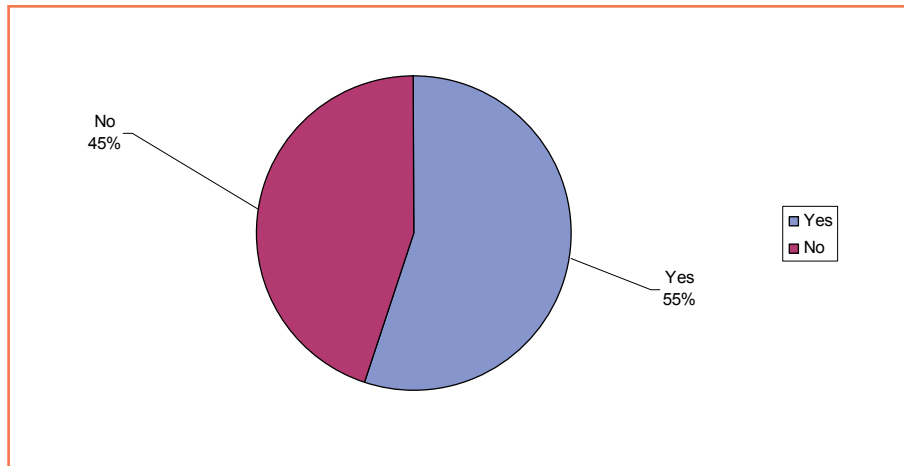
Figure 3.30: Are there students still receiving language support having completed two years of language support in primary before coming to your school?
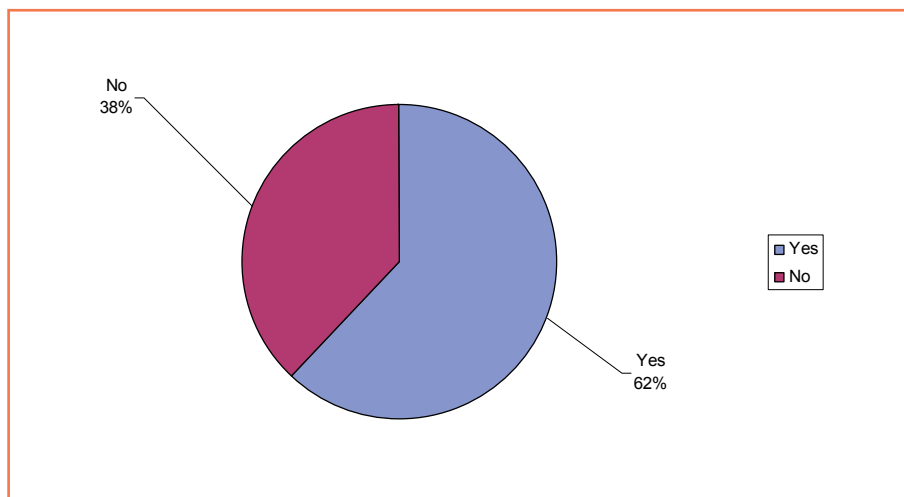
Figure 3.31: Are there students still receiving language support having completed two years of language support in post-primary?

Figure 3.32 shows that of the teachers who had sought to extend language support beyond the two-year limit (as provided for in Circular 0053/2007), only 7% had found this relatively easy to achieve – "[student name] *needs that allocation now and my professional judgement should be accepted by the Department*" (language support teacher).
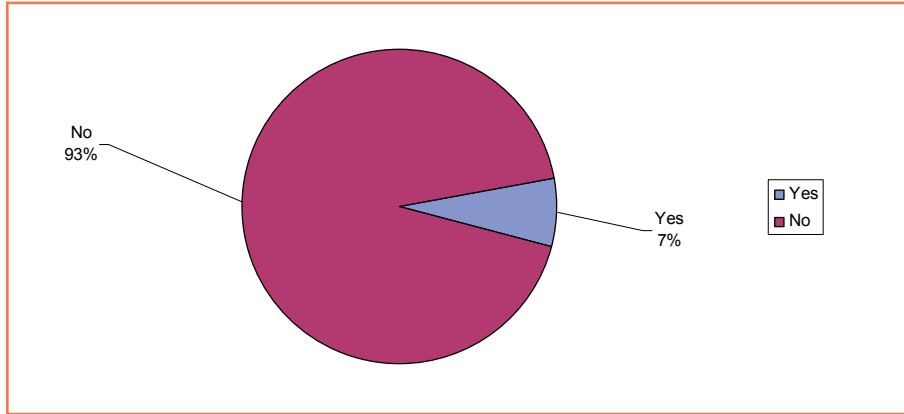
**Figure 3.32: In cases where you have sought extensions to the two-year limit
as outlined in Circular 0053/2007, has this been a relatively easy and
transparent process?**

3.7.2 Frequency of language support

Figure 3.33 shows that the majority of newcomer students in the 70 schools represented in the survey received between 60 and 90 minutes of language support weekly (54%), while 10% received language support in such an inconsistent manner that it was difficult for the teachers concerned to calculate an average weekly amount. Research and common sense suggest that language support should be provided to newcomer students on a daily basis to ensure that they have opportunities to immediately apply what they are learning and that a focus on language becomes part of their daily routine (Crawford, 2002; Fernandez, 1996).
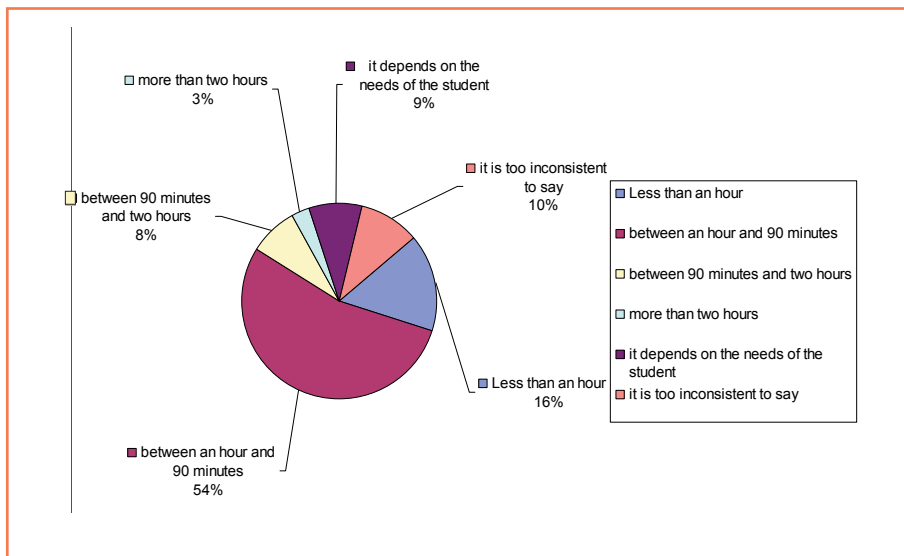
**Figure 3.33: How many hours of language support does a newcomer student
receive each week?**

It is worth noting Harklau's (1994) analysis, which indicated that the predominant interactional routine in mainstream classrooms was teacher-led and followed the three-part structure that has long been identified by classroom discourse research (e.g., Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) as the

most common form of classroom interaction: teacher initiation – student response – teacher fol-low-up. This structure mostly limits student output to a single word or phrase, and many writing activities are similarly constrained: exercises that employ multiple choice or short answer formats or merely require students to fill gaps with single words or phrases. Clearly, as Harklau found, such discourse structures do not challenge students to create coherence in sustained oral inter-action or extended written text, because they do not require them to engage in the negotiation of turns, the joint construction of meaning, and topic maintenance.

Figure 3.34 shows that only 9% of the teachers surveyed were working in schools where lan-guage support was provided daily. 37% of teachers were in schools where language support was provided between two and four times a week, 23% in schools where it was provided once or twice a week, and 22% in schools where it was provided once a week. Remarkably, 2% of the teach-ers surveyed were in schools where, despite recognized language-of-instruction deficits amongst their newcomer students, language support was provided in such an inconsistent manner that they could not suggest a weekly average amount as there were some weeks when they "*failed to touch base*" with their newcomer students.
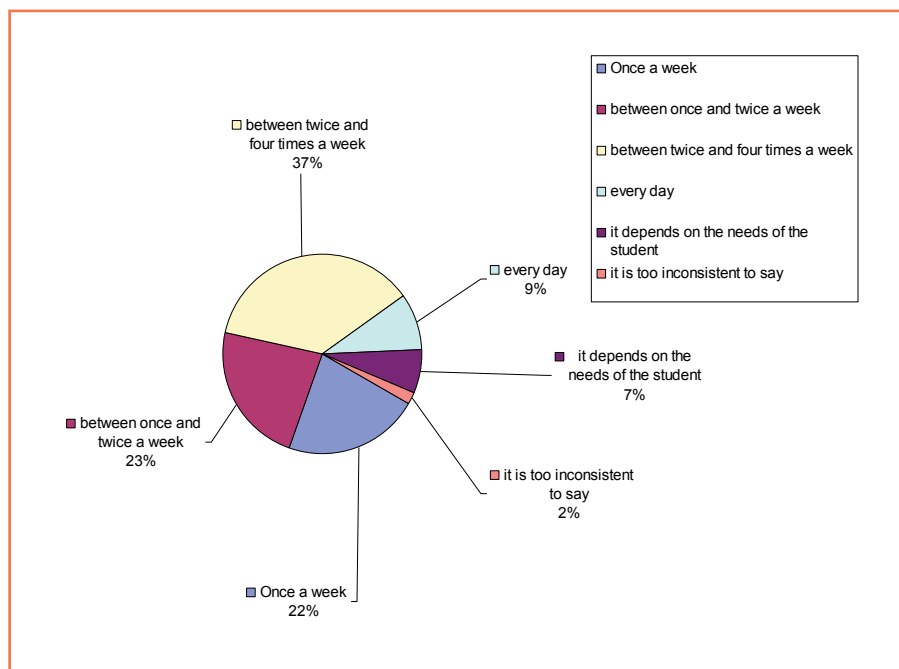
Figure 3.34: How many times a week do language support classes occur?

3.7.3 Class size and organization of teaching

Figure 3.35 shows a large range of average class sizes for language support, with 22% of the teachers surveyed engaged in one-to-one teaching and 10% teaching groups of more than eight students – "*I once had to teach a group of fifteen newcomer students. Now I ask you, who can do that well?*" (language support teacher).

The most common teaching approach is to withdraw language support students from the main-stream class. Only 4% of the teachers surveyed reported that they managed to adopt other approaches (Figure 3.36). Figure 3.37 shows that in the schools represented in the survey, with-

drawal from Irish occurred in 75% of cases and from Religion in 42% of cases. Interestingly, only 2% of newcomer students followed a complete language support curriculum.
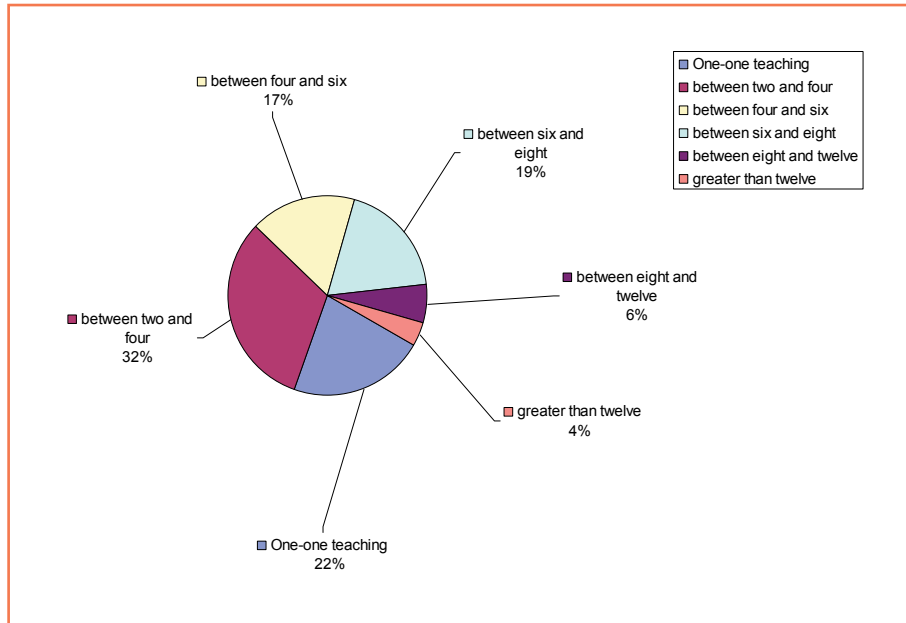
Figure 3.35: What is the average class size for language support lessons?
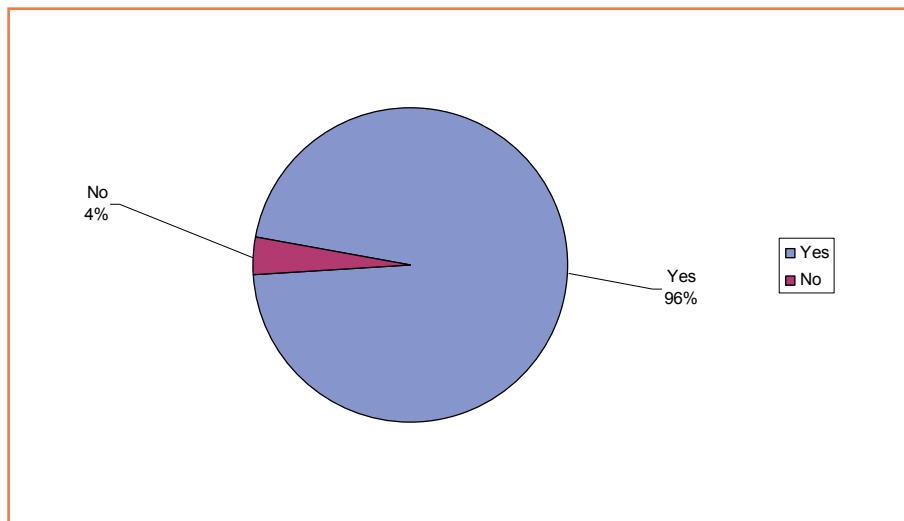
Figure 3.36: Do you withdraw newcomer students from mainstream subject classes for language support?
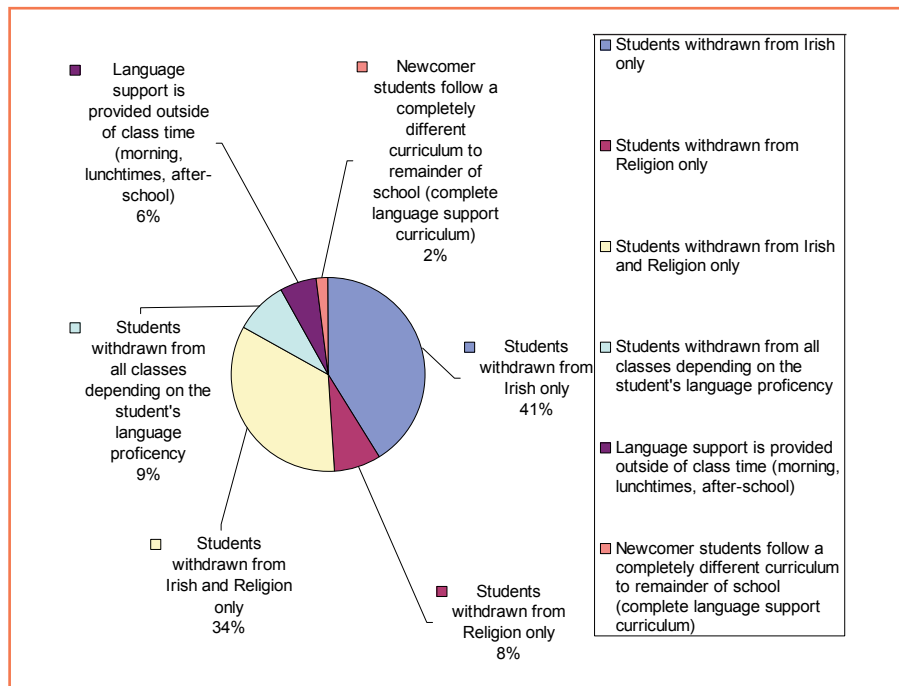
Figure 3.37: How is language support accommodated in the school's/student's timetable

3.7.4 Communication between language support and subject teachers

Good practice requires that language support teachers work in partnership with mainstream class teachers. This involves joint planning and assessment as well as team teaching. The expertise of the language support teacher should help to make subject lessons accessible to newcomer students by meeting their specific language needs. In cases where a language support teacher is not available, the mainstream teacher should have the training to deploy these strategies.

3.7.5 Timetabling language support

As Figure 3.38 (below) shows, in the schools represented in the survey the language support teacher/coordinator was primarily responsible for timetabling language support, whether individually (35%) or in consultation with the principal or deputy principal (35%).

3.7.6 Language support and the mainstream curriculum

45% of the teachers surveyed did not consider that language support in their schools was linked to the mainstream curriculum that their newcomer students were required to follow (Figure 3.39). Further reflecting this discontinuity between language support and the curriculum, only 41% included the use of subject-specific keywords in their language support classes (Figure 3.40). "*Keywords! Just try asking the subject teacher for keywords and see how far you get!*" (language support teacher).

Remarkably, only 17% of the teachers surveyed explicitly linked their language support provision to the literacy aims of the Junior and Senior Cycle English syllabuses despite the fact that 43% of the language support teachers surveyed had English as their mainstream subject (Figure 3.41).
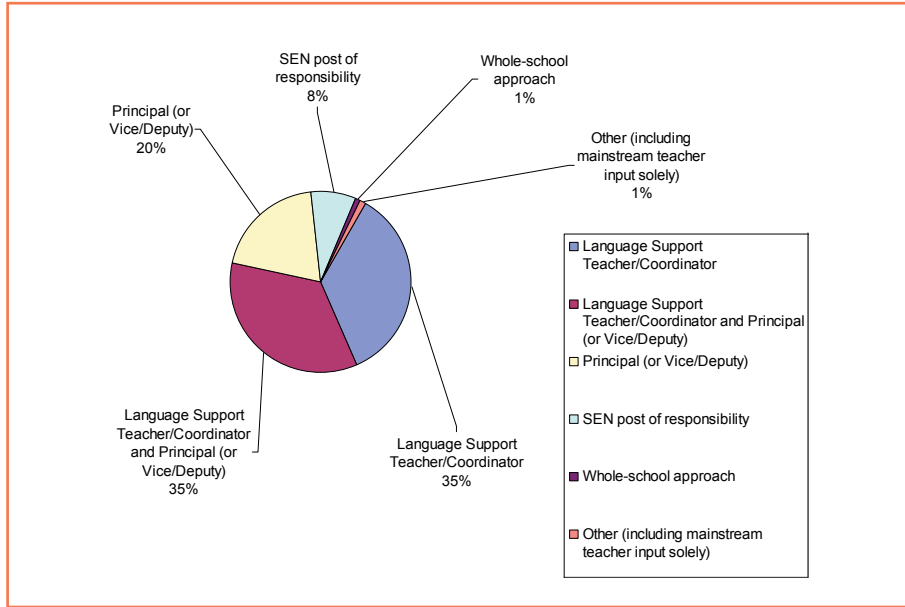
Figure 3.38: Who is responsible for timetabling language support in your school?
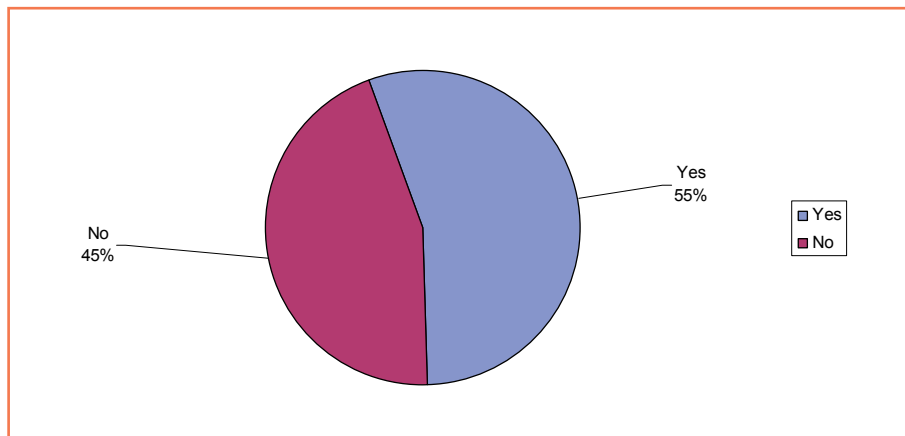
Figure 3.39: Is language support linked to the mainstream curriculum?
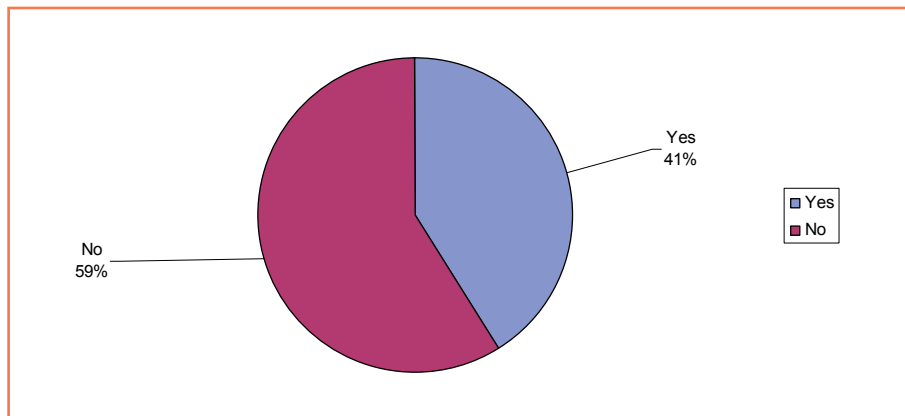
Figure 3.40: Do you use keywords for each curriculum subject in your language support classes?
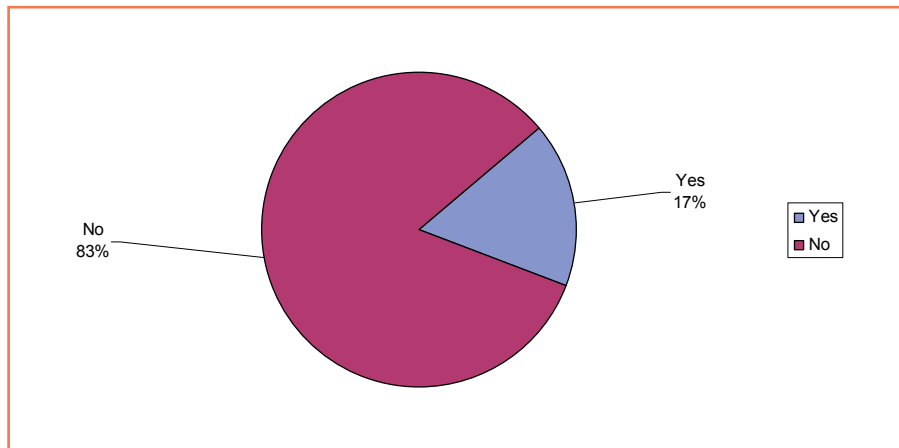
Figure 3.41: Do you explicitly link the literacy aims of the Junior and Senior Cycle English syllabuses to your language support classes?

Classroom materials for language support mostly came from three sources: the IILT website, the internet, and TEFL books/materials (90%), with only 5% of the participants reporting that they made explicit use of curriculum subject textbooks (Figure 3.42).
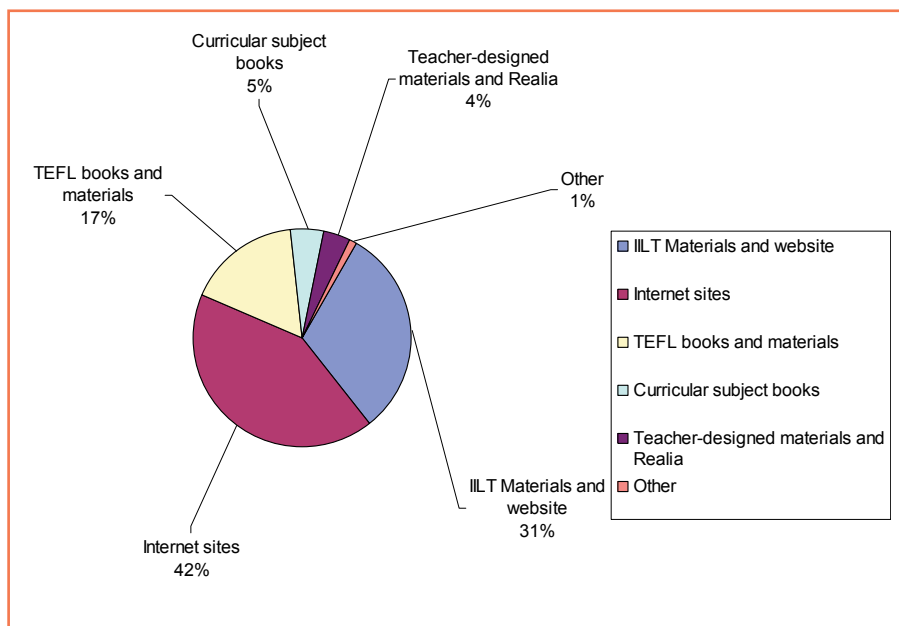
Figure 3.42: Where do you get classroom materials for language support lessons?

88% of the teachers surveyed reported that they streamed newcomer students according to their ability to engage with the language of instruction (Figure 3.43).

Only 22% of the participants were working in schools that had a language support coordinator (Figure 3.44).
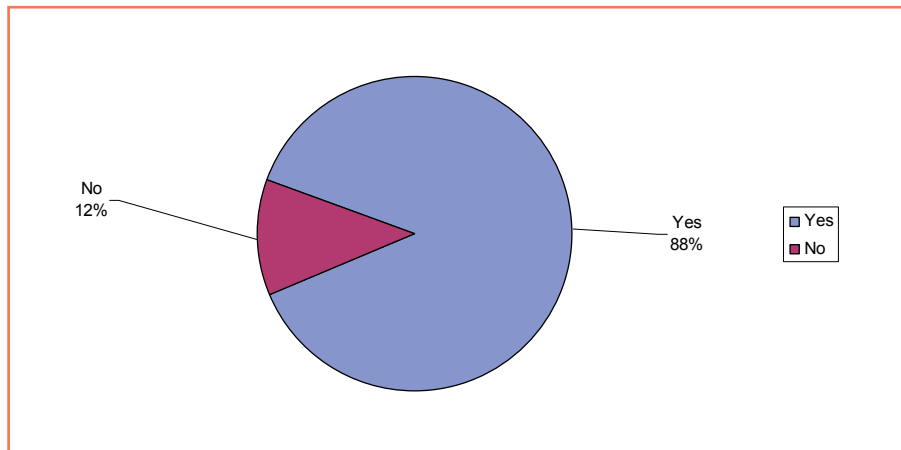
Figure 3.43: Are newcomer students streamed according to their proficiency in English?
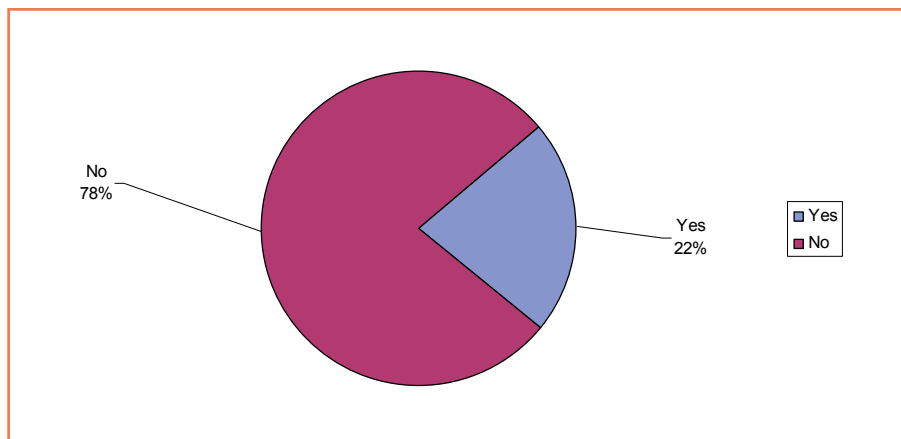
Figure 3.44: Is there a person in a post of resonsibility dedicated to coordinating language support in your school?

3.7.7 Roles of the language support teacher

The varied roles that language support teachers are required to play are shown in Figure 3.45. 33% of the teachers surveyed indicated that their chief responsibility was to provide language support, while 33% judged that placement and assessment were their main responsibility. Only 4% reported that their main responsibility was to interact with other teaching staff concerning how best to address the needs of newcomer students. This last finding finds an echo in Figure 3.46, which shows that only 16% of the teachers surveyed engaged in regular meetings with mainstream subject teachers.

Figure 3.47 provides more information on the lack of communication between language support teachers and their mainstream subject colleagues. Of those teachers who reported that they had regular meetings with mainstream subject teachers, only 1% said that they engaged with mainstream subject teachers on a daily basis, while 82% did so informally (e.g., in the corridor between classes).
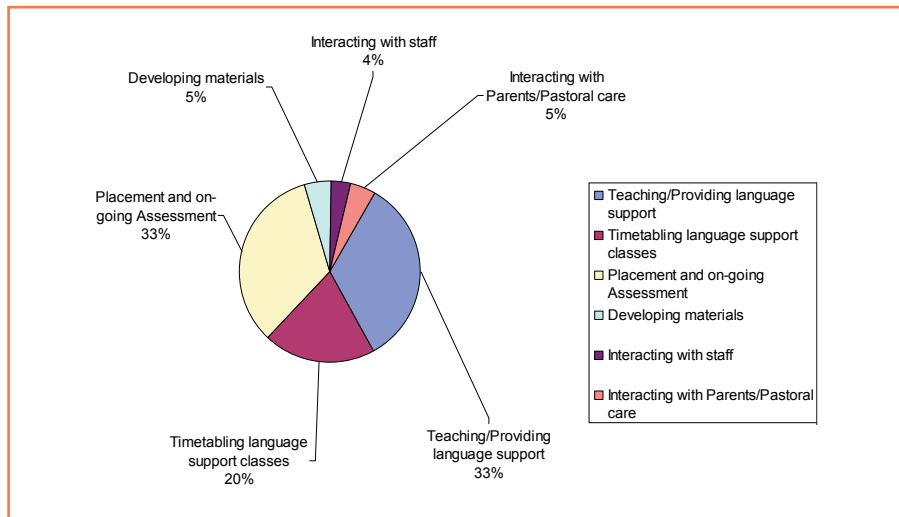
Figure 3.45: As a language support teacher, what is your main area of responsibility?
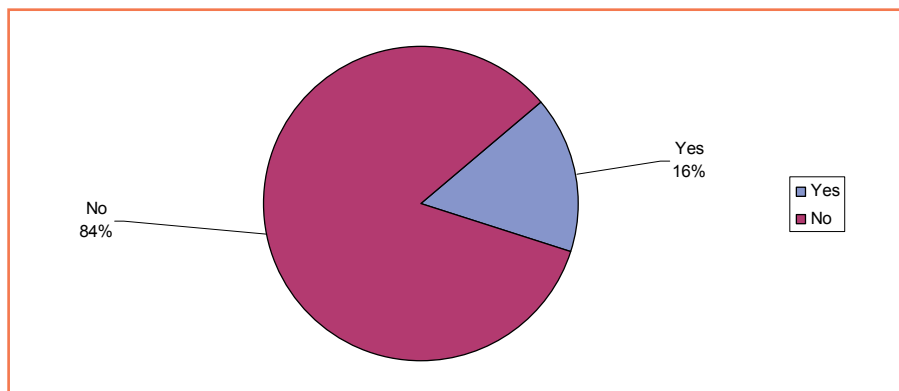
Figure 3.46: Are there regular meetings between subject teachers and language support teachers in your school?
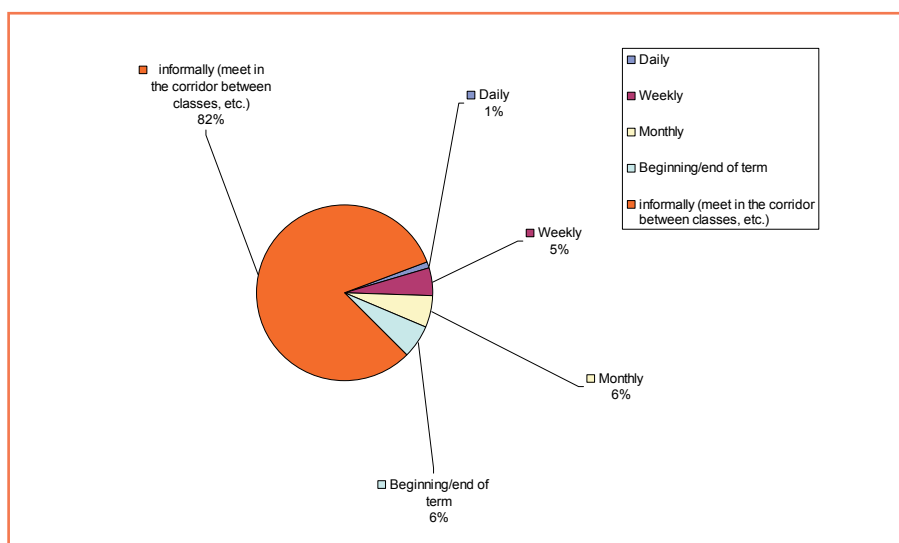
Figure 3.47: If you do have regular meetings with subject teachers, how frequently do you communicate with them about language support issues relating to their subject?

As Figure 3.48 shows, lack of time was the reason most often given for this failure of communication (47%). However, 34% of the teachers surveyed cited the difficulty of involving mainstream subject teachers in issues relating to newcomer students, even when large numbers of newcomer students were present in their classes. When asked to elaborate, language support teachers explained that a central difficulty is that mainstream subject teachers are often unfamiliar with theories of language learning and in most cases refuse to accept that all mainstream post-primary subjects have their own specific language content. This problem was further compounded in 14% of cases by a failure on the part of senior management to ensure that language support teachers – who in the main were newer members of staff (see Figure 3.1) – were adequately "*backed up*" (language support teacher) when they tried to encourage meetings with mainstream subject teachers.
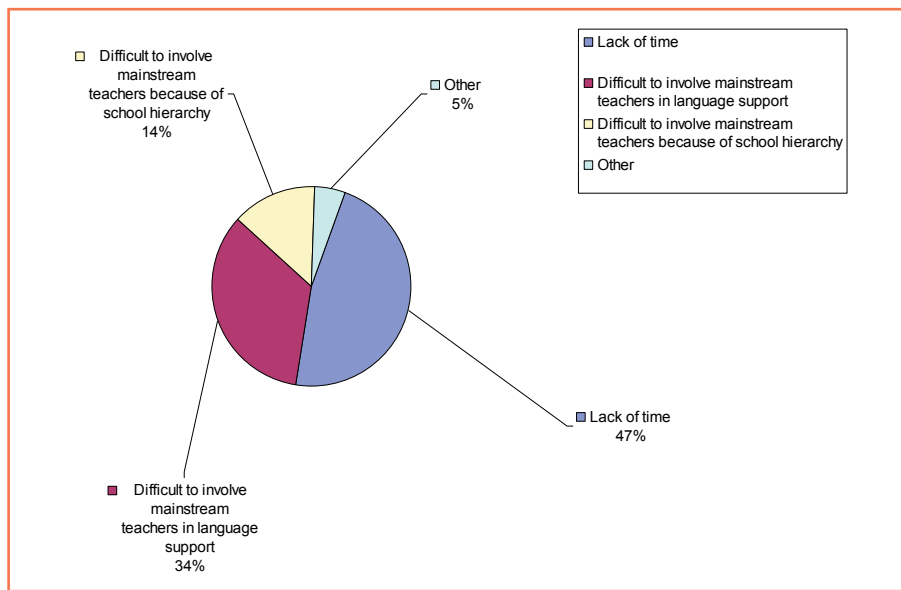
Figure 3.48: If you do not communicate frequently with subject teachers about language support issues relating to their subject, why not?

3.7.8 Support from the school management team

Only 23% of the teachers surveyed felt that they received adequate support from the school management team (Figure 3.49) – "*It's like we're at the bottom of a pecking order which we know*
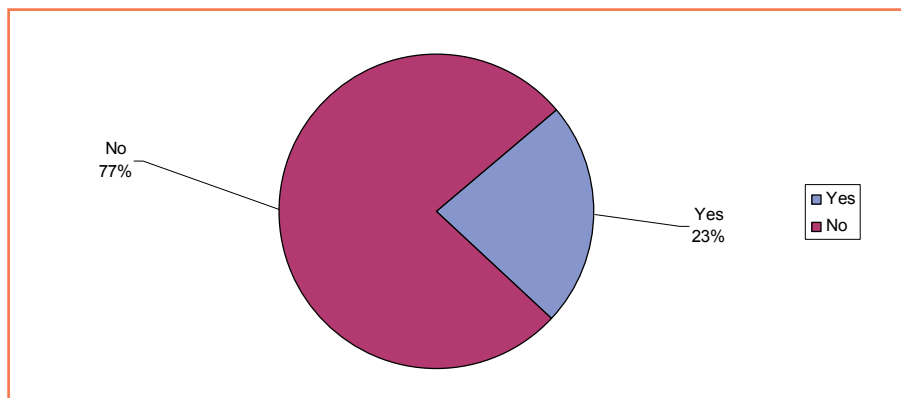
Figure 3.49: Do you receive adequate support from the school management team?
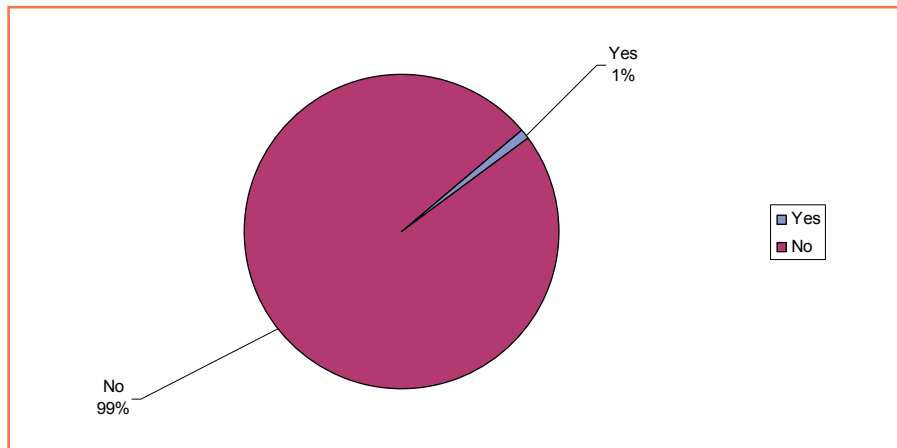
Figure 3.50: Do you use team teaching?

nothing about" (language support teacher). Considering some of the findings above, it comes as no surprise that only 1% of the participants reported that they engaged in team teaching (Figure 3.50) as a means of addressing the academic and linguistic needs of newcomer students – "*Her hair would fall out if I suggested team teaching*" (language support coordinator's comment on her school principal).

3.7.9 Issues in teaching language support

Figure 3.51 shows that 33% of the teachers surveyed felt that aspects of the teaching of curriculum subjects had been changed to take account of intercultural sensitivities. They mentioned in particular changes in the teaching of SPHE, Religion and Human Biology. One language support teacher who also taught history reflected that she was aware of aspects of Middle Eastern history being ignored as they were potentially contentious given the make-up of her class.
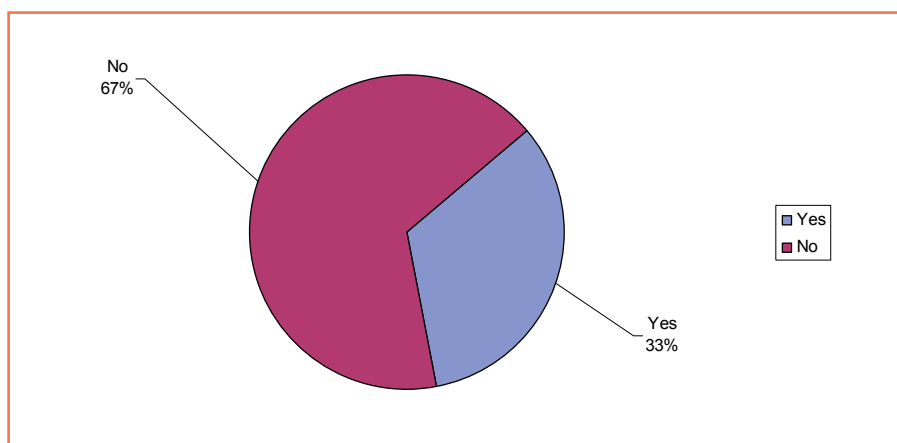
Figure 3.51: Are there aspects of the teaching of curriculum subjects which have been changed to take account of intercultural sensitivities?

Only 10% of the teachers surveyed reported that differentiated teaching methods were used in classes with newcomer students (Figure 3.52). Successful differentiation obliges teachers to change the way they think about the classroom and the curriculum by challenging the belief that the curriculum is just coverage of facts and by partnering with students in teaching and learning.
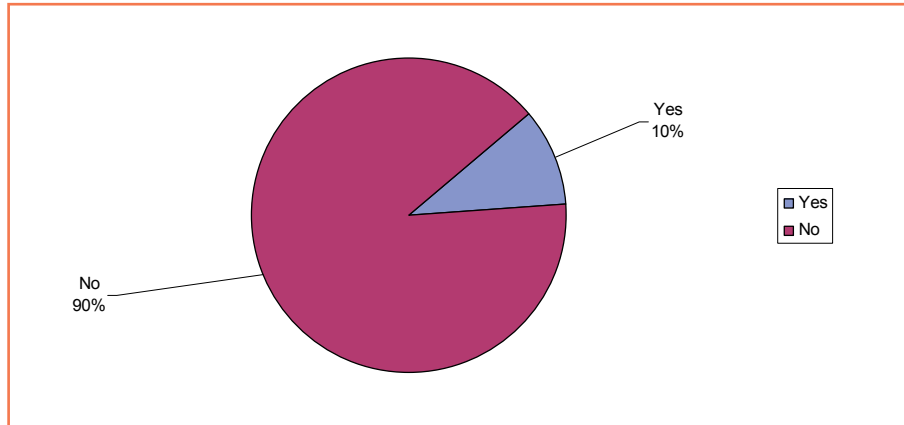
Figure 3.52: Do you use differentiated teaching methods?

Only 62% of the teachers surveyed said that they explicitly taught grammar to newcomer students (Figure 3.53). When questioned, many of them admitted that their reluctance stemmed from their own lack of grammatical knowledge and appropriate teaching methods – "*Some of the newcomer students actually know more than I do about a present participle, for example*" (language support teacher). Figure 3.54 shows that 31% of the participants reported using various kinds of visual aids and realia when teaching newcomer students.
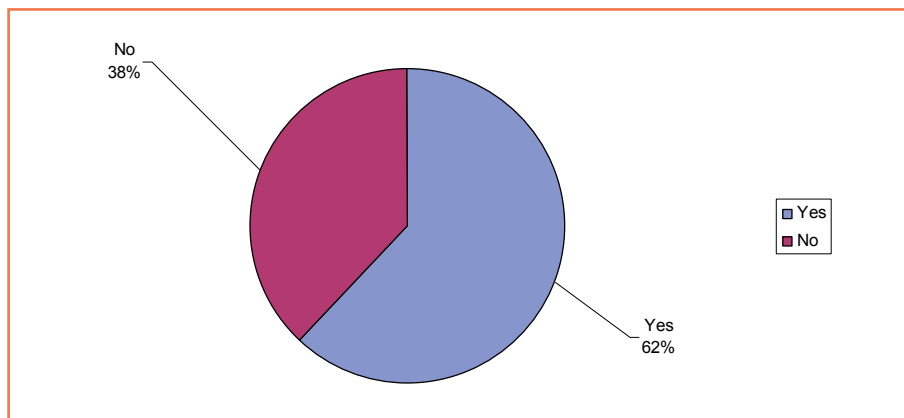
Figure 3.53: Do you explicitly teach grammar to your newcomer students?
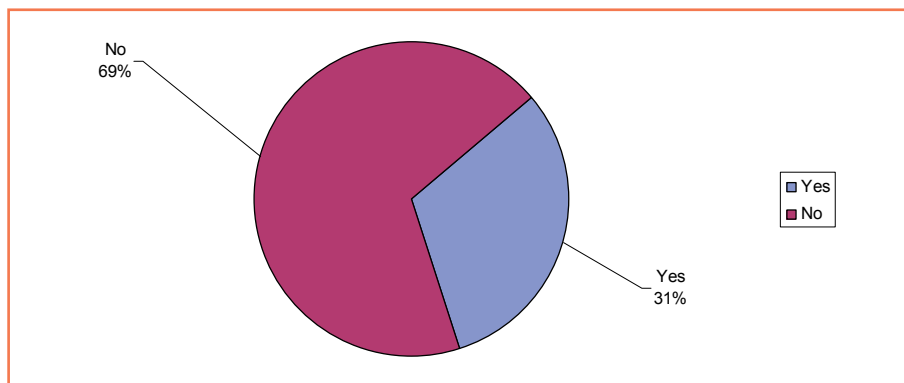
Figure 3.54: Do you use visual aids, pictures and realia when teaching newcomer students?
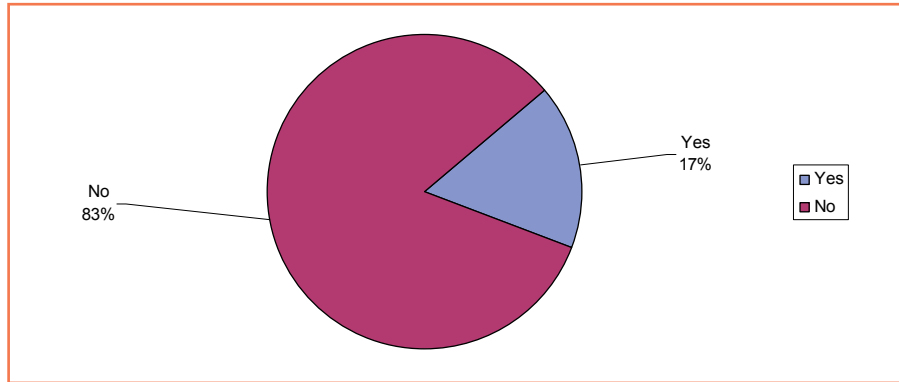
Figure 3.55: Do you have easy access to the use of computer facilities for your newcomer students?

While Jonassen et al. (1999) argue that meaningful technology-enhanced language learning is active, authentic and cooperative, research shows that many learners are unable to develop sufficient autonomous learning skills (the ability to do things for themselves) to make the most of ICT language learning tools (Linard, 2000). Nevertheless, appropriate use of ICT (e.g., the Internet) provides newcomer learners with opportunities to use English in meaningful ways, in authentic contexts, and in cooperation and collaboration with their peers. Linard (ibid.) suggests that the use of ICT can add a certain prestige to language learning in the minds of learners. However, Figure 3.55 shows that only 17% of the teachers surveyed had easy access to computer facilities in their schools.

3.8   Training for language support

Figures 3.56–3.66 touch on an area of deep disquiet among the language support teachers surveyed, that of adequate pre- and in-service training. Only 10% of the teachers surveyed had received training related to teaching newcomer students in their pre-service teacher training (Figure 3.56). What is more, Figure 3.57 shows that this training was mandatory and examinable in only 3% of cases; in the remaining 97% of cases training related to teaching newcomer students was an elective module or elective day session. When asked to reflect upon this training, only 27% of those who had received it felt that it had been of any use in their subsequent teaching of newcomer students (Figure 3.58).
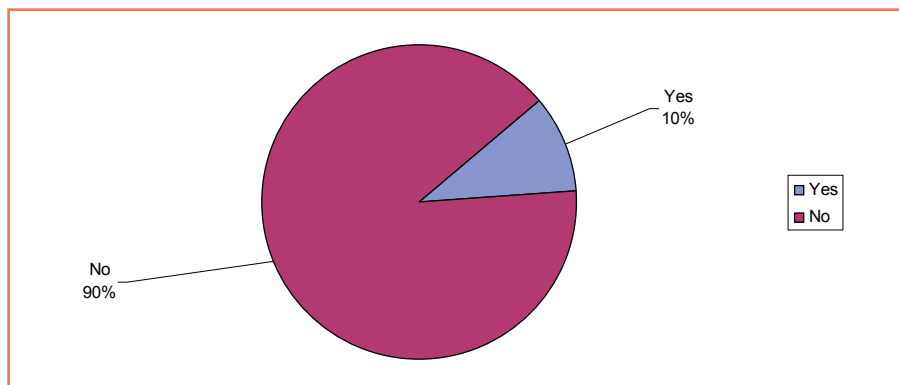
Figure 3.56: Did you receive specific training related to teaching newcomer students in your original teacher training?
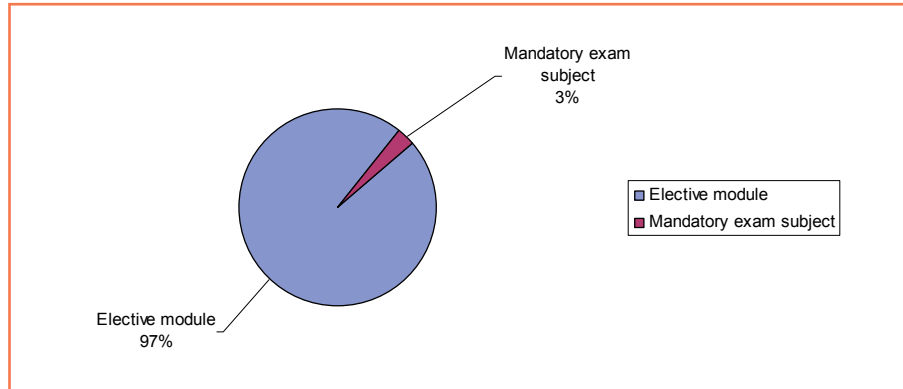
Figure 3.57: If you received specific training related to teaching newcomer students in your original teacher training, what form did it take?
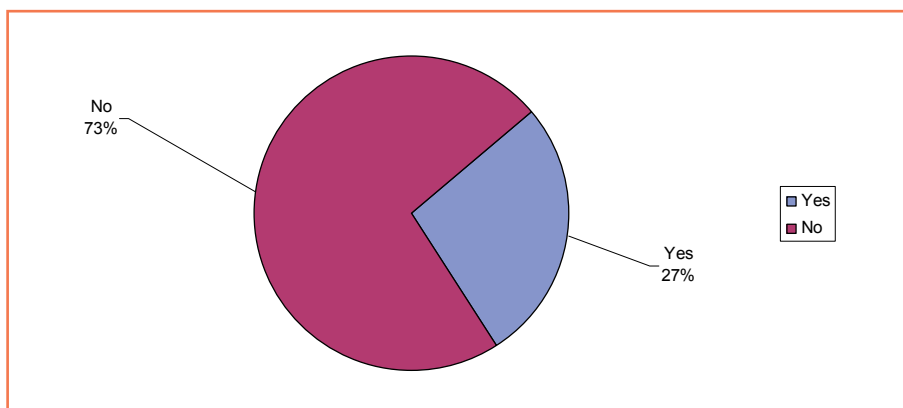
Figure 3.58: Was this training useful?

Only 12% of the language support teachers surveyed had received in-school training related to teaching newcomer students (Figure 3.59). Such training mostly took the form of informal advice from the senior leadership team and/or other members of staff. More structured in-service was chiefly related to how to develop an inclusive school/classroom culture. Only 12% of the participants who had received in-service training had been given specific guidance on appropriate classroom methodologies and English language teaching approaches, and only 7% had been guided
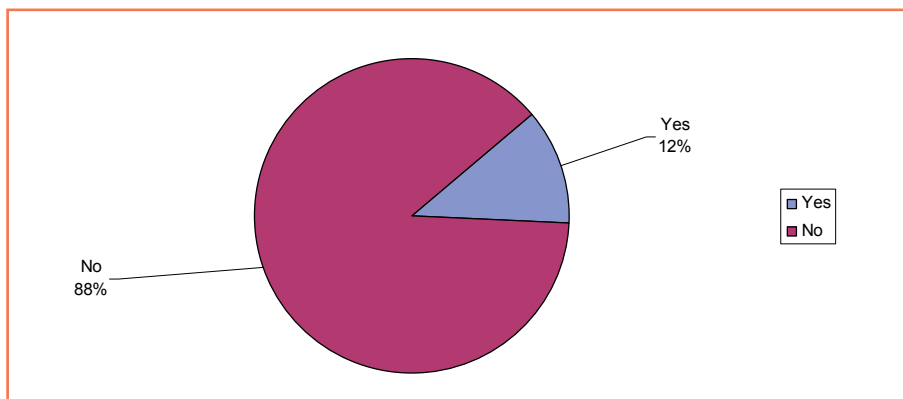
Figure 3.59: Within your present school, did you receive training related to teaching newcomer students?

in how to properly assess newcomer students (Figure 3.60). It is perhaps not surprising that only 27% of these teachers had found their in-service training to be useful (Figure 3.61) – "*what you get is someone telling you that our classrooms have changed, as if you needed to be told that, but not showing you techniques for teaching these students*" (language support teacher).
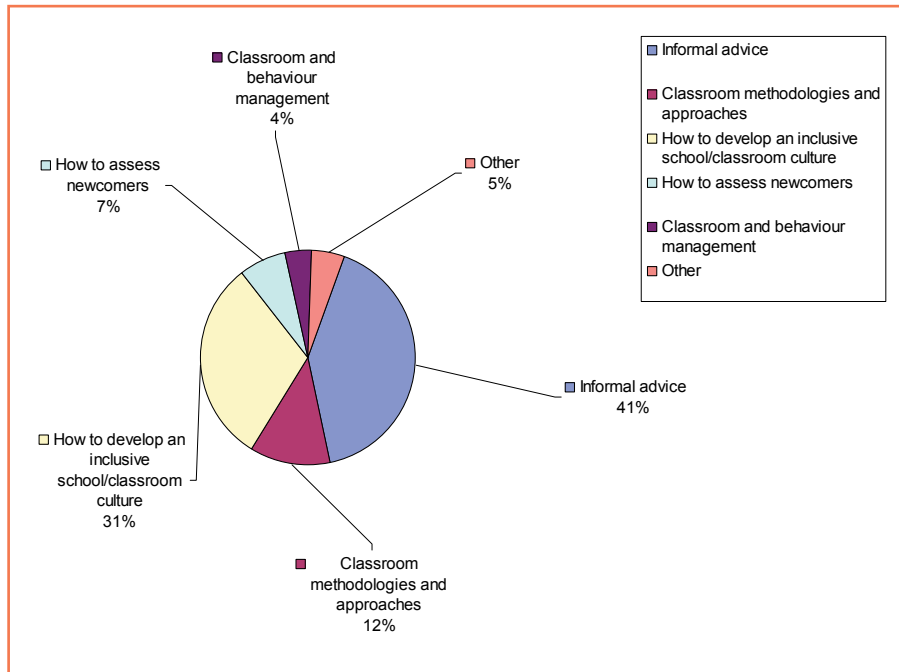
Figure 3.60: If you received training related to teaching newcomer studnents, what form did it take?
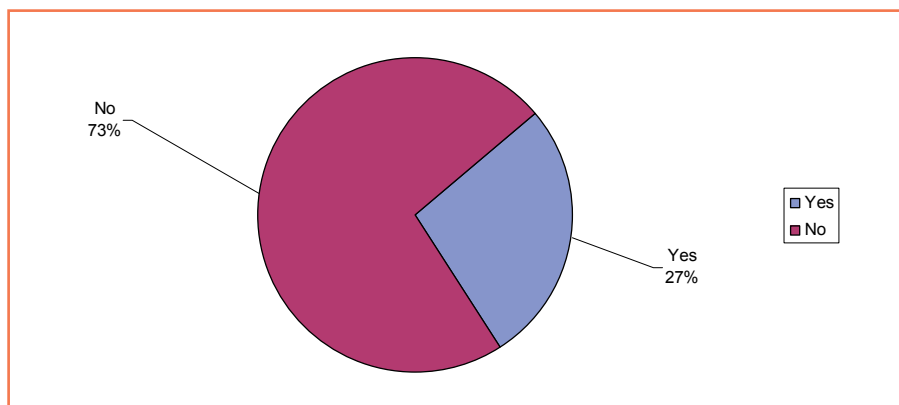
Figure 3.61: Was this training useful?

39% of the language support teachers surveyed had some qualification in teaching English as a Foreign, Additional or Second Language, with TEFL being the most common qualification (Figure 3.62 below). 84% of those who had a qualification had, at some stage in their careers, followed a TEFL course that emphasized adult learning. Only 11% had taken courses which, to a greater or lesser extent, addressed the particular requirements of integrating language learning with the learning of curriculum subjects within a post-primary context. This latter type of course was, in the opinion of the teachers surveyed, more likely to be present in seminars run by IILT, in which 36% had participated (Figure 3.63 below).
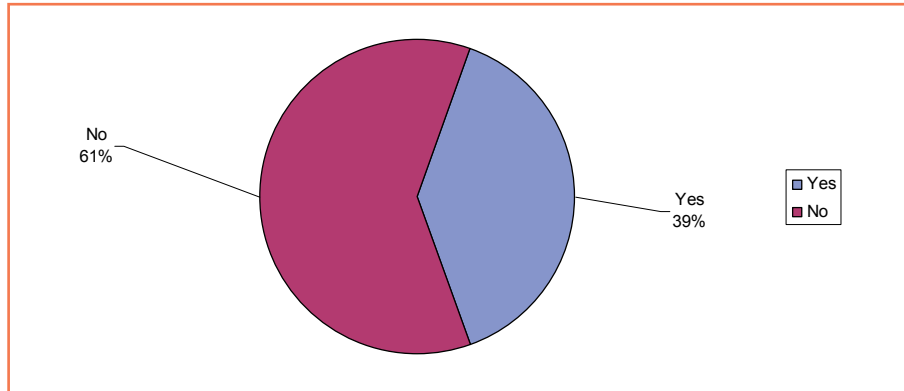
**Figure 3.62: Have you a qualification in teaching English as a
Foreign/Additional/Second Langauge?**
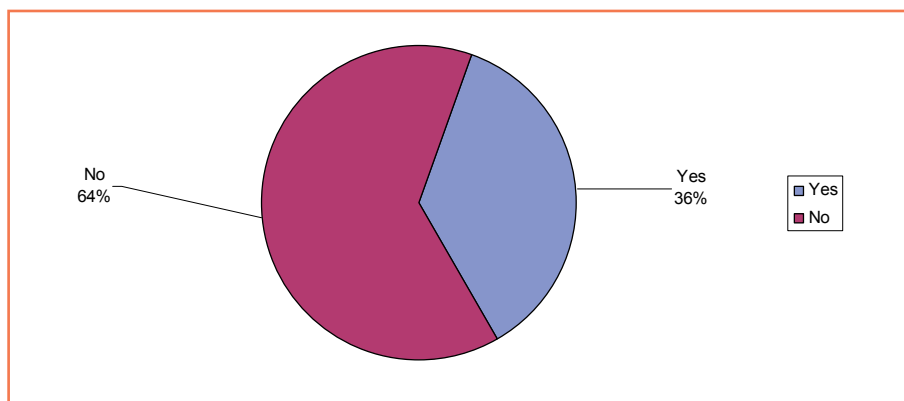
**Figure 3.63: Have you attended seminars run by Integrate Ireland Language
and Training up to 2007?**

The lack of appropriate in-service training for newly-appointed language support teachers (whether they are experienced mainstream subject teachers or not) is highlighted in the findings reported in Figures 3.64 and 3.65. Only 22% of teachers received some in-service training during their first year in post (Figure 3.64), while 91% expressed their need for such training as a means of assisting them in their present role (Figure 3.65).
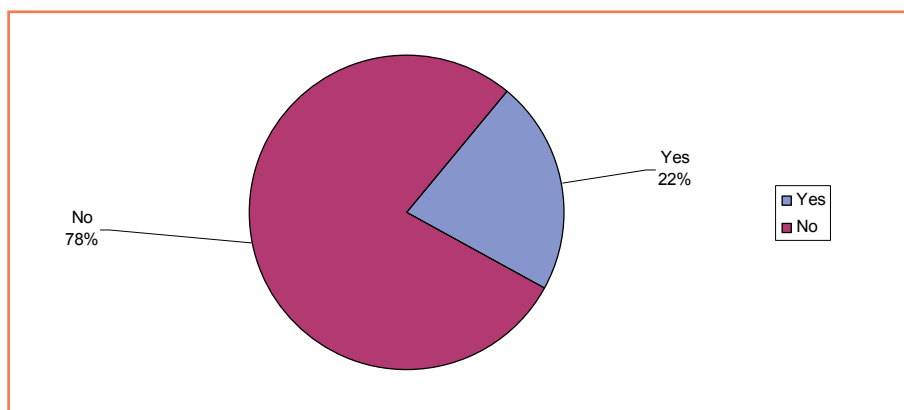
**Figure 3.64: Did you receive any in-service training during your first year
as a language support teacher?**
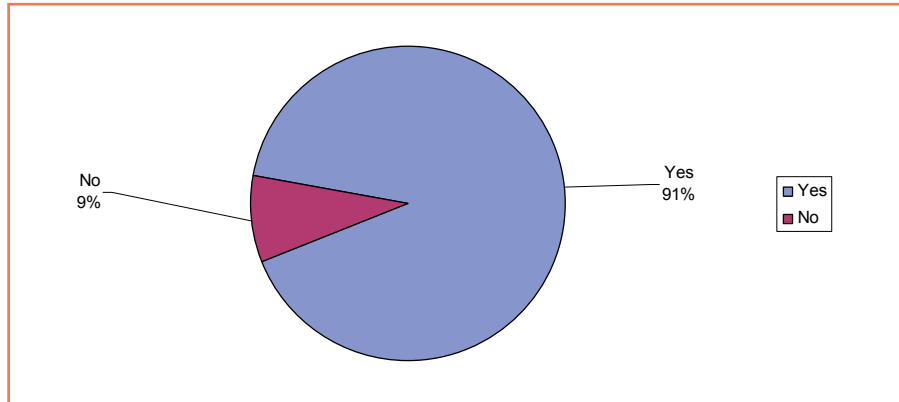
Figure 3.65: Do you require further in-service training to assist you in your role at present?

In summing up the perceived lack of training, 97% of the teachers surveyed were convinced that intercultural and language support issues should be a compulsory and examinable module in all pre-service teacher training (Figure 3.66) – "*Only then will the Department [i.e., DES] have made an improvement to English provision*" (language support teacher).
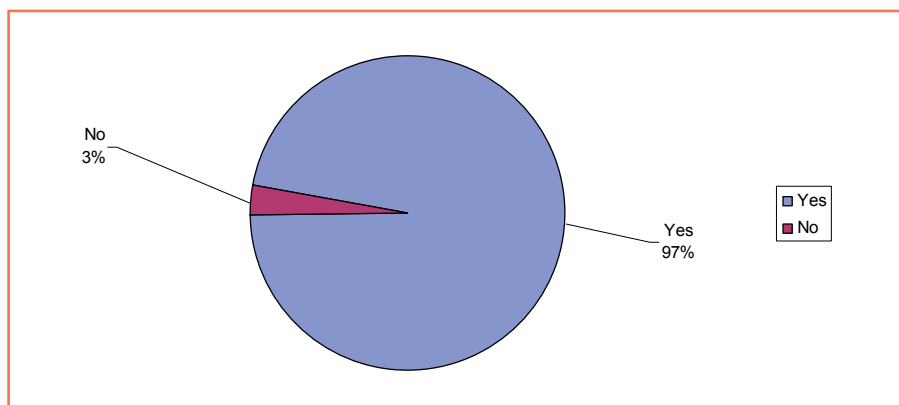
Figure 3.66: Should intercultural and language support issues be part of pre-service training as a compulsory module?

3.9   Other sources of help for language support teachers

The knock-on effects of the sudden closure of IILT in August 2008 were captured in the findings conveyed in Figure 3.67 (below). 66% of language support teachers questioned again in September 2008 reflected that the closure of IILT would have a negative impact on their role as a language support teacher. The reasons they gave for this were varied, but chief among them was the disappearance of the easily-downloadable resource materials available from IILT and geared specifically towards post-primary schools.[15] Another reason cited by many teachers was

15   These materials remain available, however, on the NCCA website (at www.ncca.ie/eng/Curriculum_and_Assessment/ Inclusion/English_as_an_Additional_Language/IILT_Materials/).
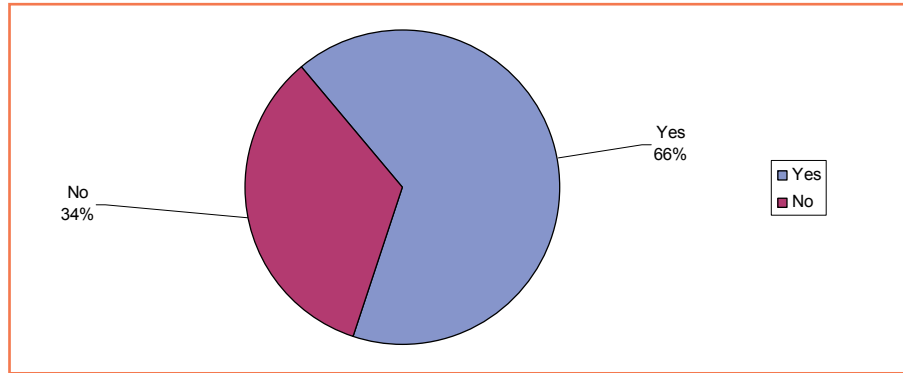
Figure 3.67: Will the closure of IILT in August 2008 have a negative impact on your role as a language support teaching going forward?

the assumption that with the closure of IILT, the promised roll-out by DES of appropriate and well-resourced in-service training was even more unlikely to occur in the near future – "*Where are the unions in all this and what do we do now, Minister?*" (language support coordinator).

Figures 3.68 and 3.69 reveal that 41% of participants were either members of the English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA) or were aware of its purpose. However, only 8% of this sub-group considered that ELSTA helped them in their daily practice in the language support classroom.
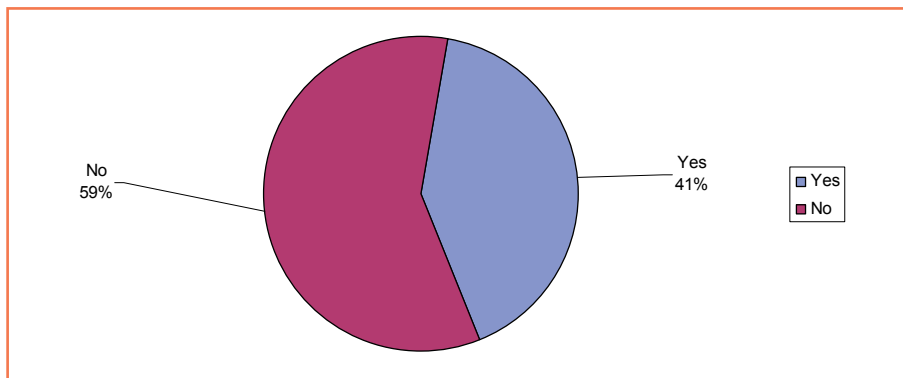
Figure 3.68: Are you familiar with or a member of the English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA)?
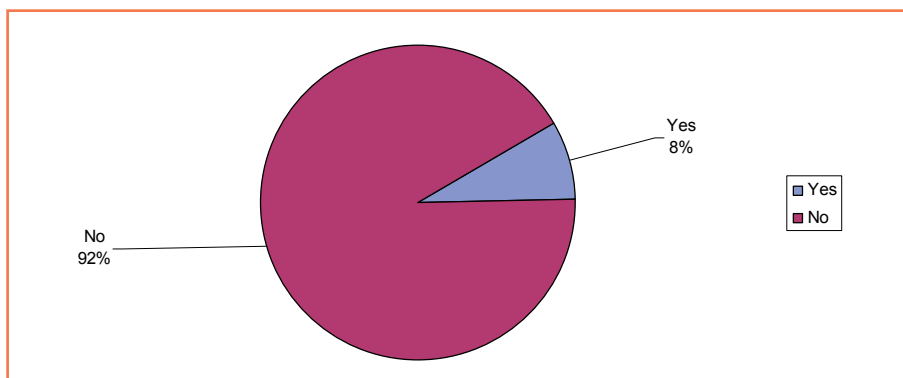
Figure 3.69: If you are familiar with or a member of ELSTA, do you consider that it helps you in your daily practice in the language support classroom?

53% of the teachers surveyed reported that they had used aspects of the NCCA's *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* guidelines in their daily practice in the language support classroom (Figure 3.70).
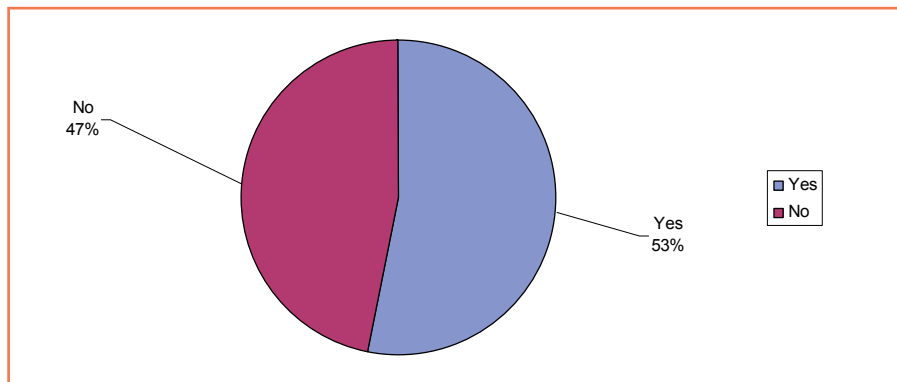
Figure 3.70: Have you used the NCCA's *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* **guidelines in your daily practice in the language support classroom?**

3.10 Psychological evaluation of newcomer students

Only 1% of the participants said that they had been successful in organizing an educational psychological evaluation of a newcomer student through the National Educational Psychology Service, whose role is to provide an educational psychological service for all students in primary and post-primary schools and in certain other centres supported by DES (Figure 3.71). The Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), and the Equal Status Act (2000) guarantee the right of all children in the state to an education.
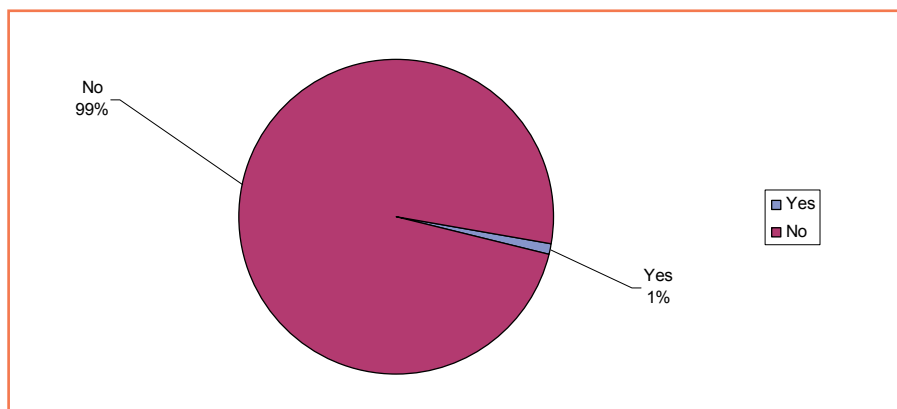
Figure 3.71: Where you deemed it necessary and urgent, have you been successful in organising an educational psychological evaluation of a newcomer student through the National Educational Psychology Service?

3.11 Home–school liaison

The Home School Community Liaison Scheme began in November 1990. Bonds of trust between schools and parents are established through home visits and various formal and informal meet-

ings where needs are identified. It is the role of the liaison co-ordinator to facilitate the meeting of those needs and to support parents in their role as primary educators. Parents participate in the scheme and in its activities at the level they choose – levels of parental involvement include visiting the parents' room or drop-in centre at the school, being shown how to help their children with school work,[16] attending parenting courses, participating in leisure activities, and themselves receiving educational assistance from basic literacy to certificate examinations. Figure 3.72 shows that this scheme was available in 28% of the schools represented in the survey.
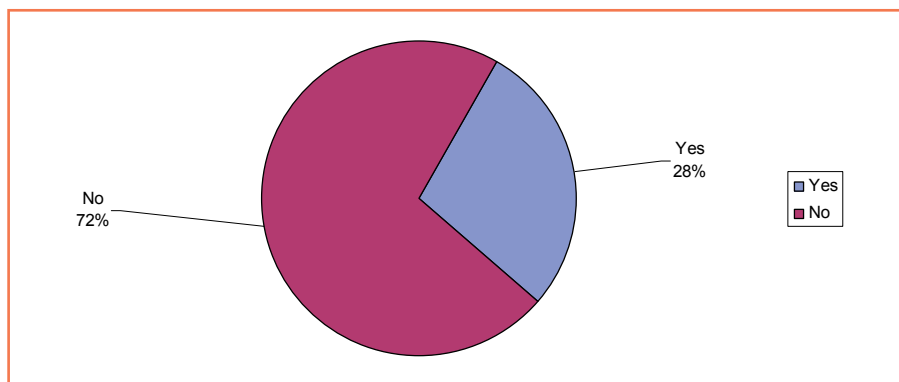
Figure 3.72: Do you have a DES home–school community liaison scheme in place in your school?

3.12 Language support teachers and the DES

The relationship between language support teachers and the DES is thrown into stark relief by the findings shown in Figures 3.73 and 3.74. Remarkably, only 4% of the teachers surveyed were familiar with the contents of Circular 0053/2007 (Figure 3.73), while 91% considered that the DES does not play a sufficiently active role in language support provision and intercultural guidance at post-primary level (Figure 3.74).
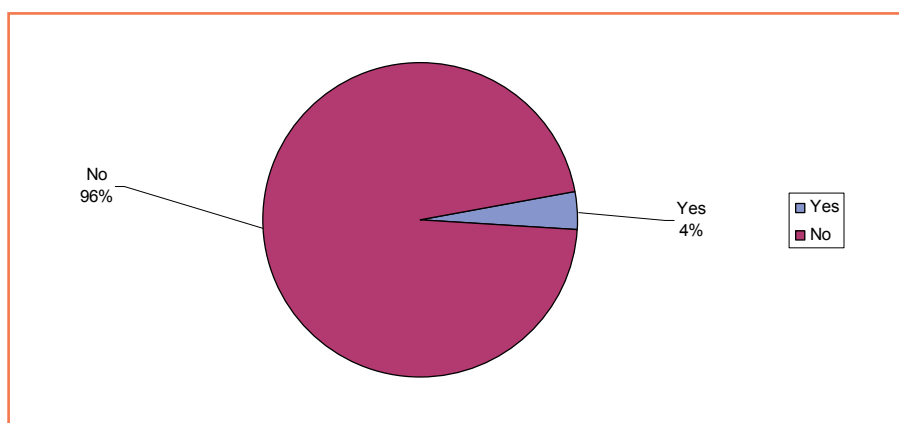
Figure 3.73: Are you familiar with Circular 0053/2007, which is the principal DES circular relating to language support provision and intercultural guidance at post-primary level?

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16 Good practice guidelines and even hands-on assistance are, in the opinion of language support teachers, very important. However, Wong-Fillmore's (1991) research shows that an over-emphasis on using English in the home can impact negatively on the newcomer student's linguistic and cognitive development. Parents may be less able to elabo-
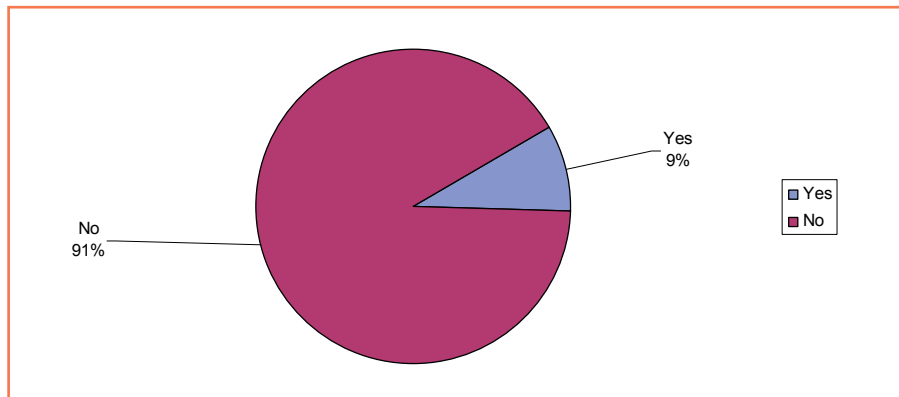
Figure 3.74: Do you consider that the DES is playing an active role in language support provision and intercultural guidance at post-primary level?

3.13 The general educational progress of newcomer students

Finally, only 57% of the teachers surveyed were happy with the progress being made by their newcomer students (Figure 3.75). Many factors impact on newcomer students at post-primary level and their ability to access the curriculum: the age at which they enter the educational system; their previous experience of schooling in their L1; their prior knowledge of English and the subjects of the curriculum; the school's response to their needs; and the available support for language and learning development at home and at school. According to the teachers surveyed, the chief reasons for their newcomer students' lack of progress were inadequate coordination and provision of language support and insufficient teacher training. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the specific challenges and deficits that they identified
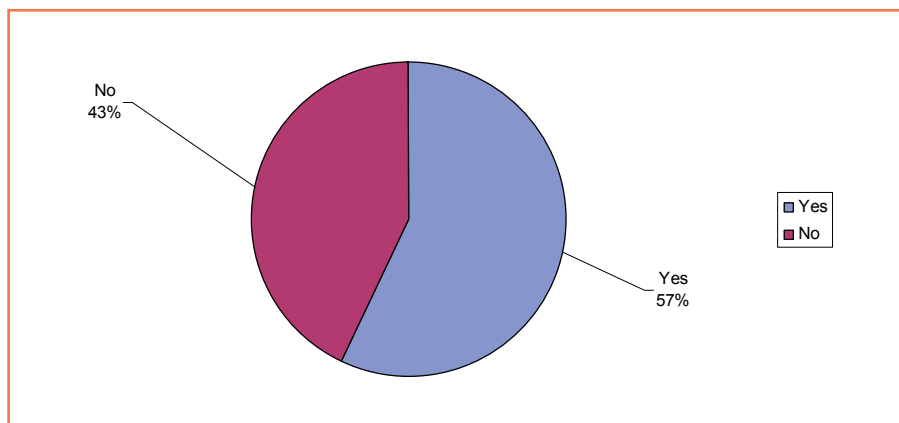
3.75: Are you happy with the progress your newcomer students are making?

rate and extend the language and thinking of their children when communicating to them in a second language. What is more, their relative lack of proficiency in English may cause them to speak less to their children, who as a result will go to school with inadequate development in both their L1 and English.

4 Key survey findings: challenges and deficits

4.1 Introduction

The teachers surveyed identified a number of significant challenges and deficits in relation to English language support and related pastoral aspects in post-primary schools. These provide the themes of this chapter. Whether structural, attitudinal, linguistic, cultural or political, they are encapsulated in three quotations from different sources. The first is taken from the 2006 DES Inspectorate report, *Looking at English, Teaching and Learning English in Post-Primary Schools*:

> *While a number of schools were offering structured language support to international students through teachers who have some training in the area, there was a lack of coherence in the provision and delivery of this support in many other instances.* (DES, 2006: 9)

The second quotation is taken from data collected by Rachael Fionda, research student with the ELSP, who is working with a network of language support teachers in post-primary schools:

> *Time … my time is the key issue … because there isn't anything there … the identification of students … the stage that they're at … the organizing of the programme … the organizing of programmes within school … the grading of the programmes in school … upgrading of the training that teachers have, the resources that they require, and then […] a way of integrating the kids so that they have opportunities outside school to participate in community activities, like youth things, and I'm not so sure they do much of that, they tend to go home and they just speak Romanian or whichever language.*

Thirdly, a comment from a language support teacher with whom Zachary Lyons has worked since October 2007 exemplifies the exasperation of the teachers who participated in this study:

> *… the Department [i.e., DES] is far too reliant on the goodwill of us teachers. Now, we may not be sinners […], but we most certainly are not the saints they think we are either. And between us, we are letting down so many of these children […] to badly paraphrase Tony Blair, it is still Education! Education! Education! But it is also Resources! Resources! and Training! And then more resources!*

(It is worth noting that the word *goodwill* appears over 180 times in our data, and *helpless*, as in "teachers feel helpless", occurs 312 times.)

4.2 Challenges

An analysis of the data produced the following list of challenges:
1. Language support coordination and provision
2. Training for teachers
3. Disproportionate numbers of newcomer students at resource-poor schools
4. Classroom issues
5. School management structures
6. Teacher attitudes
7. Parent/guardian and home issues
8. Diversity/intercultural education issues
9. Lack of ICT facilities
10. Extramural administration concerns
11. Exemption from Irish
12. Frustration

This list of challenges was then presented to the participants, who were asked to rank them in terms of importance (a) for themselves as teachers and (b) for their students in terms of their successful integration into the school and their access to the mainstream curriculum. This produced the overall ranking set out in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1.

Challenges identified according to ranking by teachers	% of teachers
Language support coordination and provision	100
Training	97
English language deficiency/disproportionate representation at resource-poor schools	96
Classroom issues	67
School management structures	51
Teacher attitudes	50
Parent/home issues	48
Diversity/intercultural education issues	44
Lack of ICT facilities	40
Dealing with external agencies	38
Exemption from Irish	38
Frustration	n/a

Table 4.1: Challenges identified and ranked by teachers
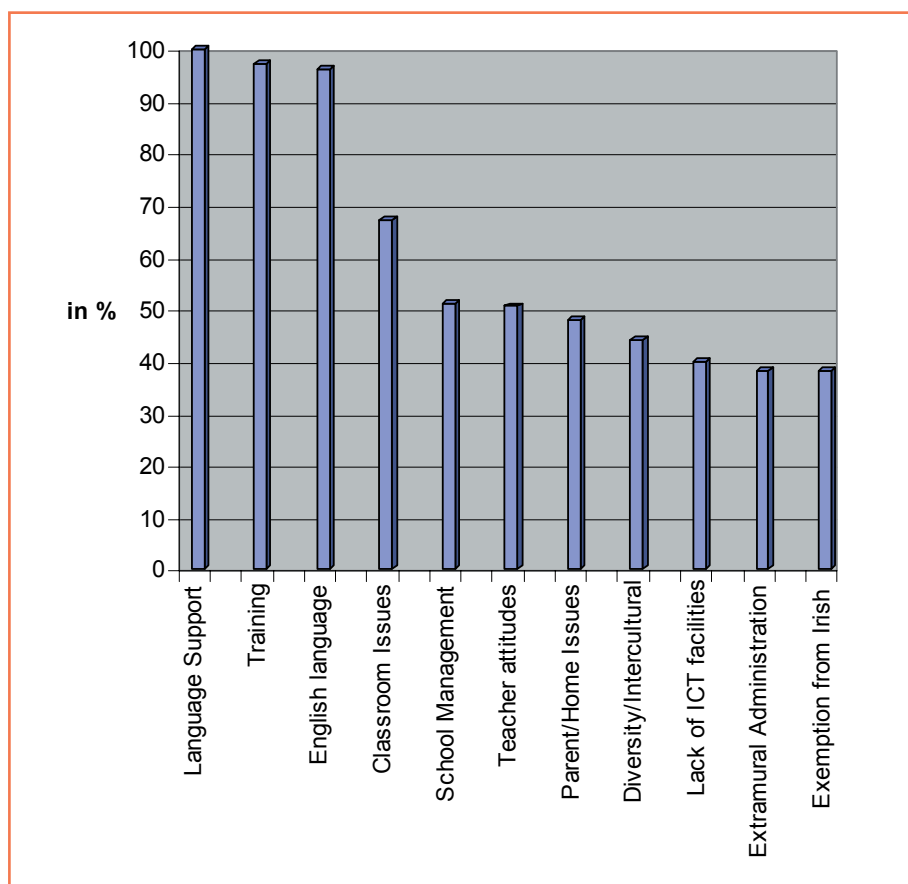
Figure 4.1: Challenges as ranked by teachers

4.2.1 Language support coordination and provision

The teachers surveyed overwhelmingly took the view that the organization and provision of English language support was
- under-funded, with inadequate structures and resources;
- undervalued both by the DES and within the school community, at all levels;
- inconsistent in terms of the quality and quantity of delivery to students; and
- failed to build on students' prior knowledge and achievement.

Key aspects of language support coordination and provision that participants thought were challenging are set out in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2.

Challenges within language support coordination and provision identified by teachers	% of teachers
Timetabling language support	100
Allocation of language support posts/hours	100
The temporary nature of language support posts	97
Allocated provision for students	97
The perceived lack of an adequate language support curriculum	90
Enrolment, orientation, initial assessment and placement	87
The multiple roles of a language support teacher	82
Language support teachers' skills and experience	98
Models of language support	94
Teaching/learning materials	90
Examinations	90
The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the European Language Portfolio	67
Ongoing assessment	41
Transfer from primary to post-primary school	40

Table 4.2: Challenges associated with the coordination and provision of language support

4.2.1.1   Timetabling language support

Timetabling language support to ensure adequate and purposeful provision and thus derive maximum benefit from the student's two-year language support allocation, was rated a significant challenge by all participants. They took the view that planning for ESL instruction is more complex than planning for subject area instruction because of the need to combine language teaching with subject area content. A wide ability range in the language support class was reported as a further complicating factor. The following specific issues were mentioned:
- the arrival of students at different times during the school year (overwhelmingly the biggest challenge according to these teachers);
- the problem of ensuring enough contact hours for individual students, due to lack of resources (the DES allocation, teachers, rooms, etc.);
- grouping students in a way that meets their needs (age, previous experience of English,

Language Support Coordination and Provision
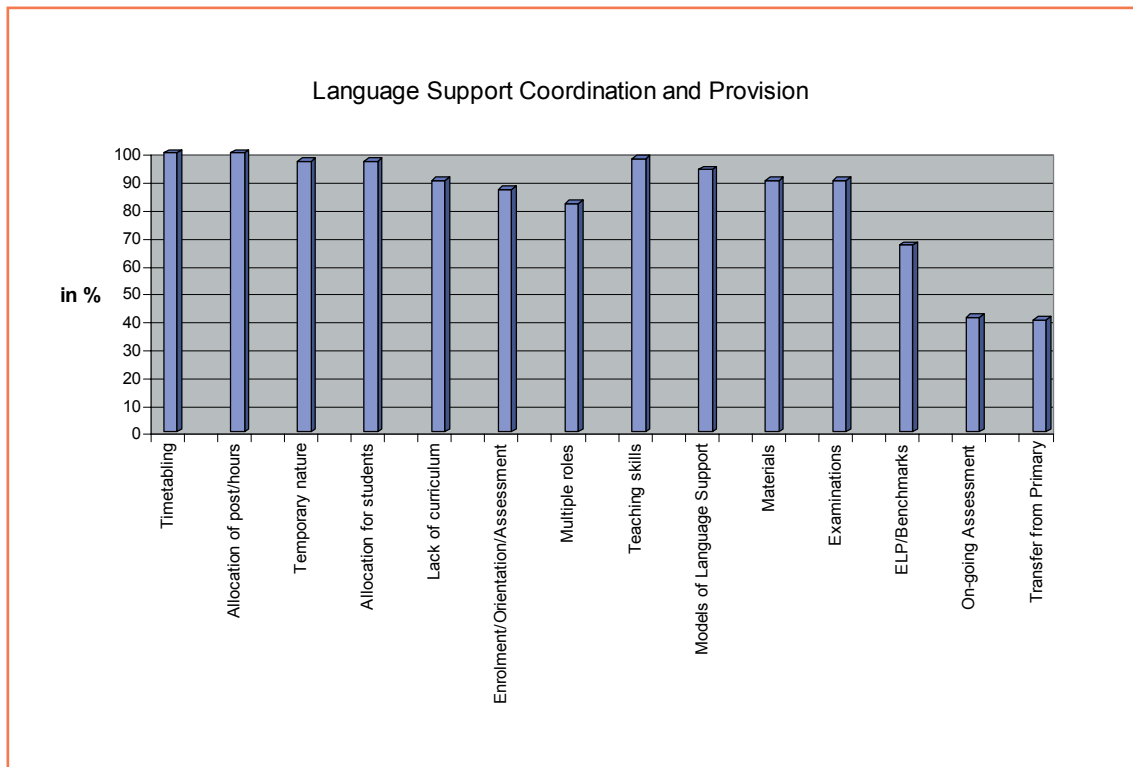
Figure 4.2: Challenges associated with the coordination and provision of language support

literacy, demands of the academic programme they are following, e.g. Junior Certificate/ Leaving Certificate, Ordinary Level/Higher Level/Foundation, etc.); and

- the difficulty of matching available teachers to possible withdrawal class periods in the context of competing demands for time in an ever more crowded curriculum.

4.2.1.2 Allocation of language support posts/hours

A further challenge arises from the fact that schools do not know their DES allocation for English language support until they have made their certified October Returns (capitation and census). From a planning perspective, the practice of not allowing schools to appoint language support teachers before the beginning of the school year, often makes it virtually impossible to plan a language support programme that constitutes an effective element in the support structures of the school. As a consequence of this last minute confirmation of posts and recruitment, there is frequently a lack of experienced post-primary teachers to take up language support posts and the teachers surveyed argued that this had inevitable consequences for the quality of language support in their schools. The chief specific issue mentioned was:

- If a school is in an over-quota position, then additional language support must be provided by existing staff, who may have neither the training nor the desire to do so.

4.2.1.3 The temporary nature of language support teacher posts

According to the teachers surveyed, the temporary nature of language support teacher posts (because funding is allocated on a year-to-year basis), the fluctuating concessionary hours, and the tendency to use quota teachers (that is, teachers employed to teach mainstream subjects) further increases the difficulty in attracting experienced/qualified language support teachers:

> *Unless there are already permanent or CID teachers in the school who are willing and able to do significant amounts of language support as part of their timetable, principals may have to take on inexperienced or part-time teachers for the language support, or else (worst of all) use the language support hours to plug gaps in teachers' timetables, regardless of how qualified or interested the teacher is.* (language support coordinator)

Participants agreed that language support teacher posts were undervalued and suffered from high turnover and attrition rates, thus "*undermining the potential for the creation of a 'bank' of teachers with sustained practice and experience in the field*" (Devine, 2005: 66). They argued that the temporary nature of language support contributes to a general sense of impermanence in the area. With more long-term positions, it would be possible to develop language support over time to meet more accurately and fully the needs of all concerned – "*the principal's management objectives, the needs of mainstream teachers, pupils' learning and socialization needs, and parents' involvement in the education of their children*" (Yarr et al., 2005: 14). The year-to-year nature of language support funding has led to the perception that posts are indeed temporary, or in the words of one participant: "*ok for now but I'm always keeping an eye on the Sunday Independent job section so I can get something worthwhile*". This was considered a significant challenge by 97% of participants.

4.2.1.4   Allocated provision for students

Another significant challenge identified by 97% of the teachers surveyed was the low allocation of hours for the ESL students (on average 90–120 minutes a week) and the two-year cap on language support provision. When it was pointed out to them that Circular 0053/2007 effectively removed this cap,[17] teachers' comments included the following:

- they were unaware of this removal of the cap (only 18% of the teachers surveyed were familiar with Circular 0053/2007 and only 6% could summarize its provisions);
- it was not the reality on the ground ("*they* [the DES] *make you jump through hoops to get any further allocation* [past the two-year cap]" (language support teacher);[18]
- the allocation was not consistent with the level of language support required to enable concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills;
- "*In relation to the goals set out in the Department circular – I think the circular needs to be amended to include recognition of the fact that we are providing language support to students who have to become proficient in reading and writing as well as speaking and listening …. The application form for language support hours doesn't make any mention of reading/writing skills in the statement about the student's level of English*" (language support coordinator).[19]

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17 "*Should these extra resources be required for individual pupils for longer than two years, details of the assessed level of language competence and specific details of how the school has addressed the needs of these pupils in the previous two years must be outlined. Details must also be outlined of how it is proposed to optimise the opportunities of the pupils for whom an additional year is being sought.*"

18 In Rachael Fionda's ongoing research (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter), a language support coordinator made the following observation about achieving allocation beyond the two-year cap: "*I think the department shouldn't be putting us in a position where we have to make a special case for each student once they go over the 2 years, I don't think that's fair at all, I think if we keep the paperwork, if we keep the assessments, if we're ready to be inspected as any department is as part of the whole school, they should respect our judgement there, if we have the paperwork to show that's it's needed.*"

19 We discuss this issue further in Chapter 5.

4.2.1.5 The perceived lack of an adequate language support curriculum

Although the post-primary English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (developed by IILT at the request of the DES) are the *de facto* curriculum for English language support, the teachers surveyed were in general confused as to their purpose and intended use, and this led them to the view that there is no English language support curriculum. This was viewed as a major challenge by 90% of the participants. The following specific issues were mentioned:
  • teachers are obliged to design their own curriculum;
  • there is a need to use authentic texts;
  • it is often difficult to liaise with mainstream subject teachers;
  • standard texts at all examination levels are not easy to read;[20]
  • an overloaded curriculum presents a continuous challenge;
  • many language support students experience no real problems in maths (and sometimes science subjects), and this can lead the school management and many mainstream subject teachers to believe that "*there's no real problem*" (language support teacher);
  • there are major problems in newcomer students' comprehension of and participation in English, History, CSPE, Economics and Music;
  • it is difficult to know how best (and whether) to teach phonics;
  • it is difficult to know how best to teach literacy;
  • it is difficult to know how best to teach functional writing;
  • it is important to provide guidelines for mainstream subject teachers at all examination levels.

4.2.1.6 Enrolment, orientation, initial assessment and placement

According to 87% of the teachers surveyed, enrolment, orientation, initial assessment and placement all present significant challenges.

The following challenges arising at enrolment were mentioned:
  • ensuring that the newcomer student understands the enrolment procedures;
  • ensuring that all information relevant to the academic, social and emotional needs of the student has been gathered;
  • ensuring that the student feels welcomed by the school;
  • ensuring that the student understands the information provided about the school and its programmes;
  • if necessary, finding an interpreter and/or explanatory materials in the relevant newcomer language;
  • ensuring that a 'buddy' or student peer shows the student round the school;
  • dealing with students who choose to disregard the school's advice about placement levels or course choices;
  • gathering accurate information on students (even date of birth may be problematic);
  • addressing religious, cultural and/or gender issues.

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20 This perception on the part of the teachers was confirmed by examining sample textbooks using the SMOG readability calculator, which "estimates the years of education needed to understand a piece of writing" (http://www. harrymclaughlin.com/SMOG.htm). On average the readability age for a sample of 12 textbooks from different educational publishers in Mathematics, History, Geography and English at Junior Certificate Ordinary Level/Higher Level was 2.1 years above the average age of the group for whom the textbooks were written.

The following challenges arising at orientation were mentioned:
- time spent trying to find the newcomer student's first language in the school or the wider community;
- compiling orientation information in an appropriately simplified manner (to include a school map, for example);
- finding time to do this in the absence of existing materials/templates/school policies, etc.

Language support can only be successfully implemented on the basis of an accurate initial assessment of the newcomer student's written, oral and aural language skills and by taking account of his/her educational background and L1 ability (Ward, 2004). The following challenges arising at initial assessment and placement were mentioned:
- carrying out a needs analysis when newcomer students first arrive;
- ensuring that the identification of needs and assessment for placement are accurate and comprehensive;
- ensuring that the newcomer student's language proficiency and needs are assessed in relation to written as well as spoken language;
- coping with the DES's failure to provide assessment materials;[21]
- in the absence of official assessment materials, knowing how to apply the wide array of assessment instruments in schools;[22]
- getting appropriate feedback on available tests;
- not knowing if the assessment instrument used is suitable for students at post-primary level, given that the purpose of language support is to ensure that students are learning language and using language to learn;
- sourcing appropriate assessment instruments;
- interpreting assessment results and placing students;
- coping with the difficulties posed by banding and streaming;[23]
- not having access to the student's prior educational records;
- knowing how to respond to Circular 0053/2007's advice, pending the publication of a post-primary assessment kit, to use the assessment materials designed for use with newcomer pupils at primary level.[24]

4.2.1.7   The multiple roles of a language support teacher

82% of the teachers surveyed admitted that they were overwhelmed by the multi-faceted and complex functions they were required to perform. The challenges are compounded by the fact that these functions are devolved rather than explicitly outlined in a language support teacher job description – "*I just end up doing it all. If I don't, who will?*" (language support teacher).

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21 In January 2009 the DES distributed an assessment kit based on the post-primary English Language Proficiency Benchmarks, developed and piloted by IILT and approved by the inspectorate.

22 The Oxford Placement Tests were used by 40.5% of the teachers surveyed.

23 Streaming is a widespread practice, but one that apparently does not enjoy official support. The inspectorate's 2006 report noted that streaming is likely to have a negative effect on "*students' expectations and development of potential*" (DES, 2006: 10).

24 This advice indicates how little the DES understands the language support domain. The primary assessment materials, developed and extensively piloted by IILT, were based on the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks for primary schools and reflect recurrent themes of the primary curriculum. They are also age-appropriate, making use of primary rather than post-primary themes and classroom activities; thus they are unlikely to be suitable for use with teenagers.

The following functions were identified as presenting challenges within the school:
- assessing the needs of ESL students, using appropriate means;
- suggesting appropriate placement, programming, and service delivery alternatives in consultation with subject teachers and administrators (this may include determining how best to support students' achievement of desired learning outcomes in a broad range of subjects);
- being a language teacher for students (including special needs students) whose proficiency in English ranges from beginner to advanced;
- teaching English using strategies calculated to improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- providing an initial and/or ongoing point of contact for the ESL student's family;
- facilitating communication with parents or guardians through interpreters and translations;
- facilitating the involvement of ESL parents or guardians in school activities;
- helping to interpret cultural and educational practices and expectations for newcomer students and their parents (and for school personnel, as needed);
- introducing newcomer students to basic concepts in various subject areas;
- assisting mainstream subject teachers;
- conducting ongoing assessment and keeping records so that progress can be measured with a view to some future inspection visit or WSE;[25]
- suggesting adaptations to the classroom environment or the curriculum, if required;
- keeping records of newcomer students' backgrounds, which may include language proficiency, academic profile, social/emotional/behavioural needs, cultural considerations, the student's previous schooling (report cards, information on interruptions to schooling, etc.), as well as family and medical information, support by specialists, and progress to date;
- helping to resolve any apparent behavioural problems that arise (difficulties may sometimes reflect cultural misunderstanding);
- acting as an advocate for ESL students, for multicultural understanding in the school and community, and for the idea that continued growth in students' first languages should be supported;
- coordinating and supporting inter-agency services for ESL students;
- advising or providing referrals for students who may be under extreme pressure, suffering from trauma, or at risk for other reasons.

4.2.1.8   Language support teacher skills and experience

The language support teachers surveyed identified as a considerable challenge the fact that they are not language specialists and do not fully appreciate the processes involved in successful L2 acquisition. 98% of them regretted the lack of a recognized English language support teaching qualification focussed on the needs of post-primary students and the post-primary curriculum.

Few specific guidelines and minimal resources to support training means that frequently it is left to individual schools/principals/language support coordinators and/or language support teachers

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25 Whole School Evaluation (WSE) is a process whereby a team of Inspectors from the DES spends a few days in a school evaluating the overall work of the school under the following heads: quality of school management; quality of school planning; quality of curriculum provision; quality of learning and teaching in subjects; quality of support for students. At post-primary level, subject inspections are also undertaken within the framework of the WSE process. Subject inspections are also carried out independently of WSE. Thus a school may have subject inspections and/or WSE.

themselves to decide how to implement recommendations from DES.

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- ensuring the development of reading comprehension, extended writing and expressive skills;
- ensuring successful integration with the curriculum, which is a moving target (while the newcomer student is acquiring English, the mainstream curriculum is constantly advancing);
- dealing with children who present with little or no formal schooling, or interrupted experience of schooling;
- identifying specific short-term language and curriculum objectives;
- lack of knowledge of student's L1;
- failure to understand the implications of the distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language processing (CALP);[26]
- failure of school management and mainstream subject teachers to understand the implications of the distinction between BICS and CALP;
- failure of DES inspectors to recognize the implications of the distinction between BICS and CALP;
- failure to realize that in language learning comprehension usually precedes production and that beginner ESL students may go through an initial silent period, during which they listen and internalize;
- knowing how to choose the best contextual supports to facilitate the learning of English and curricular content;
- knowing how to teach the (Roman) alphabet;
- knowing how to support the transfer of key English language skills across the curriculum;
- knowing how to teach the analytical skills relevant to different curriculum subjects;
- knowing how to teach poetic language and the language of examinations;
- knowing how to help students who heard the word incorrectly and then proceed to write it down using phonetic approximation;
- knowing how to help students with limited vocabulary and insecure grammar (sometimes reflecting interference from the grammar of other languages);
- lack of linguistic knowledge (grammar, etc.);
- knowing how to provide opportunities for learners to explore grammatical and discoursal relationships in authentic data;
- knowing how to teach language in ways which make form/function relationships transparent;
- knowing how to encourage learners to become active explorers of language;
- knowing how to encourage learners to explore relationships between grammar and discourse;
- knowing how to deal with the additional social, emotional and behavioural needs that some newcomer students bring with them;
- dealing (in some schools) with the challenge that only teachers of English and/or Modern Languages can apply for language support hours;

26 Following Cummins (e.g., 1984), BICS are context-dependent, cognitively undemanding language skills used for everyday social communication with family and friends, while CALP is context-reduced, cognitively demanding language processing, necessary for academic learning. For more on this distinction, see Chapter 5

- knowing how to help with homework;
- knowing how to help students to increase their achievement levels in curriculum subjects;
- knowing how to teach students step-by-step how to write essays and assignments in the different genres and presentation formats required by different curriculum subjects;
- knowing how to scaffold newcomer students' learning with their mainstream subject teachers, helping them to take small steps, being explicit about links to previous learning, and breaking longer or more complex tasks into smaller achievable units;
- teaching newcomer students how to use the library;
- knowing how best to model asking questions and participating in whole class and group discussions;
- knowing how best to set up co-operative learning tasks that require newcomer students to contribute orally but at the same time support their participation;
- knowing how best to share the purpose, the learning plan, and the expected outcomes with newcomer students at the beginning of a lesson or phase of learning;
- knowing how best to encourage learner independence;
- knowing how to give students strategies for vocabulary learning.

4.2.1.9   Models of language support

Closely linked to 4.2.9 above, 94% of the teachers surveyed found the lack of detailed guidelines as to the best models of English language support and how to implement them effectively a substantial challenge. The following specific issues were mentioned:

- the absence of concrete models for emulation;
- the call by some principals for students to be "*thrown in at the deep end*" (language support teacher) and placed immediately in full-time mainstream subject classes;
- the assumption that ESL students will simply acquire the language of instruction (English) through immersion in the classroom;
- finding a way of providing an immersion programme for newcomer students in September;
- finding a way of providing an immersion programme for newcomer students who arrive after the beginning of the school year;
- finding a way of ensuring that newcomer students have an adequate amount of English before they are assigned to mainstream subject classrooms;[27]
- the challenge of doing any of the above, given the challenges outlined in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 above (language support coordination/provision and timetabling), possibly through a system of block release from the classroom;
- meeting the challenges identified with the most common model of instruction – withdrawal;[28]
- dealing with the fact that students are often unhappy with withdrawal;

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27   In this connection it is worth noting that a motion at the ASTI Convention 2008 proposed "*that the ASTI vigorously engages with the Department of Education and Science to establish an appropriate school-based facility to ensure adequate competency in the English language for each newcomer student prior to their inclusion in mainstream classes*". The motion was carried unanimously (ASTI, 2008: 31). It is also worth noting that in 2003 the DES asked IILT to submit proposals for such a facility, but then failed to act on them.

28   It is worth noting, within the context of Irish language support classrooms, that although several researchers (Devine, 2005; Nowlan 2007; Wallen, 2006) have suggested that the appropriateness of the withdrawal model is a matter of some academic debate, "the issue of withdrawal from the classroom for language support was not mentioned as problematic by teachers" (Devine, 2005: 57). This was reflected in the opinions of the teachers in this research.

- deciding from which subjects newcomer students should be withdrawn and how often;
- finding a way of counteracting the fact that while attending their ESL classes, students are missing whatever is being taught in their regular classes, which is likely to interfere with their academic progress;
- dealing with the challenge that being sent from the regular class to a 'withdrawal' class has the effect of differentiating, if not stigmatizing, the students in the eyes of the other students in their class;
- contriving that newcomer students are not isolated from their peers;
- meeting the challenge of organizing extra classes after hours;
- overcoming the lack of integrated and co-operative teaching;
- overcoming the lack paired/team teaching;
- finding time to set up peer support systems;
- finding a way of supporting newcomer students' L1 development;

4.2.1.10 Teaching/learning materials

90% of the teachers surveyed identified the lack of suitable curriculum-focussed materials and resources as a significant challenge. The following specific issues were mentioned:
- the lack of differentiated subject and language materials;
- the lack of suitable resources oriented to the curriculum;
- the need for age/interest-appropriate materials;
- the need for keywords and guidelines as to how best to use them;
- the inadequacy of the set-up grant, particularly when schools are dealing with a range of ages and ability levels;
- the lack of a set-up grant when teaching hours are being funded rather than a teaching post;
- the lack of English/L1 dictionaries/electronic translators.

4.2.1.11 Examinations

Tests and examinations are a dominant feature of school culture. 90% of the teachers surveyed identified internal assessment, end-of-year examinations and public examinations (Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate) as significantly stressful challenges for teacher and student alike – "[exams] *come around like Banquo's ghost and my students are not ready for the language of the exam paper*" (language support teacher). The two significant challenges associated with examination preparation were:
- because of their structure and format, the failure of examinations to assess the abilities of ESL learners adequately;
- the literacy level/readability of examination papers.

The following issues were also mentioned:
- teaching "exam language";
- teaching examination strategies;
- teaching newcomer students how to use a dictionary – "*so that the poor soul isn't … spending 20 minutes of their two hours looking up a word*" (language support teacher);
- the need for some special provision for ESL learners similar to special needs provision.[29]

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29 Full details of these Reasonable Accommodation measures are available from the State Examinations Commission (www.examinations.ie).

4.2.1.12 The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the European Language Portfolio

The importance and effective use of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training were deemed a significant challenge by 67% of the teachers surveyed. The following specific issues were mentioned:
- whether the Benchmarks and ELP are needed for the inspector's visit or a whole-school evaluation;
- if they are, how they should be used;
- the difficulty of photocopying the ELP, given the state of the school's photocopying facilities;
- the wordiness of the ELP;
- a feeling that the Benchmarks are merely for whole-school evaluation since they are too wordy, especially in a large ESL group;[30]
- transfer of students' ELPs from primary to post-primary school;
- the difficulty of understanding the accompanying instructions for use;
- the unsuitability of the Benchmarks and ELP as pedagogical tools;
- the unsuitability of the ELP for absolute beginners (too complex);
- whether mainstream subject teachers should play a role;
- whether parents should be allowed access to the ELP.

4.2.1.13 Ongoing assessment

The ongoing assessment of newcomer students, whether summative or formative, was considered a significant challenge by 41% of the language support teachers surveyed. The following specific challenges were mentioned:
- ensuring that summative assessment is accurate and comprehensive;
- ensuring that it assesses students' needs and language proficiency in both spoken and written modes;
- coping with the DES's failure to provide assessment materials;
- coping with the DES's failure to provide guidance on the assessment of newcomer students given their language deficit;
- coping with the fact that a wide range of assessment instruments are used in schools;
- getting appropriate feedback on available tests;
- not knowing if the assessment instrument used is suitable for students at post-primary level, given that language support is about ensuring that newcomer students are learning language and using language to learn;
- responding to the challenge that schools have to select and buy an assessment instrument;
- coping with the difficulty of interpreting assessment results;
- coping with the difficulty of banding and moving students between bands;
- ensuring that the assessment of English language proficiency does not use "*mere SEN tools*" (language support teacher);
- knowing how to respond to Circular 0053/2007's advice that post-primary schools should use the assessment kit developed for primary schools.

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30 This comment is based on a misunderstanding. The Benchmarks are designed to help teachers, but they are not a teaching tool.

4.2.1.14 Transfer from primary to post-primary school

40% of the language support teachers surveyed identified as a substantial challenge the successful transfer of ESL students from primary to post-primary school because in many cases their level of proficiency in English was deemed very low. Many students who had received two years of language support at primary school transferred to post-primary school with significant deficits in their English language skills. This problem was thought to be compounded by the common perception of post-primary teachers that many students transferring from primary school are ill-prepared for the post-primary curriculum – "*they are expected to have achieved a level of proficiency much higher than what they bring*" (language support teacher). However, one teacher spoke of entry into post-primary for newcomers and English-speakers alike as being somewhat of a "level playing field":

> *In my opinion [students transferring from primary to post-primary school] are at the same level as ESL students as the language of most of the subjects that are being learned by Irish students such as Science and Home Economics are new to them too. They may be familiar with the words but may not have an understanding of their meaning.* (special education teacher)

It is important to note that this observation fails to take into account the fact that Irish nationals arrive in post-primary schools fully proficient in English basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), whereas newcomer students must acquire BICS as well as CALP.

4.2.2 Training

The need for training and the challenges that arise from its absence were issues of concern for 97% of the teachers surveyed. They recognized that "*the quality of the education delivered to newcomer students ultimately depends on the quality of the training received by teachers. Specific training and guidance is required …*" (Kearney, 2008: 143).

The lack of appropriate pre-service and in-service training in ESL (including adolescent/post-primary L2 acquisition, diagnosis, assessment, intercultural competence and linking language skills to curricular/exam content and requirements) was recognized as the second most significant challenge to the successful implementation of English language support in post-primary schools. Participants expressed the view that in-service provision should lead to certification and enhanced professional development opportunities.

Another issue was the difficulty of allowing language support teachers who are also mainstream subject teachers to attend in-service courses; though in our experience this is not an insuperable problem when the school's senior leadership team is firmly committed to ensuring the best possible language support provision.

The final concern has to do with what constitutes an adequate in-service/CPD model, how it should be funded, and who should be charged with delivering it.

4.2.2.1   Language support training

The following specific issues were mentioned:
  • no in-service provision;

- the DES's minimalist approach to upskilling teachers in readiness for language support – "*there isn't a person in Marlborough Street* [i.e., the DES] *who can give any practical advice*", "*I asked him* [the English Inspector from DES] *how do I teach these [newcomer] students and he told me that I shouldn't worry as the Department were going to train me up … it never happened*" (language support teachers);
- the perception that training is relegated to a low priority or none at all;
- school management's ad hoc approach to preparing/supporting language support teachers – "*it was very much a case of 'Sink or swim, my dear' when I took on this role!*" (language support teacher);
- the challenge of identifying the specific skills and strategies needed to teach ESL and link it successfully with curriculum content;
- the lack of accreditation for language support teachers;
- the lack of appropriate funded courses in the Education Centres;
- the difficulty in accessing a proper system of professional development through which language support teachers can enhance their skills;
- the false assumption that one day of in-service is sufficient preparation to teach ESL;
- the mismatch between the needs of language support teachers and the content of in-service courses – "*irrelevant*", "*impractical*", "*too theoretical*", "*no practical application to my classroom*", "*redundant*" (language support teachers);
- the need for qualified language support teachers to deliver training rather than academics ("*we need someone who tastes of chalk* [from standing at the blackboard] *rather than another lofty academic*" – language support teacher);
- the need for training on subject-specific methodologies (other than the teachers' subject areas);
- the exclusive focus of some in-service courses on multicultural/intercultural themes rather than language support practices;
- the need for practical "*hands-on*" training rather than vague notions of what "might" work in the classroom.

4.2.2.2 Diversity/intercultural education training

It has been argued that a multicultural climate promotes newcomers' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Berry, 1998). Multiple positive cultural identities, in turn, have been shown to be related to higher school adjustment among immigrants (Horenczyk & Ben-Shalom, 2001), probably by exposing them to a wider range of available social and cultural resources (LaFromboise *et al.*, 1993), and the teacher's role is paramount in this process (Igoa, 1995).

Inclusion is often regarded by educators as a utopian state, something that is a noble ideal but unworkable in practice (Croll & Moses, 2000). For the teachers surveyed, the need for specific diversity and intercultural education training was second only to the need for language support training.

As early as 2001 the Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE) pointed out that

> *one of the aims of intercultural education, stated in the recent Information Booklet on Asylum Seekers which was issued to schools, is to provide teachers with additional professional skills so that they can work effectively in classes where the young people are from culturally and ethnically mixed background …. This provision is simply not being made …. This report recommends that a review of*

pre-service training should be undertaken to accommodate an intercultural perspective in all aspects of teacher training, further it is crucial that training be delivered at post-graduate level. (IATSE, 2001: 6–7)

The following specific issues were mentioned by the teachers surveyed:
- no in-service provision to help teachers to develop their classroom skills;
- the DES's minimalist approach to upskilling language support teachers in readiness for intercultural education;
- school management's often *ad hoc* approach to preparing teachers for intercultural education;
- the challenge of developing the skills and strategies needed to deal with ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse students;
- the lack of accreditation;
- the lack of appropriate funded courses in the Education Centres;
- the difficulty of accessing a proper system of professional development through which teachers can enhance their skills in this area;
- the false assumption that one day of in-service is enough to prepare teachers for intercultural education;
- the need for qualified language support teachers to deliver training rather than academics;
- the need for practical "hands-on" training rather than vague notions of what "*might*" work in the classroom – many teachers found the online course run by Lóchrann good, but many considered that such a course needs more "*meat*" (i.e. more practical application to the day-to-day school and classroom environments).

4.2.3 The disproportionate representation of newcomer students at resource-poor schools

For 96.2% of the teachers surveyed over-representation of newcomer students in some post-primary schools and their absence from other (sometimes neighbouring) schools was "*the daily reality on the ground*" (language support teacher). They argued that the presence of large numbers of newcomer students had consequences for the allocation of resources and staff in schools which are already "*resource-poor*" (language support teacher). They also admitted that there were concerns about their school's ranking in league tables.

We noted in 2.1 above Flynn's (2008) conclusion that many schools are using restrictive admissions policies to exclude students with special needs, the children of immigrants, and Travellers, with the result that the education of students in these categories is largely left to vocational and community schools. In response to the study, the then Minister for Education, Mary Hanafin, acknowledged that the audit "*indicates that some schools are assuming a disproportionate responsibility for enrolling children of all backgrounds and needs within their local community*" (Flynn, 2008). In the opinion of most language support teachers we surveyed, this has a significant negative impact on newcomer students' motivation to learn.

4.2.4 Classroom issues

Challenges related to classroom integration, practice and management were identified as being significant by 67% of the teachers surveyed.

4.2.4.1   School/classroom integration

Successful classroom integration is crucial if newcomer students are to gain ownership of the diverse social practices enacted through language and to participate effectively in the life of the school. The following specific issues were mentioned:

- a wide range of practice regarding induction, with some schools organizing structured induction activities and others having no induction or activities organized *ad hoc* on the initiative of the language support teacher alone;
- lack of parental involvement in some cases and too much parental involvement in others;
- the challenges arising from religious diversity;
- newcomer students' need for "survival language";
- the challenges arising from the emotional problems of some newcomer students;
- the need for specific measures to integrate isolated students;
- concern for other Irish students (English-speakers);
- the particular issues that surround unaccompanied minors;
- newcomer students' wide range of previous educational experience, including no experience at all;
- the gaps in some newcomer students' learning resulting from interrupted schooling;
- newcomer students' previous experience of different examination structures and syllabuses;
- knowing how best to exploit the fact that newcomer students have well-developed skills in other languages;
- newcomer students often appear tired or uninterested;
- newcomer students often appear stressed;
- newcomer students are often very quiet in the classroom, never offer an answer, nod their heads whether or not they have understood, or avoid eye contact with teachers;
- newcomer students may not want to eat with other students in the school canteen or assembly hall;
- newcomer students occasionally seem aggressive or excessively loud;
- there is little recognition of the needs of more advanced learners;
- modifying the curriculum to meet the individual student's needs late in the course of study;
- late-arriving students' preferred option choices may be full, and other school-based course activities may also be fully subscribed;
- lack of success in examination-focused lesson activities may cause students to become demotivated, leading to poor attendance and achievement.

4.2.4.2   Classroom practice

According to 60% of the teachers surveyed, the pressure to meet curriculum objectives and timelines precludes teachers using methods which, research shows, facilitate and support language learning, such as active learning, oracy-integrated skills and process writing.

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- large variation in newcomer students' abilities – "*levels are so different that it makes teaching in groups problematic*" (language support teacher);
- uncertainty as regards what teaching methodology/methodologies to use;
- ESL students are overwhelmed with the dual challenge of developing proficiency in English

and mastering subject content;
- newcomer students often get poor marks despite tremendous efforts;
- ESL students may take their failures personally and develop low self-esteem;
- newcomer parents cannot assist their children;
- mainstream subject teachers have insufficient time to address the language-related needs of newcomer students;
- ESL students "*slow the pace*" of the mainstream class (language support teacher);
- the erosion of teaching time;[31]
- the need to avoid lessons becoming just "*teacher talk*";[32]
- dominant teaching methods are at variance with the aims of language support;
- newcomer students often go through a silent period;
- teachers find it difficult to adopt a constructivist approach to teaching.[33]

4.2.4.3   Classroom management

The amount of time, effort and stress involved in working with ESL students was identified as a significant challenge by 44% of teachers in this study. Other issues mentioned in this context were:
- poor/bad behaviour/discipline on the part of newcomer students;
- student inattention;
- attitudes of other students;
- active listening behaviour that suggests understanding and refrain from asking for help or further understanding;
- unresponsive/uncooperative or disrespectful behaviour;
- bullying;
- large classes;
- racism;
- undiagnosed learning difficulties;
- forcible deportations by the Garda National Immigration Bureau;[34]

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31 In relation to this issue and the previous one, research by Rumberger and Palardy (2005) tends to support the views of these teachers. One specific finding is that both national and immigrant students perform worse in classes with higher numbers of recently arrived immigrants who have low proficiency in the language of schooling. A possible explanation suggested by Rumberger and Palardy is that in such classes teachers have to invest time and effort in supporting the new arrivals at the expense of time and effort devoted to the rest of the class. However, they also argue that when teachers have high expectations and the academic climate is geared towards raising effort and taking up cognitively more challenging tasks, the negative impact of class composition can be significantly reduced. With respect to the disproportionate amount of teacher effort directed at students who lack proficiency in the language of instruction, Orlich et al. (1998) have shown that this can best be avoided by organizing differentiated practice – for instance, by arranging more opportunities for cooperative learning and peer tutoring.

32 The inspectorate's 2006 report on teaching and learning English in post-primary schools noted the "dominance of teacher talk" (DES, 2006: 32).

33 According to the constructivist paradigm, learners actively create their own meanings and knowledge, both through individual acts of cognition and through social interaction (Kukla, 2000); thus the teacher's primary role is to ensure that classroom interaction is such that curriculum goals are achieved (see Mercer, 2001: 254).

34 The Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) is responsible for all immigration-related police operations and carries out deportations, border control, and investigations relating to illegal immigration and human trafficking. The GNIB has pursued forcible deportations of newcomer students from primary and post-primary schoolrooms and buildings. This behaviour was deplored by, among others, the Teachers Union of Ireland (as reported in TUI News, November 2006).

- attitudes of Muslim students towards depiction of Jews in religious textbooks;
- absenteeism;
- attitudes towards female teachers;
- cultural issues related to student-teacher relationship;
- Irish students may misbehave when they see "*idle*" newcomer students at the back of the classroom.

4.2.4.4   "What do we call them?"

A significant challenge for 37% of the teachers surveyed was the issue of what to call newcomer students. In addition to "*newcomers*" and "*ESL students*", the following terms were all used (though sometimes merely for purposes of clarification, i.e., what term(s) should be avoided?):

- ELLs/English language learners
- non-Irish
- non-nationals
- Africans
- ethnic minorities
- refugees
- non-English speaking students
- internationals
- children from new communities
- foreigners
- newly-arrived students
- immigrants
- migrants

The use of the word "newcomer" was deemed problematic by many teachers – "*if I went on the PA and said would all the newcomer students come to the front office, sure every student in first year would turn up*", "*what do I call a student who has done three years in primary and is now in with me in second year? It's a bit silly … calling him a newcomer!*" (language support teachers). The point was also made that, by extension, one ought refer to "*Irish*" students as "*non-newcomers*". In fact most of the teachers surveyed referred to "non-newcomers" (i.e. students with English as their first language) as "*Irish*", "*Irish nationals*" or simply "*nationals*".

4.2.5 School management structures

Established school management structures and associated administrative procedures were identified as a significant challenge by 51% of the teachers surveyed.

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- lack of a clear mutual understanding with management (principal/board of management) regarding the implementation of educational and instructional practices;
- lack of leadership;
- poor/inappropriate leadership;
- school management disengaged;
- school management over-involved;
- resources allocated for language support may be diverted elsewhere;
- resources allocated for language support are too small;

- poor coordination of the newcomer student body as regards enrolment, orientation, assessment, placement and language support;
- lack of time to implement appropriate teaching practice due to too high workload;
- opposition and misunderstanding from management;
- lack of school policies;
- nothing exists in the school development plan, mission statement, vision, aims or code of behaviour (as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000).

4.2.6 Attitudes

Prevailing attitudes on the part of school management, mainstream subject teachers and other staff were considered an important challenge by 50.5% of the teachers surveyed. Within this subgroup, 98.8% identified the absence of supportive collegiality as deleterious.

4.2.6.1 Teachers' attitudes and beliefs

Mac Éinri has described the "*prevailing official attitude towards foreign immigrants* [in Ireland as] *one of caution, if not outright opposition*" (2001: 6), and teachers are not immune to holding such attitudes. Vollmer (2000) has pointed out that teachers' beliefs have a strong impact on the classroom's educational and social climate. Often teachers are unaware of their ideological assumptions, but their low expectations of newcomer students can lead to adverse "Rosenthal effects" (according to which students internalize their teachers' positive or negative expectations of them; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978). Both Devine (2005: 53, citing a number of corroborative studies) and Kearney (2008) point out that post-primary teachers may view ESL students from a "deficit perspective". Kearney has further shown the significant levels of reluctance on the part of mainstream subject teachers to include newcomer students in their classrooms. 49% of teachers in the present survey felt that subject teachers viewed ESL students from a deficit perspective.

The following related issues were mentioned:
- subject teachers may ignore ESL students in their classrooms;
- subject teachers may be less diligent in their efforts to support the learning of newcomer students;
- subject teachers tend to employ practices characterized by a traditional knowledge-transmission model of teaching in which the teacher does most of the talking;
- such teacher-centred teaching addresses the class as a whole without taking account of the different needs of different learners;
- subject teachers may equate language support with SEN;
- when in a subject teacher's classroom, a language support teacher's time is not always well used;
- lack of qualified language support staff may place unrealistic expectations and responsibilities on both subject teachers and language support teachers.

4.2.6.2 Teacher collegiality/interaction between language support and subject teachers

The following issues were mentioned:
- lack of clear understanding as regards the implementation of educational and instructional practices;

- opposition and misunderstanding on the part of their subject teacher colleagues towards the role/goals of language support;
- uncertainly regarding how to develop a whole-school approach;
- whole-school planning (the challenge of identifying the inclusion of newcomer students as a priority);
- planning for differentiation at the level of subject department and subject teacher;
- the need to develop a whole-school team;
- the need for a post of responsibility;
- establishing effective lines of communication between language support teachers and subject teachers so that subject teachers know the range and extent of newcomer students' language deficits ("*everything happens in a random, haphazard way*" – language support teacher);
- teachers' excessive work load;
- difficulties in liaising with subject teachers – "*Liaising with subject teachers can be difficult – in the sense of having processes/protocols that work on a day-to-day basis in a way that meets the changing needs of the individual ESL student. Apart from crowded timetables and substitution/supervision rules which leave little space for 'meetings' between teachers – informal or formal – except at lunchtime or after school*" (language support coordinator);
- experienced subject teachers do not always take well to younger, less experienced ESL staff telling them how to change their teaching strategies, and ESL teachers feel uncomfortable in this role too;
- the challenge of trying to make mainstream subject teachers understand and accept that teaching in any subject area needs to involve some focus on language – "*it too often seems to be regarded as the language support teacher's problem that the ESL student can't do the written homework assigned [for example] to the History class*" (language support coordinator).

As regards this last comment and subject teachers' attitudes in general, it is worth noting that the joint DES/Council of Europe *Language Education Policy Profile* for Ireland also mentions the dominant view that language is the sole concern of language teachers:

> *A fully integrated and implemented language in education policy would, on the contrary, see all teachers aware of the language dimension of their subject and of their role – among others – as teachers of language.* (Council of Europe/DES, 2007: 40)

4.2.7   Issues to do with parents and the home

Dealing with parents and home issues was identified as a challenge by 48% of the language support teachers surveyed. Most immigrants perceive school as providing an opportunity for upward social and economic mobility (Vedder & Horenczyk, 2006), and according to many language support teachers, this can have challenging consequences for language support in post-primary schools:

The following issues were mentioned:
- parental expectations;
- the difficulty of communicating with parents and the use of older siblings, other speakers of the parents' L1, or interpreters;
- issues of confidentiality, ethical issues, data protection;
- lack of information for parents in their own language;

- parental frustrations due to their lack of English;
- dealing with student and parent objections when a student is placed in a class below his/ her age level;
- opposition and misunderstanding on the part of parents towards the goals of language support and the role of the language support teacher – "*I end up being the go-between with the school and parents on everything*" (language support teacher);
- dealing with gender issues related to use of interpreters;
- the need to explain to newcomer parents policies and procedures that are taken for granted by Irish parents;
- general ongoing communication difficulties with parents due to language and/or cultural barriers;
- notes in copybooks (parental corporal punishment issues, etc.);[35]
- letters/phone calls home – "*A well-directed phone call such as I would use to prevent a student's behaviour from getting out of hand is of no use when the person on the other line can't understand you*" (language support coordinator);
- parents' failure to respond to letters;
- arrogance on the part of some parents (who may perceive teachers as being socially inferior to them);
- student homework issues, including the inability of parents to help with student homework;
- lack of parental involvement in school and pastoral matters (two teachers described this as a "*disconnect*" on the part of the parents);
- parents' failure to attend parent–teacher meetings;
- parents' own English language needs;
- mother tongue maintenance;[36]
- lack of culturally trained home-school liaison.

4.2.8 Diversity/intercultural education

Challenges related to how best to make the curriculum, school and classroom more socially inclusive were identified as significant by 44% of the teachers surveyed.

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35 Kearney (2008: 158-9) outlines a wide variety of punitive parental reactions to disciplinary notes brought home by their children. According to some teachers she interviewed, students may try to manipulate teachers' reluctance to send notes home and thus avoid bringing the school/classroom misconduct to the attention of their parents.

36 Cummins (2003b) has argued that:
- the level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development;
- mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue, but also children's abilities in the majority school language;
- spending instructional time through a minority language in the school does not hurt children's academic development in the majority school language.

The Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (IATSE) in its 2001 report, *Education for a Pluralist Society: the Direction of Intercultural Education*, suggests that the provision of L1 language classes "*should be possible where there is a concentration of children with the same first language*" (p.7), for example around Beaumont hospital in Dublin, where there is a large Filipino community due to the recruitment of Filipino nurses.

In Rachael Fionda's research, the principal of a Dublin school with a large newcomer population made the following observation: "*I'm not so sure that the decision to permit students from abroad to take exams in their own language without a teaching programme behind it … was a good decision*". This may be further aggravated by the fact that these examinations follow a foreign language model

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- different behavioural, religious and cultural norms;
- different school systems;
- attitudes towards female teachers;
- attitudes towards school authority (i.e. teachers);
- diet, clothing and gender issues related to religious practice;
- concerns about the non-newcomer school population;
- "*White flight*"[37] and its impact on the make-up of the school population;
- segregation within the school community;
- exclusion of ethnic minorities.

4.2.9   Lack of ICT facilities

The issue of inadequate and insufficient ICT facilities in post-primary schools was viewed as challenging by 40% of the language support teachers surveyed.

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- having to use the computer room for many language support classes due to lack of rooms, which leads to a clash with scheduled mainstream ICT classes;
- finding time to verify that software is appropriate for self-access learning;
- ensuring that an ICT-assisted class "*doesn't just turn into a Bebo moment*" (language support teacher);
- "*considerable*" lack of funding from the DES;
- lack of training in the use of information technology in language learning – "*students are propelled on to the Headway site and left to their own devices for a class period*" (language support teacher).[38]

4.2.10   Dealing with external agencies

Dealing with various government Departments (the Health Service Executive's Children and Family Services, the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform, the Irish Naturalization & Immigration Service, etc.) was viewed as a fairly significant challenge by 38% of the teachers surveyed.

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- educational and welfare entitlements of students and parents;
- non-EEA children over 16 and 18+ students without English.

This comment by a language support coordinator reflects the experience of several of the teachers surveyed:

> *I came off the phone to the Department of Justice* [Equality and Law Reform] *shaking with anger and I just thought to myself, that if I … was treated like that, just how were they treating my newcomer students and their families.*

37 The phenomenon of Irish students moving out of increasingly diverse schools, which reflects a wider residential movement of white Irish moving to avoid increasingly diverse neighbourhoods. See *Intercultural Education – Primary Challenges in Dublin 15* (McGorman & Sugrue, 2007).

38 A website operated by Oxford University Press to support a best-seller among EFL textbooks.

4.2.11   Exemption from Irish

Interestingly, when asked about issues arising from the common tendency to withdraw students from Irish classes, 38% of the teachers surveyed felt that this presented a challenge to language support and social/school inclusion.

The following specific points were made:
- some teachers felt that as the level of Irish was so low amongst many English-speaking Irish nationals, first and second-year Irish was more or less a level playing field for all students;
- some argued that learning Irish would tap into the multilingual/language learning abilities of many of the ESL learners (which is certainly the experience in primary schools);
- some argued that exclusion from the Irish language effectively cut off an important area of wider inclusion into Irish culture and could have long-term repercussions – "*they should have to endure Peig Sayers*[39] *so they can really feel what it's like to be Irish!*" (language support teacher).[40]

4.2.12   Other recurring frustrations

Other recurring frustrations reported by the teachers surveyed included:
- a prevailing sense of having to "*reinvent the wheel*" each time with each new student – due to lack of policies, guidelines and training;
- a perceived lack of "*joined-up thinking*" at DES and school management levels;
- increased work load and its associated additional stress factors and risk of burn-out.

The last of these frustrations is significant in view of the emphasis that modern pedagogical approaches place on social interaction and verbal reasoning. Research suggests that when students score low on language proficiency, teachers need to invest more time and effort in regulating their social interactions and creating conditions that optimize the quality of their verbalizations than is necessary when teaching students who score high on language proficiency (Chinn *et al.*, 2000).

4.3   Deficits

According to the teachers surveyed, the greatest deficits in language support in post-primary schools were, in descending order:
1. Inadequate provision of language support
2. Lack of appropriate and fully funded language support training
3. Poor coordination of language support at DES level
4. Poor coordination and resourcing of language support at school level

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39 *Peig*, the autobiography of Peig Sayers, is perhaps the most famous example of a late Gaelic Revival genre of personal histories by and about inhabitants of the Blasket Islands. The book was for a long time required reading on the Leaving Certificate Irish syllabus and is still associated with that experience today, which tends to overshadow its importance as a historical and cultural document.

40 Wallen (2006: 1) makes the following observation: "*Though difficult to demonstrate, perhaps a subtle discomfort remains regarding the funding of English teaching based on the belief that Irish was suppressed by English. A significant amount of special funding continues to be directed towards the development of the Irish language. At the very least, Irish-English bilingualism is afforded a high status*."

5. Disproportionate representation of newcomer students at resource-poor schools
6. Newcomer students' English language deficit
7. Newcomer parents' English language deficit
8. Negative teacher attitudes and lack of collegial support within the school
9. The tendency of schools and mainstream subject teachers to conflate language support with Special Educational Needs
10. The lack of language support materials aligned to curriculum subjects
11. The lack of appropriate and fully funded training in diversity/intercultural education
12. Lack of ICT facilities
13. Lack of a policy on mother tongue maintenance
14. Administrative concerns
15. The need for a better policy on exemption from Irish

4.3.1 Deficits in DES policy

The teachers surveyed were strongly critical of the DES's policy on language support, which they considered unsound, inconsistent and inadequately funded. They also identified the conflation of language support with SEN as evidence of a deficit in policy at school level, and recognized that the way in which education is organized can itself be a vehicle for perpetuating and, indeed, promoting social injustice and inequality (Lyons, 2008).

Teachers cited the following as evidence of the lack of a coherent DES policy:
- the haphazard, last-minute allocation of teaching hours/posts to fill up timetables;
- the lack of assessment instruments – "*the Department keeps mentioning tests, they mentioned them again in that circular you just showed me* [Circular 0053/2007] *and here we are a year later, still awaiting them*" (language support teacher);
- the lack of adequate set-up funding – many teachers, for example, identified the need for taped materials and school-based listening posts in language laboratories, ICT facilities and simple tape/CD-players in order to facilitate individual listening and speaking practice;
- the lack of appropriately designed learning materials appropriate to students' age and language learning needs;
- the perception that the government views the "*problem*" of language support as a temporary phenomenon – "*just witness the speed with which funding was cut to IILT at the first signs of a downturn in the economy*" (language support teacher);
- the "*myth*" of return, i.e. the unfounded belief that all newcomers will eventually return to their country of origin;[41]
- the closure of IILT and the failure to make better use of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the European Language Portfolio produced by IILT;
- the lack of interpreters;

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41 The myth of return is predicated on the assumption that in an economic downturn, many migrants will return to their countries of origins. As Lucy Gaffney, chair of National Action Plan Against Racism, has pointed out, this may be true for a section of casual workers, but with the CSO data showing that almost 42% of the non-Irish population is married, a significant number of them are probably settled and raising families in Ireland (Gaffney, 2008). Within the field of migration studies, "*historical migratory movements have shown that regardless of the intentions of individuals, a significant proportion of migrants may remain in the receiving country, settling and forming a community*" (ICI, 2007: 9). There is an abundance of international research to support the view that economic downturns do not inevitably lead to emigrants returning to their countries of origin (Anwar, 1979; Bhatti, 1999; Breakwell, 1986; Ghail, 1988; Ghuman, 1995; Krings & Bobek, 2009; Zetter, 1994).

- the lack of a helpdesk facility available to schools which could be accessed by telephone and e-mail;[42]
- the lack of a lending library of resources focussed on curriculum-related English language support and intercultural education.

82% of the teachers surveyed felt that there was a policy vacuum at DES level, which meant that schools react passively rather than proactively to the English language needs of newcomer students. In particular, teachers felt that there exists at government level a belief that teaching ESL is a simple matter and that "*good*" teachers should be able not only to make adjustments in the way they teach their lessons but to develop alternative assessment techniques for ESL students: it is only a matter of accommodation. There was a common perception among the teachers surveyed that the DES has abandoned them, believing that the teachers themselves should have all the answers – "*when I talk to them* [the DES]*, there's a sense that I haven't a clue about teaching*" (language support teacher).

68% of the teachers surveyed referred to a perceived lack of investment in education generally as a significant deficit that must inevitably lead to the poor funding of language support in post-primary schools. *Education at a Glance*, 2002, noted that Ireland's expenditure per pupil in primary and secondary schooling is much lower than the OECD average: Ireland was ranked 18th out of 24 countries in respect of primary and 19th out of 26 countries in respect of secondary education; and when expenditure is standardized according to GDP per capita, both sectors came last among the OECD countries surveyed. In 2003, the OECD average expenditure on educational institutions relative to GDP was 5.4%, while Ireland's average expenditure was below 4.5% (OECD, 2007, Table B2.1a).

91% of the language support teachers surveyed – who considered themselves "*professionals working at the chalk-face*" (language support teacher) – stated that as a consequence of inadequate resources, many children with ESL needs, including high-level needs, were not being provided with the support necessary to reach the level of English required for their full participation in the school community, the curriculum, and society at large. An abundance of research (e.g., Glenn & De Jong, 1996; Hijzen *et al.*, 2006; OECD, 2006b) confirms the commonsense view that newcomers benefit insufficiently from education when they lack proficiency in the language of instruction; and when students underperform at school, they are likely to suffer from low self-esteem and drop out of school early, with negative implications for their participation in the workforce and potentially serious social repercussions.

According to PISA research (OECD, 2006b: 12), countries where there are either relatively small performance differences between immigrant and native students, or where the performance gaps for second-generation students are significantly reduced compared to those for first-generation students, tend to have well-established language support programmes with clearly defined goals and standards. The teachers we surveyed did not consider themselves part of such a programme; on the contrary, they identified inadequate provision of language support and lack of appropriate and fully funded language support training as the two greatest deficits of the present system.

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42 The provision of just such a helpdesk facility was one of the de facto functions of IILT.

4.3.2 Deficits in training

By far, the largest deficit identified by the teachers surveyed (100% of the sample) was the lack of in-service training and the continuing failure to include English language support in pre-service teacher education. The data seem to establish that teachers feel that they can play their roles more effectively in an ecology that treats them as learning and reflective professionals.[43]

The following specific issues were mentioned:
- a dearth of systematic and sustained teacher training and professional development with a focus on language support teaching and curriculum development;
- because so many language support teachers are also mainstream subject teachers, they were never freed by their principals to attend in-service training;
- training to date has tended to focus on multicultural awareness and not the nuts and bolts of how to support ESL students in the language of instruction;[44]
- English language support is a dynamic and expanding field, with ongoing research and development, so it is important for the profession to have a well-informed body of certified practitioners;
- there is a need for adequate and stable resources to support professional development;
- the prevalent form of professional development is unstructured and restricted in scope, so that it fails to provide teachers with the required professional skills and practice based on an appropriate model;
- there is a lack of support in providing a well-planned programme at the appropriate levels for the full range of newcomer students;
- there is a lack of training to support specific areas of language support, e.g., the teaching of vocabulary, speaking skills and written language for different curriculum subjects, familiarizing students with different styles of classroom interaction, using IT facilities for self-access language learning;
- there is a lack of training in how to recognize whether an ESL student's difficulties are due to a language gap, a skill gap, or simply a general need for remediation;
- teachers need to improve their own English language proficiency to enable them to be more confident in their spoken skills and communication;
- teachers do not know how to adjust lessons or assignments, homework or tests for ESL students;
- if newcomer students can cope with day-to-day spoken English, teachers often do not recognize that such students nevertheless need support in dealing with academic English;
- two teachers wondered whether the DES's inspectors for English, who deal with ESL as part of subject inspections or whole-school evaluations, are themselves qualified ESL professionals (if not, there is a serious deficit at the heart of the inspectorate);
- many teachers expressed the view that TEFL qualifications do not prepare language support teachers to provide ESL support for curriculum subjects;
- the failure of teacher education to focus on language across the curriculum – all teachers should be encouraged to participate in initiatives which focus on the role of language in learning and the development of academic literacy (such initiatives benefit not only ESL learners but also students whose L1 is English).

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43 Research carried out in France, Spain, the UK, Ireland, Latvia and Italy (Fine-Davis et al., 2007: 20) found that teachers rated the "need for training" as the most significant factor in managing diversity in their classroom.

44 This is not true, however, of the in-service seminars provided by IILT between 2000 and 2006.

As a consequence of inadequate training 67% of the teachers surveyed believed that newcomer students have special educational needs if they are fluent in spoken English but still have difficulty coping with classroom interaction and literacy tasks. The distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive/academic language processing, fundamental to research in this area, is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.3.3 Deficits at school level

The teachers surveyed mentioned the following deficits at school level:
- negative attitudes to language support on the part of school management and mainstream subject teachers – "*particularly amongst the old hands!*" (language support coordinator);
- failure to provide language support classes regularly and often so that learning is reinforced (46% of the sample deemed this a significant deficit);
- lack of a readiness to engage in collaborative teaching based on joint planning and consultation;
- lack of awareness of the range of contexts in which language support could be provided and the possible combinations of different strategies that could be used (team teaching, withdrawal, parallel teaching, resource teaching, language support-informed instruction),[45] depending on the students' needs and the resources available to the school;[46]
- the low expectations that subject teachers often have of newcomer students because of their English language deficit.[47] Significantly, 42% of language support teachers felt that subject teachers in general expect less from newcomers due to their language deficit. This is an important finding since research shows that teacher expectations have more impact on students from minority and low social status backgrounds;
- vagaries in school enrolment policies as outlined in 2.3.2;
- lower than warranted enrolment of newcomers in some schools parallels existing socio-economic disadvantage;
- lack of a whole-school approach to (modern) language teaching in general;
- lack of language laboratory and computer facilities (the internet, for example, is an important language learning resource as well as a ubiquitous communication tool, and teachers felt that the IT infrastructure in schools should be updated to support computer-assisted language learning especially for ESL students).

45 Team teaching: the language support teacher and the mainstream subject teacher work in equal partnership to share teaching responsibility and engage in joint planning. Withdrawal: ESL students are withdrawn from their regular class activities to follow an intensive language support programme. Parallel teaching: an identified class or group of ESL students works on the same curriculum area as their mainstream peers, but with a language emphasis appropriate to their needs. Language support-informed instruction: subject teachers develop an understanding of ESL pedagogy and apply it in their classes. Resource teaching: the language support teacher acts as a resource for both students and teachers. This support may take many forms depending on the school timetable, the subjects being taught, and teacher cooperation. It may include team teaching, joint planning, staff development and resource development.

46 This deficit in collegiality recalls the findings of Goodlad (1984: 186), who reported that teachers' "*autonomy seems to be exercised in a context more of isolation than of a rich professional dialogue [and] teacher-to-teacher links for mutual assistance or collaborative school improvement [are] weak or non-existent*". This state of affairs leads to increased work loads and stress levels for language support teachers, with the potential for diversity-related "burn-out".

47 A review by Jussim and Harber (2005) suggests that the following general conclusions can be drawn from the large body of research on this topic: teachers' pre-existing expectations affect students' intellectual growth, both positively and negatively depending on the nature of their expectations; expectation effects are commonly small but statistically significant; and the size of the impact brought about by expectation effects is heavily dependent on situational and interpersonal moderators and mediators, in particular (and of special importance in the present context) student ethnicity and socio-economic background.

4.3.4 Deficits in learning materials and other supports

The teachers surveyed mentioned a need for:
- word lists and topic-related sentences for preview, revision, copying and reading;
- materials for self-directed revision;
- materials to assist teaching how to write essays and assignments in the various genres and presentation formats appropriate for the topic;
- materials that scaffold new learning, helping students to take small steps, being explicit about links to previous learning, and breaking up longer or more complex tasks into smaller achievable units;
- materials to develop listening and speaking skills;
- visual supports such as diagrams, flashcards and illustrated glossaries;
- bilingual dictionaries;
- templates for school–home letters/notes in newcomer languages.

4.3.5 Deficits in relation to newcomer students' mother tongues

As regards newcomer students' first languages, the teachers surveyed identified the following deficits:
- lack of the necessary skills on the part of teachers to capitalize on the cognitive, linguistic and emotional resources that come with the students' proficiency in their L1;[48]
- failure to see mother tongue maintenance as an academic resource;
- the culture-specific nature of the curriculum, which is a barrier to equality of access and equality of outcomes.

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48 With respect to the maintenance and use of the newcomers' L1, the Language Education Policy Profile – Ireland makes the following observation: "*English is everywhere and nowhere, omnipresent and unnoticed [in the school]. The languages of immigration are heard more often outside than inside the school. This situation could be caricatured as follows: a country officially bilingual, effectively more and more multilingual, with a majority of the population which might easily resign itself to being English-speaking monolingual*" (Council of Europe/DES, 2007: 33).

5 What kind of future?

5.1 The survey findings and their implications

The findings of our survey do not make encouraging reading. In many of the schools represented the provision of English language support was poorly coordinated; in some it was downright haphazard. Effective and sustained communication between language support and subject teachers seemed to be a rarity, and in some cases responsibility for the integration of newcomer students fell entirely on the language support teacher. There was a widespread tendency to take a "deficit" view of students' lack of proficiency in English and to assume that they belonged in the same category as students with special educational needs. These inadequacies of provision and understanding were not helped by serious deficits in the system. According to the teachers we surveyed, the single most significant deficit was the lack of appropriate teacher training, pre- as well as in-service; but there was also a serious lack of teaching/learning materials, especially materials related to the different curriculum subjects. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that only 57% of the teachers surveyed declared themselves happy with the progress their newcomer students were making (3.13, Figure 75). The teachers who participated in our survey did so because we were in contact with them and they were prepared to give us some of their time; they did not constitute a sample constructed according to scientific principles. Thus we cannot claim representative status either for what they told us about the design and delivery of language support in their schools or for their view of the challenges posed by language support and the deficits in the system. On the other hand, we have no reason to suppose that what they told us is not broadly true of the post-primary sector as a whole.

In 4.3.1 we referred to the "myth of return": the assumption that when the economy is in recession, immigrants will go back to their country of origin. At the time of writing (April 2009) Ireland is facing what is by common consent the biggest economic crisis in its history, but as yet there is no sign of a mass exodus of newcomers. In any case, it seems to be generally agreed that the return of economic growth will require an enlarged workforce, which means further and long-term immigration. What is more, our need for immigrants will increase as life expectancy rises. In other words, our present economic difficulties should not blind us to the fact that English language support and the educational integration of newcomer pupils and students will be an inescapable part of Ireland's long-term future. But at a time when the government should be engaging seriously with schools and other stakeholders to find a way of making progress despite acute funding difficulties, the DES issues a circular that announces a reduction in English language support but with no acknowledgement of the serious implications this has for the educational prospects of newcomer pupils and students. This prompts us to take a second look at the DES's policy response to the challenge of large-scale immigration.

5.2 Immigration: another look at the DES's policy response

The DES's key policy response to the challenge of immigration was its decision to fund two years of English language support for each newcomer pupil and student, with the recommendation that such support should be delivered on a withdrawal basis (i.e., in special classes for which the pupils/ students in question should be withdrawn from their mainstream class). It is unclear who formulated this policy, but it is not necessary to be a specialist in the complexities of language acquisition to recognize its inadequacy. The assumption that one size fits all certainly makes for

neat accounting; unfortunately it is not confirmed by reality, which is complex, multifarious, messy and unpredictable. Consider two examples. The newcomer child who enters primary school with no English at the age of four and a half but is provided with a well thought-out programme of English language support, is unlikely to lag seriously behind her English-speaking peers for very long. The amount of life experience she does not have in common with them is relatively limited, and she is introduced to the themes of the curriculum and takes her first steps towards mastering literacy in English at the same time as they do. For her, two years of English language support will probably be enough. Our second example is a fourteen-year-old boy who arrives in Ireland with his parents. He has eight years of schooling behind him in his home country, but he has followed a very different curriculum from the one he must cope with in his Irish post-primary school; and although he has taken English as a core subject since the age of ten, he is unable to use the language for purposes of spontaneous communication. Two years of English language support are unlikely to give him the level of proficiency he needs, especially as the DES makes no provision for an intensive induction programme to kick-start his language learning.

The DES's one-size-fits-all approach carries the implication that learning the language of instruction is the same as learning a curriculum subject: there is a finite amount of content to be mastered, and it should be possible to do that in two years. Further evidence of the serious ignorance that underlies DES policy is provided by the descriptors used in Circular 0053/2007 to define the three proficiency levels that were to be applied to newcomer pupils and students:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Very poor comprehension of English and very limited spoken English	Understands some English and can speak English sufficiently well for basic communication	Has competent communication skills in English

According to these descriptors, newcomer students need only to develop listening and speaking skills in English. Whoever devised them presumably imagined that if newcomers could communicate orally they should be able to cope equally well with the written forms of the language. There is, however, a significant body of research to show that developing spontaneous proficiency in oral communication is one thing, and mastering the often complex forms of the written language is quite another. Admittedly Circular 0015/2009 replaces these descriptors by the following, which derive from the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks:

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Absence of any English language proficiency	Can understand and use basic words and phrases in a social and school context	Can understand, read and write simple English and can speak English sufficiently well to exchange communication	Can function well enough in English to be fully integrated into the mainstream classroom

But the assumption that proficiency in the language of schooling can be adequately captured by these brief formulations (which give no hint of the complex multidimensionality of the Benchmarks themselves) indicates that whoever was responsible for drafting the circular had either not read the Bench¬marks or failed to understand them.

5.3   BICS and CALP

The distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language processing (CALP) was first made and researched by Jim Cummins, now of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (see, for example, Cummins 1978, 1980a, 1981a, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Cummins & Swain, 1986). The essence of the distinction is captured in the BICS/CALP quadrant:
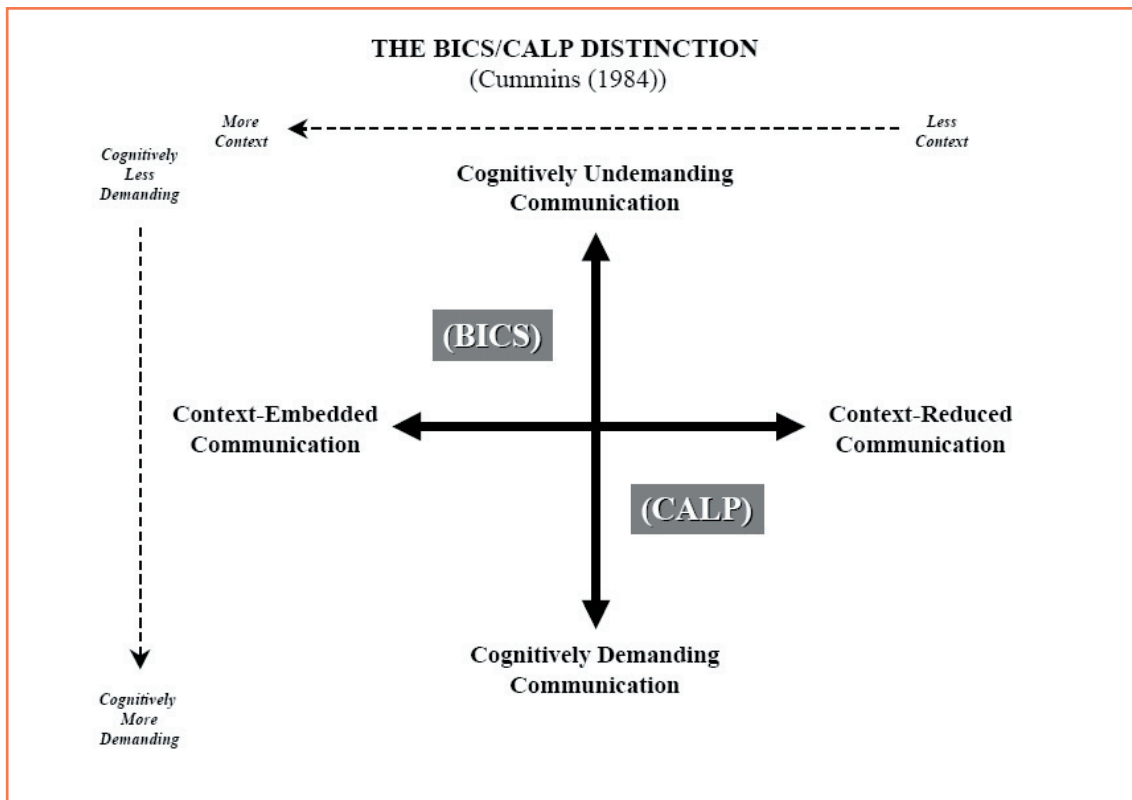
The quadrant allows us to categorize communication according to the amount of contextual support available (horizontal axis) and the cognitive demands made by the task in question (vertical axis). Context-embedded communication is typical of the everyday world outside the classroom, where comprehension and production of meaning are supported by paralinguistic cues (e.g., intonation, gesture, eye contact, feedback) and by features of the physical situation (e.g., persons and objects in focus, the sunshine that is pleasantly warm, the rain that is making you wet); it is also a precondition for child language acquisition and the so-called "naturalistic" acquisition of second and foreign languages. In context-reduced communication, on the other hand, the cues to meaning are primarily linguistic, contained in the spoken or written text we seek to understand or produce. BICS tasks are typically located in the top left quarter of the quadrant because they are context-embedded and in cognitive terms relatively undemanding; while CALP tasks are typically located in the bottom right quarter because they are context-reduced and cognitively demanding.

It is important to make three things clear regarding the BICS/CALP distinction. First, it is not absolute; for example, social chat among friends is a cognitively undemanding BICS task, but persuading a friend of your point of view, while still a BICS task, can be cognitively demanding.

Secondly, the BICS/CALP distinction does not refer to informal spoken communication on the one hand and formal written communication on the other. BICS tasks can occur in written communication (e.g., e-mail, text-messaging), while CALP is a characteristic of much of the spoken communication that occurs in classrooms and other academic contexts (Cummins, 1994). Thirdly, CALP grows out of BICS, which means that English language support at post-primary level needs to give as much attention to BICS, especially in the early stages, as it does to CALP. The better newcomer students are able to communicate informally with their Irish peers, the easier they will find it to develop CALP; or, to put it another way, the more fully integrated newcomer students are in the social and extra-curricular dimensions of school life, the better their chances of succeeding academically.

The dependence of CALP on BICS is reflected in the structure of the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks, which are divided into four parts thus:

I. Global benchmarks of communicative proficiency and global scales of linguistic competence and general communicative ability
II. Personal identification and classroom interaction
III. Learning to learn and developing cultural awareness
IV. Subject-specific scales: Physical Education and Sports, Mathematics, Science Subjects, History and Geography, English

The first part presents an integrated view of communicative proficiency at levels A1, A2 and B1; the second part has to do with learners' ability to give an account of themselves and engage in general interaction (BICS and the beginnings of CALP); the third part is concerned with the development of learning skills and cultural awareness (CALP firmly embedded in BICS); and the fourth part is concerned with subject-specific communication (CALP).

Before we leave BICS and CALP it is worth summarizing the findings of one research project, carried out more than twenty years ago, in order to illustrate the complexity of the language learning challenge faced by newcomer students in our post-primary schools. Collier (1987) investigated the academic achievement of 1,548 immigrant students in the US. The students came from over 100 different countries, spoke more than 75 languages between them, had little or no proficiency in English, and were either at or close to grade level in academic skills in their first language. All spent part of their day in ESL classes and part in the mainstream classroom. The study focused on reading comprehension and the ability to classify, generalize, manipulate ideas, solve problems, and apply knowledge in the content areas of social studies, science and mathematics. Thus English CALP and content area achievement were both tested. The findings showed that

• students aged 8–11 years at immigration made the most rapid progress in acquiring CALP in English;
• students aged 12–15 years at immigration experienced the greatest difficulty in acquiring CALP in English and mastering curriculum content.

Collier estimated that students in the latter group would need 6–8 years in order to catch up with national native speaker averages.

5.4 Towards a better future

Any significant and long-term improvement on the situation reported in Chapters 3 and 4 of this report will depend on changes in DES policy, beginning with the replacement of the two-year rule

by better informed and more flexible criteria, and increased levels of funding to provide appropriate in-service training for teachers and the ongoing development of support materials. One implication of our survey findings is that Ireland badly needs a specialist unit to support the educational integration of newcomer pupils and students: a unit engaged in developing the English language support curriculum, learning and teaching materials, and assessment instruments; but also a unit capable of undertaking empirical research calculated to increase our understanding of the language of schooling, the language learning challenges faced by newcomer pupils and students, and the barriers that stand in the way of their educational success. When the DES closed IILT in 2008, however, it effectively declared that Ireland does not need such a unit.

Meanwhile, funding for English language support has been reduced, which increases the pressure on schools in general and language support teachers in particular. The short-term prospect is bleak. Nevertheless, the Trinity Immigration Initiative's English Language Support Programme will continue until the autumn of 2010, and during that time it will seek to alleviate the burden of both language support and subject teachers by completing the programme of research and development outlined in Chapter 1. This will include substantial elaboration of the ELSP website (www.elsp.ie), which has been live since March 2009. Already the website offers a large selection of language learning materials and activities directly related to curriculum subjects. They are designed to be used in language support and subject classrooms as well as by students on an individual basis.

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Appendix: Probe questions

1. Describe your present employment status.

2. Are all your teaching hours language support hours?

3. Number of years teaching language support.

4. If you already had teaching hours, were you given a choice in taking on language support provision?

5. Do you enjoy providing language support?

6. In addition to your language support hours, what mainstream subject do you teach?

7. How many are involved in SEN?

8. How many see language support as a SEN issue?

9. How many were born outside Ireland?

10. What type of school do you teach in?

11. Number of newcomer students in your school?

12. Has your school been assigned disadvantaged school status?

13. Do you have a structured induction/reception programme in place?

14. Do you have a structured induction/reception programme in place for students who arrive late in the school year?

15. Who is responsible for overseeing the induction programme?

16. What school policies do you have in place which address the needs of newcomer students?

17. Do these policies meet statutory requirements in line with the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000), and the Equal Status Act (2000)?

18. Are these policies reviewed regularly?

19. Are all staff made aware of relevant policies?

20. Do you have a peer support/buddy system in place in your school to help integrate newcomer students?

21. Is curricular and extra-curricular information provided in different languages?

22. Do you assess newcomer students when they arrive in your school?

23. What tools do you use to assess the newcomer student?

24. How do you use the results of this assessment?

25. Have you used the European Language Portfolio produced by IILT?

26. Have you used the English Language Benchmarks, which are the de facto curriculum for English language support?

27. Have you received the post-primary tests produced by IILT and promised in Circular 0053/2007?

28. Do you have a dedicated language support room?

29. Percentage of newcomer students entitled to language support on the basis of home language other than language of instruction (English/Irish)?

30. Percentage of newcomer students entitled to language support on the basis that they are still within their two-year provision?

31. Are there students still receiving language support after having completed two years of language support in primary before coming to your school?

32. Are there students still receiving language support after having completed two years of language support in post-primary?

33. In cases where you have sought extensions to the two-year limit as outlined in Circular 0053/2007, has this been a relatively easy and transparent process?

34. How many hours of language support does a newcomer student receive each week?

35. How many times a week do language support classes occur?

36. What is the average class size for language support lessons?

37. Do you withdraw newcomer students from mainstream subject classes for language support?

38. How is language support timetabled in the school's/student's timetable?

39. Who is responsible for timetabling language support in your school?

40. Is language support linked to the mainstream curriculum?

41. Do you use keywords for each curriculum subject in your language support classes?

42. Do you explicitly link the literacy aims of the Junior and Senior Cycle English syllabuses to your language support classes?

43. Where do you get classroom materials for language support lessons?

44. Does streaming of newcomer students occur?

45. Is there a person in a post of responsibility dedicated to coordinating language support in your school?

46. As a language support teacher, what is your main area of responsibility?

47. Are there regular meetings between mainstream subject teachers and language support teachers in your school?

48. How frequently do you communicate with mainstream subject teachers about language support issues relating to their subject?

49. If you do not communicate frequently with mainstream subject teachers about language support issues relating to their subject, why not?

50. Do you receive adequate support from the school leadership team?

51. Do you use team teaching?

52. Are there aspects of curriculum subjects which have been changed to take account of intercultural sensitivities?

53. Do you use differentiated teaching methods?

54. Do you explicitly teach grammar to your newcomer students?

55. Do you use visual aids, pictures, and realia in teaching newcomer students?

56. Do you have easy access in your school to the use of a CD/DVD player or computer facilities?

57. Did you receive specific training related to teaching newcomer students in your original teacher training?

58. If you received specific training related to teaching newcomer students in your original teacher training, what form did it take?

59. Was this training useful?

60. In your present school, did you receive specific training related to teaching newcomer students?

61. If you received specific training related to teaching newcomer students, what form did it take?

62. Was this training useful?

63.   Have you a qualification in teaching English as a Foreign/Additional/Second language?

64.   Have you attended seminars run by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) up to 2007?

65.   Did you receive any in-service training during your first year as a language support teacher?

66.   Do you require further in-service training to assist you in your role at present?

67.   Should intercultural and language support issues be part of pre-service training as a compulsory module?

68.   Will the closure of IILT in August 2008 have an impact on your role as a language support teacher?

69.   Are you familiar with or a member of the English Language Support Teachers' Association (ELSTA)?

70.   If you are familiar with or a member of ELSTA, do you consider that it helps you in your daily practice in the language support classroom?

71.   Have you found that the NCCA's Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School guidelines help you in your daily practice in the language support classroom?

72.   Where you deemed it necessary and urgent to do so, have you been successful in organising an educational psychological evaluation of a newcomer student through the National Educational Psychology Service?

73.   Do you have a DES home–school community liaison scheme in place in your school?

74.   Are you familiar with Circular 0053/2007, which is the principal DES circular relating to language support provision and intercultural guidance at primary and post-primary levels?

75.   Do you consider that the DES is playing an active role in language support provision and intercultural guidance at post-primary?

76.   Are you happy with the progress your newcomer students are making?