

Irish Med.

1924/92

FROM: S PEOVER
POLICY DIVISION

DATE: 6 December 1994

cc Mr Jackson

Ms Leonard

Mr Hill
Mr Smith
Mr Woods
Mrs Jendoubi
Dr Davison

IRISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION

1. You will be aware of the existence of an umbrella body for Irish-medium education - Gaeloiliuint - set up on a voluntary basis by the Irish-medium schools and involving other interested groups such as the Ultach Trust.
2. In the course of my Division's policy review of IM education, we met with Gaeloiliuint on a number of occasions, since it provided the most convenient forum in which all the relevant groups could be brought together. Thus far, the organisation has operated on a voluntary and part-time basis with a dual role of acting as a representative forum for IM interests and also as a repository of experience and advice/support for new, local groups proposing to establish IM schools.
3. Gaeloiliuint has now submitted a request for government funding to enable it to move to a more professional footing with some full-time staff. From a discussion I had with them about their proposal, it seems that what they have in mind is, initially at least, fairly modest - probably a development officer and clerical/secretarial support.
4. For what it is worth, I can see some merit in supporting the proposal. In presentational terms, it would indicate that we are not actively hostile to the development of IM education. But, more importantly, it could provide an opportunity for a more planned and orderly approach to the development of new IM schools, with a greater understanding by local groups of the problems they will face in setting up schools and, hopefully, a better appreciation of the options available to them. You will see too that the proposal envisages the development of more formal contacts with the umbrella body in the ROI for IM education, Gaelscoileanna. This could be a fruitful area for the development of links so that resources and experience could be shared between IM schools North and South.
5. My Division has no functional responsibility for IM education (and no resources which could be used to fund a proposal of this type!) so I would be grateful for your comments and for Mr Hill's views on who should take the lead in dealing with it. Gaeloiliuint is aware that we are considering the proposal, but I have given them no indication of whether we would be able to offer any assistance.

S Peover

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PRIVATE OFFICE
D.E.M.I.

31 OCT 1994

28 / 10 / 94

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REFERRED TO

A Aire, a chara,

Gaeloiliúint (GO) is a co-ordinating body which was set up in September 1991 by people involved in Irish-medium Education. The membership of GO is comprised mainly of educationalists employed in Irish-medium nurseries, primary schools and the two Meánscoil (Irish-medium Secondary Schools). All the Irish-medium schools in the North are affiliated to the organisation. Members also include a range of other independent groups and professional individuals.

As the only co-ordinating body for Irish-medium education, GO hopes to gain Government recognition and financial support. The Executive Committee has already been introduced to representatives from the Department of Education and has outlined its terms of reference. The Department has responded favourably to the establishment of a centralised group which represents the interests of all Irish-medium Education projects.

The group was set up to develop a more structured approach to the expansion of Irish-medium Education at all three levels. GO aims to provide a supportive network for teachers and parents. Teachers gain from the opportunity to share experience and resources as well as from the forum for discussion and debate. Regular seminars and workshops are organised. The organisation has gained the respect and confidence of the many various groups which are presently providing Irish-medium Education.

Since its foundation four years ago GAELOILIÚINT has operated on a voluntary basis. During this time it has co-ordinated and extended the network of Irish-medium schools throughout the North. This work has created significant employment opportunities for Irish speakers. The common goal, shared by all our members ensures investment in society's most valuable resource - our children. The Committee has represented many projects in negotiation with the Department of Education. A range of themes have been analysed at GO meetings. Advice and guidance has been provided to several groups facing difficulties with accomodation, funding, enrolment procedures etc. The Committee also produces and distributes a monthly newsletter. Recently, we drew up a five-year plan for Irish-medium Education, which I enclose.

GO has reached a stage in its own development as a co-ordinating body at which it is now essential to open and equip an office and employ full-time staff. These needs reflect the concrete and practical achievements of the organisation as well as the emergence of an exciting and realistic plan for future development. This proposal would enable the organisation to implement its development strategy in an even more energetic and dynamic way. The considerable work involved would be facilitated in this way and we could make a very valuable contribution to community and cross-community life here.

The individuals to be employed should have the following qualities:

- experience in Irish-medium Education;
- fluency in the Irish language;
- administrative skills;
- organisational skills;
- an ability to relate well with individuals and groups.

The successful applicants will carry out the following duties:

- create a supportive network for those involved in Irish-medium Education;
- build on the existing structures of Irish-medium education, organising regional functions etc;
- help to draw up and implement development plans for Irish-medium education projects;
- help to set up an independent Resource Centre for Irish-medium Education;
- negotiate regularly with the Department of Education re. funding, recognition for new schools, in-service training, curriculum issues etc;
- strive to establish a proper form of teacher training for Irish-medium schools;
- liaise with government, public, private and other relevant bodies (such as GAELSCOILEANNA, the co-ordinating body for Irish -medium Education in the South);
- counsel and guide any group interested in initiating an Irish-medium Education project by providing information, teaching packages, professional advice and practical everyday assistance;
- organise seminars, exhibitions, workshops etc for members of GO.

Salaries of successful applicants to be in line with civil service salary scale.

The appointment of development and administrative staff is vital for the growth and development of Irish-medium education and the Irish-speaking community. Many of the areas where schools have been established are socially deprived and under-privileged. The schools are a source of inspiration, self-confidence and hope for all the pupils, parents, teachers, auxiliaries and friends involved in them. As such, they provide the impetus and the climate necessary to re-vitalise the social, economic and cultural infrastructure of each area. School establishments have a definite growth potential and we are still a long way off the crest of the growth and the demand for Irish-medium education. We are requesting that the Department provide finance to implement the above proposals. We hope our request will be favourably considered.

Yours faithfully,

Cathal Ó Donnghaile, Rúnaí,
Gaeloiliúint Executive Committee.

Gael Oiliúint

PLAN 2000

Existing Irish-Medium Schools Spring-term 1994

Belfast	1	4	8
Derry		1	3
Newry		1	1
Maghera		1	1
Armagh			1

Secondary Schools

Primary Schools

Nursery Schools

STRATEGIC PLAN 1994 - 1999

The first Irish-medium school was opened in Belfast, in 1971. This primary school was opened by parents living on Shaw's Road, as part of a new and exciting cohesive approach to the revival of Irish in the city. This group of families had set up their own socially supportive environment wherein their children could grow up as Irish speakers. An integral facility for these children was an Irish-medium education.

The wheels within the realm of Officialdom grind slowly. A tedious and frustrating battle with the Education Authorities lasted 13 years before culminating in the award of state recognition and financial support. This first Bunscoil still awaits permanent accomodation for its 400 pupils.

The pace of growth of Irish medium schools throughout the Six Counties has accelerated considerably since then. The current situation is outlined below :

BELFAST

1. BUNSCOIL PHOBAL FEIRSTE

Opened in 1971 with 9 pupils.
Awarded grant maintained status by the Dep. of Education in 1984.

2. GAELSCOIL NA bhFAL

Opened in 1987 with 6 pupils.
Awarded grant maintained status in 1992.

3. BUNSCOIL NA FUISEOIGE

Opened in 1992

4. BUNSCOIL AN tSLEIBHE DHUIBH

Opened in 1993 with 6 pupils.

5. MEANSCOIL FEIRSTE

Opened in 1991 with 9 pupils. Current enrolment is 60 students with almost 40 enrolled for the coming school year.

NEWRY

6. Bunscoil an Iuir opened in 1987 with 4 pupils.

DERRY 7. STEELSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL

An Irish medium stream was introduced into this school in 1984. This stream expanded each year until it became independent from the "Mother school" in 1993/94. BUNSCOIL CHOLM CILLE was officially opened this year, on the same site as Steelstown Primary School. Its own principal teacher was appointed.

1983?

MAGHERA 8. Bunscoil Luraigh opened in 1994.

A network of nursery schools operate as feeders for these primary schools. As primary schools become well established, an effort is made to exert greater control over the pre-school education of in-coming children. The managers of established schools can make more reliable predictions of enrolment figures if they tighten up the structure of the pre-school structure. Therefore, there is a tendency for bunscoileanna, which initially take in pupils from a variety of naiscoileanna, to begin to promote their own nursery unit as a pre-school channel.

School principals consider a 2 year nursery immersion programme as an essential foundation to primary education through Irish.

Naiscoileanna are funded by parents and the community. Glor na nGael supports the nurseries by operating an ACE scheme for assistants (i.e. a Government sponsored scheme to tackle unemployment, paying for one year posts). The shortage of full-time posts in the naiscoileanna presents certain difficulties. The temporary character of paid employment has implications for the satisfactory training of staff.

Bunscoil Phobal Feirste : Receives children from Naiscoil Bhreandain. This nursery accommodates approximately 100 children on a dual day system. It is located on the same site as the school.

Gaelscoil na bhFal : Receives children principally from the Iveagh Nursery Unit, attached to the school.

Bunscoil na Fuiseoige : Admits children from its own nursery, Naiscoil na Fuiseoige

Bunscoil an tSleibhe Dhuibh : Admits pupils from two nurseries in the locality. These will soon be located on the same site as the school.

Bunscoil an Iuir : Draws pupils from the naiscoil on site with the Bunscoil. The nursery service has expanded to offer two sessions.

Bunscoil Cholmcille : The newly independent Derry school draws pupils from three nurseries in the city.

Bunscoil Luraigh : Is presently working to open a second nursery school in the area.

The extension of the naiscoil network in certain areas is essential in order to secure a steady intake into the new primary schools. At the same time, a sense of balance must be maintained. Experience shows that difficulties arise when there is a scattered and unstructured intake from a range of naiscoileanna.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SEPTEMBER 1994

BELFAST :

Meanscoil Feirste - 2 new teachers to be appointed. Enrolment reaches 100 students. It is hoped that the Department of Education will respond to the growth and success of the school, during this year, by granting maintained status. During the first week of June 1994, a D.E.N.I. inspection was carried out in the school which resulted in an extremely favourable report.

Satellite system planned for 2 primary schools in Belfast. The original Bunscoil (Bunscoil Phobal Feirste) hopes for approval from the Education Authorities for their application. This system would allow a state-maintained school to "adopt" an unrecognised school and take temporary responsibility for it. A similar system is already well established in English-medium schools operating on a split site.

North Belfast hopes to open its own Bunscoil, "Bunscoil Chnoc na hUaimhe".

DERRY :

The most significant development planned in Derry, for September 1994, is the opening of the city's first Meanscoil.

A second Bunscoil was discussed and plans deferred. Another naiscoil must be introduced and an opportunity given to the existing Bunscoil to become well established. The second Bunscoil will be a necessary development for the new Meanscoil.

NEWRY :

During this year it is hoped that a more permanent site is established for the Newry school and that a second naiscoil is introduced.

MAGHERA : A second naiscoil will be opened, in a more central location, to act as a feeder for the Bunscoil.

ARMAGH : Plans for the city's first Irish-medium primary

school will be finalised. It is possible that the parents will choose a unit within an existing school, as the first step towards an independent school.

The enrolment numbers in the two nursery sessions are very healthy and guarantee a strong intake for an independent Bunscoil.

COALISLAND : A nursery school will open, providing an intake for a primary school in two years.

STRABANE : A naiscoil opens in September.

DOWNPATRICK : A naiscoil opens in September.

PORTADOWN : A naiscoil opens in the 1994/95 school year.

LURGAN : A naiscoil opens in the 1994/95 school year.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

1994 - 1999

1. Growing momentum and extension of schools throughout 6 Counties.
2. Facilitate specialist training for Irish-medium teachers and develop resources.
3. Growth of GAELOILIUINT as the co-ordinating organisation for Irish-medium schools.

1. EXTENSION OF SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT 6 COUNTIES

An increased drive from GAEL OILIUINT has propelled forth the momentum of new emerging schools. A growing network of schools draws support from the membership of GAEL OILIUINT. The expansion of schools is now occurring in a planned and structured manner, rather than in a haphazard or random fashion.

Over the next five year period, it is hoped that the nursery and primary schools will extend to embrace counties Tyrone, north Antrim and south Down. Further developments at secondary level will be realised when the existing bunscoileanna, outside Belfast and Derry, receive maintained status and become more solidly established.

The Irish-medium scenario can be forecast in fairly reliable detail for the next school year. Certain unpredictable factors will help determine this future provision, beyond that point. Many of these factors hinge upon decisions made - or delayed - or not made - by the Authorities.

Government response to the Educational Review of Irish-medium Schools, which it is presently considering, will be a crucial factor. Unfortunately, these proposals are not likely to be considered in educational terms only, but within the context of the political climate of Northern Ireland. Once a school receives funding, its intake increases and other schools also grow in confidence.

Another crucial factor is the funding of GAEL OILIUINT and the appointment of full-time staff on its team. The more recent, accelerated pace of developments is challenging and exciting. However, it is also exhausting and frustrating as a part-time activity. Each of GAEL OILIUINT committee members is in full-time employment. The extension of the schools network involves a lot of travel, meetings and negotiations. Maintenance of this pace depends upon full-time professional commitment.

Other factors are more predictable. For example, growth and success of schools in one area have an impact upon neighbouring areas. Portadown and Lurgan are likely to be influenced by the development in Armagh.

Publicity also influences developments. For example, a public meeting was held in Down Patrick, last week, to provide information about the first steps towards opening a naiscoil. Several participants expressed their encouragement by the Maghera Bunscoil. The founding of a school in a rural area was inspiring.

Another related factor is communication. Parents in Armagh were encouraged to take the step towards introducing a Bunscoil by a visit to Bunscoil Phobal Feirste. Communication with teachers and parents from this school served to remove any hesitations experienced by the new parents.

PROJECTIONS FOR YEAR 2000

NAISCOILEANNA - Belfast, Derry, Newry, Armagh, Portadown, Dungannon, Maghera, Dunloy, Dungiven, Enniskillen, Omagh, Randalstown, Down Patrick, Strabane, Lurgan

BUNSCOILEANNA - Belfast, Derry, Newry, Armagh, Maghera, Downpatrick, Strabane, Coalisland, Portadown, Lurgan

MEANSCOILEANNA - Belfast, Derry, Newry

These projections are made on the basis of existing provision and enquiries which have been made with local contacts concerning future provision. It is quite possible that the network of facilities will extend beyond these localities.

2. TEACHER TRAINING AND RESOURCES

It is hoped that training facilities for Irish medium teachers is established within the next 5 year period. Negotiations are already underway between GAEL OILIUINT and the third level institutions. St. Mary's Teacher Training College has responded enthusiastically to the requests made by G.O.. A document has been submitted to the College authorities which details the needs of Irish-medium teachers under 3 categories : Academic content of course ; Educational and vocational needs ; Practical teaching experience.

Teaching materials and resources are produced by teachers in each of the schools. A small resource unit is located within Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, funded by the Education Authorities. This unit produces books to be distributed between all the schools. However, funding is very limited. A stronger coentral resource facility must be created to accommodate the growing number of schools.

3. GAELOILIUINT

The pivotal role of G.O. in Irish-medium education has grown over the past three years. During this time, the entire movements has been driven forward in an invigorating, effective and sweeping manner.

Over the next 5 year period, the role of the organisation must be formalised and acknowledged as a leading and representative body. This step is needed to transfer the its present voluntary status to that of a full-time professional body.

GAELOILIUINT will consolidate its relationships with other representative bodies:

- GAELSCOILEANNA
(Co-ordinating Organisation in 26 Counties)

- C.C.M.S. This Council for Catholic Schools introduced the Irish-medium stream into Steelstown School in Derry, and

subsequently opened the independent school, Bunscoil Dhoire. It is hoped that more formal liason with the C.C.M.S. will serve to persuade the Church Authorities to respond to parental demand for Irish-medium schools.

- N.I.C.I.E.

GaelOiliuint has already initiated co-operation with this organisation representing integrated schools. The key difference enjoyed by N.I.C.I.E. is the fact that a Government policy encourages the founding of integrated schools (Catholic and Protestant). Bunscoil an Iuir places a heavy emphasis upon the interdenominational character of its school. Other schools also espouse an open and inclusive attitude, although residential segregation hinders any significant attendance by non-Catholic children. Over the next few years a stronger relationship will be built up with N.I.C.I.E., sharing expertise and experiences. This will be of mutual advantage to the two groups.

- DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
- EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARDS

Over the past few years an improved relationship has been built up with the Dep. of Ed.. Negotiations have taken place regarding satellites, resources, secondary schooling and other issues. It is hoped that these negotiations will result in the reduction of the viability criteria for new schools. It has been requested that this number should be lowered to 9 children per annum, in rural areas. If this is accepted, schools like Bunscoil and Iuir will be given a better chance for maintained status.

TACA

TACA has been operating as a charitable organisation for five years. It provides practical and financial support for Irish-medium schools, using a weekly lottery system for this end. Approximately 50,000 pounds per annum is collected (principally from the Belfast area) and distributed among the schools.

The role of TACA will change somewhat in response to developments occurring within this plan. The main implication for TACA concerns the increasing demands placed upon it by the growing network of schools. This growth will cause TACA to react in two ways :

1. The funds gathered by TACA will be used only to support schools which have not yet been awarded maintained status from the Dep. of Education. Presently, maintained schools are funded on a 85% basis. They still require assistance in collecting the remaining 15% of running costs and paying for additional resources necessary in an Irish-medium school. These schools will not be able to draw support from TACA.
2. TACA can increase the advice and guidance which it gives to new school committees as they, perforce, embrace the challenge of funding their own schools.

IRISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS _____ THE HEART OF A GAELIC COMMUNITY

Over the next five years it is important to protect the status and significance of Irish-medium education as a fundamental contributor to surrounding communities and to Irish life.

As a school grows, attains State recognition and support, reaches maximum intake figures, it will always come face to face with the temptation to place individual interests and ambitions above the interests of Irish-medium education on a broader plane.

This temptation must be resisted. An Irish-medium school equips children with a competent command of the Irish language. It offers children a high level of educational excellence. It cultivates a valuable self-confidence in its pupils which can be drawn upon throughout their lives.

However, the GAELSCOILEANNA (Irish-medium schools) do more than this. They inspire communities throughout the country to participate in their society as Irish speakers, Irish learners, Irish enthusiasts. They endeavour to serve the entire community. Their duty extends to the entire community. It is the community which created conditions wherein the school could be founded. Therefore each school must cherish this "community" ethos. The value system must not succumb to anything less.

Within the plan laid out for the next five years, this fundamental and crucial characteristic of Irish-medium schools must be respected. The role of GAEL OILIVINT as a co-ordinating organisation is all the more significant within this context.

Presently, all members are encouraged to work together towards common goals. Experienced members are encouraged to offer support and concrete help to new committees embarking on new initiatives. They have generously responded to this request. This foundation of good supportive and communicative practice must be built up over the next five years.

In June, 1994, an end of year sports day was organised for the Irish-medium school throughout the Six Counties. This type of activity is useful in giving the children a sense of belonging to a growing community. Staff also are reminded of this important fact. Pressure of work on a teacher in a GAELSCOIL is intense. It is important to provide forums where they can also be reminded of their role and their value within a wider community. On this occasion, a prize cup was

awarded in honour of Kate Reid, a local lady who went to live in the United States and who valued Irish culture. Hopefully, this presentation can become an annual event among many others.

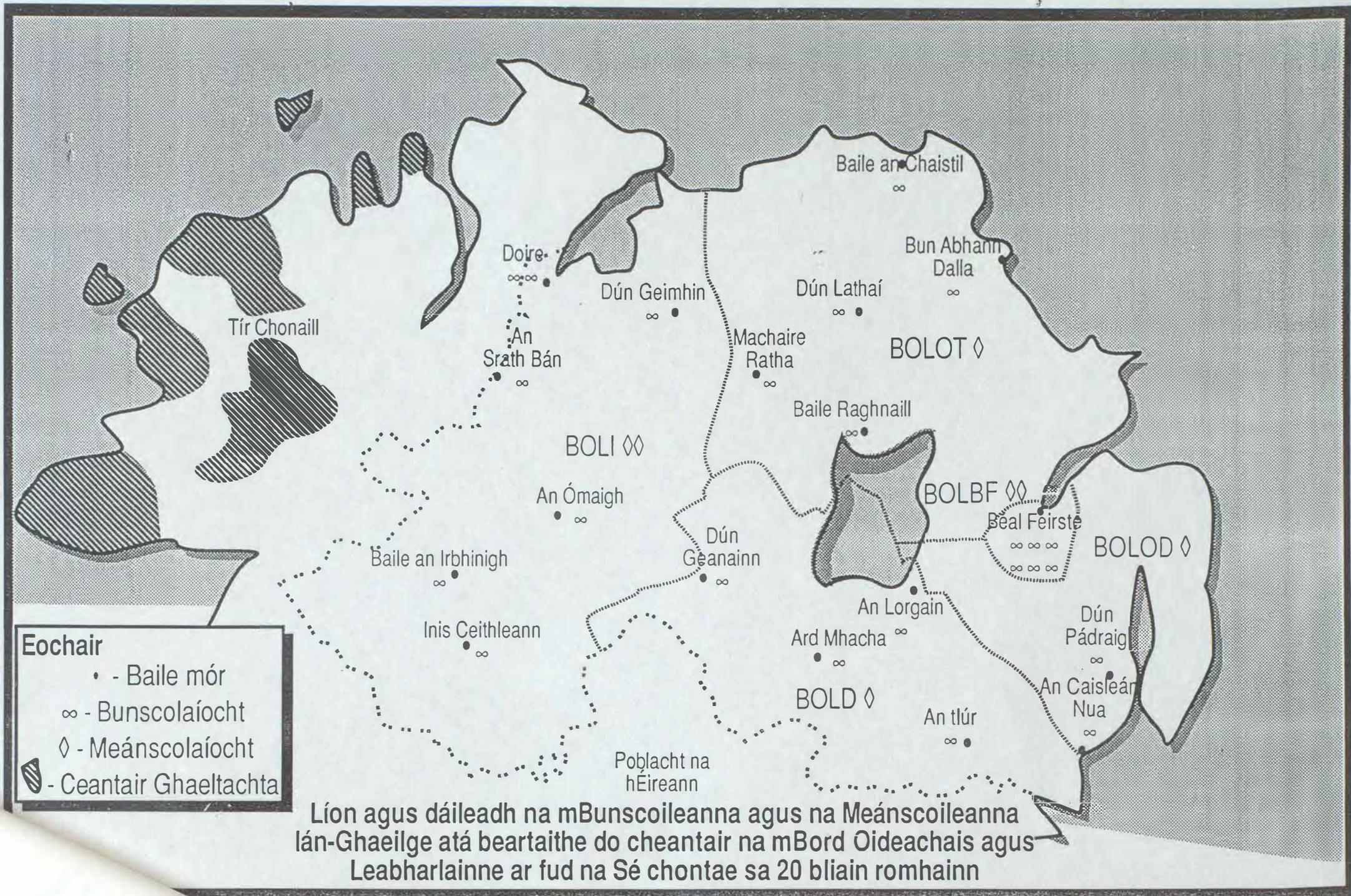
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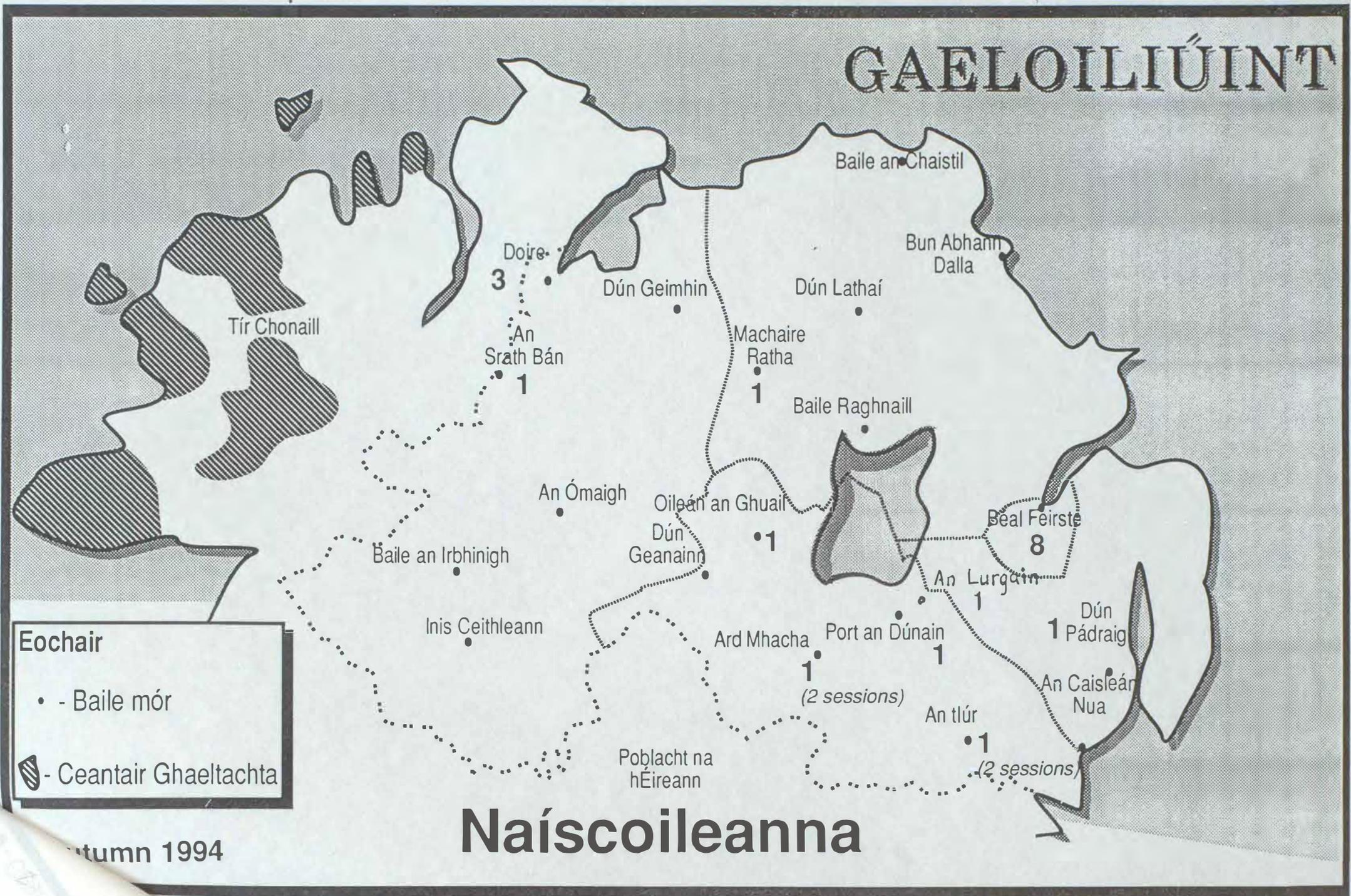


Eochair

- - Baile mór
- ∞ - Bunscolaíocht
- ◇ - Meánscolaíocht
- ▨ - Ceantair Ghaeltachta

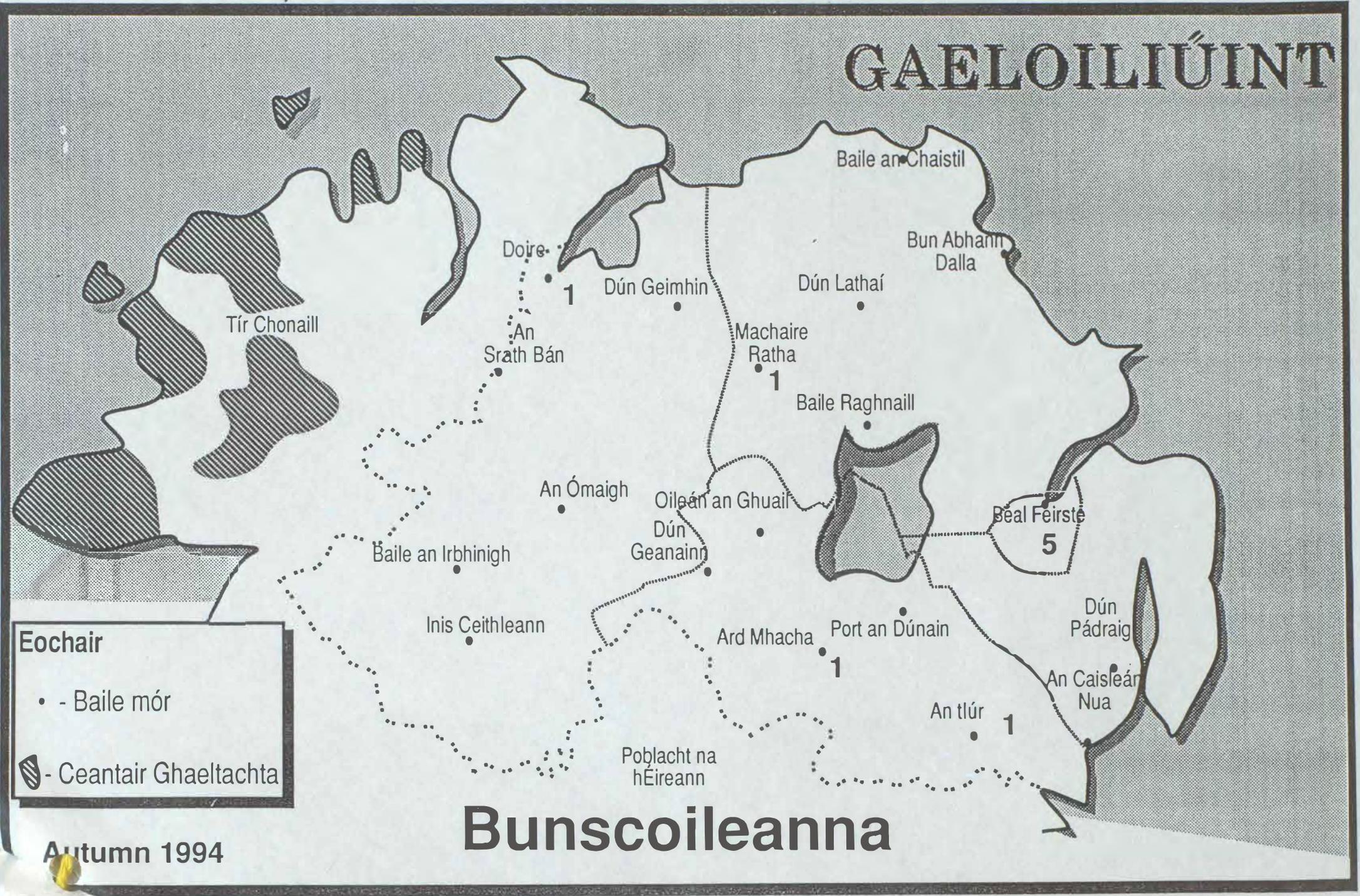
Líon agus dáileadh na mBunscoileanna agus na Meánscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge atá beartaithe do cheantair na mBord Oideachais agus Leabharlainne ar fud na Sé chontae sa 20 bliain romhainn

GAELOILIÚINT



Autumn 1994

GAELOILIÚINT

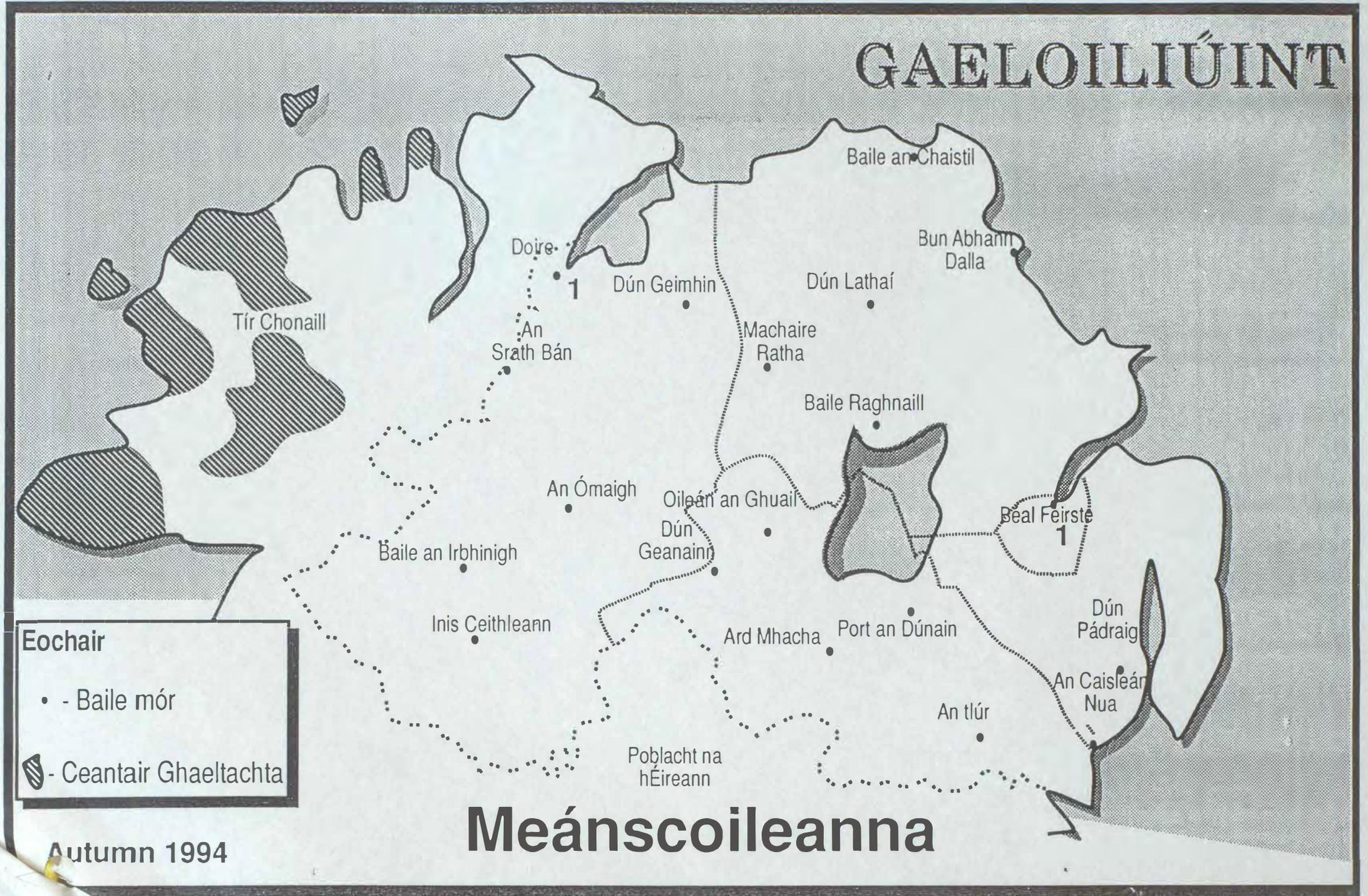


Eochair
• - Baile mór
▨ - Ceantair Ghaeltachta

Autumn 1994

Bunscoileanna

GAELOILIÚINT



Eochair
• - Baile mór
▨ - Ceantair Ghaeltachta

Autumn 1994

Meánscoileanna