

# 1 Problem

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Our [primary school curriculum](#) is not well aligned with the capabilities that will likely be required for our children to have good options in the future employment market – specifically there are gaps around foreign languages and technology skills.

## Current Curriculum

<b>Language</b> Gaeilge <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>  English <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>	<b>Mathematics</b> Mathematics <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>	<b>Physical Education</b> Physical Education <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>
<b>The Arts</b> Visual Arts <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>  Music <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>  Drama <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>	<b>Social, Environmental and Scientific Education</b> History <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>  Geography <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>  Science <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>	<b>Social, Personal and Health Education</b> Social, Personal and Health Education <a href="#">Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Teacher Guidelines</a>

## 1.1 Languages

There are powerful trends towards globalisation and requirements for multi-language capability. Our primary curriculum only contains 2 languages – English & Irish. The requirement to have foreign languages on the primary school curriculum has been widely accepted for a long time. There have been a number of reports on this topic ([2005 NCCA Report](#), [2008 NCCA Report](#))

## 1.2 Technology

Technology is becoming more pervasive in all aspects of life. Future career options will be dependent on technology skills and ability to learn new technologies quickly. These ideas are frequently considered in mainstream media, e.g. [link](#), [link](#).

# 2 Complications

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## 2.1 Resourcing

The existing population of primary school teachers do not, in general, have the formal training or skills required to teach foreign languages or technology skills.

## 2.2 Time

A curriculum exists today which fills available instruction time. Given unchanged duration of school day, introduction of any new content requires that time be taken away from one of the existing curriculum areas.

## 3 Solution

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### 3.1 Languages

The immediate solution is to create, centrally, a technology platform for delivery of foreign language instruction to every school. This would be online self-service learning with a core curriculum that all children would follow during class time, with the option for children to undertake extra modules and languages in their own time. The devices on which children would undertake the learning in class would be a combination of "*Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)*" and state provided devices in schools where required.

It is accepted that teacher based instruction is superior to technology-based instruction in terms of adapting to the different learning styles and special needs of our children. However, building capability to deliver foreign language education via direct teacher instruction will not be achievable in the near-term, this approach should be seen as a next-best approach to at least begin to address a glaring gap in our education system.

The template for use of technology in education is South Korea where delivery of education is heavily technology based and has highly successful outcomes<sup>2</sup>. South Korea is consistently near top of global comparative studies on IQ and has had strategic initiatives running for almost 20 years to re-invent the way education is delivered in order to leverage technology. The latest incarnation of that plan, started in 2010 outlines that the "*aims and visions of the ICT use in education are to strengthen the future competitiveness of education, science and technology, and to cope with rapid changes in the economy and society, and in science, technology and education worldwide*"<sup>1</sup>. These factors are no less relevant for Ireland than they are for South Korea. Their goal is to digitalize the school curriculum to focus on not only more efficient but also more creative education via technology while bridging the educational divide, i.e. mitigating variable teaching standards by making consistent education available to everyone.

The proposal here is more modest than the South Korea model – simply to introduce technology driven delivery of one element of the school day.

### 3.2 Technology

Technology changes so quickly, and is so specialised, that it is likely not feasible to build the capability to deliver effective technology education through the conventional teaching model. The proposed solution is for the state to partner with either or both of (A) corporates with a vested interest in ICT skill pipeline; (B) NGO's; to ensure that consistent technology programs are available in every school in the country.

The technology multi-nationals that operate in this country all have community giveback and corporate citizenship programs that encourage staff to get involved in community activities. The idea of (A) is to align the primary education programs with these corporate programs. On the ground, (B) has developed by itself in the form of the [CoderDojo](#) movement which is available in many areas already.

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<sup>1</sup> [Link to paper](#)

<sup>2</sup> Not asserting technology as sole cause of good outcomes. Also cultural factors at play