



**DEVELOPMENT  
EDUCATION  
POLICY  
AND PRACTICE  
FOR THE FORMAL SECTOR  
IN IRELAND**



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#### IRISH DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (IDEA)

IDEA is the national network for Development Education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. We represent over 70 members involved in the practice, promotion and advancement of Development Education in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen Development Education in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role of Development Education in achieving an equal, just and sustainable future. For more information about IDEA, please visit [www.ideaonline.ie](http://www.ideaonline.ie)

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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IDEA acknowledges funding received from the Development Education and Civil Society Unit of Irish Aid. The ideas, opinions and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of IDEA and do not necessarily represent or reflect Irish Aid policy.

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# PART 1

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## THE IRISH POLICY CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNISED within Irish education policy that education has an important role to play in supporting the development of the person's capacity to be an active citizen in contemporary society at local, national and global levels.

*The White Paper on Education – Charting Our Educational Future*, is the key policy document which sets out the core aims, principles and policies for the Irish education system. It sets out a number of aims for education, at least two of which are explicitly addressed by Development Education:

- **to nurture a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and awareness of one's particular abilities, aptitudes and limitations, combined with a respect for the rights and beliefs of others to create tolerant, caring and politically aware members of society**
- **to ensure that Ireland's young people acquire a keen awareness of their national and European heritage and identity, coupled with a global awareness and a respect and care for the environment.** (p. 11–12)

It is worth noting that the White Paper on Education states that:

*The mission of the Department of Education is to ensure the provision of a comprehensive, cost-effective and accessible education system of the highest quality, as measured by international standards, which will enable individuals to develop to their full potential as persons and **to participate fully as citizens in society and contribute to social and economic development.*** (p. 203)

The White Paper also states that:

*Recent geopolitical developments, including major changes in Eastern Europe, concern about an apparent resurgence in racism, violence and xenophobia, in many countries, and the focus on conflict resolution in the island of Ireland, serve to underlie the importance of education in areas such as*

*human rights, tolerance, mutual understanding, cultural identity, peace and the promotion of co-operation in the world among people of different traditions and beliefs. The threat to the global environment has focused attention on the importance of environmental education.* (p. 215)

The focus on education that leads to awareness and action for change is set out clearly:

*An important component of the international dimension of education is making young people aware of the nature and causes of underdevelopment in the world and about what needs to be done to bring about change in relation to the imbalance in wealth between rich and poor countries. ... An aim informing policy formulation, educational practice and curriculum development at the different levels will be to create an awareness of global issues, including the environment and third-world issues. The objective will be to stimulate a commitment, by individuals and society as a whole, to necessary actions to respond to specific crises and equally importantly to search for and promote long-term solutions to the underlying problems.* (p. 222–223)

This consciousness of the global context in which education takes place coupled with a belief in the need for education to foster both awareness of and action on global issues is evident across many key curriculum and policy documents.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) review of senior cycle post-primary education commenced with the publication of *Developing Senior Cycle Education: Consultative Paper on Issues and Options* in 2002. It states that *the fundamental purpose of senior cycle education is to enable and prepare people to live their lives to the fullest potential within democratic society.* Among the general aims of senior cycle education set out here is the aim – *to educate for participative citizenship at local, national, European and global levels.* (p. 37)



All senior cycle programmes are currently being reviewed and reformed to ensure more relevance, greater flexibility, more autonomous and student-centred learning and a greater focus on the teaching of skills as well as content. The five key skills for senior cycle education as set out in the *Senior Cycle Key Skills Framework* are information processing, being personally effective, communicating, critical and creative thinking and working with others.

More recently, when setting out a vision for a new programme of education for junior cycle the NCCA highlighted the need for an education that equips people to respond to global challenges and injustices. It stated:

*Across the developed and the developing world schooling finds itself at the centre of a set of global concerns about the future of the planet, about food and water security, and about the movement of peoples in the face of climate disasters. The global economic crisis adds to these concerns and increasingly, schools are being asked not simply to teach students about these issues but to shape the next generation of creative problem solvers who can quite literally, 'save the world'.*

— *Innovation and Identity, Ideas for the new junior cycle*, NCCA, 2010

The Framework for Junior Cycle<sup>1</sup> was published by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in October 2012. This Framework sets out twenty four 'statements of learning' which students will be expected to acquire during their Junior Cycle. Sustainable development is reflected in a number of these statements. These include the expectation that students will *value what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts*, (Statement 7), *understand the origins and impacts of social, economic and environmental aspects of the world around him/her* (Statement 9), and *have the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably*, (Statement 10).

A further important aspect of the new junior cycle is the rebalancing of teaching skills as well as content. The key skills for junior cycle are Managing Myself, Staying Well, Communicating, Being Creative, Working with Others, and Managing Information and Thinking, along with Numeracy and Literacy. These skills will be a part of all teaching and learning across a new junior cycle curriculum. When we look at these skills we see that many elements relate to Development Education such as the skill of Working with Others, which includes the element of *contributing to making the world a better place* and of *respecting difference*, or Being Creative, which includes *imagining ways to make a positive different in the world* and *exploring options and alternatives*, or Staying Well, which includes the following learning outcomes:

Students can

- **participate in actions that make a positive contribution to my school, community and the wider world**
- **recognise my rights and responsibilities as a local and global citizen**
- **make decisions based on 'the common good'.**

An emphasis on critical and creative thinking, listening to and expressing ideas, problem solving, questioning and debate is evident across the key skills framework and all of these skills can only be developed in a classroom where students are working cooperatively and actively engaged in their learning. Hence a classroom in which key skills are being developed is more likely to be a more participative, democratic and open space and one in which topics related to Development Education can be explored. At Junior Cycle, therefore, curricular reform is clearly moving towards placing a greater emphasis on the development of the type of pedagogy and skills that are compatible with Development Education.

<sup>1</sup> [www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-2015.pdf)



## PART 2

In July 2014, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) published the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).<sup>2</sup> The Strategy aims to ensure that learners are equipped with the relevant knowledge, dispositions, skills and values to motivate and empower them to become informed citizens acting for a more sustainable future. Eight 'priority action areas' have been identified. They include leadership and coordination, data collection and baseline measurement, curriculum, initial teacher education, professional development and promoting participation by young people in decisions that affect them. Each of the eight priority areas has a series of recommendations. These recommendations encompass all areas of the education system, from early childhood education through to further and higher education, as well as non-formal and community education, and the Youth sector. An Advisory Group has been set up to oversee the implementation of this Strategy and meets regularly.

The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group are

- **highlighting existing activity relating to ESD, new developments and resources, and sharing best practice**
- **making the findings of ESD research available through the proposed ESD web portal, and considering the issues arising from the findings of such research**
- **building partnerships and mobilising stakeholders**
- **contributing to the planning of an annual ESD forum which will invite a wide range of relevant stakeholders to consider issues arising from the work of the Advisory Group**
- **monitoring progress on the recommendations in the National Strategy for ESD, and reporting annually to the High Level Group on Sustainable Development**
- **contributing to a mid-term review of overall progress on the National Strategy in 2017.**

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# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND POLICY PRIORITIES WITHIN IRISH EDUCATION

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<sup>2</sup> [www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/National-Strategy-on-Education-for-Sustainable-Development-in-Ireland-2014-2020.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/National-Strategy-on-Education-for-Sustainable-Development-in-Ireland-2014-2020.pdf)



# 1. CURRICULUM REVIEW AND REFORM

## PRIMARY

The primary curriculum (published 1999) is under review with different areas of the curriculum being considered in sequence. Updates on this process can be accessed on the NCCA website.<sup>3</sup> The Forum on Pluralism and Patronage continues to work in supporting good practice in relation to a more inclusive education system. In this context, the NCCA recently undertook a consultation on Education about Religion, Beliefs and Ethics while Educate Together schools are reviewing their 'Learn Together' ethical education curriculum for primary schools.

## POST PRIMARY

Schools are beginning to embark on an extensive review of their junior cycle programmes as they plan for a new junior cycle experience of education for their students in line with the Framework for Junior Cycle.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on key skills has already been mentioned. Other changes that can support Development Education include the shift towards a more flexible approach to programme planning to allow schools to use short courses to introduce new areas of learning or deepen existing areas. A small number of schools have already begun to develop courses in global citizenship which will be offered as part of a new junior cycle programme.

A further important feature of the new junior cycle is the focus on a new area of learning entitled Wellbeing. This area of learning will incorporate learning traditionally included in Physical Education (PE), Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) and Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE). A school may also choose to include other areas in their provision for Wellbeing. Up to 400 hours will be available for learning

in the area of Wellbeing commencing with a minimum of 300 hours of timetabled engagement from 2017 and moving to the full complement of time as the new junior cycle is fully implemented in schools. This could provide significant additional space for learning in the areas of citizenship education, given that current provision is approximately 70 hours under the present junior certificate CSPE programme.

Development Education can contribute to a school's new wellbeing programme in a number of important ways. It can help students think beyond themselves as they consider how they can contribute to the local environment and the wider world; it is important for students to understand that wellbeing is not singularly about your personal, emotional and physical health. Awareness of the interdependence between individual wellness and the wellbeing of others and of the environment is important too. Furthermore, Development Education can provide opportunities for students to grow in confidence and empowerment as they discover how they are connected to a wider community working to help build a better community. Through active citizenship students develop resilience, a sense of agency and voice as they participate in actions to promote their own well-being and that of the wider community and world.

In tandem with this, senior cycle education is changing too with revised specifications being developed across a range of subjects. In all these changes there is a focus on renewing teaching and learning so that it is more engaging and relevant to the needs and interests of students and the world they live in. Of most relevance to Development Education, is the introduction of Politics and Society<sup>5</sup> as a new optional Leaving Certificate subject, which will be introduced on a phased basis from September 2016. This new course is framed around 4 units:

<sup>3</sup> [www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Early\\_Childhood\\_and\\_Primary\\_Education/Primary-Education/Review\\_and\\_Research/](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Primary-Education/Review_and_Research/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA\\_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Documents/JC-Framework\\_FINAL\\_02oct12.pdf](http://www.juniorcycle.ie/NCCA_JuniorCycle/media/NCCA/Documents/JC-Framework_FINAL_02oct12.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Post-Primary\\_Education/Senior\\_Cycle/Politics\\_and\\_Society/Politics\\_and\\_Society\\_draft\\_syllabus.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Senior_Cycle/Politics_and_Society/Politics_and_Society_draft_syllabus.pdf)



### **Unit 1: Power and decision making**

Topic 1: Power and decision making in school

Topic 2: Power and decision making at national and European level

### **Unit 2: Active citizenship**

Topic 3: Effectively contributing to communities

Topic 4: Rights and responsibilities in communication with others

### **Unit 3: Human rights and responsibilities**

Topic 5: Human rights and responsibilities in Ireland

Topic 6: Human rights and responsibilities in Europe and the wider world

### **Unit 4: Globalisation and localisation**

Topic 7: Globalisation and identity

Topic 8: Sustainable development

There has been significant interest from schools already wishing to introduce the new subject which is a positive indicator of the level of interest and expertise amongst teachers. The introduction of Politics and Society will also be accompanied by a training programme to upskill practicing teachers in this area.

Other leaving certificate subjects that have relevance to Development Education are Economics, Agricultural Science, Biology, History, Geography, Religious Education, Home Economics, Construction Studies and Technology to name but a few.

## **2. A FOCUS ON DEVELOPING KEY SKILLS AND DISPOSITIONS ALONG WITH LITERACY AND NUMERACY**

Across all sectors of education, from early childhood to senior cycle, there is strong focus on developing a curriculum that fosters children's key skills and dispositions for learning and for life as well as a focus on promoting the basic skills of literacy and numeracy across all learning. Development Education is hugely relevant to this and has much to contribute in developing students' key skills and critical literacy skills. It is not enough to be able to read about the world, students must also be able to critically read their world and engage in meaningful and thoughtful action in the world. We know that students enjoy subjects that offer 'real world' and practical learning (ESRI research 2004)<sup>6</sup> and the shift away from the transmission model of learning towards a more constructivist model of learning is supportive of Development Education, as Development Education enables students to engage in problem based learning and explore their role as agents for change.

## **3. MORE FOCUS ON DEMOCRATIC LEARNING AND STUDENT VOICE**

There is a growing recognition that education for human rights and active citizenship must take place within a setting where students are given opportunities to exercise responsibility for their learning, discuss issues, make choices and take action. Students need to learn not just about human rights but through human rights, not just about democracy but through more democratic forms of teaching and learning. In these ways important characteristics of active citizenship, such as a sense of student agency and efficacy, are promoted. In this context, students

<sup>6</sup> [www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/ESRIBooklet.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/ESRIBooklet.pdf)



are being consulted more frequently in relation to proposed curriculum changes and making a significant contribution to education thinking and policy.

## 4. RENEWED FOCUS ON PEDAGOGY

The need for a renewal of teaching and learning across all education sectors is broadly agreed. 'It's all about the learning' is a common refrain. This sums up the conviction that good pedagogy needs to be at the centre of teaching rather than a content driven and exams focused approach. Research suggests that teaching and learning methodologies in Irish classrooms are not generally conducive to educating for global citizenship.<sup>7</sup> 21st century learning must encourage active learning, collaboration, dialogue, critical thinking and reflection. It must engage students in authentic and 'real-world' learning and assessment. It must be learning *for* as well as learning *about*.

## 5. CHANGES TO INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There are significant changes taking place in regard to the reconfiguration of institutions involved in Initial Teacher Education. The new 4-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and 2 year Professional Masters in Education (PME) degrees allow for increased course time and increased time for school placement. In spite of this, expectations in regard to what can be achieved at preservice level must be realistic as student teachers are encountering many new ideas and cannot be expected to become champions of Development Education when they are simply learning how to cope in the classroom.

<sup>7</sup> Cosgrove et al, 2011 and Gilleece et al, 2009

The Teaching Council is the regulatory body that sets teaching standards and establishes best practice at all stages on the continuum of teacher education. Recently, the Council began a consultation in relation to the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers. Further information in relation to the Council's policy on CPD is set out in its Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education.<sup>8</sup>

The publication of a national framework for CPD in 2016 will provide a long-awaited opportunity to recognise and acknowledge teachers' participation in both formal and informal training and it will offer guidance to teachers when considering options to support that learning.

## 6. INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING OF IRISH STUDENTS

Since 1997 the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has been undertaking international surveys of the performance of 15 year olds across almost 70 OECD countries in mathematics, science, and reading. The programme performed its first survey in 2000, which it repeats every three years. In addition to examining in mathematics, science and reading, the 2015 survey focused on collaborative problem solving and the 2018 survey will examine students' global awareness of the interconnected world we live and work in. Both the shape and focus of this survey and its results will be of interest to Development Educators.

In an Irish context, the PISA results are taken very seriously and can inform both policy and practice. The 2009 results which showed a decline in literacy levels led to the development of DES's National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People,<sup>9</sup> in 2011.

<sup>8</sup> [www.teachingcouncil.ie/\\_fileupload/Teacher%20Education/FINAL%20TC\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_SP.pdf](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/_fileupload/Teacher%20Education/FINAL%20TC_Policy_Paper_SP.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/lit\\_num\\_strategy\\_full.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/lit_num_strategy_full.pdf)



## PART 3

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# HOW DEVELOPMENT EDUCATORS AND NGOs/ CSOs CAN INFLUENCE POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF FORMAL DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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While Irish economic policy is largely influenced by the EU, the EU does not directly shape the education policy of member states. National governments are fully responsible for the policy, content and organisation of their education systems. The EU's role is to encourage and facilitate cooperation amongst member states in education but it does not dictate policy. This means that Irish citizens can directly influence Irish education policy.

At a global level, UNESCO (*Proposal for a Global Action Programme on ESD*, July 2013) has identified and highlighted three common challenges to implementing effective Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which are relevant to the policy context for Development Education in the formal sector in Ireland:

- **Successful activities in ESD often merely operate within fixed timeframes and with limited budgets**
- **ESD policies and practices are often not properly linked**
- **ESD has yet to complete its integration into the mainstream of the education and sustainable development agendas**

UNESCO and the United Nations are doing important work on policy approaches to Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 which are relevant for Development Education policy in Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Global Citizenship Education: [www.en.unesco.org/gced](http://www.en.unesco.org/gced)  
Education for Sustainable Development: [www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development)  
Sustainable Development Goal 4.7: [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4)

Here are some ways to influence policy and practice in the context of formal Development Education:

- **Stay abreast of national and international policy developments with an eye on the role of Development Education within these.**
- **Seek deeper levels of engagement with policy makers to inform and influence curriculum developments and the implementation of strategies on Development Education. For example, it will be important to influence and monitor how Sustainable Development Goal 4.7<sup>11</sup> is delivered within Ireland and beyond. Equally, it will be important to seek to influence how schools will provide 400 hours of wellbeing as part of a new junior cycle, and what role Development Education plays within this new area of learning.**
- **Seek to influence how Development Education should be monitored based on diverse indicators that reflect knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as well as specific learning outcome indicators.**
- **Contribute to consultation processes as opportunities arise. In particular, keep an eye on the NCCA website for notice of curriculum consultation opportunities relating to consultations at both primary and post primary level and consult the Teaching Council website for information on the consultation on the National Framework for CPD.**

<sup>11</sup> Goal 4.7 – By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development



- **Read existing curriculum documents and discern how to help practitioners deliver on curriculum objectives while incorporating Development Education as something better not something else or more.**

- **Engage in and/or keep informed about European-level platforms**

- **Strengthen the capacity of educators, trainers and other key influencers to facilitate them in supporting Development Education. For example, by working with subject teams within the JCT<sup>12</sup> to support them in seeing the opportunities and benefits of Development Education.**

- **Keep an eye on PISA 2015 and 2018 surveys which focus on students' competence in collaborative problem solving and in global awareness. How Irish students perform in these tests may provide useful leverage for a renewed commitment to Development Education.**

- **Irish Aid is currently developing its Development Education Strategy for the coming years. This will be an important opportunity for all concerned to contribute to the future of Development Education policy and strategy in Ireland. During spring 2015, the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) undertook a peer review of Irish Aid's Development Education programme. This will form the basis for Irish Aid's Development Education strategy from 2016 onwards.**

<sup>12</sup> [www.jct.ie/home/home.php](http://www.jct.ie/home/home.php)

## KEY RESOURCES

*Developing Senior Cycle Education: Consultative Paper on Issues and Options*, NCCA (2002): [www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/SeniorCycleExSummary.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/SeniorCycleExSummary.pdf)

*Innovation and Identity, Ideas for the new junior cycle*, NCCA (2010): [www.ncca.ie/en/Publications/Reports/Innovation\\_and\\_Identity\\_Ideas\\_for\\_a\\_new\\_junior\\_cycle.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Publications/Reports/Innovation_and_Identity_Ideas_for_a_new_junior_cycle.pdf)

*Framework for Junior Cycle*, DES (2015): [www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Junior-Cycle-/A-Framework-for-Junior-Cycle1.html](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Junior-Cycle-/A-Framework-for-Junior-Cycle1.html)

Global Education in Ireland – The European Global Education Peer Review Process: [gene.eu/peer-review/](http://gene.eu/peer-review/)

Key Skills for Junior Cycle, NCCA: [www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum\\_and\\_Assessment/Post-Primary\\_Education/Senior\\_Cycle/Key\\_Skills\\_Framework/KS\\_Framework.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Post-Primary_Education/Senior_Cycle/Key_Skills_Framework/KS_Framework.pdf)

*Moving up – The experiences of first year students in post-primary education*, ESRI (2004): [www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/ESRIBooklet.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/ESRIBooklet.pdf)

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