

## Irish Development Education Association CSPE Short Course Submission

### Overview

This submission, on behalf of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) welcomes the CSPE Short Course on Citizenship as an essential opportunity to foreground social justice issues within the formal curriculum and infuse a global dimension into teaching and learning. IDEA believes that in order for the short course to function in the most active way possible, the following points should be considered in the next phase of the development process:

- The proposed change of CSPE from a mandatory assessed subject, to an optional short course could have significant impact on how Ireland meets its commitment to development education and education for global citizenship as outlined in current policy
- Further information about the implementation of the short course should be included in the design, in order for teachers and students to engage with the material in a confident and effective manner
- Changes proposed in this submission will enhance the impact of the CSPE short course in creating active and engaged global citizens.

### Introduction

Surely it is an obligation of education in a democracy to empower the young to become members of the public, to participate, and play articulate roles in the public space (Greene 1985, p.4).

IDEA welcomes this Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) Short Course on Citizenship and specifically its aim to 'inform, inspire, empower and enable young people to participate as active citizens in contemporary society' (NCCA, 2013, p. 6). If students are to become critically engaged active citizens committed to democratic values and principles, it is imperative that they are provided with education which infuses global and social justice

perspectives into all aspects of teaching and learning. IDEA would like to congratulate the NCCA for their work in promoting global citizenship education in this regard.

The CSPE short course provides an opportunity for engagement, contribution and collaboration among students. It is positive to note, anecdotally at least, that there is significant appetite among schools for this course. Among IDEA members and partners consulted by IDEA, there was a positive response to the introduction of this course, which allocates 100 hours to citizenship education and provides scope for students of all abilities to engage with principles of democracy, human rights and global justice in a meaningful way. The assessment methods, which place reflective action at the heart of the learning process, will be a positive move for both educators and students alike and the inclusion of learning outcomes which engage with social and digital media is also an important development. The new short course is a natural follow on from the previous way CSPE was taught in schools, and the evident legacy of this curriculum will be helpful for teachers during the transition.

In a broader context, IDEA also welcomes the changes to the new Junior Cycle which emphasise a more flexible curriculum and support linkages across learning subjects in schools. The 24 statements of learning represent a clear vision for the Junior Cycle which will be a useful framework for students and teachers on their learning journeys. IDEA is pleased to note that the scope within this course to develop numeracy and literacy skills is clearly articulated in the specification document. Lessons taught on themes of social justice, using participative methodologies, can simultaneously develop literacy and numeracy skills among students. Development education can contribute to higher levels of numeracy and literacy as well as to problem solving in real life contexts, improving oral language competencies, encouraging children to communicate, explore and think more effectively and enabling heightened reflective practice among students.

Within the framework of plans for the new Junior Cycle, IDEA welcomes the fact that the statements of learning highlight the importance of the sustainability agenda and the well-being of students. IDEA believes this gives great scope to further develop discourse around the notion of well-being, moving it from beyond a surface understanding of care for others to a more contextual understanding which emphasises the importance of rights and responsibilities.

IDEA is hopeful that citizenship education will continue to have the potential to reach a wide audience through this new short course. The following submission aims to highlight some of the key points and concerns which emerged from a consultation process about CSPE involving members of IDEA and the Citizenship Education Network, and it aims to identify areas for further development during the next phase of the Citizenship Short Course.

### **Mandatory status of CSPE**

Research indicates that education for social justice, for citizenship education, for sustainable development and for the complexities of a modern world is a necessity not a luxury (Bourne 2003; Campbell 2008; Irish Aid 2007). From the outset, IDEA would like to note its concern about the proposed change of CSPE from a mandatory assessed subject, to an optional short course.

IHRC (2012) notes that a subject on citizenship has been a compulsory part of the post-primary curriculum since the then Minister for Education introduced civics in 1966. It can therefore be argued that the reconceptualization of CSPE as an optional short course represents a significant policy shift and one not in keeping with the vision for teaching as articulated in other key education documents. The Code of Professional Conduct for teachers lists 'social justice, equality and inclusion' as among the core values of The Teaching Profession and states that:

Teachers in their professional role show commitment to democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion. They encourage active citizenship and support students in thinking critically about significant social issues, in valuing and accommodating diversity and in responding appropriately (Teaching Council, 2007, p.11).

The positive impact of CSPE is revealed in international research on civics and citizenship. Irish students ranked seventh in Europe on a test of civic knowledge (ERC, 2011). Students in Ireland demonstrated high scores in relation to respect for equal rights, trust in civic institutions, political self-efficacy and student-teacher relations. This research focused on 14 years olds across 38 countries and Ireland's success among this target group can be attributed to the mandatory nature of CSPE in schools.

At an international level, commitment to infusing development education throughout the formal system is particularly high with such initiatives as Global Education First, the UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative for Education, which includes global citizenship as among its three priorities ([www.globaleducationfirst.org](http://www.globaleducationfirst.org)). Due to Ireland's excellent track record in development education and global citizenship education, this initiative provides an opportunity for Ireland to play a leading role in this important international initiative which is spearheaded by the UN secretary General. The removal of the compulsory status of CSPE and any perceived downgrading on global citizenship education will diminish Ireland's ability to take this international leadership role. Moreover, situating global citizenship at the heart of the formal curriculum is common in many European countries, such as Denmark and Finland (Webb et al, 2004). In Ireland, schools and third level institutions have received significant support from Irish Aid to promote development education throughout their formal learning programmes. Indeed, in recent years, based on data collected for the European Development Education Monitoring Report (2010), Ireland scored the highest possible marks for governmental commitment to development education. IDEA would be concerned that if CSPE were no longer to be a mandatory school subject, this could represent a deprioritising of Ireland's commitment in this area at a time where there is significance development of the discipline at an international level. This is especially relevant in the light of the new Government Policy on International Development 'One World, One Future (2013), which highlights development education as a tool to deepen understanding, and encourage people towards action for a more just and equal world. As a whole of government policy, it reaffirms the scope of development education to be regarded as an opportunity 'for people in Ireland to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens' (p. 35). It would seem counter-intuitive to provide such clear support for quality development education at whole-government policy level, while at the same time downgrading the status of CPSE, which acts as an enabling environment for such policy in practice.

If CSPE is no longer a compulsory subject in the Junior Cycle, this could have practical ramifications for students at senior level as well. Currently, CSPE represents a natural academic pathway for the proposed Politics and Society subject at Leaving Certificate level. Maintaining CSPE as a compulsory subject would provide continuity into the senior cycle

and ensure that students critically engage with democratic principles throughout the full lifespan of their academic careers. CSPE represents an important foundation for this Politics and Society subject, as it is where the student first begins to articulate their voice as a citizen. There is a danger of a significant disconnect between junior and senior cycles if CSPE is relegated to an optional short course. It is imperative that all young people in Irish schools, regardless of their age, ability, religion, nationality or ethnicity will be equipped with the necessary tools to become an active and informed citizen in the future. IDEA is concerned that if CSPE is no longer a compulsory subject at Junior Cycle it will have a detrimental impact on students' ability to 'actively participate in their communities and in society, and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives' (NCCA, 2013, p. 5).

### **Language and Terminology**

While IDEA understands that not all readers may agree with certain terms used, it is nonetheless important that the language and the terminology used in the short course documentation reflects current discourse in the area. Teachers should encourage their students to critically analyse the language they use when discussing human rights and development issues and support them in unpacking what these terms are actually saying. For example, in Strand 2, (2.11) there is an opportunity to change some of the terminology in relation to high, medium and low development to reflect evolving language in relation to the Global North and Global South. In Section 1.8, it is recommended to replace the word 'categorise' with 'explore' or 'identify' in relation to the case studies as it is essential to ensure that the language chosen in these instances reflects the indivisibility of rights in this context. In Section 3.12, there was concern with the terminology of 'freedom of the press'. An amendment was suggested to change the term to 'free media' which better captures the complexity of the issue. It is recommended that students are provided with a lexicon for their work on the reflective journal in particular, which will support students in their understanding of both the discourse and language of citizenship.

### **Strand 1: Rights and Responsibilities**

The subject of CSPE provides an enabling environment to explore rights and responsibilities with young people. It affords students the opportunity to exercise their voices, to advocate for their rights and the rights of others and learn how to recognise prejudice and challenge discrimination in their lives. The strand of Rights and Responsibilities represent the ideal starting point for young people to begin their engagement with CSPE.

Under section 1.5 (p. 12), it is suggested that the term 'basic needs' is hierarchical and it may be beneficial to move beyond terminology which could be considered value laden. During the IDEA consultation, it was suggested that it would be useful to look at the notion of 'family', in order reflect the different types of families present in Ireland as well as to differentiate between needs and wants.

The draft specification is particularly strong in relation to Human Rights Instruments. However, in section 1.7 (p. 12) it was noted that the inclusion of UNCHR, ECHR and UNCRC were quite specific references and that it would be better not to present the list as exhaustive. It was suggested that a wider range of models/instruments could be looked at in order to provide a critique of the dominant models and avoid excluding certain rights and contexts. It would also be useful for teachers and students to work together to identify national or global initiatives which address similar values, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Post-2015 process or the Green Schools Initiative. While this section introduces significant Human Rights instruments, it was felt from a development perspective, only mentioning the Human Development Index (HDI) was limited and students should be encouraged to read more widely around the topic.

In addition to the positive representation of human rights, it was felt that this strand also needs to emphasise examples where there are challenges to rights and how those challenges might be negotiated. Links to the past should be included and explored, e.g., between human rights, gender equality and control of resources in Ireland; how we are connected to people elsewhere. In section 1.9 (p. 12), it would be useful to include some information about conflict resolution/possible solutions. In a development education context, it is important to frame discussion by representing people as agents in their own 'destiny', and to ensure a rights based approach, rather than a charity approach is adopted during these discussions. This strand represents great opportunity to explore complex

themes and topics within a human rights frame, which will better aid students in their understanding of the subject matter in the second and third strands.

## **Strand 2: Global Citizenship**

As key social and cultural institutions, schools have a significant role to play in fostering citizenship values and empowering students to see links between the local and global contexts. IDEA particularly welcomes the fact that the concepts of sustainability and sustainable living are named explicitly in this section. It is further suggested that the '3 pillars of sustainability' (Economy, Society, Environment) be reflected and embedded throughout learning outcomes 2.1 – 2.4

It is important also that this strand include a focus on real world problems and how students perceive the world. Currently, there is nothing included about the market economy and this means there is scope to use this strand to bring a focus on resources and examine them from different perspectives, for example, the life cycle of products or the interface between the natural and social world. Similarly, there is a gap in this strand regarding the articulation of influences and how we are shaped as citizens. It is recommended that a learning outcome be added on stereotypes as well as a learning outcome on attitudinal issues to show students are aware of how ideas are formed. It is also important the issues of equality and inequality, for example inequalities within countries as well as between countries are named explicitly in this strand.

It is important that debate is included as a potential action point under this strand, including scope for schools to incorporate different models of debate and discussion. Motions or topics chosen for debate should be worded appropriately in order to do justice to the multifaceted nature of many of the themes involved. Discussion, questioning or conversation based exercises would facilitate students to cognitively engage with the complexity of the issues involved. Debate in this sense should allow for the inclusion of multiple perspectives and the inclusion of diverse voices in the discussion.

## **Strand 3: Exploring Democracy**

In recent years, there has been a shift in how we think about human rights and democratic education. We have moved from merely the commitment to democratic values, principles and attitudes, to the need to empower students to exercise their voices, critically engage with and actively participate in democratic processes (Reich, 2007). It is in this context that Strand 3 of the CSPE Short Course is especially important.

Development education approaches emphasise the necessity that the links between the local and global contexts are made explicit for students. In section 3.5. (p.16) it is suggested that the 'international' context should be referenced as well as the Irish and European and that a reference to voting systems also be included. During the IDEA consultation, practical examples of democracy at play in other contexts were recommended for this strand, in order to ensure that the brief of exploring democracy is not too abstract for students. For example, it was felt in section 3.6 that an outcome of demonstrating 'belief' in the democratic process might be problematic to prove in a practical context. This should be reworded to something which more accurately reflects the student's capacity to critically engage with and evaluate the material. In section 3.8 (p.16), the focus is on 'enforcement', it does not include anything about the responsibility of citizens to uphold the law. This would represent a good opportunity for students to build upon knowledge from Strand 1: Rights and Responsibilities.

Finally, it is essential in this strand, that the concepts of interdependence and peace building, which are implied throughout the section, are explicitly stated in either the content or the outcomes sections. Similarly, in the general description of the course, the social justice elements need to be made more explicit. IDEA is pleased to note that this new short course goes deeper into human rights than the previous CSPE programme and provides teachers with scope to look at the full spectrum of rights and how human rights are relevant to the lives of young people all over the world.

<b>Reflective Journal</b>
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IDEA welcomes the fact that reform of the Junior Cycle is not just limited to curriculum content, but also includes restructuring at an assessment level to target both reflective and active learning. In particular, the introduction of a reflective journal as a pedagogical tool in

this regard is to be commended. The use of a reflective journal to chart student engagement with social justice issues will deepen their reflections, allow them the time to see things from different perspectives and afford students the space to collect their observations. The structure of a reflective journal will enable students to make sense of their experiences and this is particularly relevant in a subject like CSPE, where attention should be given to changes in understanding and personal positions on issues that many students go through with their learning.

There are a few observations about the process which should be raised. While it is commended that students are given the choice between an electronic learning journal or a notebook, teachers should be made aware of the difference in the processes. Anecdotal evidence from engagement with journaling at third level tends to favour the written approach, as it then avoids students self-editing or being self-conscious about their views when they revisit them over time. Also this provides scope for some students to include articles, photos or pictures in the hard copy of the learning journal. This is particularly relevant for schools who may be resource limited when it comes to access to technology.

It is evident that further direction and targeted supports will be needed for students in relation to their engagement with the reflective journal. These supports should be built into the design of the course in order to ensure students have the confidence to engage with their responsibilities in this regard. It could be useful, for example, if students were aided in this process by reflective questions being posed by the teacher every few weeks. The questions could be linked to specific themes or actions the class has been involved with. It would be important as well for students to be introduced to guidelines, such as the Dóchas Code on Images and Messages, for the visual or digital representation of their work. It is evident as well that students will need further information about formal research approaches and methodologies, data collection tools, and research design to support them in carrying out meaningful original research. Students should also be taught how to analyse their data and present their findings. Ways of disseminating the findings and sharing the results should also be included in the description of the reflective journal.

Participants in IDEA's consultation process cited the need for the generation of baseline data among students in relation to their engagement with the reflective journal. Providing

research methodological support will be very useful in this regard and facilitate teachers to collect this type of data and track the reflection that takes place over time.

Similarly, further support will also be needed for teachers in regard to focused CPD on the reflective journals. Teachers will need to be provided with in-service to facilitate their work on these journals. IDEA welcomes the reflective element of the journal, but is aware that the nature of reflection is subjective and may prove difficult to standardise across the school. There is a concern that without comprehensive and targeted CPD in this area, too few educators will have the necessary skills and confidence to deliver the short course in an effective way. In addition, it is important that teachers are sufficiently supported to embrace opportunities in the area and find ways to evaluate and assess individual journeys. A further concern was that there could potentially be a substantial amount of work required for a school to turn the specification into a course ready for school engagement.

Greater clarity is needed about the practicalities of the assessment. More detail about what constitutes a journal entry and about when the assessment should take place is needed to avoid a run on assessment at the end of third year. Various examples of templates (online, multimedia, written, audio), as well as the necessary information on data protection, ethics and online publication should be provided to give guidance to teachers. In IDEA's consultation 20% as a grade was deemed as too small a percentage for the journal, given the important emphasis on reflection. It is suggested that the weighting be increased to at least 30%. If necessary, students could be required to write 2-3 entries per topic, rather than per strand to increase their engagement with the material.

### **Action Records**

Democracy...is not something which is 'taught', it is something which is practised (Hodgkin in Ruddock and Flutter 2000, p.83).

Schools have a significant role to play in fostering citizenship values and empowering students to make changes around them. As such, the emphasis on action in the CSPE Short Course is to be welcomed. True fostering of citizenship skills will require more than just forty minute sessions in the classroom and it is significant that the new Junior Cycle will include a focus on action and engagement. To be effective, active citizenship needs to

permeate through the whole school environment and students need to experience what it means to be a citizen in their everyday lives. IDEA sees citizenship education as addressing many aspects of school life, from classroom practice to school policy-making, thereby operating on both pedagogical and systemic levels.

CSPE can play a key role in fostering the skills needed for students to effect change in their own environments. Local and meaningful action, ideally an action which is ongoing, creates entry points for students to engage with global justice issues and avoids the risk of being overwhelmed and powerless in the face of global issues. The Action Records will be a key component in this endeavour, but it is important to bear in mind some of the following observations.

Completing six actions over the course of potentially two or three years will require very clear guidance and direction. The distinction between doing the action and reporting on the action should be clear. The fact that the lists of actions under each strand deliberately include small and larger actions should be made explicit. There is also a significant concern that only selecting two from six for action records for assessment may make the remaining four action records irrelevant or may devalue the work done on those other actions. It is important that perceptions and attitudes towards the new short course are positive from the start. Similarly, with the disparity of percentages (30% v 50%) for the two assessments, there is concern that the first action record will not be taken as seriously if there is not equal weighting given. The assessment of the action records should be more balanced with an even distribution reflecting students' progression throughout the course. It is suggested that the percentages for assessment be divided equally, for example, 35% and 35% for both of the actions. Scope for cross-curricular approaches to assessment practice are recommended within the action records, for example, adapting assessment procedures from subjects like Art and English to ensure a holistic, yet standardized approach to marking.

The group work element of the action records is a very positive development. Collaborative and group work among peers are at the heart of citizenship education, but it will be important that teachers are given a framework to identify and assess both individual and group work in this regard. Including elements of reflection in the action record could be very useful as well, for example, a statement regarding what was learned and then a reflection

on this. Also, do the students decide which actions that they engage with? Greater clarity is needed about how students decide which actions they engage with.

On a related point, it is necessary to mention another assessment development within the new Junior Cycle, namely the move from external anonymous correction to continuous assessment by teachers correcting the work of their own students. Ongoing CPD in this area is necessary to ensure sufficient support is made available for teachers to be up-skilled in these new components of the short course. No information has been made available yet about the nature of in-service or CPD which will be made available to teachers in this regard. There is a need for greater clarity around this issue.

Furthermore, a complete move away from external anonymous grading could be potentially problematic as well. Sending coursework and exam-work to be centrally graded by state actors traditionally gave the process a value in the past. It is not yet known how an initiative like this will play out in practice in schools which are differently resourced or come from differing socio-economic backgrounds. The issue of parity of assessment needs to be addressed. Independent verification of continuous assessment should be included in the Junior Cycle to ensure parity of assessment, as well as assessment guidelines and practices within schools such as shared assessment meetings and assessment by teachers other than the class teacher.

In CSPE, when there are complex issues at play, such as the intersection of development, race, poverty, cultural representation and partnership, it is recommended for good practice that some sort of independent assessment be introduced for the short course. This is particularly relevant for the action component, to ensure sufficient exploration of global justice issues and problematising of responses to these issues. Subjecting the action record to external scrutiny will benefit the quality of the work produced by schools and the quality of engagement by pupils with the issues.

## **Conclusion**

IDEA welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the CSPE Citizenship Short Course. IDEA believes that to become active citizens in both local and global contexts students need formal inputs which infuse a global dimension into their learning and foreground issues of

social justice. The new short course for CSPE actively promotes the key skills of the Junior Cycle, in particular in relation to scaffolding critical thinking skills among students. It also contributes to the creation of awareness and understanding around development issues and the use of more participative and qualitative pedagogies.

IDEA is concerned that since there is no obligation for schools to engage with the short courses and since there exists a wealth of choice of short courses for schools, this could potentially mean a significant represent a drop off in the number of students who are exposed to citizenship education during their junior cycle. It may be that with so many changes to the Junior Cycle, schools may be conservative in their engagement with the short courses and may not choose to take on that many short courses in the early stages of the new programme.

There needs to be something in the new Junior Cycle which compels schools to show their commitment to development education and encourages them to infuse a strong global dimension into teaching and learning. This short course on Citizenship goes a long way to achieving those goals, however it is essential that policy-makers reinstate the mandatory status of CSPE.

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