

Report to SCoTENS Committee
North-South Citizenship Conference
September 30 – October 1 2004
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Introduction

The North-South Citizenship Conference emerged from last year's Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS), when it was agreed to initiate a co-operative, cross-border forum on Citizenship Education. It was within this context, and with particular reference to the framework of collaborative research and professional activities in teacher education North and South, that a funding application was submitted to the SCoTENS Committee. Following funding approval from the Committee, additional finance was secured from CCEA and from the Department of Education and Science (DES). The combined funding enabled the organisation of an invitational conference for up to fifty people (a breakdown of costs is illustrated in Appendix 1). The Conference was held in the Slieve Russell Hotel, Ballyconnell, Co Cavan from September 30 – October 1 2004. The event represented an opportunity to share insights from existing practice in both jurisdictions, to strengthen professional relationships between those actively engaged in Citizenship Education, and to consider ways to take forward findings through a collaborative programme of activity.

Background

Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) has been a part of the compulsory core curriculum in the Republic of Ireland since 1997. CSPE focuses on seven core concepts – Human Dignity, Rights and Responsibilities, Democracy, Development, Law, Interdependence and Stewardship, and is taught to pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 in all post-primary schools as a time-tabled class period. Formal assessment in the Junior Certificate Examination includes credit for a report on an action project.

In Northern Ireland Citizenship Education has yet to become a mandatory feature of the curriculum. It has however been introduced as a pilot scheme at Key Stage 3 increasingly into all Northern Ireland schools. Within the framework of the current curriculum review process, it is anticipated that Local and Global Citizenship will become a statutory subject from September 2007. Local and Global Citizenship is delivered through four key themes – Diversity and Inclusion, Equality and Social Justice, Human Rights and Social Responsibilities

and Democracy and Active Participation. In preparation for this, the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs), in collaboration with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), are engaged in a training programme for up to five teachers per year from participating schools.

Conference Planning

A planning meeting was held in Belfast during March 2004 to agree the format and structure of the conference. The meeting was attended by three colleagues from each jurisdiction, each of whom had particular expertise in the areas of teaching, training research and development. The remit of the planning committee was to oversee the development of the conference by identifying a series of key issues that could be explored for the mutual benefit of the target audience.

It was agreed that the proposed aim of the conference would seek to share approaches to diversity and citizenship, with specific reference to :

- ❑ Schools and school practice;
- ❑ Initial teacher education;
- ❑ Continuing professional development;
- ❑ The role of NGOs and the non-formal education sector;
- ❑ Research and evaluation.

The different context in which citizenship is currently taught within the two jurisdictions has created an environment where it is possible to foster increased inter-professional and inter-institutional linkages on issues of common interest and concern to teacher education. It was anticipated that the challenges and dynamics of complementary theory and practice would generate productive discussion and debate and lay the foundation for increased strategic collaboration and co-operation.

A guest list for the conference was drawn up to include representatives from each of the areas outlined above (Appendix 2). From this list a number of colleagues were identified as possible key speakers or workshop facilitators. The conference comprised eight parallel thematic sessions (Appendix 3). Each session was co-presented by North-South representatives and was overseen by an appointed facilitator. Each session lasted approximately one and a half hours (30 minutes per presenter and a further 30 minutes for discussion). The parallel sessions were developed in consultation with each of the key speakers on an agreed, specific aspect of

citizenship provision in the two jurisdictions. Every effort was made to avoid an overlap of complementary presentations to ensure thematic continuity. Details of individual sessions are provided in the synopsis of presentations attached (Appendix 4).

Conference Outcomes

The Conference produced a number of key outcomes for consideration over the next 12 months. These were :

- The collation of conference papers for the preparation of a published book that will be disseminated to a wider education audience. This audience will include teachers, trainee teachers and school leaders; those working with young people in the non-formal sector; NGO representatives; and those involved with policy formulation. Preliminary discussions are underway with a potential publisher. Conference papers are currently being passed on to the two organisers who will act as editors. The purposes of the proposed book will be to chronicle some of the experiences so far in both jurisdictions in attempting to implement *Education for Citizenship and Diversity*. This will include some original research findings, some critiques of current provision and some indicators of implementing best practice.

- The development of a Citizenship Education website, with specific reference to Initial Teacher Education. Following a successful proposal to the SCoTENS Committee, additional funding has been secured to develop a website for students, staff and other professionals involved in ITE provision. The recruitment procedure is currently underway and it is anticipated that an appointment will be made early in the New Year.

- The request for a further Citizenship conference. Potential for a further conference is currently being investigated. Extending the conference to a wider audience would necessarily incur greater costs. Some participants at this year's conference have stated that they would be willing to pay some of the costs for a future conference from their own resources. This would have to be considered in any funding application. Equally, responsibility for the organisation and administration would have to be considered within the capacity of existing work commitments.