GORDON COOK FOUNDATION: FIVE NATIONS PROGRAMME EXTERNAL REVIEW
FINAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

8. A RECENT INNOVATION – THE SMALL SCALE RESEARCH INITIATIVE SSRI

      8.1 *The small-scale research initiative: background and development*
      8.2 *The value of the scheme*
      8.3 *Commissioning projects and monitoring*
      8.4 *Ethics and the small grants scheme*
      8.5 *The SSRI and recommendations for future development*

9. THE FIVE NATIONS WEBSITE

      9.1 *Five Nations website: background and development*
      9.2 *Monitoring the site*
      9.3 *Target audience – who is the website for?*
      9.4 *Suggestions for developing content and new tools*
      9.5 *The website and recommendations for future development*

10. CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FIVE NATIONS PROGRAMME EXTERNAL REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION
1.1 *Overview*
   This report constitutes the draft final report for the External Review commissioned by the Trustees of the Gordon Cook Foundation and covers an evaluation of the Five Nations Programme carried out from December 2011 to mid July 2012. The Gordon Cook Foundation is an Aberdeen based charity which is committed to furthering the aims of values education. While the foundation supports a range of projects in the fields of citizenship education, the Five Nations Network remains the Gordon Cook Foundation's "flagship" project.

1.2 *Aims of the review and methods*
   This review constitutes the first evaluation of the Five Nations Network. The broad aim of the evaluation was to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the programme in order to inform its future improvement. A combination of methods was used:
   - Interviews with network members.
   - Observation of network activities.
   - Consideration of network documentation.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
2.1 *Strategic development, key strengths of programme and recommendations*
   The Executive Summary first makes a general recommendation for strategic development of the Five Nations Programme. Second it identifies the key strengths of each aspect of the programme and then makes recommendations for improvement of its four key components.

(i) STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME
   It is widely recognised that the Five Nations is now an established network and is at a crucial stage in its development. The review would therefore recommend that it is timely that the aims and objectives of the Five Nations Programme are reviewed. A key and overall recommendation is:

   - To formulate an up-to-date strategic plan that integrates the forward plan for the four key aspects of the programme (i.e. annual conference, SG, SSRI and website).

(ii) THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
   Key strengths of the annual conference are:
   - The conference was felt *to punch well above its weight* in terms of its high quality content and organisation.
   - Enthusiasm generated by attendance was highly rated and valued by delegates.
   - The conference was viewed as a vital source of support where citizenship education was perceived to be under threat.
   - The conference provided important networking opportunities for all delegates but in particular for participants from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Recommendations are:
- Establishing wider links with other networks is to be welcomed as a constructive way forward for the network.
- Revisiting the question: "What are the goals of the conference?" For example, is it to develop individual capacity and/or to influence policy?
- Promoting activity between conferences requires concerted action. A newsletter between conferences could support this.
- Re-examining the diversity of conference attendees, their methods of recruitment and the needs of new members.

(iii)THE STRATEGY GROUP
Key strengths of the Strategy Group are:
- The commitment of the group has been pivotal to the progress of the Five Nations network and its maturing as a network.
- The role of the group in co-organising the annual conference and *keeping its content fresh* was a very important contribution of the group.
- The establishment of the group marked a significant turning point in the governance of the network.

Recommendations are:
- The "Terms of Reference" should be reformulated.
- The relationship of the group vis-à-vis the Trustee group should be clarified.
- The proportion of the overall budget spent on supporting the work of the group should be reviewed and other sources of funding sought.
- The "goodwill" contribution of the group over and above their "day jobs" and/or support of employers should be factored in when assessing the capacity of the group.

(iiii) THE SMALL SCALE RESEARCH INITIATIVE
Key strengths of the SSRI are:
- Findings from the scheme generated enthusiasm and provided a productive focus for debate at conference level.
- The scheme enhanced collaboration between jurisdictions.
- The scheme could be a future vehicle for enhancing the impact of the network.

Recommendations are:
- Monitoring and quality control of the scheme requires development.
- More targeted commissioning of projects could enhance the impact of the scheme over the longer term.
- Thinking through the ways in which the impact of the scheme can be enhanced is a future challenge for the network.

(v) THE FIVE NATIONS WEB SITE
Key strengths of the website are:
- The potential of the web site was widely recognised by participants.

- The website is seen as a very important resource that could aid communication between conferences.

Recommendations are:
- The day-to-day manager of the site should be identified.
- The question "Who is the target audience of the site?" requires clarification.
- The review makes suggestions for updating its content and tools to enhance communication.
- The website could be used to collect information about the potential impact of the conference and activity between conferences.

3. THE GORDON COOK FOUNDATION (GCF)
3.1 *The Gordon Cook Foundation and the role of the Trustees*
The Foundation is managed by a Board of Trustees drawn from education and business. There are currently five Trustees, who meet four times annually in order to oversee and plan the work of the Foundation. Since the mid nineteen seventies the Foundation has funded over 240 projects in "Values Education" and related areas including Health Education, the Arts, Human Rights and Professional Ethics.

Over the years the Foundation has developed a particular model of working with projects. Each successful project is assigned a "Lead Trustee" and their role is to support the approved project and its managers. The Lead Trustee also provides an important link between the Trustee group and activity at project level. Ivor Sutherland, for example, is the Lead Trustee for the Five Nations Programme. As the Lead Trustee he liaises with the project manager for the programme, attends meetings of the Strategy Group - the core decision making body of the network - and generally keeps the Trustee group up-to-date with developments and progress.

3.2 *Rationale for the Review*
Today the Five Nations Network is considered a "mature network". The conference is well established and has taken place annually since 2000 and the Reading in November 2012 will constitute the twelfth Five Nations conference. In April 2012 the management of the network was taken over by the Association of Citizenship Teaching (ACT) based in London. This was a significant change in the Five Nations project management because since its inception the conference was organised under the auspices of the Institute for Global Ethics (IGE), led by Sheila Bloom (Chief Executive). From the onset the Five Nations Programme was supported by Sheila Bloom who played a key role in determining the organisation and substance of the conference, the publications emanating from it, and the nature of follow-up activity. As a consequence the network is at an important juncture in its development where a review of its efficacy is warranted.

4. WHAT IS THE FIVE NATIONS NETWORK?
4.1 *A unique forum*
The Five Nations Network is a unique forum sharing practice in education for Citizenship and values in England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
http://www.fivenations.net/

Today the Five Nations Network encompasses four key dimensions, namely the annual conference, the activities of the Strategy Group, the Small Scale Research Initiative (SSRI) and the Five Nations website. While the Five Nations network developed additional dimensions over its 12 year existence, the annual conference remains its defining event. Since its inception, a rotating hosting system was established where each jurisdiction and the Country Leads take it in turns to host and organise the conference with extensive input and support of the Project Manager (i.e. prior to 2012 Sheila Bloom IGE and currently Liz Moorse ACT). Country Leads are nominated individuals who are the main contact point for each jurisdiction. Over the years the conference has been hosted by Northern Ireland (Belfast, Derry), England (London, Birmingham, Leeds), the Republic of Ireland (Dublin), Wales (Cardiff) and Scotland (Glasgow. Edinburgh). Initially, the conference ran for two days and included over 100 participants. Today due to funding constraints the conference is now shorter (i.e. over two half days), involving around 60 delegates.

In the early days, delegates' attendance was supported by various organisations (e.g. Learning Teaching Scotland) and local authorities across jurisdictions. Today, however the Gordon Cook Foundation is the sole funder of the conference. Costs met are hotel accommodation, subsistence and meeting travel costs to the venue (£150 per delegate), project management, including the support of the Strategy Group. The budget for the whole programme stands at around £95,000 per annum[1] and is approximately one half of the GCF total annual budget.

5. SCOPE OF REVIEW, METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS
5.1 *Aims of the review: a summary*
The prime aim of the review was to examine its four key components and to evaluate the value of the annual conference; the work of the Strategy Group and its management role and responsibilities; the role and sustainability of the Small Scale Research Initiative and the content and potential of the Five Nations website. The review assessed to what extent these four aspects were effective mechanisms for achieving the goals of the programme. Specifically, it identified the strengths and weaknesses of these aspects, highlighted areas for action and provided some options for the networks' strategic development.

With regard to questions for the review, organisations which commission evaluations tend to ask the following fundamental questions:
- To what extent does the programme achieve its aims?
- How can it be improved?

This review will tackle these questions by elaborating on the main strengths and weaknesses of the programme which will be especially useful in formulating recommendations for the networks' future development.

5.2 *Review methods*
This evaluation used a range of data gathering techniques typically employed in qualitative and developmental evaluations (e.g. Patton 1987; 2011). It involved:
1. Observation of core activities, namely attendance at Strategy Group meetings and the annual conference in Dublin 2011.

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[1] This total includes £15,000 which is the annual budget for the SSRI.

2. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, in addition to a number of telephone interviews.
3. Consideration of documentary evidence (e.g. conference reports; conference participants' feedback forms; small grants final reports).

In order to seek a range of standpoints, an even spread of participants from the five jurisdictions were included in the interview sample. In addition, a few individuals with expertise in the field provided "outsider" views on the network that were invaluable insights regarding programme development. In total 27 interviews were undertaken (25 general interviews were carried out in relation to the network while 2 additional interviews were conducted specifically on the topic of the website).

In relation to the website review, additional expertise was sought from those knowledgeable in the area. Dr Jen Ross, Moray House School of Education, for example, undertook a preliminary evaluation of the site in order to help guide the review. Nick Morgan, National Development Officer, Education Scotland, who has a special interest in web development, provided helpful suggestions and comments.

5.3 *Ethical considerations*

This project was granted formal ethical approval from the Moray House Ethics Sub Committee and the evaluation conformed to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines. All individuals who took part in the review were informed that information divulged in interviews would be anonymised and that no individual would be named and/or identified in the evaluation report, or subsequent publications.

Ethical behaviour also requires transparency regarding potential conflict of interests (MacFarlane, 2010). The reviewer had previously attended two Five Nations Conferences as a delegate and with a colleague at the University of Edinburgh was a recipient of a SSRI award (2011-2012). Previous participation provided a very useful backdrop for the review, and thus ensured that the reviewer orientated swiftly to the topic under investigation.

5.4 *Strengths and limitations of the review*

Given the review constitutes the first review of the Five Nations Programme one of its strengths lies in the fact that it will provide baseline information for future reviews of the network. As is the case with most research projects, this evaluation was bound by time and resource constraints which inevitably impinged on the scope of its activities.

6. THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE: THE NETWORK'S KEY EVENT
6.1 *The conference: background and development*

When participants talked about the network they were invariably referring to the annual conference thus reaffirming its centrality to the programme. The conference provides an opportunity for a range of professionals and practitioners (e.g. teachers, NGOs, policy makers, and academics) to share ideas and practice in education for Citizenship and values in England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The significance of the conference was illustrated in the extent of documentation and reports on the topic (see annual Conference Reports 2000-2011). The annual conference was the brainchild of one influential individual, Bill Gatherer, who was a founder Trustee of the Gordon Cook

Foundation. His longstanding involvement with the Foundation and commitment to values education was set out in his account of the life of Victor Cook, its benefactor (see Gatherer 2004). Bill Gatherer's original idea for the annual conference was fuelled by political changes taking place around the UK. In the 1990s the move towards devolved political systems proved to be an important impetus. Sheila Bloom (IGE administrator of the FN Programme 1999-2012) who worked closely with Bill Gatherer at the time explained the thinking behind the first Four Nations Conference which took place in London May 2000:

It was towards 1999 because that's when Bill Gatherer would have been having this idea of a concern about devolution and that was going to adversely affect the countries talking to each other about education. And it was his idea to have the first Four Nations Conference in London.
Sheila Bloom[2]

While the first conferences included participants from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, it later developed into what is now called the Five Nations Programme with the inclusion of the Republic of Ireland[3]. According to a few informants involved at the time, the inclusion of the Republic of Ireland was set in motion when a core member from the Northern Ireland contingent invited a colleague who was based in the Republic of Ireland.

6.2 *From showcasing "good practice" to tackling difficult and challenging issues*
Long-term participants' views of how the focus of the conference changed to become *punchier* and focused, resulting in enhanced relationships was surprisingly similar. This was apparent in interviews, as well as evident in conference reports. In the early phase of staging the annual conference, each country was inclined to promote their individual system and approach to citizenship education. A few members categorized this as the *showing off* phase. It was noted that at that time the conference was not perceived to be really tackling the *nitty gritty* and fundamentally difficult issues surrounding citizenship education. At this point, network and conference participants tended to defend what was happening at that time in their own jurisdictions:

I mean we'd gone through two rounds of showcasing in a sense, which was in the early days people were really quite defensive about their turf and so they wanted to show why it was different in Wales and what it was that Scotland was doing better, you know. (Long term, core participant)[4]

Not only were conference participants thought to be a little defensive but some members reported that there was an element of what could be termed: "cultural and

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[2] Permission was sought to identify Sheila Bloom's account of the early days of the network.
[3] Given the purpose of the Gordon Cook Foundation (i.e. to promote values education in the UK) the Trustees sought legal advice regarding the inclusion of the Republic of Ireland in the programme.
[4] Various conventions have been used intentionally to explain types of participant e.g. long term member, core member etc. The review has been mindful of using quotes from a range of participants while at the same time preserving anonymity.

linguistic imperialism"[5] surfacing in the early days. In short, a bias towards an English standpoint predominated at the expense of understanding innovations and developments taking place in other educational systems. The following demonstrates the challenges that had to be overcome in order to establish trustful and open working relations:

I think ... there has been in the past a kind of an insensitivity to the identity of some of the countries and possibly, dare I say it, a slight tendency towards a kind of, you know, a kind of seeing things being viewed from quite an English perspective.
(Long term, core participant)

This insensitivity, according to some members, was accompanied by an inappropriate use of terminology that was unacceptable and sometimes offensive. What was felt to emerge from sometimes fraught beginnings was the deepening of relationships and a resultant *honesty* that developed between core network members. Reportedly, this was not an easy process and took time. The Leeds Conference in 2007 constituted a defining moment and a number of members recalled how at the time they felt disillusioned, tempted to leave and give up:

To be quite honest, when I came back from Leeds, from the conference there I said ..., you know: "I'm not going to one of these again", because, I felt it had been, I felt that, that the two conferences in Edinburgh and Leeds had not been really productive use of time.

The subsequent conference in Glasgow 2008 marked a significant change in direction for the network and generated the thinking behind the "Call to Action". This document was important as it set out a broad and expansive vision for future activity of the network. It highlighted "Lines of Action" which among other things proposed achieving greater policy engagement, strengthening policy implementation and improving quality and standards.

6.3 *The value of the annual conference*
The annual conference was found to be appreciated and valued by conference participants on a number of levels. As one long term participant put it, the conference: *punches well above its weight* in terms of the quality of the content, as well as the stature and status of the key presenters. This is readily illustrated in previous conference reports which demonstrate how a range of high status policy makers, government ministers and academics delivered keynote speeches on topical and challenging issues over the life of the network.

Attending the conference provided important opportunities for networking and the exchange of ideas, which were highly valued. This was found to be the case across the range of professionals that took part in interviews and responded to requests for information via email. Returning to the work place with a post conference "glow" and enthusiasm was highlighted, and feeling *invigorated* and *rejuvenated* were sentiments commonly expressed. Being intellectually stimulated and having *your own thinking challenged* was also identified as a significant benefit. The following new delegate

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[5] This is the reviewer's use of terminology and not a direct quote from participants.

reflected on his/her experience at the conference in Dublin. For this individual, the energy generated by dialogue with like-minded colleagues was regarded very positively:

The strengths are about the synergies that you get when you pull together a group of people who have clearly been working on similar agendas for many years and you bring them into contact with practitioners which is what happened in Dublin. And you share your stories and you share your evidence bases and you share your plans for the future.

A further salient aspect of the support that attendance afforded was related to jurisdictions where citizenship education was felt to be under threat. The Five Nations Conference could provide a "sanctuary" for delegates whose national contexts were less than supportive of the aims of citizenship and values education. For example, in Dublin 2011 English participants highlighted the *doom and gloom scenario* in their nation, precipitated in part by the perceived antipathy towards citizenship education by the present government. This hostile environment served to sharpen and heighten their appreciation of the support of the Five Nations Programme and in particular to participate in the conference. As the following delegate put it, the existence of the Five Nations Network was a reassuring presence:

Its been brilliant for me to know on the policy side that its always been there, where policy makers and practitioners were coming together to talk to each other about citizenship and values because there isn't any other forum.

This is an important contribution of the Five Nations conference when the prevailing political climate is antagonistic towards the aspirations of citizenship education. Another delegate highlighted the impact of the broader economic climate and the value of the conference and the collaboration it facilitated:

In times like at the moment when we are challenged by reduced funding and lack of government support, we are stronger together than we are separately (Core member)

If the main goal of the annual conference is to build individual capacity and enhance delegates' sense of enthusiasm it is clear from participants' accounts that it is fulfilling that function. If however the purposes and goals are broader than that i.e. to influence policy, provide a pressure group on citizenship related issues there is little available evidence to indicate that at this stage in its development the network fulfils such wider functions. One delegate reported that they felt that the networks' impact on policy was probably negligible:

I think that with the huge advocacy agenda that there is in most of the nations that we're maybe not having the impact on policy that we should have.

Given that activities undertaken by the network depend to a large extent on the goodwill of participants it seems unlikely that the network currently has the necessary

capacity to impact consistently on the more ambitious aim to influence policy. This remains a significant area for the network to tackle.

6.4 *Raising the profile of the network*
At the last annual conference affiliating with a wider network in the "Council of Europe" was raised. Participants who took part in the review were overwhelmingly positive about the network linking with such networks. This would not only help promote the Five Nations network to a broader audience but marks a stage in its development which is outward-looking and ready to engage in partnerships with other like-minded organisations. One delegate however was circumspect on this issue:

If you don't really have something to offer to a broader audience then you shouldn't be raising the profile. You should just be accepting that you're doing a good job with the people that you're working with.

A long-term participant was positive and recognised that the network was now at a point in its evolution where it could confidently look outwards to work alongside other organisations:

We need to look at the international stage and engage more on international level. I think now we are ready for it.

6.5 *Maintaining momentum of the network between conferences*
A challenge for any professional network is maintaining the impetus of activity, members' enthusiasm and commitment over time[6]. An ongoing issue for the Five Nations network is maintaining activity between conferences. One original conference participant recollected how real efforts were made in the early days to galvanise activity:

I remember quite vividly some of the debates at the 2003 conference and then for some months after that, because we did actually try to, try very hard to engage in some between conference activity which was tough because there's always a, tension .....between your day job and .... spending time with other people from other jurisdictions.

Collaborative activity between conferences was reported to have been more successful and generated fruitful exchanges in particular jurisdictions. Members from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, for example explained how the Five Nations Programme was instrumental in facilitating dialogue between members of the two nations in the early days. As a Northern Ireland delegate stated: *it actually linked us much more closely with our colleagues in the South of Ireland.* Others also maintained that new professional links between educational specialists in the north and south were initiated

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[6] The Applied Educational Research Scheme (2004-2009) is a useful model of a professional network which operated in Scotland. This scheme employed full-time dedicated personnel i.e. Senior Research Fellows (SRF) who facilitated and lead activity at network level. They fulfilled a proactive role essential to move the activity of the network forward. As a result SRFs supported network members who were usually in full-time employment in Higher Education and in Local Authorities.

through their attendance at the annual conference. Clearly, given their respective political histories this interchange however small should be seen as a particularly constructive by-product of network activity.

When delegates were asked about their views and suggestions for future development of the network they frequently raised the issue of having some form of contact between conferences. Suggestions for contact were alerting members to developments in other jurisdictions, as well as information for developing practice in the field. One helpful suggestion was the introduction of an annual newsletter. This would seem a relatively easy way of making contact between conferences and could either take the form of a simple, succinct email or a PDF document with more extensive content.

6.6 *The nature of participant groups and replenishing membership*

Due to the fact that there are different tiers and three main levels of involvement in the network (i.e. Core Strategy Group, Extended Strategy Group, and conference delegates) maintaining the balance of established and new membership was identified as a salient issue. While not a widespread sentiment some review participants observed that there was an "in-group" and "out-group" which could be experienced as *cliquey*. Being proactive and providing information that would meet the needs and help orientate new participants about the conference format and expectations is one way of addressing this potential problem. While conference reports are available on the web, it is highly unlikely that new participants would trawl through their extensive content. This suggests that web based information should be provided for new members as a way of optimising what individuals could get out of, and contribute to the event.

Another issue raised was the way in which attendees were selected which was said to differ between jurisdictions. Some participants on the receiving end of selection processes said that they were uncertain whether they would be invited in subsequent years. Other people who were asked to nominate participants felt that they were not briefed sufficiently about the aims and intended outcomes of the conference which would assist them with the selection of suitable candidates:

> *It was quite difficult for me to understand what the goals were and what the outcomes were and what was it all about.*

Members also raised questions regarding the homogeneous composition of conference participants in terms of their age (i.e. mainly middle aged) and ethnicity (predominantly white). Some delegates suggested that too many academic researchers were in attendance. This indicates that getting the balance of the delegate group right for the range of stakeholders is a challenge to achieve. Also many noted the very real difficulties with including teachers who were often unable to secure time out of school. The points raised above indicated that the following would bring benefits for the network:

- Reviewing procedures for inviting participants and briefing those who are asked to select suitable participants.
- Providing information and support for new participants.
- Broaden the characteristics and diversity of conference attendees where possible

6.7 *The debate about conference accommodation*

There has been a longstanding debate about the quality of accommodation for the conference which tends to be the higher end of the market (i.e. Four Star Hotels). Two opposing views were found on this a) some delegates said that they felt valued and supported by attending a conference in such comfortable surroundings and b) hospitality should be a lower standard in keeping with similar organisations.

Resolving this issue becomes clearer when the following question is addressed: "What are the goals of the conference?" If the key goal is simply to enhance the capacity of individuals to return invigorated and well-informed to their workplaces the rationale for quality accommodation then appears justifiable. If, on the other hand, the goals of the conference are wider and policy related, the question of whether high end accommodation is necessary becomes less clear-cut.

6.8 *The annual conference and recommendations for future development*

A new phase of development of the network could take several forms. These include the fostering of more proactive policy influencing groups within the 5 nations, and promoting a more outward looking network with wider European contacts. A further option could be to redeploy funding. For example, perhaps more participants could be included in the conference if money was redirected from elsewhere in the budget, or a policy officer might be employed on a part-time/casual basis.

The review identified salient strengths and challenges for the annual conferences which have implications for formulating key areas for programme development. These are:

- Maintaining the momentum and activity between conferences.
- Renewing and replenishing membership over time.
- Meeting the needs of new members.
- Extending its reach and its impact to a greater number of people who are involved in education for citizenship.

7. MANAGING THE NETWORK: THE STRATEGY GROUP
7.1 *The strategy group: background and development*

The development of the Strategy Group marked an important change in the way in which the network was managed and is a fairly recent development. The group was formed after the 2007 annual conference in Leeds and in the period following Bill Gatherer's death. Bill Gatherer, as has been suggested, had had an enormous impact on setting the agenda for the programme but he was also involved in the consultative exercise which took place in London in July 2008. In this meeting the formation of the Strategy Group was discussed. Since then the Strategy Group has played a key role in leading activities of the network, formulating policies and in particular organising the annual conference. According to one Strategy Group member it marked a significant shift in management of the network:

There's been this step-change .....to create a much broader and stronger management structure in the Five Nations Network that has included not just as it were ad hoc groups meeting to plan a conference in a particular country, but having a structure for doing that.

The group has a two tier system of representing each jurisdiction. The first tier is made up of Country Leads for each nation (Core strategy group members) and the second level comprising the extended Strategy Group. Up until recently the group had 5 face to face meetings per annum – 3 meetings which involved core members and 2 meeting including both core and extended representatives. Until April 2012 the work of the group was supported and facilitated by Sheila Bloom (IGE) whose contribution was highly rated by the group. She was credited with bringing a diverse group of people together from the very beginning, facilitating group cohesion, anticipating tensions and potential conflicts and providing an important link with GCF Trustees: Spontaneous comments such as *Sheila has a great talent for diplomacy* and *she'll be a hard act to follow* were regularly made by Strategy Group members. This demonstrated their high regard, as well as Sheila Bloom's substantial contribution to the evolution of the network.

7.2 *Responsibilities, decision-making processes and relationship vis-à-vis the foundation*

With regard to the managerial role of the Strategy Group "The Terms of Reference" readily available in conference reports and on the Five Nations website spell out the responsibilities of the Strategy Group and outline its operational structures. Responsibilities cover a wide range of activities from organising the annual conference, monitoring the Small Scale Research Initiative and website to raising awareness of citizenship education across the five nations.

Observation at Strategy Group meetings showed that a carefully considered, egalitarian way of working including how meetings were chaired. It was apparent the Strategy Group "walked the walk" in terms of modelling democratic processes, mirroring what is recognised as critically important in the teaching of citizenship (Brown, Ross & Munn 2012:). Another salient feature of the group's operation was the way in which members thought about decision-making. The review found that the SG highly rated "reflection" and "process". One member explained: *we're our sternest critics* while another stated: *I'm a process person anyway*. Preferences for what can be a time consuming decision-making style will need to be incorporated in future planning. The review suggests that while the SG could aim for fewer meetings, face-to-face meetings should perhaps be of a longer duration.

Some questions also emerged regarding the relationship of the SG vis-à-vis the Trustees. While the Lead Trustee is a kind of conduit moving between the SG and Trustees it remained unclear how both groups relate to each other and how decision making works. This suggests that formalising this relationship would be a useful exercise, especially in terms of following through action points.

7.3 *The Strategy Group and the "goodwill factor"*

While attendance at SG meetings, including subsistence and accommodation is met by the network budget, members' time is voluntary and additional to their formal workload. Attendance at meetings is either supported by employers or alternatively members take part in their own time. As a result individual Strategy Group contributions to network activities are dependant on the goodwill of Strategy Group members, as well as support of members' employers. The "goodwill factor" is a relevant consideration in terms of

strategic planning given it is likely to have implications for what can realistically be achieved by the network.

7.4 *The Strategy Group and recommendations for future development*

The above has implications for assessing the full economic costs of maintaining the work of the Strategy Group. At present, supporting the Strategy Group costs well over a third of the whole annual budget (£34,000 out of £95,000). This supports 5 face-to-face meetings per annum. If approximate daily rates for each member are added to this a conservative estimate would be an additional £8000 (i.e. £42, 000) for attendance at these meetings.[7] Looked at in this way over the longer term it would appear to be an unsustainable way to run the management of the programme. Consequently the move towards conference calls to replace some face-to-face meetings is to be welcomed. The review would recommend:

- The "Terms of Reference" should be re-examined.
- The contribution of the group over and above their full-time employment should be taken into account in when evaluating the capacity of the group.
- The relationship of the group vis-à-vis the Trustee group could be formalised.
- The proportion of the overall budget spent on supporting the work of the group should be looked at and other sources of funding considered.

8. A RECENT INNOVATION – THE SMALL SCALE RESEARCH INITIATIVE SSRI

8.1 *The small-scale research initiative: background and development*

As it stands the resourcing of the Small Scale Research Initiative stands at £15,000 per annum. Given the scheme has only been in operation for a short period it is difficult to make recommendations regarding sustainability over the longer term. However it has certainly generated much enthusiasm among network participants and provided a stimulating focus for debate at conference level. The small grants scheme was instituted in 2010 and so only initial comments on it can be made. To date, 9 projects have been funded and 6 project reports have been submitted and are available on-line.

8.2 *The value of the scheme*

The small-scale grants scheme was developed in order to serve a number of purposes. These included facilitating cross-country collaboration and the sharing of practice between jurisdictions. It is also of note that they additionally provided a focus for workshop discussion at the annual conference in Dublin in 2011, where 4 projects presented their findings and outcomes. An important idea regarding the SSRI relates to leaving a legacy for the network. The following participant expresses this viewpoint succinctly:

> *It's clear to me that, you know the SSRI are there to create a legacy, to create an evidence base to actually document, if you like, the sort of work, the sort of gains that are made.* (New member)

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[7] Estimated cost @ £200 per day for each core and extended member to attend SG meetings i.e. 5 meetings for core members and 3 meetings for extended group.

Network members were especially enthusiastic regarding the institution of the Small Scale Research Initiative and overall viewed them as a very positive development. The way in which they provided a focus for debate at the Dublin conference on topics such as controversial issues, pupil participation and sectarianism was assessed as a *good thing*. As a result the value and future potential of the SSRI scheme should not be underestimated. There are however a number of areas where this review can make suggestions for future development. Observations relate to the implications of the open-ended approach to the commissioning of topics for the scheme; the monitoring of projects and finally the need to provide information on ethical guidelines for applicants.

8.3 *Commissioning projects and monitoring the scheme*

Currently there exists a non-prescriptive approach to the focus of projects so they cover a variety of areas in the field of citizenship. While it is early days for the scheme, in the longer term there could be ramifications of this open-ended approach. Potentially, it may result in funding a "scattergun" of topic areas which is worth bearing in mind for planning purposes. Alternative options could be considered at strategic level as a means of sustaining the scheme. For example, the Strategy Group may wish to consider encouraging projects in particular areas such as a series of linked projects that look at teaching of controversial issues in schools. It could also use the total annual funds at times to commission a larger piece of work with implications for citizenship education across jurisdictions. Reviewing the state of education for citizenship across the Five Nations is an example of this type of approach to funding. This kind of approach could be easily integrated into strategic planning and inform the content of annual conferences, as well as the website.

According to the "Terms of Reference" the Strategy Group and the Country Leads are responsible for monitoring the SSRI. Interview data showed that there were mixed views on this. Some Strategy Group members felt that due to workload implications overseeing the scheme was necessarily a "light touch" operation. Others expressed the view that it was not a responsibility of the Strategy Group. A formally agreed position on this issue would be advantageous, especially in terms of tempering the expectations of successful applicants.

A light touch approach to monitoring the scheme has implications for suitable candidates for awards. If the position is a low key approach to scrutiny, extending eligibility to a wider audience may be ill advised. "Light touch" oversight also has repercussions for quality control. How quality is assured would require attention if a purpose of the scheme is to leave a "legacy" for the network.

8.4 *Ethics and the small grants scheme*

One salient omission in the documentation for the Small Scale Research Initiative is the absence of reference to ethical codes of behaviour. This is a highly relevant consideration when working with children/young people and undertaking research in schools. Reference to appropriate guidelines and professional codes of conduct should be integrated into the grant application form as well as given a prominent position on the Five Nations website.

8.5 *Small Scale Research Initiative and recommendations for future development*

In future, questions remain about the monitoring of the scheme and the resources that the Gordon Cook Foundation can realistically allocate to this. A further issue relates to the potential impact of individual projects. Because they are small-scale it is inevitable that the impact and benefits accrued will largely be confined to project participants. A challenge for the network is thinking through how the impact of such an initiative could be enhanced. Replicating projects across jurisdiction is one possible solution to this, as is funding larger single projects stipulating clear expectations and guidelines relating to outputs. The review would recommend:

- The role of the strategy group in relation to the small grants scheme needs to be reviewed.
- Alternative models of governance are considered for the scheme (i.e. the scheme is overseen by one nominated individual).
- The scheme includes ethical protocols in its information for applicants.
- The potential for linking a theme for funding with conference proceedings is explored.

9. THE FIVE NATIONS WEB SITE

9.1 *Five Nations website: background and development*

The web site was established in 2009 and utilised a standard web template. Its development was initially commissioned and administered by IGE. After project management of the Five Nations Programme was handed over to the Association of Citizenship Teaching some minor changes to the design and content of the website were made in the early part of 2012. As it stands (accessed August 2012), the web site currently provides basic information and content on:

- Broad aims of the network on the home page.
- Back copies of 11 previous annual conference reports (2000-2011).
- Information on the 8 research projects that have been funded between 2010 and 2011.
- Country information and contact details for nominated Country Leads and the "Terms of Reference" for the Strategy Group.
- A web page explaining the work of the Gordon Cook Foundation and its links and support of the FN programme.
- A sign up page for the ACT newsletter.

Information missing from the updated site at the time of writing included Small Scale Research Initiative grant application forms and completed report forms.

9.2 *Monitoring the site*

According to the "Terms of Reference" it is the responsibility of the Strategy Group to maintain the Five Nations Network website but it is unclear how this works in practice. Previously, Sheila Bloom and Deepa Shah from IGE had oversight of the website and were responsible for aspects of its management. Given the transition to project management of the Five Nations to ACT in March 2012 and the recent departure of Millicent Scott (Project manager of FN ACT March 2012-June 2012) a priority would be

to clarify its oversight and governance. Presently important information is absent from the site and it is of note that maintenance information (i.e. who is the webmaster) is not currently included. An important consideration for the network in relation to the website is: "Who is responsible at ground level for the day-to-day maintenance and development of the website?"

9.3 *Target audience – who is the website for?*

Established features of a successful web site are that they are simple to use and easy to navigate. Equally salient is that the content is regarded as relevant and attractive to the needs of end-users. A fundamental question then in relation to the web site is "who is the target audience?" Is it for "insiders" or "outsiders" i.e. those not involved with the network but with an interest in citizenship education? Or, is it for both? This was not entirely clear from the point of review participants, as well as those with web expertise who contributed to its review. One observation was that its content suggested that it was for network members given that it appeared to assume some prior knowledge. Another observed that there was very little content referring to, or linking it with other outside networks and agencies which helped reaffirm the view that it was for "insiders". The following delegate elaborated further on the question of its intended audience:

> *It's either for people who are already involved in the network to, if you like; keep them up to date with the relevance in-between conferences. Or the other side of it is, is it actually a website for a general audience of people involved in citizenship teaching. Now if it's the second it's really not serving its purpose.*

The issue of end-users is important because the characteristics and needs of the target audience underpin decision-making about the direction of its future development. If the site is intended to reach a wider audience it requires a different kind of approach from meeting the needs and aspirations of those involved with the network. Seeking a wider audience does raise the issue of duplication of effort and overlap and whether specific kinds of content can be readily accessed elsewhere.

9.4 *Suggestions for developing content and new tools*

When asked, participants said that they accessed the website at particular times, especially in the pre-conference and post conference period. This suggests that the resource is currently under-used. However a key finding was that delegates felt much more could be made of the web resource, particularly as a means of communication and updating members between conferences. Members were especially enthusiastic about the considerable potential of the website to help enhance network activity and promote cohesion. When asked about suggestions for its development, participants suggested a range of additions which are discussed below. Primarily these related to expanding its content and capacity.

There were numerous suggestions for expanding the content further and these suggestions would be fairly straightforward to implement. As previously mentioned it would be helpful as far as new members are concerned to have some specific, tailored information to meet their needs. For example, a simple "Guide for New Members" could

be easily added giving a summary of key aspects of the conference and expectations about participation.

Commenting on the earlier version of the web site (on-line prior to March 2012) some participants felt that the web links for each jurisdiction were limited in scope and should be expanded and developed. It was noted that some "Useful Links" were out of date and that particular jurisdictions provided more comprehensive information than others.

A further issue raised about content related to information about the breadth of network members. As it stands Country Leads are the sole individuals mentioned as contacts. The Five Nations network is a unique resource since a wide range of professionals from five jurisdictions are members. It may be helpful to revisit the question of providing contact details of more members on the website which would capitalise on one of the key strengths of the network. As one participant observed, potentially this could encourage new collaborations and fill a current gap in provision:

The unique selling point they have is the Five Nations bit and the fact that it brings in people from those five jurisdictions. If say as a teacher you are looking at a theme like the holocaust and you're wondering: 'Well how actually do people teach that in Ireland?', you've got no way to do it. And you wouldn't find it through the website of an individual country organisation.

In terms of the present content it appears that how a new visitor to the site might be become involved is a little confusing. Presently, there are links to the Twitter account of ATC and a page with an invite to opt-in to the organisations' newsletter. This means that currently there is no means of joining the network directly as an "outsider".

As mentioned, members were unanimous and most enthusiastic regarding the development of the web site. At a basic level, the provision of podcasts of conference presentations and uploading power points of Small Scale Research Initiative workshop presentations were regarded as obvious additions to be incorporated. A number of participants felt that these were useful facilities for extending the reach of the conference. However it is important to recognise that there has to be a "pull" and reason why "outsiders" would wish to visit the FN website.

Setting up email alerts on citizenship related topics, a Twitter account and Facebook were among other suggestions for development:

You could have email alerts about certain things. You could have a sounding board that allows two weeks on a particular topic and you can ask people who were part of that, Twitter or Facebook or that community to, to put up ideas, say what they've been doing, say what are the big questions for them.

Another idea related to the potential of the web to collect post conference feedback. Survey Monkey is a common way that researchers and organisations now seek the views of user groups. As the post conference feedback form currently stands, it asks for specific information about the content of the programme and organisation. Given the interest in activity between conferences and collaborative partnerships that are developed, feedback forms could provide a very useful opportunity to seek further information on this. It could also assist in the development of mini networks collaborating on different initiatives.

9.5 *The website and recommendations for future development*

Future resourcing of the website will be an issue for consideration if the plan is to develop and enhance its capacity further. Part of this would entail *keeping its content fresh* as one participant put it to make it attractive to end-users. The review recommends:

- To identify who is responsible for the site on a day-to-day basis.
- To clarify its main target audience.
- To extend its content i.e. to include a facility where a new members can join the network, to have more open access to network members.
- To develop the site in order to facilitate communication between conferences.

10. CONCLUSION

The Five Nations Programme has certainly contributed enormously to debates about citizenship education since its inception. It has modelled a unique initiative in which its central concern - citizenship - has been explored appropriately through processes of sharing practice and critical reflection.

The main vehicle, the Conference, has run an unpressurised and "natural" evolution from a "show casing" early phase, through to the more confident, mature phase which offers participants access to high quality speakers, a focused programme of activities and valued opportunities for exchanges. At particular times the conference can even provide a sanctuary for those feeling dispirited and beleaguered by policy changes in their national curricula.

There is currently an enthusiasm for the next stage to be taken forward, as participants now perceive it as a mature network, well founded and secure enough to engage with new initiatives.

Two different, but not mutually exclusive ways forward emerged. The first concerned the liaison of the Five Nations Network with European networks with similar agendas. The second concerns developing mechanisms to promote further understanding of policy generation, in order to contribute more effectively to policy discussions. Both the website and the use of the SSRI to generate interest and data in key areas could be important tools in furthering these initiatives.

The implication of the further evolution of the Network, in whatever form, is that further reviews on the management strategies, its governance, modes of communication and decision-making take place. It is therefore timely that the Five Nations Programme re-visits and re-affirms its aims and objectives in this exciting and challenging point in its development.

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