



CITIZENSHIP AND VALUES EDUCATION TO THE RESCUE!

Revisiting the Call to Action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Derry/Londonderry

November 2009

Education for Citizenship and Values in
England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
Cathy Begley, Conference Rapporteur

**GORDON COOK
FOUNDATION**

Institute for
Global Ethics 
UK Trust



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Foreword

This Executive Summary by Cathy Begley reports on the very focused 24-hour Five Nations Network Conference that took place in Derry/Londonderry in November 2009, described by one participant as “an awesome event – lean, mean, has impact and outcomes”. Supported since its inception by the Gordon Cook Foundation, this series of annual conferences has matured and strengthened since 2000 and is now planned and managed by a joint Strategy Group, comprising representatives from England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, who meet three to four times a year.

In 2009 the Strategy Group launched a new Five Nations Network website at www.fivenations.net and published a shared **Call to Action** to galvanise support and build capacity for citizenship and values education. This provided the focal point for the conference and helped each country prioritise ‘lines of action’ to take forward – see *Citizenship and Values Education, 2010 and beyond* by David Kerr, which is being published together with this report, for more information about the responses and decisions made by each country grouping.

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of the Gordon Cook Foundation, the first cycle of a Small Grants Award Programme¹ was also launched at the 2009 conference. It builds on a long-standing ideal of the Network to facilitate inter-country working in an effort to learn more about how educators and young people from across the five educational systems engage with, and learn about, any number of issues related to citizenship and values. The programme will provide scope for teachers to share methodologies and content and for young people to experience involvement in an action research project, or to take part as co-researchers. It is hoped that these small scale projects will add value both to the Network and to future annual conferences where the work will be disseminated.

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¹ Five Nations Small Grants Award Programme <http://www.fivenations.net/cms/index.php?id=120>

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Introduction

The Gordon Cook Foundation has funded an annual conference on Citizenship and Values Education for ten years. Historically the conference was organized, planned and hosted by one of the Five Nations – England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – and supported by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust. However, since 2008 a Strategy Group comprising representatives from each of the five countries has been tasked with the planning. This has freed up participants from all countries and created a space for a much wider and richer exchange of ideas and discussions. No longer restricted to experiencing one country's approach, the conference is now increasingly collegiate and delegates can engage with issues and ideas around citizenship and values education in a more democratic and participatory way.

The 2009 conference in Derry/Londonderry raised the bar yet again. Building on the outcomes of the 2008 conference in Glasgow which generated the **Call to Action**,¹ the annual event in Northern Ireland gave teacher educators, policy makers, academics, practitioners, inspectors, stakeholders and NGOs an opportunity to put their own experiences into the context of the five countries working together to achieve some understanding of what it would mean to create a direction of travel for the Five Nations Network, and for themselves, amidst the uncertainties of the coming year.

This report tells the story of the conference and is accompanied by a more detailed examination of each country's response to the 'lines of action'² and their recommendations for the Five Nations Network (see page 6).

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

- To build on the **Call to Action**
- To review the matrix of opportunities, lines of action and points of entry identified in the **Call to Action**
- To identify next steps to focus on in each country in 2010
- To identify next steps for the Five Nations Network

OUR JOURNEY

During the conference we took part in and experienced:

- An active citizenship project on digital diversity mapping
- Networking
- An inspirational speaker. Richard Moore, founder of Children in Crossfire and author of *Can I Give Him My Eyes?*
- Celebrating success (results of the active citizenship project) with The Nerve Centre
- Country groupings around the **Call to Action**
- The launch of the Small Grants Award Programme
- Final plenary on next steps

OUTCOMES

As a result of our conference we:

- Set goals, actions and priorities for in-country work
- Recommended next steps for the Five Nations Network
- Renewed relationships, re-established contacts and made friends
- Reflected and evaluated our experience

"The different structure of this conference has been very successful. We have been able to network, explore the city and develop action plans for all nations as well as inter-nations"



¹ *Citizenship and Values Education to the Rescue, A Call to Action* by the Five Nations Network (2009) <http://www.fivenations.net/cms/>

² There are seven 'lines of action' identified within the Call to Action including policy engagement, policy implementation, leaders and advocates, quality and standards, effective training, building an evidence base and celebrating success, p5.

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Conference

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

There have been major curriculum developments in all areas of the UK and Ireland over the past ten years and the Gordon Cook Foundation, in partnership with the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust, have been at the forefront of enabling discussion and debate around the purposes, principles and practices of citizenship and values education during that time. Coupled with unforeseen and dramatic political and societal change which impacts on all children and young people, both in their communities and in their schools, the Five Nations annual conference has tried to understand and to analyse how policy makers, educationalists, curriculum planners, members of the inspectorate and representatives of NGOs can ensure an entitlement for all to high quality, effective and meaningful experience around citizenship and values education.

The purpose of this year's conference was to revisit the important work done in Glasgow in 2008. The **Call to Action** which emerged from the Glasgow conference recognised the need for a concerted and proactive approach from the five countries. It was time to identify commonalities that would enable the Five Nations Network to operate as a more cohesive body and to speak with one voice.

Participants in Derry/Londonderry were asked to review the identified 'windows of opportunity'³ for strengthening and embedding citizenship and values education across the five jurisdictions, as well as looking at the seven specific lines of action detailed in the **Call to Action**. They were asked to set themselves achievable targets for the coming year as individuals, as members of their country group and as active members of the Five Nations Network.



"An energetic and thought provoking start to a conference which continued to inspire and educate"

2.2 OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE CONFERENCE

The programme included

- The active citizenship project facilitated and supported by the Nerve Centre
<http://www.nerve-centre.org.uk/>
- Young people from the City of Hope Collective joined us in the evening. See their contribution on youtube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJQmolLhbXw>
- A keynote speaker, Richard Moore. Richard is the founder of Children in Crossfire, a charity working to eradicate poverty.
<http://www.childrenincrossfire.org/>
- He is also the author of 'Can I Give Him My Eyes?'
<http://www.richardmoore.ie/index.php/book>
- Country group discussions
- The launch of the Five Nations Small Grants Award Programme
<http://www.fivenations.net/cms/index.php?id=120>
- The final plenary

Five Nations conferences have never shied away from innovation and experiment, from pushing the boundaries. Locating the conference in Derry/Londonderry provided an opportunity, for the first time, to fully immerse the activities and experiences of the conference within the local context. Both the active citizenship project and the inspirational voice of Richard Moore capitalised on the city's rich cultural and political heritage.

"Real glimpse of meaning of 'active citizenship' in a learning context. Excellent conference and more of a sense of all countries aiming for the same goal"



Derry/Londonderry is full of symbolism and rich in history – the perfect location to engage in learning both about the identities forged into the walls from the seventeenth century to those more modern displays of its recent past. Like all good active citizenship activities, the digital diversity mapping required the democratic involvement of delegates. They had, like children and young people engaged in active citizenship, to work with their peers in groups and with the subject matter. It also required collegiate interaction between people which very quickly created mutually satisfying relationships and connections for the rest of the conference. The importance of this type of experiential learning shows the depths of learning possible for children and young people. It gave the adults taking part an understanding of how digital storytelling could be used in any number of settings and contexts. If we believe that active engagement in purposeful and personally relevant activity is essential to effective citizenship and values education, then it seems obvious that as participants in the Five Nations Network we practice what we preach.

"It was a fantastic way of engaging with the city of Derry. The opportunity to explore the city, and its legacy, with people from the five different nations, understanding how each of us perceived symbols, flags etc. This project could be used in schools to engage children with their communities and help them understand where they belong"

Asking Richard Moore to be the main external speaker at the conference was also a break from tradition. Typically, previous keynotes have focused on citizenship and values education in the curriculum. Richard's experiences and eloquence linked the personal with the political, reminding us very powerfully of our location.

"He tackled the controversial issue of Northern Ireland and reconciliation through his own story, in a very sincere and humble way"



2.3 OUTCOMES

One of the main aims of the conference was to suggest ways in which the **Call to Action** could be put into operation for the coming year, within each country and across the Network.

Two questions were posed for consideration during the home country groupings.

1. In considering the Opportunities for Action, what does your home country group think are the main Lines of Action in your country that could be undertaken during the coming year?
2. What Lines of Action does your home country group think that the Five Nations Network should be seeking to undertake in the coming year?

Question 1

The **Call to Action** provided a clear focus and participants within their country groups reported a very fruitful and useful discussion. Two key points of entry⁴ for action emerged from all countries, namely the importance of achieving greater engagement with policy makers and securing more effective education and training for all those who promote citizenship and values education in schools and other education and training institutions. The uncertainties of the coming year both in terms of financial constraints, political upheaval and the use of the term 'broken society' make this an opportune time to actively engage politicians, curriculum developers and educationalists in discourse around the central role that citizenship and values education should play in an education that prepares our children and young people for life and work in the twenty first century.

Question 2

The major themes to emerge as a result of discussing question two included:

- The idea that the Five Nations Network should respond as an entity in its own right to consultations and shifts in policy
- Requests to develop the newly launched Five Nations Network website⁵ to allow information sharing between conferences and Strategy Group meetings, and to direct users to relevant research and academic papers
- Building a project around the shared areas of concern of volunteering and community action
- Developing a positive relationship with the Council of the Isles
- Investigating linking to the wider community of the European Union, Council of Europe, United Nations and UNESCO.

More detailed information about the responses and decisions made within the country groupings can be found in the booklet *Citizenship and Values Education, 2010 and beyond* by David Kerr. See www.fivenations.net.

"The keynote speaker was extremely moving and enlightening. Couched in our own historical and political reality, it gave rise to an understanding of human values, challenges and experiences. Excellent and unforgettable"

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Conclusion

LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

Every conference informs the next, and 2010 was no exception. Reflecting on the process of the conference the Strategy Group agreed that the added value of the active citizenship project was consistent with including an active element in future conferences. It provided an energetic start and encouraged delegates to make connections much earlier in the lifetime of the conference than previously. Controlling the timing more carefully and building in space and time for reflection are key learning points for future planners. Ensuring that the rich learning from this active and creative element of the conference is easily transferable, either to the classroom or to other settings involving learning and teaching with children and young people, is equally important.

Each conference has its own unique character and the choice of external speaker is crucial. Choosing someone who adds authenticity, who enriches our understanding of real life active citizenship like Richard Moore was able to do, is as important as the decision to support a presentation either with personal reflection or a question and answer session. This will always depend on the nature of the presentation and on individual preferences.

Taking risks with confidence creates a dynamic space in which to explore relationships across and between the five nations. It gives conference delegates an opportunity to experience a unique journey and the chance to feed into the development of the next conference through reflection and evaluation. 2010 provided us with some key learning points to ensure that 2011 moves the discussions around citizenship and values education forward yet again.

"Citizenship education is at the cutting edge of a lot of educational reform. This event has strengthened my belief in the importance of this"

FINAL COMMENT

The journey from the first conference in 2000 in London has been a long and sometimes fractured one. That this year's conference had an energy and inclusiveness throughout is testament to the ongoing dynamic and organic nature of the Five Nations Network and the responses to the changing context of citizenship and values education across England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The work done in 2008 in laying the foundations of the **Call to Action** meant that there was an increased focus and sense of purpose in Derry/Londonderry. Participants were enabled to see the possibilities of setting practical and achievable targets for the immediate future. They could frame their commitments with the support and expertise of their peers and were galvanized to 'take action'.

Most importantly the Five Nations Network itself has gained a momentum and confidence which will continue to inspire practitioners who work both with and for children and young people to ensure entitlement to high quality citizenship and values education for all.

"An awesome event – lean, mean, has impact and outcomes"



Teachers, educationalists, policy makers, curriculum planners, members of the inspectorate, representatives of NGOs and young people from across the UK and Ireland have been meeting together every year since 2000 in a unique forum known as the 'Five Nations Network'.

Convened by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust (IGE UK) with support from the Gordon Cook Foundation, annual conferences have taken place in **London (2000)**, **Glasgow (2001)**, **Birmingham (2002)**, **Belfast (2003)**, **Cardiff (2004)**, **Dublin (2005)**, **Edinburgh (2006)**, **Leeds (2007)**, **Glasgow (2008)** and **Derry/Londonderry (2009)**. The **2010** conference is being held in **Cardiff**.

Further information can be obtained from www.fivenations.net or a member of the Five Nations Network Strategy Group

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