

# FIVE NATIONS NETWORK



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REPORT ON THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Novotel Reading Centre, England, 22-23 November 2012

Education for Citizenship and Values in England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

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**GORDON COOK  
FOUNDATION**

**ACT** Association  
for Citizenship  
Teaching

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# Foreword

As Chair of the Gordon Cook Foundation I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce the report of the 2012 Five Nations Network conference. In my view the 2012 conference was an undoubted first for the Network. Not only was it the logical sequel to the 2011 Dublin conference, but in its own right it was also at the cutting edge of citizenship education policy and practice. The Foundation is proud of its sponsorship of the conference and of its association with such a stimulating and thought-provoking experience.

The Five Nations Network is undergoing an important period of change. The 2012 conference was the first to be held under the management of the Association for Citizenship Teaching and in addition the Network (including the conference) has been the subject of an external review. The report of the review was largely favourable and the final outcome remains a matter of discussion between the Foundation, ACT and the Five Nations Strategy Group. I am confident however that the Network will emerge from the review stronger and better prepared to meet the challenges of the years ahead.

I should like to conclude by extending my grateful thanks to my fellow Trustees for their continuing financial support; to the members of the Five Nations Strategy Group for their key role in the planning and organisation of the conference; to the professional staff of ACT for their dexterous management of the Network; to the keynote speakers and workshop presenters, all of whom helped to make the conference such a ground-breaking and successful event.

Dr Ivor Sutherland,  
Chair of Trustees,  
Gordon Cook Foundation



## 1

# Introduction

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides a record and summary of the aims, activities and outcomes of the Five Nations Network annual conference on 'Digital Citizenship' held in Reading, England on 22-23 November 2012.

The report seeks to capture the spirit of the 2012 conference by bringing together information collated by voluntary rapporteurs from each session together with the conference evaluation forms completed by participants.

It is written for all those engaged in the Five Nations Network and for the trustees of the Gordon Cook Foundation who generously fund the Five Nations programme. It will also be of interest to all those involved in citizenship and values education in the UK, Ireland and more widely.

## CONTEXT

'Digital Citizenship' was the theme selected by the Five Nations Strategy Group, in part inspired by a speech made at the 2011 conference in Dublin by Anne Looney, CEO of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Ireland. Last year's theme was *'Partnerships in action in challenging times: Re-imagining citizenship and values education in a changing society'*. Anne challenged the network to think about how to harness the power of new communications and information technologies in a digital age to maximise engagement and partnerships and in citizenship teaching and learning.

The year 2012 saw the widely reported growth of social media with Twitter reaching 10 million users in the UK. The strategy group, reflecting on the challenge outlined by Anne and those facing educators interested in harnessing technology in their teaching, decided to seize the opportunity and set the theme of 'Digital Citizenship'.

## ROLE OF THE STRATEGY GROUP

The Strategy Group comprises country representatives from each of the five nations, a trustee from the Gordon Cook Foundation and staff from the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) who manage the programme. The group meet three or four times a year to oversee and develop the network and plan the annual conference.



For the first time the annual conference theme was agreed by the group because it resonated and interested each nation, rather than reflecting the interest of the host nation. 'Digital Citizenship' was also considered to be a theme at the cutting edge of citizenship and values education, and one that raises important questions for teaching, the curriculum, pedagogy and policy.

The Strategy Group were also keen that the conference programme was planned with the aim of stimulating intellectual thinking and debate, alongside practical workshops and discussion sessions. This approach is a clear development from the early conferences that focused on 'showcasing' citizenship practice from the host nation. It can also be seen as an indication that the Five Nations Network has reached a new level of confidence and maturity.

## ROLE OF ACT

ACT was invited by the Gordon Cook Foundation to manage the Five Nations programme from April 2012. This followed twelve years of successful network activities and conferences managed by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust and the formidable team of Sheila Bloom and Deepa Shah.

The ACT team of Liz Moorse and Deepa Shah was established in the summer of 2012 to ensure the network continues to be professionally managed, the conference is well organised and the programme as a whole is delivered to a high quality.

# 2

## About the conference

“Excellent ideas for integrating technologies into citizenship classrooms”

This section of the report sets out the:

- Conference aims;
- Conference précis summarising the activities within the conference programme and
- Guest speaker contributions.

### CONFERENCE AIMS

The 2012 conference had a number of aims which were established by the Strategy Group. These were to:

- bring together from across the five nations policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders with an interest in values and citizenship;
- discuss the potential for information and communications technologies to encourage new ways to engage and promote citizenship learning and political participation;
- explore the use of new technologies as effective teaching tools in citizenship education;
- promote the use and exploration of information and communications technologies to support dialogue and learning across country partnerships.

The conference also aimed to promote and encourage new applications for the Small-Scale Research Initiatives (SSRIs) and provide some time for participants to reflect on their experience of the network and share ideas about how it might be developed in the future.

### CONFERENCE PRÉCIS

#### THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

During the conference, participants took part together in a range of activities:

- 'Ready, steady, Tweet!' warm up activity and country group networking
- Working lunch and discussion of experiences, advantages and disadvantages of using technology in citizenship teaching
- Welcome and orientation to the Five Nations Network and the conference theme
- Workshops offering a range of hands-on and discursive sessions to explore digital citizenship
- Two high profile guest speakers offering contrasting inputs to prompt debate
- Constituency groups discussing the implications of digital citizenship for teaching, policy, initial teacher education and CPD
- Home country groups to reflect on the conference and the future of the Five Nations programme.

The conference programme was organised over a 24-hour period beginning with an informal activity in country groups to encourage participants to try out using Twitter as a means of sharing their thoughts, views and questions during the conference. Each country was provided with a Twitter account and decided how they wanted to contribute to create a conference micro blog using the hashtag #5NN. The hashtag continues to be used by the network.

### Welcome

During a short orientation to the Five Nations Network and the conference welcome, Liz Moorse of ACT introduced the conference theme, 'Digital Citizenship' as a wide-ranging topic that might address:

- safe and responsible use of technology;
- how we use technology as citizens to participate in democracy – to debate, share ideas, campaign, vote;
- issues of access and inclusion in society;
- how we can approach, develop, teach and assess citizenship education in new and exciting ways, by harnessing technology.

### Guest speakers

Two guest speakers – *Steve Beswick, Director of Education at Microsoft UK* and *Dr Shakuntala Banaji, Lecturer, LSE* – addressed the conference in plenary sessions. Each provided a contrasting perspective that provoked some intense discussion and debate during the conference.

### Workshops

Workshop sessions were designed to explore approaches to citizenship teaching and learning using digital and communications technologies. Participants joined their choice of two of five workshops during the two days. The five workshops included:

1. *Social media and citizenship education* – led by secondary teacher, Emma Chandler
2. *Engaging young people with democracy and parliaments* – led by Susan Vittery from Parliament UK
3. *Comic-life – citizenship through digital story-telling* – led by Emma McDermott, The Nerve Centre, Northern Ireland
4. *Harnessing digital technologies in citizenship teaching* – led by John McTaggart, Modernity Scotland
5. *Using technologies successfully in teaching* – led by Peter Baxter, an Apple distinguished educator.

Resources from each workshop are available at:  
<http://fivenations.net/workshops>

## Country and inter-country groups

Country and inter-country groups reflected on questions arising from the plenary sessions and workshops and discussed how work might continue after the conference.

Constituency groups were introduced in 2011 to create space for those with similar professional backgrounds – teachers, NGOs, policy makers, initial teacher educators and CPD professionals – to talk together.

Throughout the conference, participants were encouraged to use social media including Twitter to share their ideas and reflections in real time.

## GUEST SPEAKER CONTRIBUTIONS

Recordings of each guest speaker are available to view as films on the Five Nations website <http://fivenations.net/guest-speakers>

On the afternoon of the first day, *Steve Beswick, Director of Education for Microsoft UK*, set out his view of where digital technologies in education are heading and how Microsoft is working with schools across the country on their vision, *'Anytime, anywhere. Learning for all'*. This included making technologies affordable and accessible to develop learning communities and extending the reach of education into new learning spaces. He raised some critical questions that provoked some intense debate throughout the conference including:

- Can teachers change to become curators of knowledge, skills and learning?
- How can we maximise the potential of new learning spaces that digital technologies enable?
- Is there resistance to change by the teaching profession?

Two sides of digital citizenship were emerging: what are the tools to realise 'digital citizenship' in the classroom and beyond? What are the moral, social and ethical issues that using such tools can raise for teachers, schools and society?

“*Dr Shakuntala Banaji provided us with a balanced picture of the role of digital media in citizenship and in education*”



Dr Shakuntala Banaji, guest speaker

On day two, *Dr Shakuntala Banaji, Lecturer in Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science*, presented her extensive research on young people, civic participation and the internet in *'Clicktivism or Active Participation?'*. Shakuntala presented findings from her extensive research with young people across Europe and beyond. She considered widely held concerns about young people's apparent lack of interest and involvement in politics and in civil society. Many people are looking to the internet and social media for a solution to this 'civic disconnection', but will this provide the answer? Her research explored a number of questions including:

- Are young people really not interested or involved, or are they actually participating in different ways?
- How might the internet motivate young people to become more civically engaged?
- How might the internet change the nature of their involvement?
- How does participation online relate to participation offline?
- How might organisations use the web more effectively to encourage more civic information, understanding and engagement?

Shakuntala challenged often widely held views about young people's attitudes toward new technologies and that young people are 'digital natives'. Her research found young people's attitudes cover the full spectrum from complete engagement to total apathy. Many indicated that when it came to politics they actually wanted real, live, face to face debate with politicians and others, rather than to be contacted on Facebook or other social media, which they see as a space for their friends.

# 3

## Conference evaluation and outcomes

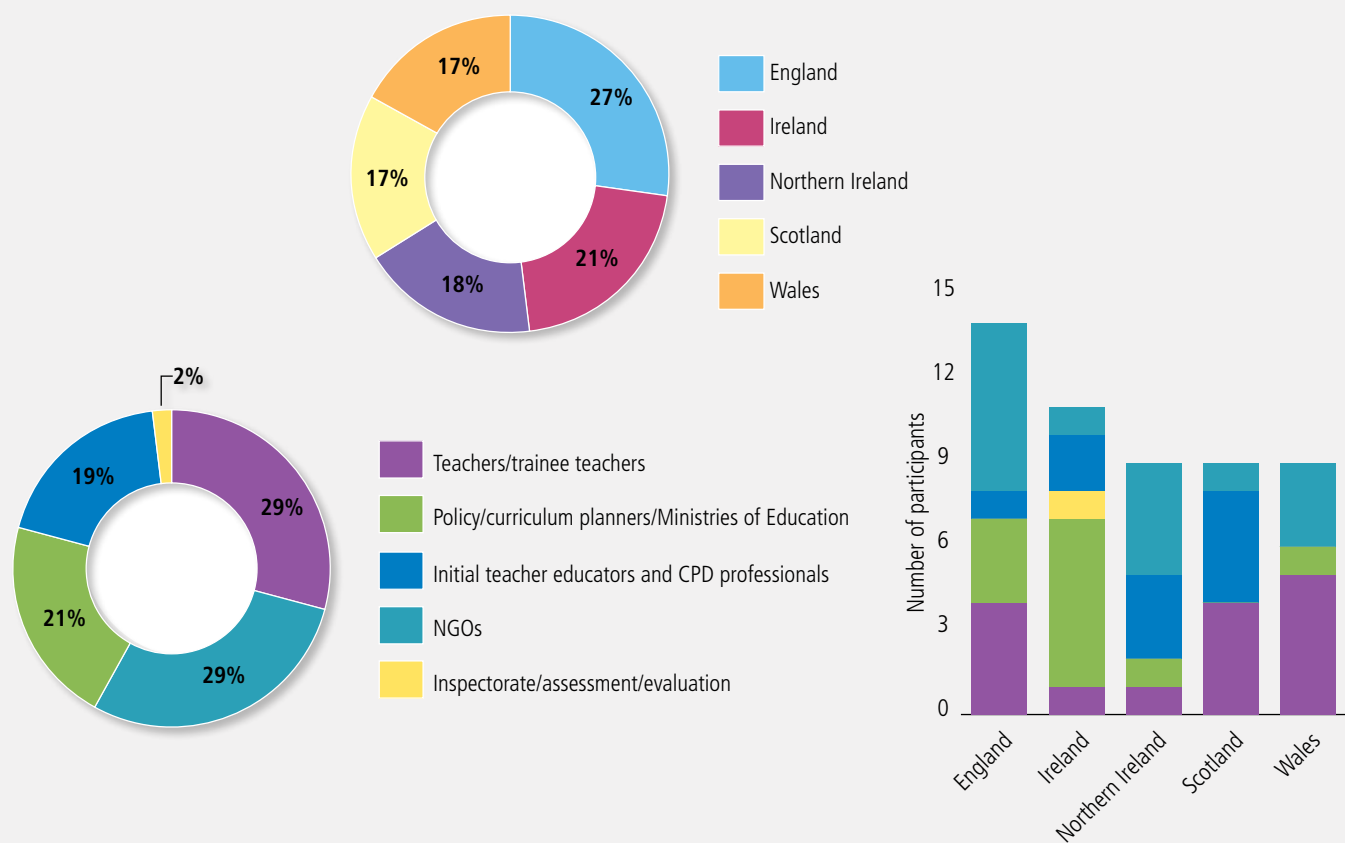
- This section of the report brings together:
- An evaluation of conference participants by country and constituency;
  - A distillation of key outcomes for the conference following an analysis of the conference evaluation forms and feedback from session rapporteurs;
  - Some actions for each country group to take forward.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Since its creation the Five Nations annual conference has been attended by a range of invited participants. This year the extended Strategy Group selected ten participants from their home nations to represent the different constituencies in education, as well as taking the geographic spread of participants into consideration. As the host country, England was able to invite up to an additional five participants.

The breakdown of participants by country and constituency are set out in the charts below.

PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY AND CONSTITUENCY





## OUTCOMES

### General responses to the conference

The annual Network conference remains highly regarded amongst citizenship educators across the five nations.

Conference evaluations and comments collated by rapporteurs showed that participants found the conference extremely interesting and worthwhile to attend. In terms of conference organisation 86% (25 out of 29 respondents) said the conference was 'excellent'.

Comments included,

*'Really good to network and have the opportunity to share practice, ideas etc – this is invaluable'.*

*'Excellent conference – made me reassess my thinking about new technologies and education. Gave me real insight into how they can be really powerful and immediate for citizenship teaching'*

*'The opportunity to meet with practitioners from the other four countries and share good practice was invaluable.'*

*'The conference has really opened my eyes to other ways of teaching citizenship'.*

*Others said they found the conference 'uplifting', and one said, 'the best Five Nations conference I have attended'.*

Suggestions for improvements to future conferences included:

- Naming some of the workshop sessions as 'seminars', where they are discursive rather than practical and hands-on;
- Revisiting the constituency group for NGOs, which was less cohesive as a group than the others;
- Introducing a new constituency group for 'first time' conference participants to help welcome them to the network;
- More opportunities to discuss and reflect deeply on the guest speakers' inputs
- Need to improve the final plenary to ensure the conference ends well.

### Workshop outcomes

*Social media and citizenship education –*

led by secondary teacher, Emma Chandler

- Different social media can be used in various ways to support citizenship learning e.g. a means to learn and share thinking, network, campaign and promote ideas.
- New technologies can support assessment for learning, helping to track progress and record evidence of learning in new ways.
- Safety is key when using new technologies and communications tools and care is needed to safeguard the identity of children.

*Engaging young people with democracy and parliaments –*

led by Susan Vittery from Parliament UK

- Digital technologies can be a means to increase the participation and engagement of pupils in politics and citizenship, and organisations such as the Parliamentary Education Service are finding new ways of disseminating and supporting learning in schools e.g. 'MP for a week' and 'My UK'.



Peter Baxter, workshop leader

*Comic-life – citizenship through digital story-telling –*

led by Emma McDermott, The Nerve Centre, Northern Ireland

- Powerful international learning partnerships can form when pupils in different countries use the same technologies as they learn in citizenship. This could be replicated across the five nations, perhaps as a Small-Scale Research Initiative (SSRI).
- 'Comic-life' and similar tools can be used to provide new ways of looking at controversial issues in citizenship e.g. the graphical representation of The Troubles in Northern Ireland.

*Harnessing digital technologies in citizenship teaching –*

led by John McTaggart, Modernity Scotland

- There are risks and rewards in using new technologies and school leaders need to be educated about the potential of technologies to overcome the barriers to their use that are sometimes created by local government.
- Pupils need educating to be critical of the information they find and use.
- Social media including Facebook can be used as an effective teaching tool in citizenship, enabling connections beyond the school and as a space for collaborative citizenship work.

*Using technologies successfully in teaching –*

led by Peter Baxter, an Apple distinguished educator

- There are a wide range of 'apps' that can be utilised to support teaching and learning in citizenship e.g. 'bookcreator', 'speaker', 'Prezi' and 'audacity'.
- New technologies support: *learning* – teaching people how to use technologies; *creating* – enabling working together to create outcomes e.g. podcasts; and *sharing* – disseminating outcomes with others.
- Digital citizenship can be a 'call to action' using digital communication tools to share and promote outcomes and collaboration.



Emma Chandler, workshop leader



## Constituency group outcomes

Constituency groups met to discuss four questions. Responses to each are set out below.

### 1. What is your response to the conference so far?

All groups expressed positive comments about the conference and its value to them professionally, in particular for networking and the opportunity to reflect and think deeply about such a relevant, topical and controversial theme, 'Digital Citizenship'.

*Teachers* agreed the conference prompted considerable debate with a range of viewpoints expressed about the pros and cons of digital technologies and citizenship.

*ITE and CPD* group enjoyed the unique opportunities for networking and thought provoking debate.

*NGOs* acknowledged the complex economic and political issues around access to technology. They saw this as more than a question of those who might be described as 'digital natives' versus 'digital immigrants'. The conference provided a means to discuss and challenge these definitions and enable participants to become clearer in their own thinking about these issues and concepts.

*Policy makers* agreed the conference provided a valuable opportunity for learning about digital citizenship and for networking, both to renew existing links and build new ones. The concept of digital citizenship might be further elucidated upon and explored – for example, does it mean 'digital education for citizenship' or 'education for digital citizenship'?

### 2. What does digital citizenship mean for the teaching of citizenship and values education?

*Teachers* saw real opportunities for active citizenship. They recognised some pupils may be digitally literate but that should not be assumed for all pupils. The role of teachers is to embrace digital technology and to ensure a range of methodologies and responses are developed in their citizenship teaching. Technology may also enable the modelling of teaching that encourages meaningful interaction and collaborative action amongst pupils.

*ITE and CPD* group saw the need for a different paradigm for education in digital era – a vision of education that doesn't see technology as separate but uses technology as an integral part of teaching and learning.

*NGOs* identified a number of discourses and a range of responses to digital citizenship, including moral questions competing with practical questions and that they should not be either/or.

*Policy makers* explored questions in relation to the role of the teacher in the context of teaching and learning through digital technologies. Does the fact that pupils can be more familiar with digital and social media than their teachers mean we need to re-imagine the role of the citizenship teacher as facilitator, mediator or curator? Or does the teacher's role remain the same, for example, to ensure pupils are critical and reflective as they explore the social context of digital media in society.

### 3. What are the implications of digital citizenship for education policy and practice including CPD and teacher education?

*Teachers* agreed that educators need to know how to engage meaningfully with technology to support learning. This has an impact on CPD and pedagogy for citizenship. They felt across the five nations there appears to be an inequality in infrastructure and support for using digital technologies in teaching.

*ITE and CPD* group recognised issues that exist around access to technology and that this has implications for teaching and the development of practice. The group was clear they did not want to exclude or disadvantage those with limited access.

*NGOs* agreed space for continued dialogue and sharing of practice between specific people across networks is key to the development of policy and practice. In addition, 'digital citizenship' needs further definition. Both ICT and citizenship are about changing the paradigms of knowledge and changing power relations.

*Policy makers* saw the influence and impact of digital technologies within and beyond education. They discussed the potential to facilitate more direct engagement of young people in politics and democracy, perhaps even to redefine citizenship and democratic processes and effect a transition from representative to direct democracies.

### 4. What do you find useful in using technology?

*Teachers* felt 'open and honest' and positive uses of social media can result in fewer incidents of bullying. Digital citizenship allows pupils to question what they see online and engage learners actively as they develop citizenship understanding.

*Policy makers* saw digital citizenship as a means to encourage pupils' engagement and learning. For example, in the area of gaming or 'gamification of learning', failure is used as a motivator for improvement and therefore incentive for further learning. The idea that digital technologies could facilitate a more personalised approach to learning was also to be welcomed.

## Country group outcomes and actions

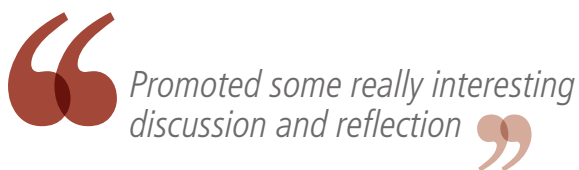
The penultimate session involved conference participants working in country groups to reflect on the conference and share ideas for the future development of the Five Nations programme.

### England

The group felt the conference met its intended outcome to create a space for teachers and others from across the five jurisdictions to discuss citizenship education and digital technology. The event felt neutral in the sense that it was hard to imagine which nation was the host and this helped to promote a good sense of wellbeing and inclusivity amongst participants.

The group identified the following as *key issues*:

1. There is potential for digital technology to impact on citizenship education teaching both positively and negatively. For example, using some technologies might result in a passive or uncritical approach to learning, while other uses might enhance pupil engagement and motivation to learn.



2. Some more contentious aspects of ICT and social media in society generally are not widely debated, for example, the extent to which a virtual community is a community in any real and meaningful sense.
3. The conference was surprisingly contentious with 'technophiles' and 'technophobes' making their respective views very clear.
4. Some workshops were quite passive, while others involved practical activities. Should we change the name to 'seminar' where the session did not involve practical activities in any sense or possibly move away from the idea that they have to be active?
5. What CPD is there to support teachers in using digital technology?

## *Actions agreed*

1. Develop a CPD response to the conference and digital citizenship.
2. Try to encourage the development of digital citizenship SSRIs.
3. Produce school leaders think piece paper on digital citizenship matters.
4. Seek funding for further work on these themes – perhaps pan European funding for a Five Nations based project.

## *Ireland*

The Ireland group considered deeply whether digital citizenship was an aim or a means. There was consensus that effective digital tools must not become the aim and that teachers should not be overshadowed by the technology.

## *Key issues*

1. A real need to provide support for teachers to become confident users of digital technologies in citizenship contexts.
2. Concern that digital technologies need to be built into new curriculum developments as a core aspect not as an add-on.
3. Harness the ways young people use social media and use this effectively in citizenship contexts.

## *Action agreed*

1. Ireland group to meet before the next conference to continue discussions about how the actions above might be developed.

## *Northern Ireland*

The conference was seen as an excellent stimulus for participants.

## *Actions agreed*

1. To hold a focus meeting in Belfast or Derry/Londonderry in 2013 – focus to be decided.
2. To develop a stronger local Five Nations Network to
  - a. facilitate more effective communication using social media;
  - b. organise activities between conferences;
  - c. develop greater capacity for advocacy of citizenship and values education at a policy level;
  - d. support educators;
  - e. investigate local funding opportunities.

## *Scotland*

The Scotland Country Group welcomed the format and theme of the 2012 conference. They felt that the thematic focus had 're-energised' the event.

## *Key issues*

1. We need to continue to ask the more challenging questions of ourselves.
2. One of the on-going roles of the conference interactions is to guard against complacency; to avoid a gradual drift away from citizenship in policy and practice terms.

## *Action agreed*

1. It might be useful to develop the CPD component within the conference and the wider work of the Five Nations Network, with a stronger focus on the impact on practice.
2. We need to review how and whether we can influence policy within and across jurisdictions regarding digital technologies.
3. We should draw upon the theme of the 2012 conference and explore new forms of networking.

## *Wales*

The group felt teachers have a multifaceted role and one part is as a learner. For example, teachers can learn to use anything that adds value to citizenship education. This raised a number of questions such as, should technology be seen as a key skill for teaching citizenship? Steve Beswick of Microsoft emphasised how the teacher's role was transitioning from teacher to facilitator/guide/enabler of digital technology. There was a discussion about how there is still a very real need for teachers to add value to learning. Examples of digital technology being used amongst members of the group included:

- using Twitter to promote learning, for example by following NASA and tweeting his class with updates.
- using Prezi, a cloud-based presentation software that opens up a new world between whiteboards and slides to enhance lessons.

## *Key issues*

1. There is concern that an over reliance on technology could exclude pupils who do not have smart phones, leading to social exclusion and pressure to buy products which individuals may not be able to afford. Can you have a high technology approach without needing the physical technology?
2. There are no guidelines in place regarding how to use digital technology. Teachers are concerned that they may not have the knowledge and skills to be able to guide appropriate use of new tools to enhance learning.

## *Actions agreed*

1. To explore Twitter as a tool to engage others whether in the classroom or at work.
2. To discuss the need for guidelines about safeguarding pupils online, including advice for pupils about the legal implications of commenting online.

# 4

“*I learned what a great networking tool the event is*”

## Concluding comments

Each Five Nations conference is different and Reading 2012 represented an important point of maturity in the Five Nations Network. For the first time, the conference theme '*Digital Citizenship*' had brought together educators united in their concern to explore a topic at the cutting edge of citizenship policy and practice, and with profound implications for democracy and wider society.

### MOVING FORWARD

The Dublin conference 2011 was described as the point at which 'the Network reset its compass' to respond positively and proactively to the challenges brought about by a rapidly changing society. The Reading conference shows that the Network is on course for an exciting journey of new learning and collaboration to find responses to these challenges.

During the Reading conference each country identified actions to take forward before the next conference.

- Can England develop an SSRI to further explore digital citizenship?
- Can Ireland and Northern Ireland continue the dialogue about the issues raised at the conference in local networks?
- Can Scotland develop a generic CPD template that can be used in future Five Nations Network conferences?
- Can Wales develop a good practice document on using Twitter and other technologies appropriately in citizenship?

The real challenge will be to see if these actions have been undertaken in a new phase of the Five Nations development.



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'.

Further information can be obtained from [www.fivenations.net](http://www.fivenations.net) or by contacting the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT):

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