

FIVE NATIONS NETWORK



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REPORT ON THE TWELFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Re-imagining citizenship and values education in a changing society

Radisson Blu Hotel and Dublin Castle, Ireland, December 1-2, 2011

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

David Kerr, Conference Rapporteur

**GORDON COOK
FOUNDATION**

Institute for
Global Ethics
UK Trust



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Foreword

Experience tells us that it is always a pleasure to recall an event which has been memorably successful and on this basis we are very pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this report of the 2011 Five Nations Network conference held in Dublin on December 1-2.

Both informal feedback and more formal evaluations suggest that the conference was very well received. We would like to extend our grateful thanks to the Trustees of the Gordon Cook Foundation for their continuing and generous financial support; to the members of the Five Nations Network Strategy Group for their key role in the planning process; to our Irish colleagues for their ready assistance at all times with the pre-conference arrangements; to the workshop presenters for their lively interactive sessions; to Ireland's Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, for his thought-provoking address in Dublin Castle; to Dr Anne Looney, Chief Executive of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for her exhilarating and at times controversial keynote, and to David Kerr, the conference rapporteur, for stitching together this careful summary of the proceedings.

There is a sense in which the 2011 Dublin conference was an historic occasion in that it marked the end of an era. Since the first such event was held in London back in 2000, twelve annual conferences have been sponsored by the Gordon Cook Foundation in support of its citizenship

and values education mission. All have been managed by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust. IGE will hand over the 2012 conference, to be held in England, to the Association for Citizenship Teaching and so the Five Nations Network bids a fond farewell to IGE and a warm welcome to ACT. Colleagues have worked hard to ensure a smooth hand-over and we are more than satisfied that the transition from one managerial team to the other will be seamless. In addition to the conference, ACT will also take over managerial responsibility for the oversight and servicing of the Five Nations Network Strategy Group, administration of the Small-Scale Research Initiative and maintenance of the Five Nations website for the year 2012-13, beginning April 1.

In the course of the first half of the year 2012, the entire Five Nations Network programme will also be the subject of an external review by the University of Edinburgh. The report of the review is to be submitted to the Gordon Cook Foundation in its final form by the end of September. The Trustees will then consider the terms of the report, together with its recommendations for 2013-14 and beyond.

We look forward to the outcome of the review with confidence, secure in the belief that the Five Nations Network programme (and especially its annual conference) is an important and much valued feature of the citizenship and values education landscape in the UK and Ireland.

Sheila Bloom
Chief Executive
Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust

Ivor Sutherland
Lead Trustee, Gordon Cook Foundation
Five Nations Network Programme

Introduction and context

CONTEXT

The introduction to the report of the 2010 Five Nations conference held in Cardiff¹ spoke of the volatility and instability of our times. It outlined the context of major political change in the UK with the formation of a coalition government, the unfolding global financial crises and the impact that was beginning to bring across all five jurisdictions. It also noted how *'the full effects of this period of instability will not become apparent for many months'*.

The twelve months between the end of the conference in Cardiff and the convening of the 2011 conference in Dublin saw these effects become very apparent, much quicker than anticipated. Major political change continued apace with the election of a new coalition government in Ireland, while all five jurisdictions witnessed shrinking economies, rising levels of youth unemployment, and on-going cuts and efficiency savings, including in education. Indeed, the issue of how to tackle the economic recession and mitigate the social, political and economic impacts on society has become the dominant discourse for all five jurisdictions for the foreseeable future.

The effects are bringing with them a growing realisation across the countries of the UK and Ireland that the economic recession marks a watershed in society and that things will never return to how they were. Rather the scale, reach and depth of the recession are forcing a critical re-examination of policies, practices and relationships at all levels of society. This includes the role of education and, within that, the place and contribution of citizenship and values education in and beyond schools. But all is not doom and gloom. For out of that re-examination are starting to emerge new conceptualisations of citizenship issues, such as identity, belonging and community and the beginnings of new collaborations and partnerships. They are borne out of the practical necessity of tackling the impacts of the economic crisis across society and communities and doing so positively and from a position of strength.

It is important to understand this broader political, economic, social and educational context for it provides the backdrop to the discussion about, and planning by, the Five Nations Strategy Group for the 2011 conference in Dublin. Another part of that backdrop that needs to be understood is the changing organisational and administrative arrangements for the

Five Nations Network from 2012 onward. This is eloquently explained in the Foreword to this report. Taken together these broader societal and specific internal changes explain the theme of the 2011 conference, the programme and the expected outcomes.

The 2011 Five Nations conference was designed very much for the time and context. This is evidenced in the conference title *Partnerships in Action in Challenging Times* and strap line of *Re-imagining citizenship and values education in a changing society*. It looks to critically re-examine the role of citizenship and values education across the five jurisdictions within the changing societal and educational context brought by the economic recession and explore the contribution of the Five Nations Network to strengthening partnerships, existing and new, going forward. It is about resetting the compass of the Five Nations Network for the realities of a rapidly changing society so that the Network can move forward with strength, unity and renewed purpose. Part of that resetting involves factoring in the new organisational arrangements for the Five Nations Network from 2012 onwards.

This report seeks to capture the essence of the 2011 Five Nations conference and provide a keen sense of the listening, interaction, reflection and learning that took place. The core strategy group excelled not only in planning a conference and programme that was thought-provoking but also in setting a tempo and tone across a 24-hour period that was uplifting and positive. This enabled delegates to take full advantage of the inputs and opportunities provided. It is hoped that the report will be read by delegates and non-delegates alike: as a reminder of a successful event by the former, and as a taster of a cohesive, vibrant and forward-looking Network that they want to join, by the latter.



“The conference theme was spot on. Economic imperatives now dominate to the exclusion of the cohesion and democratic well-being of society. We need strong and effective citizenship education to redress the balance”

AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference had four interrelated aims:

- For delegates to focus on the central theme of *Re-imagining citizenship and values education in a changing society*
- To listen and learn from the Small-Scale Research Initiative (S-SRI) projects
- To reinvigorate and energise professional partnerships and networks within and beyond the Five Nations Network
- To consider the future of the Five Nations Network from 2012 onwards.

CONFERENCE

During the conference delegates were part of, contributed to and experienced a programme that incorporated:

- The warmth and hospitality of our hosts from Ireland
- A working lunch in mixed country groups
- A welcoming address
- A tour of Dublin Castle
- Workshops on the Small-Scale Research Initiative (S-SRI)
- Networking opportunities
- A keynote address
- Constituency groupings
- Home country groupings
- Final session.

KEY OUTCOMES AND PARTNERSHIPS GOING FORWARD

Participants:

- Reflected on the implications of the changed societal and educational context for citizenship and values education
- Refocused on how the Five Nations Network should respond positively to a changing society
- Listened to and learnt from the first tranche of S-SRI projects
- Reset the Network's strategic compass and charted a revised course from 2012 onwards
- Renewed relationships, shared experiences and established new partnerships
- Set strategic goals and made concrete plans for 2012 and beyond within and across the five jurisdictions
- Were 'curators in action' – meaning was created and meaning was shared.



Conference

“Our keynote speakers really challenged us about the type of society and education we want for our children and grandchildren. It made me realise how our schools and communities are changing around us quicker than ever before”

2.1 CONFERENCE AIMS

The 2011 conference had four interrelated aims. The first, and perhaps most critical, was for delegates to focus on the central theme of *Re-imagining citizenship and values education in a changing society*. With the economic crisis leading to a questioning of all policies and practices across the five countries, including in education, now was a crucial point in time for the Network to draw on its rich cross-country expertise and know-how to envisage, in practical terms, what citizenship and values education should look like going forward. The second aim was to listen and learn from the first fruits of the S-SRI inter-country projects on key citizenship themes, as a stimulus to devising potential new projects for S-SRI funding. The third aim was the usual one at Five Nations conferences, to reinvigorate and energise professional partnerships and networks. This year there was an added dimension of discussing how to take these partnerships beyond the five nations and into Europe. The final aim was again forward looking, to hear about and actively contribute to future plans for the Network so that it remains strong, strategic and sustainable.

2.2 CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

The 24 hour conference programme included:

- A working lunch around the conference theme of *Re-imagining citizenship and values education in a changing society*
- A tour of historic Dublin Castle pointing out the history between the five jurisdictions and including a review of the Queen's recent visit to Ireland
- A welcoming keynote address by the Minister for Education and Skills for Ireland, Ruairi Quinn TD
- A choice of two workshops on the results of the first five inter-country projects funded through the Network's S-SRI, presented by the project leads
- A keynote address and Q&A with Dr Anne Looney, Chief Executive NCCA
- A short presentation on potential links to the Council of Europe EDC (Education for Democratic Citizenship) Network
- An overview of the future of the Five Nations Network from Ivor Sutherland, Lead Trustee of the Gordon Cook Foundation
- Constituency group meetings: common groupings across the five jurisdictions (teachers, inspectors, advisors, policy makers, NGOs, teacher educators etc) to share and discuss burning issues and contributions to the S-SRI
- Home country group meetings to discuss how to re-invigorate citizenship and values education and propose ideas about the future direction and organisation of the Five Nations Network
- A final session.

2.3 PROGRAMME PRECIS

Opening welcome

In a thought-provoking welcoming address, Ruairi Quinn TD, Minister for Education and Skills, set out the challenge for the conference. Drawing on his historical knowledge and political acumen he explored how the momentous changes underway in Ireland and the UK were challenging the traditional citizenship heritage of nationalism that gave people a responsibility to participate in society from birth. He contended that the squeezing of nationalism by the forces of localism and internationalism, and the rise of individualism, meant that we were entering 'unchartered waters' in terms of keeping people interested and connected collectively. This raised the fundamental challenge of how best to prepare people, particularly young people, for responsible citizenship and informed participation in society in the coming decades. He argued that the future peace and prosperity of the five nations depended on the ability to resolve this challenge.

Small-Scale Research Initiative (S-SRI) workshops

The S-SRI projects are still in their infancy. They seek to support inter-country collaboration between conferences through projects that encourage dialogue and exchange. The workshops saw presentations on the first tranche of S-SRI projects conducted in 2010 from those who led them. The projects presented addressed a range of citizenship topics including challenging prejudice, cross-curricular delivery, taking radical action, pupil voice and the use of photographs. Fuller reports on the outcomes are available on the Five Nations website.



“*I suppose we are all ‘curators’ these days, marshalling the mass of information about society and helping others to make sense and meaning of it. I hadn’t thought of it like this before but it’s critical to effective citizenship education*”

Common themes that emerged from the workshops and that are useful for the design, planning and conduct of future S-SRI projects included: the power of inter-country collaboration to challenge attitudes and introduce new perspectives; the utility of new technologies (video links, the Web, photos and video) to facilitate and stimulate exchanges by adults (teachers) and young people in different locations without the costs of travel; the challenge of time and co-ordination and the need to adapt as projects progressed; and the potential to take project outcomes to wider audiences through the production of toolkits and training materials.

Keynote address

The second stimulating keynote address was delivered, on the morning of the second day, by Dr Anne Looney, NCCA, Ireland. Drawing on her long engagement with the area, Dr Looney set out what she saw as the present challenges for citizenship education and its future directions. She posited that the chief challenge facing citizenship education, and all of education, was how to harness the power and influence of new information and communications technologies (ICT) in this digital age to maximise effective partnerships and engagement. These partnerships needed to go beyond that between young people and teachers and embrace the exciting opportunities for participation that young people had beyond schools. To reinforce her assertion, she explored the opportunities provided by three new means of engagement in different kinds of public spaces: grassroots citizen movements; virtual spaces as seen in the Arab Spring; and the Occupy movement. She argued that these new means of engagement meant that teachers had to innovate in order to continue to build effective partnerships with students. She concluded that this meant teachers adding the role of ‘curator’ alongside that of instructor and facilitator. She defined ‘curator’ as ‘where the teacher gathers, displays, presents and the student experiences, connects and makes meaning of what is presented’. The student curates his or her own collection, or does so in collaboration with others. Meaning is created and meaning is shared.

Constituency groupings

In a new development the conference created space for constituency groups (i.e. those with similar professional backgrounds such as inspectors, teacher educators, NGO employees) from across the five jurisdictions to meet together to share burning issues for their constituency and ideas of how the Five Nations Network might address such issues through the S-SRI and other avenues. There were some rich discussions and action points arising from the groups. These are picked up in the next section of the report. The constituency group meetings served to cross-fertilise thinking across the five nations which then fed into the home country group meetings that followed.

Home Country groupings

The penultimate session of the conference was home country group meetings (one for each of the five nations) to consider how to re-invigorate citizenship and values education in each jurisdiction and propose ideas about the future direction and organisation of the Five Nations Network. The main discussion points and recommendations per country and for the Network as a whole are explored in the next section of the report on outcomes and partnerships.



Conference Outcomes and Partnerships Going Forward

The conference and, in particular, the final two sessions of constituency and home country groupings, led to the emergence of a series of key points concerning the re-invigoration of citizenship and values education in a changing society and the future of the Five Nations Network. These constitute the key conference outcomes and are distilled below.

3.1 COMMON OUTCOMES

There was agreement within and across the conference groupings on a number of common outcomes. These shared outcomes concerned both the broader context within which citizenship and values education operates and the role and organisation of the Five Nations Network.

Context

There was common agreement about:

- Current context of uncertainty over the place of, support for and future of citizenship and values education, brought by cuts in statutory funding and seemingly diminishing support from policy makers, particularly politicians
- Recognition of the need to adapt, innovate and act smart by making maximum use of the resources available and being more creative with time, funding and partnerships
- Urgency of embracing the digital age and information and communications technologies (ICT) as a way of invigorating the area and opening up new forms of engagement and participation, particularly with young people
- Importance of striking an appropriate balance between face-to-face and on-line communications
- Centrality of networks and partnerships, both within and beyond the Five Nations Network, in helping to adapt, innovate and re-invigorate citizenship and values education going forward.

Five Nations Network

There was shared agreement that the:

- Five Nations Network was essential for the connectedness and sustainability it brings to citizenship and values education across the five jurisdictions
- Presence of the Network ensures a strengthened voice for citizenship and values education and that this will be needed more than ever in changing times as a source of expertise, support and innovation
- Strategy Group should continue to set the strategic direction for the Network and turn the conference outcomes into concrete actions in between conferences
- Annual conference was central to the functioning of the Network and created a nodal point where busy people could be brought together quickly and effectively to have key conversations and share developments and effective practices

- S-SRI projects were an important sign of practical outputs from the Network that needed to be vigorously pursued and the outcomes written up and made available to wider audiences
- Review of the Network being undertaken for the Gordon Cook Foundation was welcomed, given the wider context, and delegates welcomed the opportunity to contribute to it
- Network website and communications strategy are going to be even more crucial in the coming years in helping to promote and sustain the Five Nations Network.

3.2 CONSTITUENCY GROUP OUTCOMES

The constituency groupings echoed many of the common outcomes, which is reassuring for future partnership working and the functioning of the Network. Other outcomes that came out from one or more of these groups concerned the:

- Issue of how to handle and get the most out of the digital age not only for communications across the Network but also for engagement between adults (teachers, school leaders, inspectors etc) and young people, and the training required to achieve this
- Utility of the S-SRI projects in linking schools and students across the five nations and the potential to grow a schools and students support network as part of the Five Nations Network over time
- Importance of the Five Nations Network in the current climate being seen by participants and new recruits as providing value for money, particularly in terms of the professional expertise it offers in relation to citizenship and values education
- Potential to grow more specific constituency group partnerships as the Network moves forward bringing together, for example, teacher educators, those who work in NGOs or advisors on specific issues concerning citizenship and values education that matter to that constituency
- Support for raising the profile of the Network by linking to other networks that work in this area at European and international level, such as the Council of Europe's EDC European network, in order to share and learn from each other
- Need to keep the Network up to date by focusing on key current issues such as standards, accountability, assessment and accreditation, leadership and CPD. Such issues should be reflected in future S-SRI projects and conference agendas
- Value of keeping the Network relevant and appealing through its communications strategy by embracing new forms of communication such as blogging, virtual networking, twitter feeds, webinars etc via the new website.

“*The Small-Scale Research Initiative projects have the potential to bring teachers and young people from different countries together on citizenship issues that matter to them. In an interconnected world the learning can be very powerful*”

3.3 HOME COUNTRY GROUP OUTCOMES

The home country groups have been the core groupings for the Five Nations Network and the driving force for Lines of Action within and across the five jurisdictions in recent years. They are the engines of the Network. It is reassuring that these groups came up with many of the common outcomes listed above. However, they also agreed on specific country actions concerning the re-invigoration of citizenship and values education related to policy and practice in their jurisdiction. They also made practical suggestions concerning the future of the Five Nations Network, informed by plans to revise the Network's organisation from 2012 onwards. These are both detailed below.

Reinvigorating citizenship and values education

Individual countries fed back actions to reinvigorate citizenship and values education in their jurisdiction as follows:

Northern Ireland

- Develop a 'Supporters Network' for citizenship education in Northern Ireland drawing in people and organisations from across various constituency groups
- Explore, in the context of reduced statutory support for citizenship education in schools, the feasibility of setting up a network of support for schools (school leaders and teachers) in Northern Ireland with the active involvement of NGOs.

Ireland

- Develop greater linking between the school forums that work in citizenship education across the five regions of Ireland
- Promote more portfolio approaches that look to pull together and share more widely the portfolio of work generated within particular citizenship programmes and initiatives such as CPSE action projects, Junior Cycle reforms and the Young Social Innovators (YSI) work
- Work more closely with school leaders in developing whole-school approaches to citizenship, including through school ethos, policies, curriculum and community links.

England

- Continue to establish a Quality Mark for schools with regard to citizenship and values education
- Develop new curriculum approaches, including cross-curricular and co-curricular components, to help schools embrace the new curriculum landscape being proposed in the National Curriculum review
- Focus attention on enlisting cross-party political support for citizenship education through the auspices of Democratic Life.

Scotland

- Plan Five Nations seminars that address key themes, such as creativity, which are prominent in on-going reforms
- Develop an Education for Citizenship network in Scotland that builds on all those who have engaged with the Five Nations Network over the years and use the network inbetween Five Nations conferences to maintain activity and engagement
- Ensure that Scotland is well represented in the S-SRI projects and that the inter-country outcomes and learning are shared widely with schools and young people in Scotland.

Wales

- Work to build capacity and improve the competency of teachers in relation to Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC), including their use of critical thinking skills
- Engage in more campaigning on the implementation of ESDGC to ensure the policy is turned into effective practices and involve more politicians in this campaigning
- Make the benefits of ESDGC clearer to schools, pupils and parents so that they understand and see its real impact on schools.

The future of the Five Nations Network

Having heard about plans for the reorganisation, home country groupings had further practical recommendations for the future direction and organisation of the Five Nations Network. These were:

- Provide a strong, clear vision going forward of the function and contribution of the Five Nations Network so that everyone, members and non-members, understands the Network's purpose, activities and vision
- Make the development of the website fundamental to future planning so that it provides a vehicle for communications, networking and sharing not only for the whole Network but also for home country and constituency groupings
- Promote, where time and funding permits, in-country meetings between conferences, to maintain engagement and momentum with the Network
- Make greater use of the collective voice and expertise of the Network to increase political buy-in and support for citizenship and values education across the five jurisdictions
- Ensure that the voice and experience of youth, and post-16 education and training, is better represented in the Network's membership and activities
- Look for greater complementarity of issues with people and networks in other education sectors in order to build strategic alliances and partnerships going forward
- Place the challenge of responding to the digital age at the heart of the Network to ensure that it remains relevant, cutting edge and strategic, and can contribute positively to wider agendas and policy discussions in society.

Concluding Comments

Every Five Nations conference has its unique flavour and outcomes. This was certainly true of Dublin. However, what marked out the 2011 conference was the context which informed it, both in terms of the wider societal and educational context and the changes in the organisation of the Five Nations Network. This meant that the conference and its outcomes are critical to the future well-being and direction of Network, including future conferences. The Dublin conference raised a number of learning points concerning the organisation of conferences and made a significant contribution to the overall strategy of the Network moving forward. These are summarised in brief below.

Conference learning points

The main learning points concerning the organisation and conduct of the 2011 conference were:

- Utility of the revised format which saw the use of an opening lunch time social activity as a way of expanding the conference programme over a 24-hour period without making it too busy
- Invaluable role of the Network Strategy Group in setting the strategic direction for the conference and putting in train the detailed planning that goes into ensuring success
- Importance of a good conference venue and well thought through programme that engages all delegates and leads to concrete outcomes
- Central place of stimulating and strategic keynote addresses in setting the tone for the whole conference given by people who understand what the Network is about and how their input links to the overall conference theme
- Vital place for learning and outcomes from the S-SRI projects to underline the growing evidence base of the Network in terms of inter-country pedagogy and practice
- Finally, the importance of supporting and promoting a range of partnerships in the Network including those that are: inter-country; north-south and east-west; practitioner; constituency and home country.

These learning points were all part of the warp and weft of the Five Nations conference that came together to make it unique, vibrant and stimulating.

Moving forward

In time the 2011 conference will come to be seen as a pivotal event for the Five Nations Network in terms of moving forward. Above all, Dublin marked the point at which the Network reset its compass so as to respond positively and proactively to the challenges brought by a rapidly changing society. It did so by re-imagining citizenship and values education within that changing society in ways that retain the best of the Network while grafting on new ways of working and new foci.

This re-imagining and refocusing will take time to work through but the Network can take confidence from the fact that it is heading in the right direction. It has the strength, resolve and strategic nous necessary to ensure it marks out a clear route through the 'unchartered waters' ahead that will ensure the vibrancy and sustainability of the Five Nations Network in the coming years. Overall it was a great example of 'curating in action'. The 2011 conference created meaning and shared meaning.

I really enjoyed the 2011 conference. It reminded me what great value for money the Five Nations represents. You get real professional development, probing questions and great contacts all in one place. You come away refreshed and re-energised for the challenges ahead

“The Five Nations Network is needed more than ever in the current context. We need to work together to protect and project the importance of citizenship and values education for all young people and ensure that policy makers understand the arguments”



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 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)**, **Derry/Londonderry (2009)**, **Cardiff (2010)** and **Dublin (2011)**. The 2012 conference is being organised by the Association for Citizenship Teaching in Reading.

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

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