FIVE NATIONS NETWORK

fivenations

Mapping the Impact of the Five Nations Network

Lee Jerome, Faiza Hyder & Yaqub Hilal

June 2023

Middlesex University London

ACT ASSOCIATION FOR CITIZENSHIP TEACHING

The Gordon Cook Foundation

To cite this report:
Lee Jerome, Faiza Hyder & Yaqub Hilal (2023) *Mapping the Impact of the Five Nations Network.* Aberdeen: The Gordon Cook Foundation.

Acknowledgements
The authors would like to thank The Gordon Cook Foundation and the Association for Citizenship Teaching for the funding to undertake this work. We would also like to thank the respondents who generously gave their time to talk about their experiences of the Five Nations Network.

Contents

Executive summary 4
Five Nations Network Impact Map 6
Impacts 7
Introduction 7
1. Impact on citizenship education provision 8
1.1 Specific changes to class teaching 8
1.2 Rewriting schemes of work to reach whole year groups 10
1.3 Critical reflection as a stimulus to further change 11
1.4 Whole school change 14
1.5 Impact beyond school 16
2. Personal impacts 19
2.1 Re-energising participants 19
2.2 Building confidence 19
2.3 Feeling valued 20
2.4 Feeling supported by peer-peer contact 20
3. Professional community building 21
3.1 Building relationships and connecting with others 21
3.2 Avoiding isolation 21
3.3 Making a contribution 22
4. Career development 23
4.1 Building experience as a subject leader 23
4.2 Building awareness of wider career options 23
4.3 Using Five Nations experiences in new roles 23
5. Policy impacts 25
5.1 Continuing strategic involvement of policymakers 25
5.2 Developing expertise among policy actors and teachers 25
5.3 Building alignment between stakeholders 26
5.4 Leveraging expertise within and between countries 26
5.5 Responsive targeted lobbying 26
Endnotes 27

Executive summary

The Five Nations Network has developed over 22 years, through the funding and support of the Gordon Cook Foundation. The network exists to promote citizenship and values education and over its lifetime it has become increasingly focused on working with teachers rather than policymakers and other education stakeholders. The management and organisation of the network has also developed over time and now there is a relatively settled strategy group comprised of a lead trustee from the Gordon Cook Foundation, a manager and administrator from the Association for Citizenship Teaching, and two country coordinators from each of the five nations. The main focus of the network is running an annual conference, primarily for teachers.

In 2012 the Gordon Cook Foundation commissioned an independent external review from Dr Jane Brown at the University of Edinburgh.[i] The review broadly endorsed the activities of the network as generating enthusiasm among participants and commended the organisational changes, especially the development of the role of country coordinators and the establishment of a strategy group. It also made a number of practical recommendations, some of which were operational (such as the management of the website) and some of which were more strategic (such as reviewing the aims and purposes of the conferences). The trustees, managers and country coordinators implemented many of these recommendations and thus the management of the network now seems a relatively settled matter.

This review was commissioned ten years after the 2012 one with a rather different focus in mind. First it has been led by insiders (one of the country coordinators and two researchers at ACT) and secondly it is more concerned with mapping the impact of the network than commenting on the management and organisation.

This study was conducted using narrative interviews with 28 participants: 20 conference delegates (from all five nations including new, repeat and ex-participants), and eight members of the management group (including ACT staff and two Gordon Cook trustees). Each interviewee was asked to tell their 'five nations story' – to speak about their experience of the Five Nations Network and whether and how they felt it had an impact of them.[ii]

The interviews have enabled us to generate a 'map' of the impacts, clustered into five main types of impact. We have not sought to quantify this impact, rather we have focused on developing a detailed account of the types of impacts, which helps to clarify how the network is working to secure its aims.

First, teachers spoke at length about the ways in which the network had affected their teaching and subject leadership. This included the introduction of new topics, case studies and schemes of work. It also included whole school initiatives as well as teachers disseminating what they had learned to their own local networks.

Second, the teachers spoke frequently about the personal impact the network had on them. This included feeling valued, having their confidence boosted, and feeling re-energised by their experience.

Third, it was apparent that for many teachers the network had integrated them into a broader community of practice. For many citizenship teachers they may be the only specialist teacher in their school and so they lack the collegiality of a subject specialist department. The network offers them a broader group of peers to connect with and this is experienced as very important by many participants.

Fourth, several interviewees spoke about how the network had opened their eyes to wider career options, having met NGO representatives, civil servants, university lecturers, school inspectors and local authority representatives. Several more senior colleagues also noted that experiences at the Five Nations had been useful in building skills, knowledge and ways of working that they have been able to re-use in their subsequent roles out of the classroom.

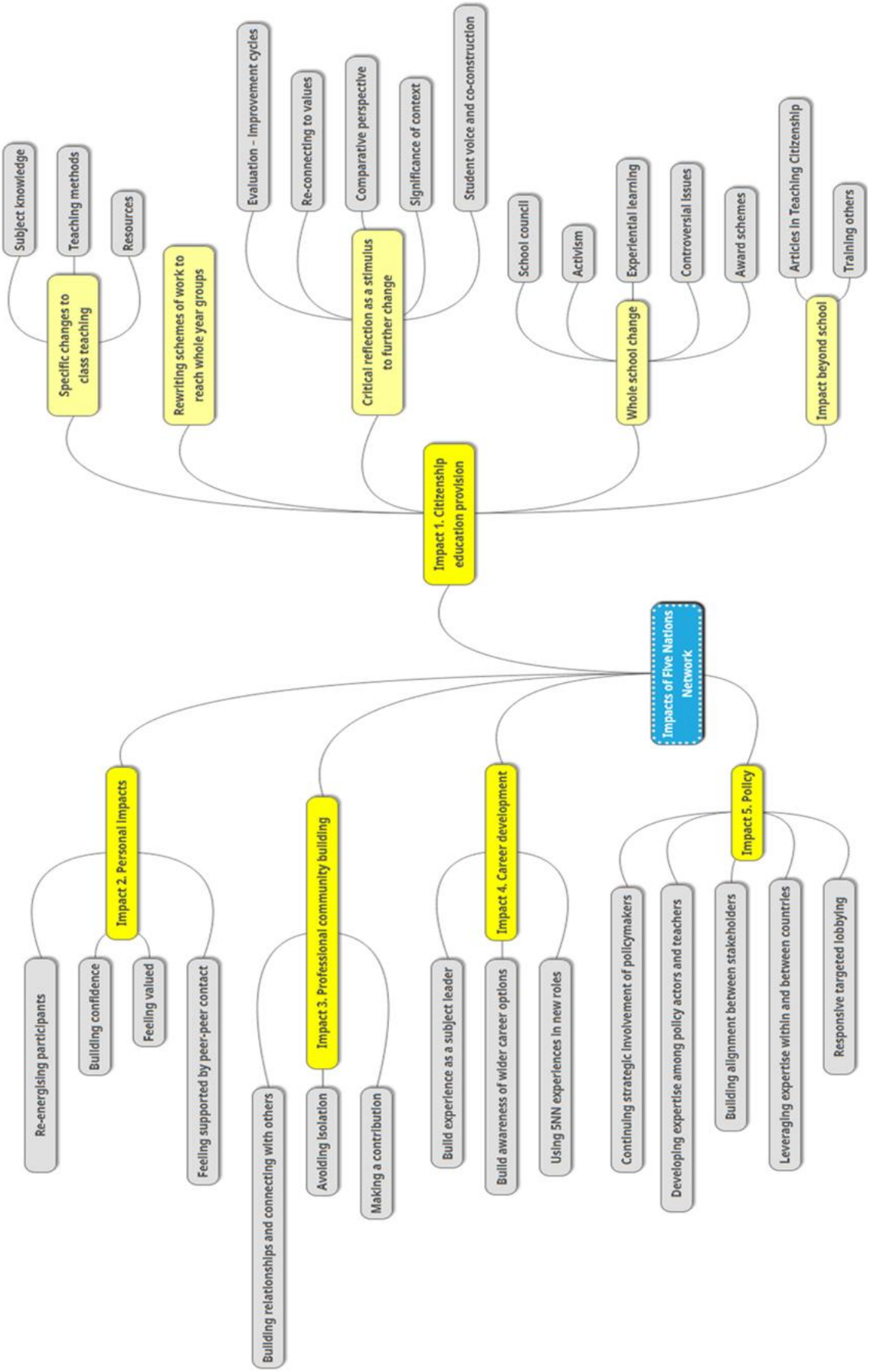
Fifth, members of the management group and more senior colleagues who had attended Five Nations events in the past gave several examples of how the network had influenced policy, particularly at the level of policy enactment, where there was scope to align diverse practitioners around some core principles.

Respondents also built an account of the factors that seemed to help promote this impact, especially by creating the conference as a safe space for professional learning. Here the idea of safe spaces is used as a way to link together a variety of experiences recounted by participants – a place where people feel safe to admit their ignorance or confront their own partial world-view; a place where people engage respectfully with difference; a place where deliberation can be genuinely exploratory, including opportunities to challenge one another respectfully; and a place where people feel cared for, including being welcomed, recognised as valuable contributors, and supported by their peers. [iii]

The Five Nations Network as a safe space for professional learning

❶ An out of school event. ❷ At the weekend. ❸ Somewhere most delegates have to travel to.	Distance from everyday 'busy-ness'
❹ Pre-reading to help delegates get into the learning zone. ❺ A range of people with different experiences. ❻ High quality speakers and presenters. ❼ Engaging themes and content. ❽ Opportunities for discussion between delegates.	Engagement and stimulation
❾ Country groups where first timers are welcomed. ❿ Supportive ethos to build confidence when teachers are presenting.	Emphasis on inclusive ethos

Five Nations Network Impact Map



Impacts

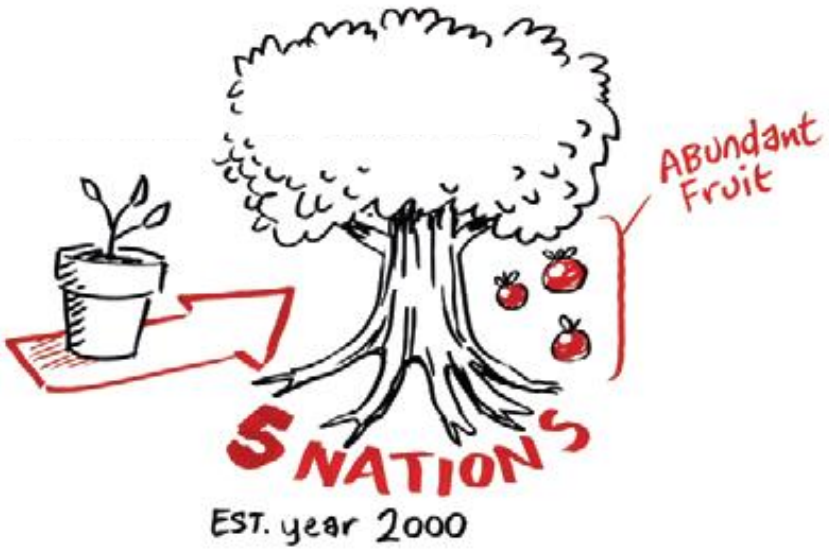
> "The effects are so far reaching. It can't, to a certain extent, be quantifiable."
> (Respondent 7)

Introduction

All of the respondents were able to speak about the ways in which their participation in the FNN had impacted positively on them. By asking interviewees to reflect on their own experiences and stories, and to focus on issues that felt most significant to them, our approach unlocked many different types of impact and different ways of presenting it. One of the recurrent observations was that the network impacts on different people in different ways, for example, newer teachers often spoke about picking up specific ideas they could adopt in their teaching and also noted that the conferences really built their confidence as citizenship practitioners. More experienced participants tended to talk more about how they benefited from opportunities for collaboration with peers, and some spoke about how the network had helped them to develop their careers. It was also evident that the effect of FNN experiences was often cumulative, so those with more experience of the network talked more about collaboration because they had more experience of it.

> "Every year everyone who I've spoken to has said no, your thinking is challenged in some way. Something that you haven't spoken about before or thought about before. It might not even be from a workshop or a keynote speaker it might be from speaking again to someone else from a different delegation or from your own."
> (Respondent 5)

As the quotation at the beginning of this section attests, such individualised reports of impact are almost impossible to quantify and so in this section we aim to provide a typology of impacts in order to give a meaningful account of the kinds of outcomes achieved by the network.



1. Impact on citizenship education provision

Given the network's focus on teachers and teaching, it is unsurprising that the most frequently discussed aspects of impact related to teachers' reports of their own practice. One respondent said:

> "And if we meet together hopefully once a year in this wonderful supportive environment, it actually does allow you to go back and fight for your subject. And I think that's probably the most valuable thing about it, it gives you the tools and the fuel in order to go about doing it. I also think it gives us, I guess a plethora of different kind of teaching strategies and ideas, and case studies to use with people, our students, and just those discussions that people have, informally often about what works with you in your classroom, you know, how have you got active citizenship working in your school, how do you structure your curriculum? All those sorts of things that happen." (Respondent 1)

In this first section we have teased out a number of different categories to reflect a shift in scale from relatively narrow impacts on teachers' own classroom practice, through to wider changes across and beyond their school.

1.1 Specific changes to class teaching

Teachers commonly described practical lessons they had taken away from conferences that they directly implemented in their own practices. We identified three slightly different forms of 'take-away' impact.

1.1.1 Subject knowledge

Aspects of subject knowledge were mentioned throughout the interviews, and especially in relation to the conference themes and specific workshops or speakers. Unsurprisingly, the most recent conference theme figured large in these discussions, both because it was the first event that sprang to mind for many, as the most recent FNN event they had attended, but also because the theme was quite distinctive. Teachers often spoke about being initially unsure about why the distinct themes of climate justice and racial justice were being combined, but after the event they had made connections between the two that they were going to develop in their teaching. Related to this theme, several participants reported that the workshops on anti-racist practice and decolonising the curriculum had given them knowledge and confidence to do more in their own classrooms. This ranged from simply knowing there was more to do that had been omitted until now, to building confidence around appropriate language to use with students.

In addition to this general impact of the conference theme, individuals mentioned many specific examples where they felt their subject knowledge had been enhanced. These included visits to the Houses of Commons, Northern Ireland Assembly and Welsh Senedd, where participants said they had not visited the sites before and learned a lot that they could incorporate into their teaching. Here several teachers found their cumulative experience of these visits provided them with a comparative perspective that informed the way they taught about parliament and democracy. Others mentioned media literacy and said they had returned to work and incorporated ideas from workshops they

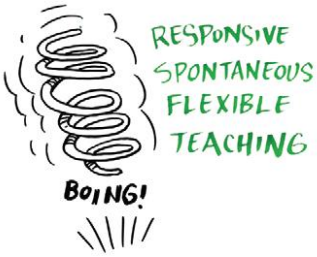
had attended. One participant said a conversation with other colleagues from Northern Ireland about restorative practices had inspired her to explore this in her teaching. Another participant had learned about the Travelling communities in Ireland and incorporated this in their subsequent teaching.

Participants also reported having picked up useful case studies to add to their own repertoire of case studies to share with students. These included the Glasgow Girls, which had inspired teachers from several countries. From the same conference, one participant had been struck by the idea of 'angelic troublemakers' shared by one of the speakers in the context of community organising traditions. He had used this subsequently with his students to connect various role models and case studies.

Whilst there is a useful role for teacher conferences in simply providing information that teachers do not yet have, the interviews demonstrate a broader role in helping teachers reconceptualise aspects of knowledge – developing comparative perspectives on parliamentary democracy, developing conceptual connections between race and climate justice, or deepening their appreciation of what students need to know to become media literate. This enhanced level of teacher subject knowledge informs their subsequent planning (see 1.2 below) but before we discuss this we note two other immediate 'take-away' impacts from the conferences.

1.1.2 Teaching methods

Participants talked about picking up specific activities, or tips for a new way into a topic, described by one as having impacts at the 'micro-level'. Others talked about developing their repertoire of teaching activities, especially in relation to deliberative classroom practices, which has featured as a whole conference theme and also appeared through 'controversial issues pedagogy' workshops over several years. The following quote illustrates the significance of experiential learning here and reflects the fact that workshops often demonstrate and model activities rather than simply describe them:



> "Some of the methodologies of various conferences would have contributed to the design of classroom materials… when you see Conor and Rose working a room and working a group of people and involving everybody in particular ways, it does inspire you to use these." (Respondent 8)

Whilst this participant was talking about developing activities in teaching resources, another senior colleague who had moved into a professional development role also stated that learning about teaching methods had been very impactful on her subsequent career and informed how she approached organising training and mentoring in her current job.

Classroom teachers who were early on in their career talked about how valuable it was to share ideas and experience from teachers who had been in the career for several years. They emphasised that they do not think they would get this sort of opportunity anywhere else. This respondent discusses the impact of activities at a classroom level.

> "Each conference, again, encourages me to go back, tweak, adapt, and make small changes to my practice. To the skill-set that I harness within the classroom. Changes to content, particularly. I always come back each year with new content that I can bring to the classroom to deliberate on, really" (Respondent 11).

This idea is shared by other respondents who describe hearing something at the conference and then going on to introduce it to their own classroom teaching. Respondents describe introducing topics such as the 'Glasgow Girls' and 'Islamophobia', which were not only new to them but also topics that their students would not have had any previous exposure to.

1.1.3 Resources

Workshop facilitators often provide delegates with resources to take away or with links to their organisations, but several interviewees also mentioned that teaching resources are shared between participants, through contacts they establish at the FNN events, and social media groups sustained by country coordinators. Here participants mentioned sharing specific resources to follow up conversations at the conference and being able to access collections of resources shared on-line within a country group. One politics teacher was inspired by a conversation with a Scottish colleague to buy some copies of Modern Studies textbooks to supplement his collection of classroom resources in Northern Ireland.

Taken together, the swapping of resources, sharing of engaging methods, and deepening of subject knowledge constitute three direct ways in which the FNN helps teachers improve their own classroom practice. The following sections illustrate how these individual impacts also ripple out beyond the classroom to impact other colleagues and students in other classes.

1.2 Rewriting schemes of work to reach whole year groups

One important way in which the professional learning is amplified beyond individual teaching practice is through the revision of existing schemes of work or the writing of new ones. Given that participants in the FNN are often the only specialist in their school (although this varies by nation), schemes of work are significant in shaping the teaching of non-specialist colleagues. These non-specialists are likely to be more reliant on the planning of their specialist colleagues in Citizenship, than they would be in their main subject discipline.

This quotation from one of the participants, demonstrates the importance of starting the planning process with some core values and principles in mind. The interviewee has been describing a memorable workshop at one of the FNN conferences:

> "After speaking for an hour he [the workshop presenter] said, 'Listen, to boil it down to a sentence, if you teach for an hour and you don't make a connection with the lives of the people sitting in front of you, it's a wasted hour,' and I loved that because ever since then, when I'm rewriting citizenship lessons and schemes and all the rest of it, I always base it around that." (Respondent 12)

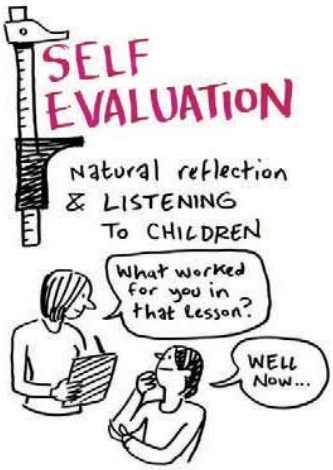
Points like this may seem obvious, but it is possible to prioritise other aspects of planning, and to lose sight of such principles. In practice many teachers are preoccupied with the challenge of content coverage, and ensuring key material is covered in sufficient depth. Reminding oneself of the need to make a relevant connection can be transformative in securing impact.

Several participants spoke about specific examples of schemes of work they had developed following inspiration or a provocation at FNN. Three examples related directly to the 2022 conference, meaning they had led to almost immediate changes to the curriculum in the same academic year. One teacher talked about re-working a scheme of work on sustainability and the environment to make a much more extensive connection to the lives of the children and their local communities. She argued this increased local focus had helped to motivate the children and make a more compelling connection between them and the content. Another enhanced their teaching on the environment with a project-based learning day designed to explore the broader connections between climate change and other social and cultural issues. Another teacher took inspiration from a workshop on decolonising the curriculum to inform an entire new history unit on colonialism and Scotland he had to complete. He said the students had been very engaged and motivated and this had led to improved numbers opting for history in the upper school.

Schemes of work help to spread good practice beyond individual teachers to whole year groups and, as these examples illustrate, building in principles such as engagement, relevance, and local connections can transform a sequence of lessons into more than the sum of its parts. One of the teachers we spoke to said that listening to more experienced colleagues from across the nations had helped them realise that they didn't need to wait for central curriculum change, that they could reinterpret the curriculum to make improvements at a local level. In this example they were arguing for introducing multiple perspectives on the same curriculum topics, to ensure they were introducing students to different worldviews and avoiding simplified narratives about historical change. These changes often built on moments of insight or clarity that emerged from participation in FNN conferences and in the next section we turn to consider what these insights are and how they impact on participants.

1.3 Critical reflection as a stimulus to further change

1.3.1 Evaluation – improvement cycles



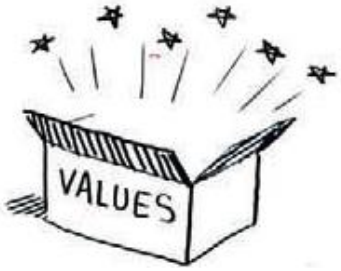
The challenges and provocations, as well as the deeper understanding, help to prompt participants to become more critical in their reflections on existing practice. Interviewees spoke about leaving each event with something new to think about, and to improve back in their schools. One delegate put it as follows:

> "I think coming away we felt as though we had been deconstructed and were having to build ourselves back up again because it was evaluating our whole self and our whole values… and of course we went along to the conference thinking that we value diversity, we are not racist, we are inclusive, but then coming away, we really did have to look at ourselves again and think, 'Well actually, maybe not intentionally, maybe there was racism in some practice….'" (Respondent 16)

Another participant pointed out that these provocations come from conversations among peers as well as through the formal programme. This rather intangible outcome has the potential to have on-going impacts as the teacher engages with aspects of their school provision.

1.3.2 Re-connecting to values

These stimuli to greater critical reflection often come in the form of insights from others, but they also emerge from thinking about the values-dimension of one's practice. One participant observed that this was intrinsic to the work of the FNN:



> "I think that a really strong part of Five Nations and what it stands for, is to cut through your government targets… actually at heart of being a teacher, what does it mean?" (Respondent 15)

Several others noted that the conferences provided time and space to reconsider fundamental questions about the purposes of education and reconsider how their planning and teaching aligned with these values.

1.3.3 Comparative perspective

In addition to re-connecting to one's values, or benefitting from the insight of others, teachers also spoke about the usefulness of the comparative dimension in enabling them to see their practices afresh, and to consider wider possibilities. This reflects the general case for comparative approaches to research, where contrasting practice in different contexts helps to bring into focus the everyday assumptions and rituals that can become taken for granted and disappear from view. One teacher was talking about these comparative conversations between peers and made the following point:

> "And to have the blinkers drop and be able to see the different things that education can be, is huge and so informative. I don't know, it's like Plato's cave… you come out of the cave and are like, 'There's a whole world out there'" (Respondent 9)

This was echoed by one of the Scottish delegates who pointed out how this helps to put one's own policy context into a broader perspective:

> "I guess, I got that wider national understanding in terms of the Scottish policy context because I was hearing about other policy contexts. Apparently, it makes you appreciate what you have and apparently it makes you question what you have as well. So, I think that wider opening of the eyes to how our world is in comparison to other worlds very close by" (Respondent 15)

And one of the Northern Irish teachers pointed out that this can have a more personal impact on how one perceives one's practice:

> "That has a massive impact on me as a person, because it opens my mind to other perspectives, other cultures, and ultimately, other curriculums that are out there." (Respondent 11)

Of course, this does not mean it is always possible, or even desirable, to simply pick up ideas from one context and drop them into another, but it does seem to help some participants to develop their appreciation of the wider possibilities and unsettle current practices to create new opportunities. This seems like an important contribution to building teachers' capacity to inform change later, as they find it easier to question established practices and imagine alternatives.

1.3.4 Significance of context

In considering the practical implications of these comparative insights, one possible outcome is to take a new look at how the curriculum is interpreted within specific contexts. According to one participant, talking about how people in different schools and different countries tackled teaching about race and racism helped her to realise how much scope there was for interpretation and how the general material (e.g. the nature of prejudice and discrimination, equalities legislation, historical perspectives) needed to be adapted to her specific context:

> "It's prompted me to look a bit more within our local authority and at the environment we live in and our community… Looking a bit closer at the history of our community and the history of the place that we live and trying to see how racial injustice has formed… and making those links about how what we're doing right now is having an impact on people all around the world." (Respondent 16)

These and other comments suggest that whilst teachers know this in principle, it is possible to forget it, or minimise it in practice, especially when these topics form part of an exam syllabus, which will be taken by students across the country, and where there is some expectation of uniform responses.

1.3.5 Student voice and co-construction

Once one has re-committed to the idea of tailoring material to the students in one's school, it can also be useful to consult the students themselves about how best to do this. Two teachers who are in the early stages of their careers said they had been inspired by conversations at FNN to consult with students more comprehensively to gain feedback on existing schemes of work and teaching and collect suggestions for how things could be improved.

We have seen how the impact of participation in the network can happen directly through picking up materials or teaching ideas, and in a much more diffuse way through developing a critical framework for evaluating current practice and improving it. This suggests that alongside the immediate impact, there is also a slower-burn process at work, as participants build their capacity to become informed, creative reflective practitioners. Student voice can play a part in this process, where teachers have the confidence to share the process of reflection, evaluation and planning with their students. Student voice is also one of the mechanisms through which the FNN secures an impact across whole schools.

1.4 Whole school change

1.4.1 School council

Case Study: Developing student voice in one school

One delegate described sitting in a session run by a student leader from the recently established Student Union for school students in Northern Ireland and immediately texting one of his own senior leaders telling them to look up the organisation. This inspired him to read more about the student-led organisation and convene a group of interested students in his own school. He then enrolled on a leadership course himself, which included a task to develop an aspect of the whole school development plan. He chose to work on student voice. In his own department he initiated a student evaluation and consultation process to get feedback on schemes of work and help improve his planning. Students now routinely contribute to their school's Citizenship planning. At a whole school level he sought permission from the head teacher to overhaul the student council. The FNN presentation warned about tick-box approaches and the teacher says the council "had to be real, had to be reflective, and I needed buy in from everybody." It took a year but he feels they got there in the end in establishing a student council that is working effectively to engage in the decision-making in the school.

This case study provides a clear example of how participation in a FNN event triggered a process that led to significant whole school change. Another teacher said conversations with a colleague responsible for a conference workshop some years previously helped her much later when she was asked to take over as lead teacher with her student council. This relies on a measure of luck but demonstrates that the learning may also lie dormant for a while – ready to tap into when the opportunity arises. In this example the teacher had been able to learn some vicarious lessons from a presentation of a case study, summarising how one teacher had developed citizenship across her school.

A more experienced colleague who had attended FNN events over a decade ago described how she had arrived as a deputy head doing some development work on her school council and returned to school with fresh ideas to deepen the work. Through conversations with colleagues and one of her country coordinators she established a teacher network for student voice, which developed training workshops and resources. Years later she became a trainer for senior leadership courses and continues to promote student voice as part of effective school leadership, but also retains core principles of student voice in the way she runs her programmes, ensuring participants are fully engaged, feel they have a say in the programmes and help evaluate provision.

One of the country coordinators also described a project on student voice that started in FNN and grew into a collaborative project between colleagues in the North and South of Ireland. This included the development of resources and training and led to some unexpected outcomes. In one school the training led to a co-designed project to redecorate the reception area to better reflect the lives of students in the school, rather than the institution's history. In another a headteacher moved the furniture in his office to ensure there was a space to meet parents and students on a more equal footing, and to avoid always appearing behind a desk in the biggest chair. In these unexpected outcomes we

can see some of the ripple effects that work out from engagement in FNN events.

1.4.2 Activism

As well as more traditional forms of student voice such as student councils, two of the country coordinators independently mentioned the role of one Scottish primary school in the network in promoting activism across schools. An enthusiastic teacher used small grants (SSRIs and FNDPs) over several years to develop their student voice work into more overt community activism. The teacher developed projects relating to issues students felt were important, and then helped them prepare their key messages for stakeholders. Projects included running an information stall for members of the public, public speaking and direct action. The teacher then presented her work at subsequent FNN events, which was widely seen as inspirational by many delegates. One of the Welsh country coordinators described how this work had directly inspired a colleague to undertake similar work in her school, which has led to student political engagement with members of the local community and in the Senedd. The original work has also been documented and disseminated through an article in *Teaching Citizenship*.

1.4.3 Experiential learning

In a similar vein, one of the country coordinators also recalled a delegate from several years ago who went on to become a headteacher. In that role they were in a position to promote experiential learning, especially outdoor learning, across the whole school. Some of those ideas had been encountered at early Five Nations events and had helped to generate the first projects he implemented. Since then, this has developed to become a key part of the school's distinctive ethos.

These first three examples of whole school impacts have been focused on active citizenship in one form or another. These impacts provide students with opportunities to exercise their capacity as citizens, to work with others to affect change. The next example of impact reflects a consistent pedagogic theme over several years which is an equally important aspect of democratic citizenship – the ability to engage productively with divisive issues.

1.4.4 Controversial issues

We already noted that several teachers spoke about how Five Nations events had helped them develop their own classroom practice in relation to teaching controversial and sensitive issues and below we describe a cross-border project on this issue. In addition one relatively inexperienced teacher said she was looking forward to taking on some responsibility for a school debate club, after several FNN events. Some relatively young teachers in the Highlands who attended the 2022 conference had already run training for colleagues within their school on how to address issues of racism and inequality in predominantly white schools. These examples illustrate the potential of FNN attendees to promote a multiplier effect as they take the learning back to colleagues for further dissemination and school-specific development.

1.4.5 Award schemes

Finally, in relation to whole school impacts one colleague described how they had gained several awards for their school related to the work they had developed around citizenship and values education. This included recognition as a Sanctuary School and a Gold Award in UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools programme. Whilst the school had been working on these initiatives independently, she felt that her experience in the network had helped her and the whole school to reflect on their practice and think about next steps.

1.5 Impact beyond school

1.5.1 Training others

Several delegates who developed practice and training across their schools also offered the training further afield. Sometimes this happened when people moved into new roles, for example we heard about colleagues who developed ideas they had taken from FNN as they took on senior roles in their school, and then disseminated this further through work with education authorities or as inspectors. The teachers who led training in their schools about teaching about race and racism in the Highlands also ran training for other local schools to further disseminate their work. Their presentation to colleagues incorporated quotations and references directly taken from FNN presentations, and thus incorporated a comparative dimension. They also included their own short- and longer-term aspirations for moving forward with this work. For example, they suggested teachers could adopt immediate change in the language they used in class – consciously developing specific vocabulary for talking about race and diversity, but also overcoming 'language paralysis' – the fear that one might inadvertently use a word which might cause offence. Instead they urged their colleagues to start to make space for 'courageous conversations'. Over the longer term they urged their colleagues to engage in wider networks where issues of racial diversity and inclusion were being discussed and to revisit planning from this perspective to ensure multiple perspectives were introduced. They urged colleagues to ensure that the predominantly white students in their schools engaged routinely with the lived experience of people all over the world in relation to their curriculum areas. One of this group of teachers said:

> "Being part of the network has really helped, not only myself as a practitioner, but also the staff in the school and the wider school community because we've been able to really reflect on our practice and moving forward, how we can improve and I think it really is an invaluable resources because, as I say, we've got the Scottish delegation which obviously are all based in Scotland and we can share ideas and have a close team that we can communicate with, but also the people across the country who are trying to make the same changes in their schools and in their authorities." (Respondent 16)

Given so much of the Welsh curriculum review is building on the Scottish model, it was interesting to see these teachers reflecting back the Welsh work on teaching Black history and committing to an anti-racist curriculum by directly referencing the first and last keynotes from the Cardiff conference.

1.5.2 Articles in Teaching Citizenship

Another way in which teachers' expertise has been disseminated beyond their schools is through encouraging them to write articles for Teaching Citizenship. Articles from recent conferences include teachers sharing insights about:

- Using citizenship education to engage with policy for countering violent extremism.
- Promoting classroom discussion and deliberation.
- Developing active citizenship through community organising networks.
- Teaching about case studies of young active citizens.
- Teaching critical media literacy.
- Teaching about race and racism.
- The contribution of citizenship education in alternative provision.

Not only do these publications help to further disseminate the work of the FNN they also build participants' confidence as members of the professional community with valuable contributions to make.

Teacher publications arising from the Five Nations Network

Dublin 2017

Zoe Baker, Helen Blachford, Leigh Canning and Sanum Khan participated in a joint keynote session, where they shared their experience of teaching about terrorism and violent extremism. Their work was published in an article 'Building Resilience' in issue 45.

London 2018

Beccy Earnshaw from School 21 led a popular workshop at the conference, where the theme was deliberation. She subsequently guest edited issue 48 where she shared some of her insights in developing oracy in an article called 'It's Time to Take Talk Seriously'.

Glasgow 2019

Noelle Doona wrote 'Community Organising in Schools' in issue 49 based on a case study that she presented at the conference. There were three linked presentations at the conference exploring the case study of the Glasgow Girls, which were also published in issue 49. Euan Girvan wrote about his perspective as a teacher of the girls in 'The Tale of the Glasgow Girls'; Amal Azuddin shared her story as one of the girls in 'A Refugee Story: The Making of a Glasgow Girl'; and Claire Dunphy wrote about her experiences using the case study in her school in 'Glasgow Girls in the Classroom'.

Belfast 2020

The conference focused on media literacy and insights from a workshop run by Helen Blachford and Bryden Joy were captured in two articles in issue 51. Helen wrote about 'Designing a Curriculum for Media Literacy' and Bryden wrote about 'Media Literacy: Theory to Practice'.

Online 2021

At the online conference, Amit Puni (country coordinator for England) was involved in several workshops dealing with race and racism. As guest editor of Teaching Citizenship issue 53 he invited Jackie Sams to write 'Tensions in Teaching Fundamental British Values' based on her comments during workshop discussions.

Cardiff 2022
Djamila Izza came to her first conference in 2022 and made a valuable contribution to the England country team discussions, where she spoke of the significance of Citizenship for young people following exclusion from mainstream schools. She wrote about her experiences in 'Citizenship Education in Alternative Provision' in issue 55.

In this first section we have illustrated some of the ways in which the Five Nations has had an impact on citizenship education provision, in delegates' classrooms, across their schools, and beyond. We have also illustrated how the impacts range from concrete teaching ideas to developing a more general capacity for critique and evaluation. In the following section we continue to explore some of the more nebulous impacts, in the hope that attending to what participants say may help to clarify these other types of outcomes.

2. Personal impacts

Whilst the impacts on citizenship provision are generally very specific and lend themselves well to concrete examples, there is also a more general impact reported on how participants feel. Whilst this is more difficult to describe or exemplify it was nevertheless very strongly evident in the interviews. Some words appeared throughout the interviews such as confidence, feeling valued, enriching, energizing, empowering, exciting, resilience. In this section we describe those more affective impacts.

2.1 Re-energising participants

The idea that the conference re-energises participants is a commonly expressed sentiment at the events and reoccurred frequently in the interviews. Two participants spoke for many when they said:

> "It's just restorative, that's exactly what it is. It's, you're wrecked' and you are restored by. 'Look, I'm not on my own, here are all these other people and we're all in it together." (Respondent 9)

> "One of the things that the conferences is to reignite that spark for citizenship and education." (Respondent 5)

Others spoke about getting the 'fuel and tools' to keep them going, being 'refreshed' and being reminded just how much they love citizenship and reinspired to bring that to life in their classroom. One participant who had not attended for several years following his retirement recalled:

> "The excitement that I can still feel years later, it's just amazing… It allowed you to feel good about your subject." (Respondent 7)

This is difficult to measure, but stands out as being a useful impact, especially in those contexts where teacher retention is proving difficult.

2.2 Building confidence

Another aspect of the affective impact of the conference relates to building confidence among participants. Country coordinators felt this was especially relevant to younger less experienced colleagues. One teacher attending for the first time in 2022 illustrated this with the following comment:

> "I already knew the knowledge. Already knew that what I wanted to do but that gave me the confidence and a bit more insight into how I could do this and how I could it correctly." (Respondent 17)

But it also relates to experienced colleagues working in schools where there is little interest or support in promoting citizenship. The retired teacher we quoted above also recalled:

> "There was a sense of empowerment, a serious sense of empowerment, the confidence to be bold, to be radical in a way, to go that step further." (Respondent 7)

Here we can see how even experienced colleagues can benefit from a confidence boost to reassure them that it is feasible to take the next step in their schools. This might be even more important where general policy conservatism seems to discourage bold citizenship education, as several delegates noted in the 2022 conference. There were concerns, especially among teachers in England, that some senior leaders appeared to be becoming more sceptical about the value of engaging in controversial discussions about divisive political issues. Being surrounded by people who support such practices can be a useful corrective to the caution that seems to be emerging in some schools, partly because it helps to place the peculiarities of national policy-making in a broader comparative perspective. One English delegate said:

> "I think one of the things that I would probably say is it allows you to build resilience in what you're doing" (Respondent 1)

2.3 Feeling valued

In addition to feeling re-energised and receiving a confidence boost, several respondents talked about how they felt valued by their invitation. Whilst we discuss the 'invitation only' nature of the recruitment process elsewhere, this does generate a sense of acknowledgement – the feeling that someone has noticed teachers are doing something interesting, or have something of value to share. This sense of being valued also relates to the quality of the venues, as several teachers and country coordinators noted it is very unusual for teachers to be treated so well in their regular professional development opportunities. This may be particularly significant for citizenship teachers, where there generally seem to be relatively few alternative opportunities for professional development.

2.4 Feeling supported by peer-peer contact

Participants also clearly enjoyed the feeling of peer support they experienced in the events. Some colleagues have known each other for years and have formed strong bonds of friendship and peer support outside of the network. But newcomers also reported feeling at ease quite quickly and finding common ground with other participants. This speaks to a sense of being part of a community of practitioners with shared interests and values. One of the strategy group recalled an event when a teacher faltered and lost their confidence during a keynote presentation, and there was a palpable sense of goodwill and support from the audience that enabled her to pick up and complete their presentation. This feeling of being supported by peers and developing a sense of connection links to the next section where we consider the role of the Five Nations in building a professional community.

3. Professional community building

Whilst the previous category focused on the personal-emotional dimension of the network, there was also a strong sense that delegates were also acutely aware of the significance of participating in a wider professional community.

3.1 Building relationships and connecting with others

Because teachers' practices are constrained and regulated by the policy contexts in which they work, the national networks seem to stand out as being particularly important. As one delegate put it:

> "Those relationships within your own country group probably become the most important in reality, and it allows you to build that kind of cohesive group in lots of ways, and then contribute to your own organisation back home." (Respondent 1)

Not only did interviewees talk about the discussions between their colleagues in their 'home' groups, but they also referred to on-going communication between conferences – sustained by friendships, social media contact, email distribution lists and occasional online events and real-life meetings. Here people reported providing support, sharing resources and working collaboratively, for example the young Scottish teachers discussed above (section 1.5) shared a PowerPoint resource they had developed together to disseminate their learning to colleagues.

As well as what we might refer to as horizontal relationships between teachers, some also mentioned vertical relationships, building contacts with more senior colleagues within the system:

> "One of the big lessons for me is that the people who work for Education Scotland, they're real people. They're teachers. They're former teachers. They're people that are passionate about education. They're not just bureaucrats." (Respondent 17)

This realisation means this young teacher now has a much-extended network, with access to policymakers and experienced colleagues.

This sense of a professional community was also broader than just small national teacher networks and several teachers mentioned how empowering it was to have a broader network of contacts across the five nations. Several reported being able to pass on contacts to colleagues who were looking for specific expertise, or just refer to examples of practice from other countries when discussing plans in their own schools.

3.2 Avoiding isolation

Of course such a network has an intrinsic value in and of itself, especially if it acts as a source of support, resources, advice and expertise. But one respondent also made a point of stressing that it is important for overcoming the risk of isolation, which seems to affect Citizenship specialists more than other subject leaders, as they often remain the only subject specialist in their school:

> "I think most of those who attend are probably quite passionate individuals in their own schools or in their own remits, but they might be isolated, and they might not have the leadership that supports them, or they might have antagonistic colleagues." (Respondent 18)

Building a sense of community therefore can be seen as useful in reducing the negative impact of professional isolation, as well as building a positive shared resource.

3.3 Making a contribution

A final aspect of community to consider, is that it also provides participants with opportunities to make valued contributions themselves. By sharing their own experiences with others, providing support to others, and disseminating resources and training, teachers begin to feel they are not just benefitting from, but contributing to the professional community. We turn to the wider consequences of this opportunity to contribute in the next section, but first we pull together these strands with a brief case study.

Case study: Cross-border collaboration in Ireland

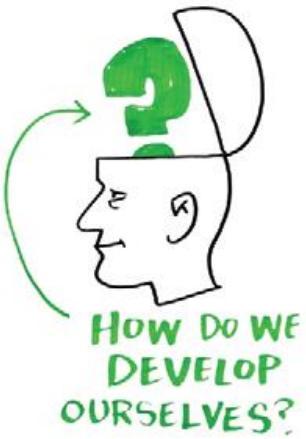
The country coordinators who were interviewed representing the North and South had both been involved with the network from the very early days and reflected on some of the historical developments that had been influential. In both contexts education policy was promoting citizenship education in various ways in the early 2000s and the Five Nations provided the first formal opportunity for citizenship educators to meet together to discuss how they were implementing policy and working with teachers. This Five Nations relationship quickly turned into a more formal bilateral network, referred to as the North and South Association (NASA). Colleagues met twice a year, once in the North and once in the South. Meetings included those employed by education authorities to roll-out citizenship education to schools and inspectors (the history inspectors continue to meet, but funding ended for comparable citizenship posts). The citizenship NASA collaboration lasted for 8-9 years and enabled practitioners to attend each other's events, run joint events, and arrange school exchanges. Whilst such work is less remarkable now, one of the country coordinators recalls that one of his colleagues, already in their 50s when the work began, made their first visit to the North as part of their NASA meetings. The relationships that emerged through this networking soon grew into collaborative projects, where resources and training programmes were developed to support teaching about controversial issues and student voice. These resources enabled the colleagues to reach beyond their immediate networks and eventually a further link was forged between the Irish colleagues working on controversial issues and others working with the Council of Europe, extending the reach of their work even further.

The resources are still available online

The Controversial Issues resources are here.

The Council of Europe resources which refer to this project are here.

The Student Voice resources are here.



4. Career development

Whilst some of the other categories are frequently discussed in the strategy group, and were therefore expected to arise in the interviews, this category was somewhat unexpected. Several less experienced participants talked about how the network had helped them to think about their own career and some more experienced colleagues reflected on how the FNN had helped them progress in their career.

4.1 Building experience as a subject leader

Some of the teachers noted that the Five Nations had given them an opportunity to see themselves as national subject leaders for the first time. This helped them to understand that they had valuable experience, feel others appreciated what they had to offer, and provided them with a formal opportunity to present their work. One teacher who had been developing active citizenship in her school for a number of years presented at the Five Nations, then wrote about her experiences for publication, was invited to present at a European conference, and has subsequently contributed to national training for ACT.

4.2 Building awareness of wider career options

For classroom teachers it is not always obvious what other roles are available in the broader education sector, nor how one can go about preparing for such posts. Some respondents felt that meeting others in various roles helped to open their eyes to wider possibilities.

There were also more surprising influences on people's career options. One relatively new teacher in Northern Ireland told us:

> "I think it's had a big influence on me, the whole idea of integration… I have actually worked in a Catholic school all year, which is the opposite religion to me… before I had any of this involvement in training [in the Five Nations Network] I wouldn't have dreamt of going to the Catholic School Council and applying for a job." (Respondent 13)

Another teacher, reflecting on a workshop and conversation at the Five Nations said:

> "I had toyed with the idea of getting into politics here myself for years and that just swung it for me. That actually tipped me and I stood for council in 2019… It definitely set off a train of thought that helped me make the decision." (Respondent 12)

We can see here that meeting others in a range of jobs and having the space to reflect on the relationship between values and practices can be helpful in making decisions about what opportunities might exist and when to pursue them.

4.3 Using Five Nations experiences in new roles

Some of the interviewees who had attended the FNN for several years had secured other posts and moved into advisory, inspection and training roles.

Those who had already moved into these roles felt that their experiences in the network continued to influence how they worked. One teacher who has been appointed to a post across a multi-academy trust in England said:

> "My role now is going to change massively, and I think my involvement in ACT and Five Nations has been a big part of that because I know the new Trust really wants a lot done on citizenship." (Respondent 2)

This raises the prospect that participation in the network can help participants build their profile and confidence as subject leaders, encourages them to consider a wider variety of career paths, and provides them with ideas to carry into their new posts. It also potentially increases the pool from which the strategy group might recruit replacement country coordinators, as colleagues retire.

5. Policy impacts

Whilst the FNN has moved more explicitly into a phase of focusing on securing impact on practitioners, several of the strategy group were clear about the ways in which the network has had, and continues to have, impacts on policy. Their perspective encourages us to move beyond a narrow perception of policy as a specific declaration of government intent or piece of legislation, and rather to focus on the processes of policy interpretation and enactment that influence practice.

5.1 Continuing strategic involvement of policymakers

Members of the strategy group felt that exerting direct influence on policymakers to adopt a specific citizenship education policy was generally beyond the reach of the network, not least because securing direct influence on specific policies is notoriously difficult and often relies on intensive and sustained lobbying. However, they recognised that it was nevertheless useful to use the network to nurture strategic relationships, primarily through encouraging, praising and supporting policymakers. They felt there was some benefit to reminding policymakers and civil servants that there was a vibrant network of citizenship educators, and thus at least ensuring they were aware of the subject. In recent years Welsh colleagues have invited Ministers and civil servants to the conference to build alliances of common interest. Scotland has maintained contact between the Lead Inspector and the network, because she is broadly supportive of citizenship. England has invited civil servants from the Department for Education, to encourage them to see citizenship education as relevant to their broader policy agendas.

5.2 Developing expertise among policy actors and teachers

The early 2000s was an exciting time for citizenship education policy, with supportive policies emerging across the five nations. The following decade was a period of interpretation and implementation, where it was important to build capacity. Several of the more experienced country coordinators used the five nations to develop and deepen their expertise, and there is a strong feeling among the strategy group that their own ability to act as leaders for citizenship education has been enhanced through their involvement in the network, and through the comparative dimension. A recent academic article by four country coordinators analysing policy in the UK demonstrates the collaborative learning that has been facilitated by the FNN strategy group.[iv]

This can also be seen among teacher delegates as well, where their capacity to be informed and influential policy actors is being enhanced by the network. One teacher observed:

> "We can't change the curriculum, but we can consider different viewpoints when teaching it." (Respondent 16)

This illustrates a potentially significant sense of critical agency as teachers move from being curriculum policy implementers to seeing themselves as active interpreters, introducing significant additional perspectives on established curricula.

5.3 Building alignment between stakeholders

In Ireland in particular the country leaders had deliberately used the Five Nations Network as a forum to bring together different policy actors. This included teachers, teacher educators, people in training posts and NGOs and charities working out how to connect their agendas to citizenship education. They were concerned that the sudden number of separate stakeholders, with different interests in citizenship, would lead to a confusion of interpretations and a potential loss of clarity. They wanted to encourage a greater alignment around a shared sense of the subject and so used the FNN events to encourage this purposeful networking. They felt they had been particularly successful in achieving this goal. This approach worked in two concreate ways: one of the largest charities in the field gave a country coordinator £40,000 to undertake a project on their behalf; and the resources they later produced were felt to be exemplary in the field.

5.4 Leveraging expertise within and between countries

Wales is now at an exciting point in the policy cycle, with a new curriculum and newfound interest in promoting citizenship and political education. Here, the network has been useful as a source of expertise, enabling an exchange of knowledge across national borders. To date several English colleagues have been involved in writing resources and running training workshops around political impartiality in schools and a colleague who presented on decolonising the curriculum has been invited to run training at a local level for schools implementing the new commitment to teach an antiracist curriculum. The experience of working across the border has already washed back to England, with colleagues working on the Welsh guidance taking their insights back to inform training on political impartiality for ACT.

5.5 Responsive targeted lobbying

Finally, the strategy group and Liz Moorse, as the overall manager of the contract, all feel that the Five Nations Network operates in two useful ways in relation to policy. It acts as a clearing house for information, as each strategy group starts with national updates, which helps to identify useful opportunities for lobbying and advocacy, where policy windows may be opening. Secondly, representing the network gives Liz access to some policymakers or relevant organisations. For example, Liz's role at the Council of Europe has been strengthened by her ability to represent the network, not just a single professional organisation. In turn this has opened up opportunities for collaboration, such as the funded project Liz was able to lead with FNN colleagues for the Council of Europe in relation to their policy around Education for Democratic Citizenship. In addition, Liz has been able to use evidence from the Five Nations network when contributing to UK parliament committee inquiries such as the House of Lords Civic and Citizenship Engagement Committee in 2018 and the House of Lords Liaison Committee in 2021.

Whilst policy no longer forms the main focus of the network, participants felt that it had achieved some useful influence over policy enactment and provided a useful foundation for lobbying and advocacy when the opportunity arose. This responsiveness is also evident in the way each country constructs its invitation list for events, with some placing greater emphasis on leaders and policymakers

because of the conditions in their national context, and others focusing more on teachers, where no obvious policy windows have opened.

Endnotes

[i] Brown, J. (2012) Gordon Cook Foundation: Five Nations Programme External Review. Final Report. www.fivenations.net/uploads/1/2/8/2/12825307/five_nations_network_external_review_oct_2012.pdf

[ii] Further details relating to the methodology and participants can be requested from ACT, which holds a full technical report.

[iii] Illustrations are taken from Philip Barrett's graphic reportage from the Dublin 2017 conference.

[iv] https://www.jsse.org/index.php/jsse/article/view/5853

For more information about the Five Nations Network, including annual reports and materials from our conferences visit:
www.fivenations.net