

Teaching Council Consultation on ITE and the Impact of Reconceptualised ITE Programmes

Rationale for the inclusion of Development Education (DE)/Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)/Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as a mandatory element of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers.

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Education in a Changing World

Irish Education policies have in the past been criticized for their bias toward economic objectives, and as such for moving the focus of education from the development of the individual to the service of the economy (Hannan, 1991; Lynch, Grummel, Devine, 2012). Hicks (2002) warns that the utilitarian and market driven ethos of society is often at odds with the need to work towards a more just and sustainable world. Nausbaum (2010) criticizes education systems driven by economic needs as hindering the development of empathy in the learner, reducing their sympathy with the marginalized, and reducing their capacity to deal with complex global problems.

We live in an extraordinary time, in a world where injustice and inequality are prevalent, poverty gaps widen and environmental conditions threaten our planet. In recent times, these issues have been to the fore in public debate – from water provision to the climatic extremes of drought and flooding, and from the plight of migrants to the rights and identity of the travelling community. Internationally, the establishment of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 captured the key issues of our time, universally framed and relevant to all nations. The Goals provide a useful framework against which to explore the most pressing local and global development issues, including poverty, inequality, mass urbanisation, climate change, and unsustainable consumption. The goals themselves are complex and interconnected. Interventions to address them must be inclusive, inter-disciplinary, innovative and informed by scientific and technological advances. Educational responses must draw on a range of disciplines and perspectives. They must be culturally sensitive and bring people together in respectful and creative spaces.

Education itself is named as SDG Goal 4, framing education as a means to enable people to emerge from poverty and exclusion. Particularly relevant within this goal is target 4.7 which emphasises the importance of all citizens engaging in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Specifically it states that by 2030 we must ensure that,

...all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015)

Therefore, education must prepare learners not only to be economically productive citizens but also to be socially active and responsible citizens. In higher education, the role of the academy

is to “encourage students to question their own unexamined beliefs, as well as the received wisdom of those around them” (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015, p. 2). As educators, we must promote scholarly debate and challenge ideas in pursuit of truth. We must educate our students to have a heightened social conscience and to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to address the challenges we face as a global society. We must support them to recognise injustice, to acknowledge the limits of our planet, to challenge assumptions and biases, to have compassion, empathy and solidarity for those who are marginalised and to challenge the status quo even from a privileged position. Rather than simply conform, we must enable them to “deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 1972). We must enable them to recognise that action or inaction can serve to perpetuate or contribute to inequality or unsustainability, to support them not to shy away from controversial issues but instead work towards a grounded, evidence-based position, and communicate this with confidence and conviction. We must provide an education that prompts people to take action for a world based on respect for human dignity and rights, on global justice, solidarity, equality, inclusion, sustainability and social responsibility.

ESD is an approach to education that strives for economic viability, while also ensuring a just society and environmental integrity for present and future generations (UNESCO, 2017). It fosters the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2004). ESD may be defined as that which supports the learner “to better understand the world in which they live, addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of problems and issues such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, population growth, gender inequality, health, conflict and the violation of human rights that threaten our future” (UNESCO, 2004:86).

The Department of Education and Skills National Strategy on ESD

In 2014, arising from the National Strategy on Sustainable Development, *Our Sustainable Future*, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) launched its first strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (2014-2020). The aim of the strategy is to contribute to sustainable development by “equipping learners with the relevant knowledge, the key dispositions and skills and the values that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future” (DES, 2014:6).

In the strategy, the DES adopts the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE 2005, 1; UNECE 2009, 15) descriptors for ESD, specifically noting its potential to:

- develop and strengthen the capacity of individuals, groups, communities, organizations and countries to make judgements and choices in favour of sustainable development,
- promote a shift in people's mind sets, enabling them to contribute to a safer, healthier and more prosperous world for all, thereby improving quality of life, and
- promote critical reflection and learner empowerment to create a new vision for our future using innovative teaching methods and tools.

It indicates that ESD in Ireland should:

- balance environmental, social and economic considerations,
- be locally relevant while also linking the local to the national and international,
- engage all sectors of the education system,
- be interdisciplinary and recognise interdependence and interconnectedness,
- use a variety of pedagogical techniques for active and participatory learning,
- develop key dispositions and skills,
- emphasise social justice and equality,
- focus on values and promote active democratic citizenship, and
- be an agent of change in reorienting societies towards sustainable development (DES, 2014)

In developing the strategy, the DES signalled a lead role in relation to ESD in Ireland. It noted the complementary of this work to that of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment (DCCAE) with its policy responsibility for the sustainable development agenda and Ireland's National Action Plans for the Sustainable Development Goals (DES, 2014:8).

Central to the implementation of the Strategy was the establishment of a National Advisory Committee to oversee and promote the work. Run by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit in the DES, the Committee comprises representatives across government departments and educational organisations. Of particular significance is the input of Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) which funds Development Education (DE) in the formal education sector. Similar to ESD, DE is aimed at "increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live...it is about supporting people

in understanding and acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives at personal, community, national and international levels” (Irish Aid, 2006:6). The concepts of DES and DE, while emerging from different traditions, are largely identical in terms of content, teaching methodologies and ideologies (Hogan and Tormey, 2008). In its most recently published Development Education Strategy (Irish Aid, 2017:9), Irish Aid introduced Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as an overarching term to encompass the work of DE and ESD across government departments to facilitate a common ground for future interdepartmental collaboration.

The ESD Strategy spans formal education from early years education, through primary and post primary education, and into higher and further education. In relation to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) it notes the importance of the integration of ESD, and engagements with the Teaching Council “to ascertain the extent to which the teaching of ESD is comprehended within existing criteria for accreditation of ITE programmes (recommendation 12)” (DES, 2014:17).

Initial Teacher Education and ESD

While Teaching Council criteria and guidelines for ITE do not directly refer to DE, ESD or GCE, a number of learning outcomes resonate with such approaches to education. The learning outcome that stipulates the inclusion of “cross curricular links and themes including citizenship; creativity, inclusion and diversity...” allows for educational activities that explore issues relating to social and environmental responsibilities at local and global levels. Similarly, the learning outcome “know and uphold the core values and professional commitments which are set out in the *Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*” provides opportunity for discussion around ethical values and standards in relation to the individual and society. The learning outcome on “children’s rights, including their right to a voice in various matters that relate to their lives” can open dialogue on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as relevant in the classroom and beyond. (Teaching Council, 2017)

Many Schools of Education/Education Departments in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are actively incorporating DE/ESD into ITE programmes. A significant number of projects and initiatives in this regard are supported by the Ubuntu Network (post primary ITE) and DICE project (primary ITE) both of which are funded by Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs. In the 2017-2018 Academic Year, the Ubuntu Network provided backing for interventions in 11 HEI ITE institutions across 18 teacher education programmes, involving 60 teacher educators and approximately 1,761 pre-service teachers.

DE/ESD supports the student teacher to “better understand the world in which they live, addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of problem and issues such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, population growth, gender inequality, health, conflict and the violation of human rights that threaten our future” (UNESCO, 2004:86). DE/ESD emphasises the development of key skills such as critical thinking, communication, information processing and systems thinking to support the learner to construct responses to every day local and global development issues and debates (O’Flaherty & Liddy, 2018; McCormack & O’Flaherty, 2010). The values inherent in DE/ESD are closely connected to the Teaching Council ethical values, particularly respect for “cultural values, diversity, social justice, freedom, democracy and the environment” (Teaching Council, 2016). They are also closely aligned aspects of the Junior Cycle Framework Statements of Learning (SoL), specifically,

- moral decision making (SoL7),
- being an active citizen with rights and responsibilities (SoL8),
- understanding the origins and impacts and impacts of social, economic, and environmental aspects of the world around her/him (SoL9), and
- having awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably (SoL10).

The Ubuntu Network supporting DE/ESD/GCE in ITE

The Ubuntu Network was established in 2006 to support the integration of DE into post primary ITE in Ireland. The Network comprises teacher educators from 13 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland – Limerick School of Art and Design (LSAD), Crawford College of Art and Design (CCAD), Dublin City University Institute of Education (DCUIoE), Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (Letterfrack), Hibernia College, National College of Art and Design (NCAD), NUI Galway (NUIG), Maynooth University (MU), St. Angela’s College, Sligo (SAC), Mary Immaculate College, Thurles (MIC-T), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), University College Dublin (UCD), University College Cork (UCC) and University of Limerick (UL).

In 2012, teacher educator members developed the *Ubuntu Network Framework for Integration of Development Education into Initial Teacher Education* (Ubuntu Network, 2016). This five-

component model builds upon the core areas of teacher education programmes as outlined in the Teaching Council Criteria and Guidelines for ITE (Teaching Council, 2017)

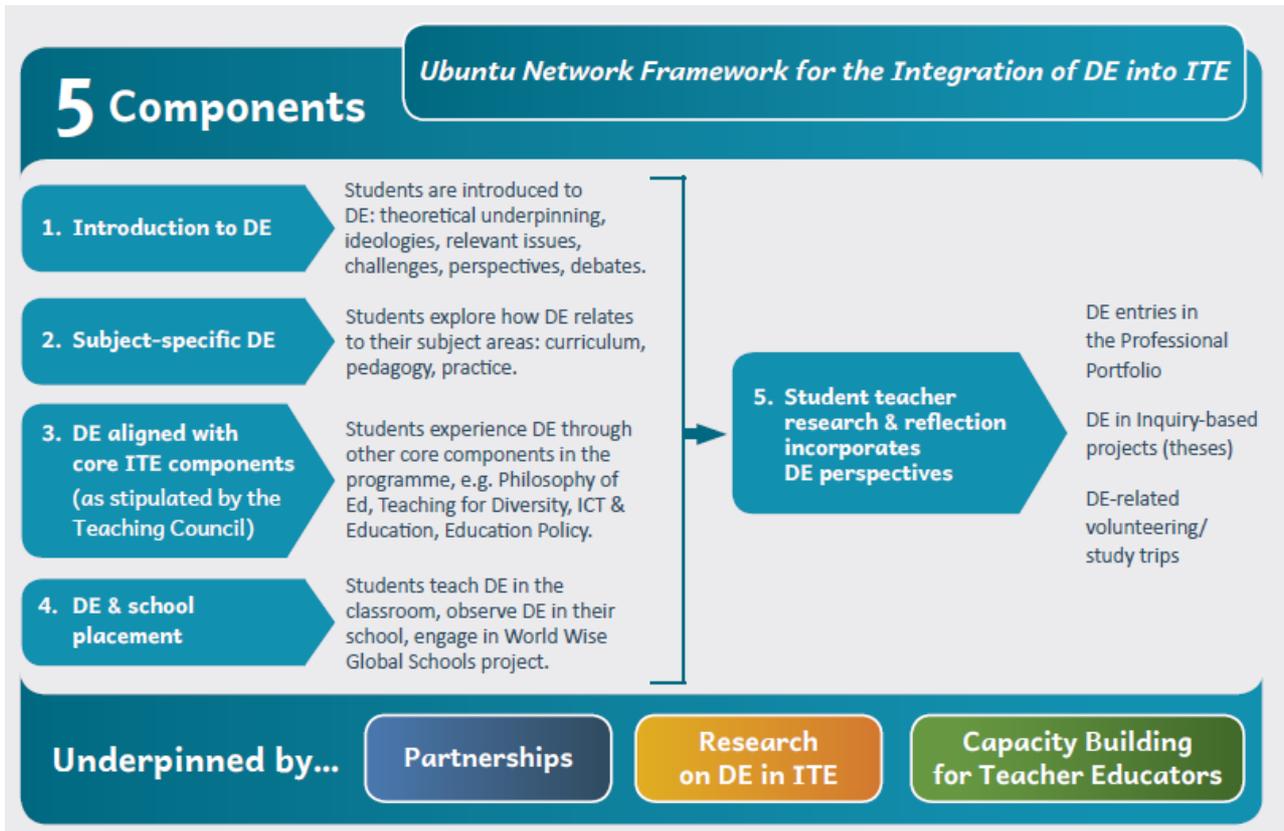


Figure 1 - Ubuntu Network Framework for the Integration of DE/ESD/GCE into ITE

The first component of the framework proposes that student teachers are introduced to the concept of DE/ESD/GCE through lectures, tutorials and independent study. They learn about the origins and meanings of the concepts, the role of the teacher in Global Citizenship Education, the issues central to the SDGs, varying ideologies associated with values-based education and the importance of critical thinking in reading the world. They are provided with the useful resources and adequate time to consider perspectives and to reflect on the place of DE/ESD/GCE in their teaching. NUIG and MU host annual ‘Development Education Days’, where student teachers are introduced to a range of SDG topics by key note speakers and are challenged to relate these to their professional practice and identity throughout their programmes.

The second component of the framework explores how the principles and themes associated with DE/ESD/GCE can be taught through school subjects in a way that aligns with the NCCA key skills, subject specifications and appropriate teaching approaches for the discipline. For example in Science Pedagogy at UL student teachers are supported to explore themes of energy

and sustainability through pedagogies focused on evidence-based argumentation and the Nature of Science (NoS). In TCD, the Ubuntu-supported DE elective module supports students to devise ‘Units of Learning’ that translate key themes of interest into a scheme of work for their subject that can be implemented in the classroom.

The third component of the framework explores how existing mandatory ITE elements (Teaching Council, 2017:14) and foundation disciplines embody the values and ideologies that are central to DE/ESD/GCE. For example, in UL, when student teachers study *The Teacher As Professional*, they consider the cultural and civic role of the teacher, they reflect upon their own core beliefs about teaching and are supported to enhance their personal social justice advocacy. Similarly, in *Sociology of Education* student teachers reflect on how education can lead to social cohesion and the empowerment of the poor, oppressed and marginalised. In *Inclusive Education*, they are supported to examine how schools and society responds to diversity, with a view to developing a greater sense of care and empathy for ‘the other’, and as a result taking positive action in the classroom.

The fourth component of the framework supports student teachers to engage in DE/ESD/GCE related activities while on School Placement. The extended remit for student teachers on School Placement (Teaching Council, 2013:13) afforded by the reconceptualization of ITE provides tremendous opportunities for their engagement with DE/ESD/GCE activities and learning within the school. A number of Ubuntu member HEI institutions, including NCAD, UCC and GMIT-Letterfrack support their student teacher to build upon the outputs of previous interventions to teach DE while on School Placement. In 2018, student teachers from UCC exhibited a range of artefacts from their teaching of DE/ESD/GCD in local schools (figure 1). The exhibition, entitled ‘We Make the Road by Walking’ was held in the Glucksman Gallery in UCC from 22nd – 25th May.

The fifth component of the framework relates to the research and reflection aspect of teacher education. Postgraduate student teachers in particular engage in portfolio work; reflective practice and research/enquiry-based learning, often conducting desk based research or research in schools as part of their studies. To incorporate DE/ESD/GCE into research tasks builds the student teacher’s capacity to understand the issues related to teaching with a social justice perspective while also contributing to knowledge base in the area. DE/ESD/GCE research opportunities are afforded across many ITE institutions. In a recent article, O’Brien and Cotter

(2018) document some of the journey that six UCC based student teachers took as they grappled with their research areas in becoming critical researchers in multicultural and DE.

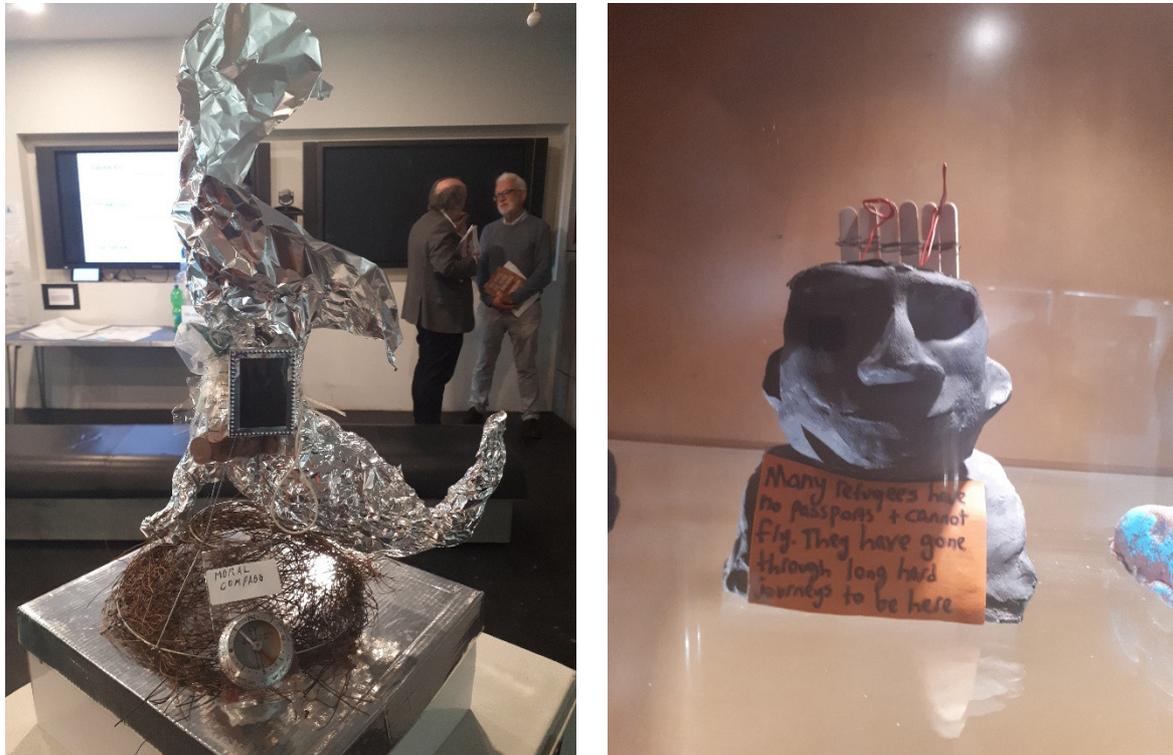


Figure 1 – Sample Artefacts from the Exhibition ‘We Make The Road by Walking’

The impact of DE/ESD/GCE on student teachers’ capacity to teach for social justice and sustainable development is significant. The Ubuntu Network Impact Report 2015-2016 identified that as a result of engaging in Ubuntu Network supported initiatives, the capacity of post primary student teachers to engage with development issues and integrate them into their teaching had strengthened considerably. It also found that in order to sustain effective DE/ESD/GCE in ITE programmes that attention must be paid to challenges including access to knowledge, the conceptualisation and practice of DE/ESD/GCE as an ‘add-on’ subject, a diminished link between DE/ESD/GCE and other ITE components and greater support for DE/ESD/GCE within the context of School Placement and research. (Ubuntu Network, 2017)

Conclusion

To include DE, ESD or GCE as a mandatory element of ITE, or to name it as a Learning Outcome in subsequent editions of the Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for

Programme Providers (Teaching Council, 2017) document, will consolidate the efforts of the DES to integrate DE/ESD/GCE into formal education. It will be an important step in insuring that our teachers are equipped to collectively address, through their teaching and professional practice, key issues of our time. It will also support the many institutions already engaging in DE/ESD/GCE to enhance their work, while also raising awareness and appreciation for the importance of education for equality and sustainability in the Irish context. Finally, it will be a key step in DE/ESD/GCE becoming normalised in educational discourse, thereby supporting our nation to fulfil its international obligations toward Goal 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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