

## **FOREWORD: THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION**

**ORLA MC BREEN**

*Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* is a unique and important resource for the development education community, and the Department of Foreign Affairs, through Irish Aid, has been delighted to support the publication of the journal for the past fifteen years. I congratulate the journal on reaching this important milestone in 2020.

There has been significant progress in the provision of development or global citizenship education (GCE) in Ireland during those years, and changes in international and national policy have contributed greatly to this. When the core values of global citizenship education are reflected in and supported by government policy and by the school curriculum, global citizenship education can be delivered much more effectively.

In 2015, global citizenship education was included as one of the topic areas of Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal on Education (SDSN, 2020). Indicator 4.7.1 relates to the extent in which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are mainstreamed at all levels in formal education. Also in 2015, climate change education, training and public awareness (Art 12) was to be enhanced as part of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (United Nations, 2015). These developments provided an impetus for the world community, including here in Ireland, to pay attention to these areas at policy level.

In the *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 – 2023* (Irish Aid, 2016), the need for a whole-of-Government approach and interdepartmental cooperation is emphasised, to ensure that our efforts are part of a cohesive overarching government policy of global citizenship education (2017: 19). As we work across Government and with our partners, it is imperative that we build synergies between different forms of ‘values education’, as all share the same core values of equality and human dignity.

These include education for sustainable development, human rights education, peace education and anti-racism education.

The *Development Education Strategy* builds on the recommendations of the 2015 Global Education Network Europe (GENE) peer review (GENE, 2015) which found clear indications of the success of the previous strategy at all levels (2015: 46). The more recent DAC peer review (OECD, 2020) found that Ireland has a strong approach to development education, relying on ‘strong partnerships among the government, non-governmental organisations, education actors and local communities’ (Ibid: 18). The upcoming mid-term review of the current *Development Education Strategy*, scheduled for autumn 2020, affords us the opportunity to assess how we are achieving our aim to increase the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of development education in Ireland. That review is also an opportunity for us all to reflect on how we can ensure that our work remains relevant and timely in the rapidly evolving and increasingly interdependent world in which we live. This is evidenced by the impacts and implications of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and the growing challenges to multi-lateralism.

The *National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020*, launched by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in 2014, placed sustainability at the heart of education policy and created new opportunities for embedding GCE in formal education. Members of the Department of Foreign Affairs’ Development Education Unit have been active members of the ESD Advisory Committee since its inception. Over the coming months we will be working closely with the Department of Education and other government departments to develop a new plan which should bring us closer to meeting our SDG targets as we approach 2030.

Kenny and O’Malley’s report for Dóchas back in 2002, found that there were over two hundred and fifty groups working in development education in Ireland, but that there was only ‘a tenuous link with mainstream education at primary, second and third level’ (Kenny and O’Malley, 2002: 38). Thankfully, global citizenship education content has become more visible in formal education curricula in recent years. Politics and Society, a new Leaving

Certificate subject strong in global citizenship content, was examined for the first time in 2018 (NCCA, 2018). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed a short course on Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) (NCCA, 2016), which includes the strands, rights and responsibilities, global citizenship and exploring democracy.

*The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World* outlines Ireland's values as ensuring that we contribute to a fairer, just, secure and sustainable world (DFA, 2015: 30). This goal remains the focus of Ireland's Policy for International Development. In the foreword to *A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development*, then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar T.D. said:

“Ireland’s approach to international development resonates with our own history and experiences. It is both in our DNA, and in our national interest, to contribute to the building of a better world” (Government of Ireland, 2019: i).

The new policy explicitly values development education and global citizenship as important elements in our evolving approach to reaching the furthest behind first and to build this better world (Ibid: 38).

Due to the implementation of strong policies at both national and international level, a stronger, more stable environment for delivery of development education programmes in Ireland now exists, contributing to the creation of that fairer, just, secure and sustainable world.

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**Orla Mc Breen** is Director, Civil Society and Development Education Unit, Irish Aid.