



CITIZENSHIP AND VALUES EDUCATION TO THE RESCUE!

Making the case for a Call to Action

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Education for Values and Citizenship in
England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
David Kerr, NFER and Conference Rapporteur

**GORDON COOK
FOUNDATION**

Institute for
Global Ethics 
UK Trust

Foreword

This Executive Summary forms part of a suite of three documents entitled **Citizenship and Values Education to the Rescue**¹ published by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust on behalf of the **Five Nations Network** (i.e. from **England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland** and **Wales**), and supported by the Gordon Cook Foundation. The full suite comprises:

- (i) Executive Summary
- (ii) Report of the Ninth Annual Conference
- (iii) A Call to Action

The simultaneous launch of these publications in each of the five countries denotes a significant milestone in this unique series of annual conferences on **Education for Values and Citizenship** and a pivotal point in the evolution of the Five Nations Network. Together, they encompass a retrospective of the nine conferences since 2000, a full report of the outcomes of the 2008 conference held in Glasgow last November, and a Call to Action 2009, looking to the future and emphasising the vital importance of values and citizenship education for the network itself and a much wider group of stakeholders.



Poignantly, this landmark also coincides with the passing of Dr William A. Gatherer, the leading champion of these Five Nations Conferences, whose brainchild the original project was. It is therefore fitting that this trio of documents is dedicated to Bill, as he was known to all, and a tribute by Ivor Sutherland, a fellow trustee of the Gordon Cook Foundation, follows. As the convenor of the conferences since 2000, I myself worked with Bill and country colleagues on planning each of the annual events. I can therefore vouch at first hand for how deeply he cherished the collegiality and mutual respect this work engendered over successive years, and how much he valued the inspiration and challenge of sharing practice across the five nations, leading him to describe the Five Nations Conferences as “one of the most successful ventures the Foundation had ever undertaken, as it achieved a general affirmation that values education, in its widest sense, lies at the heart of education for citizenship”.²

Sheila Bloom

*Chief Executive, Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust
September 2009*

¹ Further copies can be obtained from the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust
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For further information, visit Five Nations page within IGE UK Trust website: www.globalethics.org.uk

² Pioneering Moral Education, Victor Cook and his Foundation by W.A Gatherer, pub. Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2004

Dr William A. Gatherer: An appreciation

Bill Gatherer, a distinguished schools inspector and education advisor, was raised in Huntley and educated at The Gordon Schools and Aberdeen University, where he studied English.

In the course of his lengthy professional career, he served as a teacher of English, a lecturer in English in Jordanhill College of Education in Glasgow, a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools and finally Chief Education Adviser for Lothian Regional Council, in which post he had responsibility for the provision of the entire range of advisory services to all of Lothian schools.

His career describes a constant upward trajectory, as you would expect of a man blessed with such a formidable intellect, such a strong personality, such enormous drive and such huge enthusiasm for all that he did.

He had the knack of bringing people, especially young people, out of their shells, getting them to focus on the key issues, getting them to tease out the pros and cons and moving them in a gentle but firm way towards the goal he had in mind. Bill was a skilled and accomplished teacher, both in didactic terms and in the educative sense.

Bill wore many hats. He was the consummate professional, he was an academic and scholar of repute, an avid reader, a clever wordsmith, he published widely, he was in great demand as a public speaker, he loved the cut and thrust of debate and he was very interested in, and supportive of, educational research.

In that latter connection he was a stalwart member of the Scottish Educational Research Association which used to hold its annual conference in St Andrews. Bill was always in the thick of things, sometimes taking part in a panel discussion, sometimes doing the after-dinner speech (when he could of course be very funny, especially if he switched into the Doric tongue) and, on one occasion at least, he gave the key-note address.



In his retirement Bill devoted his still boundless energy largely to the activities of the Gordon Cook Foundation. He was a founding member of its Trust, which is dedicated to the promotion of values and citizenship education. In some ways Bill was the Gordon Cook Foundation. He knew exactly what had been in the founder's mind, he knew every detail of the foundation's objectives and he knew the history of the organisation inside out. Above all, however, he was committed with a fierce passion to the foundation's work. At trustees' meetings, Bill could be forceful and even argumentative and perhaps, on occasion, a tad cantankerous but he always knew precisely what he was doing. He was seeking to ensure that the agenda was not hijacked, that the focus of discussion was not lost and that the most appropriate decisions were made.

Ivor Sutherland

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Executive summary

INTRODUCTION

This is a summary of the outcomes of the Ninth Annual Conference on *Education for Values and Citizenship in England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales*, held in Glasgow in November 2008. The conference was organised by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust (IGE UK) and sponsored by the Gordon Cook Foundation. It brought together practitioners, policy-makers, teacher educators, inspectors, stakeholders and NGO representatives from across the **'Five Nations Network'** (i.e. from **England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland** and **Wales**), with unique, in-depth and up-to-date expertise in education for values and citizenship.

The overarching aim of the conference was to take stock of where education for values and citizenship has come from, where it is currently and where it should go and, in the light of dialogue and debate, to set the agenda by agreeing what needs to be done to move this area forward across the Five Nations. This reflection was to take place against the backdrop of eight previous annual conferences and be guided by current contexts and aspirations for the future.

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Having taken stock, participants concluded that the time was right to further strengthen and embed education for values and citizenship across the Five Nations. The changing contexts within which citizenship and values education are framed and practised in society, education and schools and by young people are creating *'windows of opportunity'* for moving the area forward. Participants argued that there are particular windows of opportunity:

- *In society* – the challenges posed by the lack of trust and public confidence in politics and politicians, the impact of the global economic downturn and the rapid movement of people within and across communities, make even stronger the case for promoting citizenship and values education, as a positive antidote to such challenges.

- *In education* – the drive to educate young people for life in the 21st century, the move to more flexible curriculum and learning frameworks, and the emphasis on competence- and skills-based learning all strengthen the opportunities for citizenship and values education to get a firmer foothold in the curriculum and at whole-school and wider community levels;
- *In schools* – the increasing encouragement to school leaders and teachers to use their professional judgment in shaping curriculum and learning experiences, so that they fit the needs of their learners and school and local contexts, creates opportunities for citizenship and values education to be integral to how schools are organised, the values they promote and the learning experiences they encourage;
- *Among young people* – the increasing concern of young people about the society in which they are growing up, frustration at not having a voice on issues that matter to them, and boredom with traditional teaching and learning, create the opportunity to underline the relevance of citizenship and values education to the lives and concerns of young people.

Taken together, these *'windows of opportunity'* provide the catalyst for collective action across the Five Nations. It is vital that citizenship and values education is seen as central to addressing the current challenges in society, education, schools and for young people – that, as the title of the Conference report states, it can *'Come to the Rescue!'*. However, participants believed that, for this to happen, the Five Nations Network needs to take the initiative and set the agenda for citizenship and values education, rather than just responding, piecemeal, to developments. The conference ended with a rallying cry for the Five Nations Network to issue a collective call to action, to galvanise support and build capacity for, education for values and citizenship. The case for issuing a call to action was all too clear.

The conference and its outcomes underline the expertise within the Five Nations Network and its potency as a unique forum for *'inter-nation'* dialogue, and decisive collective action.

KEY OUTCOMES

Where have we come from?

Participants agreed that the contexts within which citizenship and values education was discussed and developed had undergone considerable change in recent years, such that:

- The context within and across the Five Nations is different
- The context in society is different
- The context in education has changed
- Citizenship and values education has changed
- The Five Nations Network has changed

Reflecting on their own contexts and experiences, participants recognised that these general shifts were having a considerable impact on policies and practices for citizenship and values education within and across the Five Nations and beyond. They came away realising that despite considerable differences in culture, history and approach to citizenship and values education in each of the Five Nations – England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – the broad context driving current developments was similar and with it came similar challenges and concerns. This commonality provided a strong foundation upon which to reflect anew on where citizenship and values education had got to in the Five Nations.

Where are we at now?

Overall, there was recognition among participants that citizenship and values education had come a long way in the space of ten years in the Five Nations. It has been an exciting and breathless journey for many. A decade ago, citizenship and values education was largely an aspiration and plans were only just being considered and drawn up in each of the countries. Since then, and in rapid succession, those plans have come to fruition across the five countries and created a real and visible edifice for citizenship and values education with actual policies, evolving practices and growing support networks, such as the Five Nations. This rapid growth is a success story in itself but also a double-edged sword, for with it has come significant strengths but also considerable challenges.

The principal common challenges identified across the Five Nations were those concerning:

- *Political change* – the potential change in education policy with a new government and the threat that citizenship and values education might no longer be a priority area in education, schools and society;
- *Constant change in education policy and practice* – the need to respond to a constant stream of initiatives and directives;
- *Definition and aims* – the difficulty of explaining to people, including young people, what citizenship and values education was about. It encompassed complex concepts, and its aims and objectives were broad ranging;

- *Leadership and advocates* – though everyone in society had a role to play in citizenship and values education, it was not easy to get leaders and advocates, such as politicians, head teachers and senior managers, to actively support and promote the area;
- *Status and credibility* – citizenship and values education was still a relatively new area in education, schools and society and, as such, was fighting for status and recognition;
- *Standards agenda* – the tension between the rigidity of the 'standards agenda', with its emphasis on national testing and accountability, and the potential for innovation and local action associated with active citizenship approaches;
- *Teacher education* – the scale and cost of preparing new teachers and upskilling existing teachers to teach citizenship and values education effectively;
- *Uneven and variable practice* – because citizenship and values education was a new area, it was recognised that evolving practices were uneven across the Five Nations. The challenge was to raise the levels of overall practice and to better share and disseminate effective practices where they existed;
- *Sustainability and embedding* – the initial policy push for citizenship and values education had led to rapidly evolving structures and practices. The challenge now was to sustain and embed policies and practices;
- *Focus and direction* – making the most of the challenges and opportunities created by the changing contexts within which citizenship education is conceived and developed in society, education and schools without losing sight of what is at the core of citizenship and values education.



Where do we go from here

Participants came up with a number of suggestions for how to take things forward. Viewed as a whole, these provide a common vision – a way of thinking about and framing future action in citizenship and values education. They include:

- Seeing challenges as opportunities
- Having a clearer and more realistic vision
- Reaffirming core principles
- Agreeing the scope of approaches and ways of working

Armed with this common vision, participants considered the best way to proceed to make this vision a reality.

How do we get there

Revisiting the successes and challenges, conference participants came up with a number of concrete ‘lines of action’ for ways to proceed. These set the agenda for citizenship and values education going forward and include:

1. Achieving greater policy engagement at all levels – engage with policies not only in connection with citizenship and values education but also with wider policies concerning society, the education system and school reforms.

2. Strengthening policy implementation and support structures – secure increased and on-going funding for support structures and networks and for associated resources that make such structures and resources more sustainable.

3. Securing more leaders and advocates – build more support for citizenship and values education at all levels of society among politicians, policy-makers, school leaders, teachers, parents and young people who have the vision, energy and drive to lead developments in this area.

4. Improving quality and standards – raise the bar and make policy and practice in citizenship and values education more consistent at all levels.



Five Nations Network Strategy Group planning for the future

5. Securing more effective training – ensure an entitlement, particularly for new and existing teachers as well as for young people and school leaders, to consistent and on-going training that makes them more secure in the active and participative approaches associated with citizenship and values education.

6. Building a more secure and useable evidence base – build a broad evidence base for citizenship and values education that highlights its outcomes and impact and strengthens the case for it to be an integral part of policy and practice in society, education and schools.

7. Taking more time to celebrate successes and achievements – do more to promote and highlight effective practices and celebrate successes, particularly those involving young people. This will help to raise awareness of citizenship and values education and improve understanding of its aims, processes and outcomes.

Participants then came up with recommendations as to how this agenda and the ‘lines of action’ could be made real. They suggested a number of practical ways for the Five Nations Network to move forward by:

- Identifying ways to build capacity
- Identifying points of entry
- Consolidating strengths and addressing weaknesses
- Innovating and believing

Concerning capacity building, more needed to be done in:

- *Securing allies and resources* – there is a need to broaden the base of policy-making if we are truly to empower and build capacity by ensuring that citizenship and values education, and its promotion of participation and governance, involves not only politicians, but also representatives of civil society;
- *Building networks, partnerships and alliances* – the conference identified a broad range of potential partners and allies and provided many examples of effective networking;
- *Planning projects* – there was a plea from some participants for projects in this area to be more practitioner and young people led. There were also calls for more pilot projects which are evaluated, with the outcomes widely disseminated for the benefit of all;
- *Disseminating outcomes* – all too often there is little or no evaluation and monitoring of processes and outcomes and therefore little opportunity to distil the learning outcomes for the benefit of others. There is a need to build a much stronger and more coherent research and evaluation base for citizenship and values education with an emphasis on ‘what works’;

- *Making greater use of media and ICT* – this area is currently under-utilised, though there were some examples during the conference of the power of new technology to promote greater networking and sharing;
- *Building in formal and non-formal settings* – we should not just build in schools and colleges, but also in workplaces, training providers, community centres, churches and the like.

Participants also identified a number of points of entry that were key to effective citizenship and values education, notably:

- *Policy makers* – ensuring that citizenship and values education is a long-term policy priority at all levels of policy-making, and that policy formation leads to effective policy implementation and sustainable practices;
- *Schools* – building citizenship and values education into the fabric of how schools are organised, and the aims and values which underpin daily working practices and relationships;
- *Curriculum* – promoting the notion of national curriculum and learning frameworks underpinned by core aims and values;
- *Teacher education* – realising that teachers are vital to the strengthening of this area and effective practice is founded on initial training and continuous professional development;
- *Local communities* – particularly ensuring that the marginalised and those in non-formal settings are included;
- *Young people* – ensuring that all young people have equitable access to citizenship and values education, not just the empowered minority or ‘hard to reach’.

FINAL COMMENT

‘Citizenship is a journey not a destination’ (Hastings)

The conference showed how far citizenship and values education has come in its journey in the Five Nations in a short space of time. It also underlined the clear vision and sense of purpose in the Five Nations Network about what needs to be done in the next stage of that journey. The Network is united in seizing the moment and issuing a Call to Action. This call is designed to rally support for education for values and citizenship across the Five Nations – England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – and to help strengthen and further embed this area at all levels. Participants in the Five Nations Network believe that they have made the case for this Call to Action. They request your active support and participation in making it real and lasting – for the benefit of society, schools and education, but most of all for the benefit of young people so that they get their entitlement to high quality citizenship and values education.

A copy of the full report from which this Executive Summary is taken is available directly from the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust or to download from the IGE UK website at www.globalethics.org.uk.



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 (IGE UK) 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) and Glasgow (2008)**. The **2009** conference is being held in **Derry/Londonderry**.

This **Executive Summary** is one of three publications¹ documenting the evolution of the conference series and looking to the future, culminating in a shared **Call to Action**. This call is designed to rally support for education for values and citizenship across the Five Nations – **England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales** – and to help strengthen and further embed this area at all levels.

Participants in the Five Nations Network believe that they have made the case for this Call to Action. They request your active support and participation in making it real and lasting – for the benefit of society, schools and education, but most of all for the benefit of young people so that they get their entitlement to high quality citizenship and values education.

¹Executive Summary, Full Report, Call to Action

