



CITIZENSHIP AND VALUES EDUCATION TO THE RESCUE!

A Call to Action by the Five Nations Network*

(*COMPRISING ENGLAND, IRELAND, NORTHERN IRELAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES)



**GORDON COOK
FOUNDATION**

Institute for
Global Ethics 

WHO ARE WE?

The Five Nations Network brings together practitioners, policy-makers, teacher educators, inspectors, stakeholders, NGO representatives and, more recently, young people from across the **Five Nations** (i.e. from **England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland** and **Wales**) who have unique, in-depth and up-to-date expertise in education for citizenship and values. They share practice and learn from each other.

The Five Nations Network has evolved over the past decade. It holds an annual conference and has a Strategy Group with participants from all five countries.

The Network is supported by the Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust and sponsored by the Gordon Cook Foundation.

Citizenship and values education has come a long way in the Five Nations. A decade ago it was largely an aspiration and plans were 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. As a result:

- **In England**, Citizenship is a statutory subject in schools
- **In Ireland**, Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) is statutory during junior cycle in schools
- **In Northern Ireland**, Local and Global Citizenship is a statutory subject in schools
- **In Scotland**, Values and Citizenship is one of the Five National Priorities in Education
- **In Wales**, Citizenship is part of the statutory provision for Personal and Social Education (PSE) and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)

Despite considerable differences in culture, history and approach to citizenship and values education in each of the Five Nations, the broad context driving current developments is similar and with it come similar challenges and concerns in each educational system.

This commonality of experience provides the Five Nations Network with a strong foundation upon which to discuss and share outcomes. It gives the Network a growing confidence in setting the agenda for citizenship and values education and promoting action.

CITIZENSHIP AND VALUES EDUCATION

Vision

The Five Nations Network has a shared vision that *every young person* in England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales has a right, as well as an entitlement, to high quality citizenship and values education.

Need

We believe that the need for promoting and embedding citizenship and values education, in our complex, challenging and changing world, is greater than ever before – hence the title '*Citizenship and Values Education to the Rescue!*'

The challenges posed by the lack of trust and public confidence in politics and politicians, the rise of the far right parties in the European elections and the global meltdown of the financial system, all further strengthen the case for effective citizenship and values education across our society.

Impact

Our collective experience underlines that high quality citizenship and values education for young people and society:

- Helps to promote and strengthen the values of democracy, citizenship, human rights and good governance
- Educates people, particularly young people, to play an active and responsible part in democratic life and exercise their rights and responsibilities in society
- Prepares people with the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values needed to work together on issues, make decisions and take action
- Makes a major contribution to community cohesion and equity in society

We issue this *Call to Action* to galvanise support and build capacity for citizenship and values education.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

The changing contexts within which citizenship and values education is framed and practiced are creating 'windows of opportunity' for strengthening and embedding it across the Five Nations.

- *In society* – the challenges posed by the lack of trust and public confidence in politics and politicians, the global economic downturn and the rapid movement of people in society make even stronger the case for promoting citizenship and values education, as a positive antidote to such challenges.
- *In education and training* – the drive to educate and prepare young people positively for life in the 21st century and the move to more flexible curriculum and learning frameworks strengthen the opportunities to promote citizenship and values education at all levels.
- *In schools* – the encouragement to school leaders and teachers to shape the curriculum to the needs of their learners, school and local contexts, creates opportunities for citizenship and values education to be integral to the values, organisation and learning experiences in schools.
- *Among young people* – the increasing concern of young people about society and frustration at not having a voice on issues that matter to them create the opportunity to underline the relevance of citizenship and values education to their lives and concerns.

Taken together, these '*windows of opportunity*' provide the catalyst for collective action and underpin our *Call to Action*.

LINES OF ACTION

The Five Nations Network has come up with a number of '*Lines of Action*'. These set the agenda for citizenship and values education. They are to:

- 1. Achieve greater policy engagement at all levels** – engage with policies directly related to citizenship and values education and also with wider policies concerning reform of education, training and local communities.
- 2. Strengthen policy implementation and support structures** – secure funding for support structures and networks that make citizenship and values education more sustainable.
- 3. Secure more leaders and advocates** – build increased support for citizenship and values education at all levels of society.
- 4. Improve quality and standards** – keep on raising the bar so that policy and practice in citizenship and values education become better and more consistent at all levels.
- 5. Secure more effective training** – ensure an entitlement to on-going training for all those involved in the delivery of citizenship and values education so that, in particular, they are more confident in using active and participative approaches.
- 6. Build a more secure and useable evidence base** – build a stronger evidence base for citizenship and values education that makes the case for it to be integral to policy and practice in society, education and local communities.
- 7. Take more time to celebrate successes and achievements** – do more to promote and highlight effective practices and celebrate successes, particularly those involving young people.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

The Five Nations Network is working hard to make the *Lines of Action* realisable. We are building further capacity for citizenship and values education:

- *Securing allies and resources* – we are looking to broaden the base of policy-making and ensure that citizenship and values education involves both politicians and representatives of civil society;
- *Building networks, partnerships and alliances* – the Network already contains a broad range of partners and allies and effective networks and we will continue to develop and expand these;
- *Holding an annual conference* – the Network has evolved through its annual conferences and this will continue as we look to work with more partners and allies;
- *Planning pilot projects* – we are launching a programme of innovative pilot projects looking to address aspects of citizenship and values education about which we need to know more;
- *Disseminating outcomes* – we will be disseminating the outcomes of our pilot projects and other Network developments, with an emphasis on ‘what works’;
- *Making greater use of media and ICT* – through the *Call to Action* and launch of our Network website, we are using the power of new technology to promote greater networking and sharing;
- *Building in formal and non-formal settings* – the Network is looking to embed citizenship and values education not just in schools and colleges, but also in workplaces, training providers, community centres, churches and the like.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are a number of practical ways in which you can work alongside us to make the vision for citizenship and values education real.

We request your active support and commitment in:

- Taking up the *Call to Action* and actively promoting it to others so as to build real momentum and have maximum impact
- Joining the Five Nations Network and working with other allies and partners to strengthen and embed citizenship and values education across our differing contexts
- Working alongside us in taking forward the *Lines of Action* both through your own actions and those planned by the Network
- Helping to strengthen and embed citizenship education at crucial *points of entry* which are key to developing effective citizenship and values education across society.

These *points of entry* are:

- *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 and curriculum* – building citizenship and values education into the fabric of how they are organised and the aims and values which underpin daily working practices and relationships;
- *Education and training* – ensuring that all those who promote citizenship and values education in schools and other education and training institutions have sufficient training and expertise;
- *Local communities* – guaranteeing that all have access to citizenship and values education, including the marginalised and those in non-formal settings;
- *Young people* – ensuring that all young people have equitable access to citizenship and values education, and not just the empowered minority or the ‘hard to reach’

Much has been achieved already across the Five Nations, but there is still much work to do to make the vision for citizenship and values education real:

‘Citizenship is a journey not a destination’

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 **Call to Action** 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 help strengthen and further embed it 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

FURTHER INFORMATION

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