

The Response of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra to the Request for Submissions to Inform the Development of a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development

St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra,¹ as an interested party in the formal third-level education sector, is pleased to respond to the invitation of the Departments of Education and Science and Environment, Heritage and Local Government seeking its views and recommendations on how education for sustainable development (ESD) may best be promoted and developed through a national strategy. The College welcomes the development of a national strategy and recommends a proactive, coherent and integrated approach be adopted to ensure the development and institutionalisation of ESD across all education sectors.

This submission will focus on the key themes identified in ESD that have particular relevance to the operation of the College, namely: citizenship, human rights and cultural diversity. This submission accepts the view that there is a dynamic and constitutive relationship between education for sustainable development and citizenship and human rights education and inclusive educational practices and that the promotion of sustainable development within education is consistent with a concern for participative democracy, human rights and social inclusion in a multicultural society. In relation to the strands of ESD outlined in the invitation, this submission, in effect, addresses the following areas relating to strategic development:

- Integration of ESD into formal and non-formal education and training
- Promotion of ESD in initial training of educators and in continuous professional development
- Promotion of awareness of ESD issues among the general population
- Promotion of research in education related to SD

Background Information about St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra

Since its foundation, in 1875, St. Patrick's College has had a distinguished history in the area of teacher education. Through its programmes and courses, and through the quality of its graduates, the college has made an important contribution to education in Ireland. The College has sought, through its programmes, policies and structures, to respond effectively and with sensitivity to the ever-changing landscape of Irish education, to the needs of learners and teachers and to the rapid societal changes that are ongoing. In particular, it has identified educational disadvantage and marginalised communities, along with the challenges and opportunities of increasing cultural diversity as college priorities. In its Mission Statement and in its Strategic Plan 2006-2011, the College includes a commitment to the promotion of equity as part of its role as a third-level institution. Furthermore, in its Strategic Plan it has committed itself to the development of citizenship and human rights education as part of its response to changing educational and societal needs. The College has sought to both institutionalise and make operational these commitments through a) the creation of

¹ This submission was prepared on behalf of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra by the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education in consultation with a range of key informants within the College.

policy b) establishment of structures and c) development of initiatives (Exemplars of which are presented in tabular form as an Appendix to this submission).

1. Citizenship and Human Rights Education

St. Patrick's College welcomes recent advancements in citizenship and human rights education at primary and post-primary level. Specifically, it welcomes the focus on participative citizenship in the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum at primary level and the Civil, Social and Political Education curriculum at second level. Moreover, it recognises that the Primary Curriculum in particular is open to approaches that prioritise active citizenship, human rights and intercultural education. Nonetheless, the College holds that there is little evidence in practice of a coherent and integrated approach to citizenship and human rights education across the education sectors. Initiatives that have been developed (e.g. Lift Off) tend to be small scale, localised and in receipt of short term funding. Moreover, the college is particularly concerned that neither the recommendations of the Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) nor the government response to that report recognise the role of the primary education sector in citizenship education nor the rights of children attending primary school to have their voices heard. Yet recent research has confirmed that before they leave the primary system children have already developed ideas around identity and perceptions of other cultures that are stereotypical and prejudiced (Gash & Murphy-Lejeune, 2004; Waldron & Pike 2006).² If the Irish education system is to respond effectively to the opportunities and challenges of an increasingly diverse society it needs to recognise the generative role of citizenship, human rights and intercultural education in the creation of a successful intercultural and democratic society.

It is axiomatic that the role of the teacher is central to the success of efforts to place sustainable development at the heart of educational discourse and practice. Consequently, teacher education, at pre-service, in-service and postgraduate levels, plays a fundamental part in shaping the development and implementation of ESD. Building capacity within the teaching profession is key to the successful mainstreaming of ESD within the primary system.

The successful implementation of approaches to ESD across a range of pedagogies requires a preliminary process of curriculum innovation, piloting and evaluation. Each of these stages needs access to a fair and transparent programme of funding. However, unless projects that have been successfully piloted and positively evaluated become part of a coherent and integrated implementation programme, their potential to effect development and change in the system is not realised. The College, therefore, makes the following recommendations:

- 1.1. To adopt a policy of mainstreaming short-term and/or pilot projects which have been systematically evaluated as contributing to the objectives of the National Strategy on ESD.

² Gash, H. & Murphy-Lejeune, E. "Children's perceptions of other cultures" in Devine, D. et al. (eds.) *Primary Voices. Issues in Primary Education*, Dublin: The Institute of Public Administration (2004); Waldron, F. & Pike, S. (2006) 'What does it mean to be Irish? Children's constructions of national identity.' In *Irish Educational Studies*, Volume 25, Number 2.

- 1.2. Within the context of teacher education, at pre-service and in-service level, to provide for long-term support of ESD programmes/initiatives/projects in the form of 'ring-fenced' funding and resources to enable their development and sustainability.
- 1.3. Supporting ESD in teacher education (along with other professions) through targeted funding of research and curriculum innovation.

2. Cultural and Social Diversity in Teacher Education

Given its very recent history of substantial inward migration, Ireland has a unique opportunity to construct a truly intercultural society. Part of the context for the success of ESD at primary level is the promotion of a more diverse body of teachers and teacher educators. St. Patrick's College is committed to developing its policy and practice to meet the challenges and opportunities of this growing diversity and to the creation of an intercultural campus. Moreover, it recognises the absence of historic minorities such as Travellers and differently-abled people, from its student and staff cohorts, along with the under-representation of members of economically and socially disadvantaged communities. The policies, structures and initiatives taken by the College to address these important issues are outlined in Appendix 1. The opportunities and challenges identified by St. Patrick's College are sectoral. While College policies and initiatives will go some way towards effecting change, a systemic response is also needed. The College makes the following recommendations:

- 2.1 Increased funding of access programmes which target under-represented groups in teacher education and the provision of funding to provide on-going support to individuals from minority groups throughout their initial teacher education.
- 2.2 Systematic policy of recruitment of teachers and classroom assistants from under-represented groups.
- 2.3 Identification of barriers to participation for all under-represented groups and the development of systematic approaches to their alleviation through the provision of funded and proactive support programmes and/or to their removal where appropriate.

3. Promoting a Participative-Partnership Approach

Education for active citizenship and human rights is premised on a view of children as competent and actively engaged in constructing their understanding of the world. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) articulates the rights of children and young people to participate in society and to have a say in issues and procedures that affect their lives. In effect, this means that the child/young person is entitled to full participation and voice in her/his educative process, that he/she is entitled to central consideration in the organisation and ethos of the educational institution and of the curricula and teaching/learning methodologies adopted by these institutions. This recognition of children's right to consultation and participation is endorsed by both the National Children's Strategy (2000) and the Education Act (1998). However, while the support for school councils at second level is welcome, it is regrettable that the participation of children at primary level in decision-making within their schools is not similarly endorsed (Downes & Maunsell, 2007).³

Citizenship and human rights education are essential to the development of active and democratic citizens; it is also the right of all children to participate in such education. Any strategy for ESD, therefore should include targeted funding for citizenship and

³ For an example of innovation relating to student councils at primary school level cf. Downes, P & Maunsell, C. (2007). *Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin*. Dublin: Educational Disadvantage Centre and SICCCA pp. 99ff.

human rights education programmes in school communities characterised by diversity and/or poverty.

In the light of this, the College presents the following recommendations:

- 3.1 Targeted funding for projects focused on citizenship and human rights education in school communities characterised by social and ethnic diversity, including Irish Travellers, and with differently-abled children.
- 3.2 Ensure that a child, young person and learner-centred, participative approach is adopted through wide and ongoing consultation processes with all partners in education, including children.
- 3.3 Recognition of the rights of younger children to have their voices heard and to provide a context for the practice of participative citizenship through endorsing and facilitating the development of schools' councils at primary level.
- 3.4 Support of teachers and schools to develop confidence in and openness to democratic school and classroom processes and to greater participation of children in decision-making in schools through continuing professional development, through the facilitation of whole school projects and through the creation of support networks across schools.
- 3.5 That a sustainable partnership approach be adopted involving the development of a National Network/Forum on ESD alongside localised network structures. It is proposed that key stakeholders at the national and local community level would be involved, with representation drawn from both educational and wider community contexts.

4. Holistic Approach

The ethos of the whole school/institution premised on ESD is one that promotes positive and inclusive senses of self, and of local, national and global identity and a commitment to accountability and transparency, social justice and global solidarity. Moreover, such a school develops best in the context of a wider community that shares its ethos and supports its project.

Across educational contexts, a broad curriculum that reflects the diversity and pluralism of society is imperative to embed education for sustainable development. Such a curriculum must be constructive in its understanding of knowledge and learner-centred in its rationale. It must promote educational approaches that will develop the individual, be they child or adult, as an active self-directed learner, with a sense of enquiry and creativity, and a propensity to be an agent for critical reflection and change.

The College recognises that the Primary School Curriculum 1999, provides a supportive and positive environment for ESD. Premised on a view of education that is child centred and prioritises active engagement with learning, the curriculum is underpinned by an inclusive philosophy of interculturalism. While the primary curriculum is receptive to ESD, however, it needs to be embedded in school practice in an integrated and holistic way. The following recommendations are proposed by the College:

- 4.1 Provision of In-service days focused on the integration of ESD across the curriculum.
- 4.2 Support for the development of whole-school approaches to ESD through the provision of additional support on planning and through the facilitation of processes of consultation with the wider community.
- 4.3 Development of wider consciousness raising projects and campaigns around ESD in the wider community

5. Research and Evaluation

Education for sustainable development needs to be underpinned by appropriate research and innovation, particularly research in the context of teacher education, child learning and curriculum innovation and implementation. A culture of research that aims to foster evidence-based policy and practice is, in effect, fundamental to the principles of ESD. Furthermore, engagement in cycles of review and evaluation can ensure that policies, structures and initiatives relating to ESD are responsive to the goal of a sustainable future. The College recommends that the following be taken into account in the development of a national strategy on ESD.

- 5.1. Development of democratic research practice with children, young adults, educationalists and communities.
- 5.2. Engagement in strategic planning, at a national level, of research and evaluation in relation to ESD.
- 5.3. Development, at a national level, of a funded programme of research and evaluation pertaining to ESD.
- 5.4. Provision of support for the formation of research partnerships relating to ESD.

APPENDIX 1.

Exemplars of the College’s existing policies, structures and initiatives which have the effect of promoting sustainable development.

AREA	INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION
Policy	College Mission Statement	Within the context of ESD the College Mission Statement holds that “... The College shall strive to be an academic community which in a rigorous and critical fashion, assists in the protection and advancement of human dignity and of a cultural heritage through teaching, learning, research and various services it may be able to offer to local, national and international communities.” Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/about/mission.shtml
Policy	College Strategic Plan	A number of themes central to ESD, including those relating to the international dimension of the work of the College, links with the wider community and a stated commitment to creating an inclusive College are explicitly identified as strategic priorities within the College Strategic Plan – <i>Ar Aghaidh 2006-2010</i> . Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/administration/president/planning.shtml
Policy, Structures and Initiatives	Intercultural and Development Education Committee	Established in 2003, IDEC is a committee of the Academic Council of the College assigned the functions of: a) developing college policy on intercultural and development education b) supporting initiatives in areas relating to intercultural education and c) fostering links with external organisations. Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/moreilly/idec.htm
Policy, Structures and Initiatives	Equality Committee	The Equality committee is charged with responsibility for reviewing relevant legislation and developing and promoting equality policies and practices within the College.
Policy, Structures and Initiatives	Educational Disadvantage Centre	The Educational Disadvantage Centre was set up in 2000 to specifically target educational disadvantage arising from poverty, social exclusion and cultural diversity. The Centre's mission is to promote equality in education and to contribute to the shaping of primary teacher education, so that the cycle of educational disadvantage is broken. Located within the College's Faculty of Education, the Centre aims to contribute to best practice in national and international policy regarding the implications of social and economic disadvantage on education. Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/academic/ede/index.shtml

<p>Policy, Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education</p>	<p>The CHRCE is committed to building capacity in human rights and citizenship education in initial and post-graduate teacher education and in the primary school system. The approach of the Centre in relation to human rights and citizenship education includes both a local and global focus. As part of its work, the Centre organised the recent conference to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade, Abolition 1807-2007. The Centre has also organised a series of capacity building seminars within the College which has facilitated staff in their engagement with human rights and citizenship education. CHRCE is also engaged in a programme of research and policy development which will include working directly with primary school communities (children, staff, parents) to develop whole school approaches to and resources in human rights and citizenship education. Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/chrce</p>
<p>Policy, Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>In-service Education</p>	<p>A range of initiatives are pursued within the College in relation to the full spectrum of continuing teacher education, evinced by the establishment of a Director of In-service Education in 2002. Relevant activities include the hosting of Certificate and Diploma courses, summer courses and workshops. Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/inservice</p>
<p>Policy, Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>International Affairs</p>	<p>The College has successful exchange agreements, for both students and staff, with a range of "partner-universities". Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/administration/international/index.shtml</p>
<p>Policy, Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>Online Teaching and Learning (EOLAS)</p>	<p>Development of online teaching and learning initiatives in the College with the effect of enhancing the College's capacity for outreach, while widening access and participation. Website: www.spdonline.ie/</p>
<p>Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>Student Support Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Access Office was introduced to assist and enable students who do not have a tradition of progression to higher education. Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/administration/access/index.shtml • The Senior Tutor Service has the aim of improving student well-being and reducing the likelihood of student attrition. Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/administration/senior_tutor/index.shtml • A confidential Student Counselling Service is available to the College community.

		<p>Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/administration/counselling/index.shtml</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College through the Mature Student's Office makes provision for a range of services specifically for mature students. <p>Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/administration/mature/MatureStudents.shtml</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College is an active participant in the Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) project. This project is funded by Irish Aid and focuses on development and intercultural education. The College has an active and ongoing relationship with Amnesty International in the development of its human rights education programme and in the work of the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education.
<p>Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>Strategic Partnerships/Collaboration</p>	
<p>Policy, Structures and Initiatives</p>	<p>Curriculum Level</p>	<p>Through the ongoing development of its College programmes, St. Patrick's College is contributing substantially to capacity building within the primary system in relation to ESD. Examples of such programmes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EdID : Strand on Citizenship M. Ed.: The M.Ed includes special options on educational disadvantage and interculturalism. B.Ed. and Graduate Diploma in Education: Citizenship, human rights and intercultural education are integrated across Curriculum History, Curriculum Geography and SPHE. Intercultural education is integrated across a range of curricular areas – reading, early childhood education, drama in education – and is a theme in the following foundation courses – philosophy of education, sociology of education and the psychology of education. <p>A number of elective options offered to B.Ed students in their third year pertain to ESD- related themes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'The World in the Classroom': Elective in Intercultural and Development Education 'Literacy Practices in a Multi-Lingual Classroom' 'Making a Difference: Educational Disadvantage' <p>Of the academic subjects that are part of the B. Ed., Geography and History contain substantial courses that are directly relevant to the development of a</p>

		<p>sound knowledge base in ESD. The History Department, for example, teaches a course on the history of slavery while students of Geography can take courses in globalisation, development and sustainability. Other academic subjects such as French, Irish and English, develop themes that contribute to students understanding of interculturalism.</p> <p>Of particular note: In the coming academic year 2007-08, the College will be extending its provision in development, human rights and intercultural education through the development of a dedicated and mandatory course and an increased number of elective specialisms.</p>
Policy, Structures and Initiatives	Research	<p>A range of recent and current research around themes relating to ESD are or have been undertaken by College personnel. A full outline of the range and depth of such research may be accessed at Website: www.spd.dcu.ie/main/research/index.shtml</p>
Initiatives	Awareness Raising - Conferences	<p>Examples of recent conferences with relevance to ESD hosted by the College:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolition 1807-2007: A conference to commemorate the abolition of the slave trade (February, 2007). This conference was interdisciplinary with a strong educational focus. The conference was funded by Irish Aid and developed in partnership with the History Department, St. Patrick's College and with Amnesty Ireland, the Africa Centre, Trócaire and Anti-Slavery International. • Minority Ethnic and Language Children in Irish Schools (June, 2007).
Initiatives	Active Civic Engagement of Students	<p>Students of St. Patrick's College have been and continue to be actively engaged in a range of civic activities including fund-raising for projects such as Chernobyl Children's Fund and a Student's Union initiative to build a school in Ghana.</p>