

# RESEARCH ON THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING GCE STRATEGIES IN IRELAND

## STUDIES

**GCE**  
in policy

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September 2024 - May 2025



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## Glossary

**Céim:** Initial Teacher Education Standards Requirements

**DE:** Development Education

**DCEDIY:** Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

**DETE:** Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

**DFA:** Department of Foreign Affairs

**DFHERIS:** Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

**DICE:** Development & Intercultural Education

**Dóchas:** The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

**ESD:** Education for Sustainable Development

**ESD to 2030:** Ireland's Second National Strategy on ESD.

**GCE:** Global Citizenship Education

**GCED:** Global Citizenship Education

**IDEA:** Irish Development Education Association

**ITE:** Initial Teacher Education

**LAOS:** Looking at Our School

**NCCA:** National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

**NGO:** Non-governmental Organisation

**UBUNTU:** The Ubuntu Network

**WWGS:** WorldWide Global School



# Introduction

The implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) strategies at a national level in Ireland represents a critical endeavour to foster informed, active, and ethically aware citizens in an increasingly interconnected world. This report examines the opportunities and challenges associated with this process, drawing on rich qualitative insights obtained through interviews with key informants in the Irish GCE sector.

The first section of this report provides an analysis of the context of GCE policy development in Ireland. The relevant key concepts and terminology are presented and include a timeline of GCE, ESD and DE milestones ranging from the 1960s to present day. This first section sets the scene of the Irish education system, including its place and role within a broader whole of government context. Key national policy documents which include Ireland's Second National Strategy on ESD: ESD to 2030 and the Global Citizenship Education Strategy provide an overarching picture of GCE and ESD development and planning in recent years. Additional information aligned specifically with formal education and training activities provides further information on how these GCE engagements are aligned.

The policy analysis is populated by information gathered from a range of active GCE stakeholders who are actively engaged in a range of GCE activities in Ireland. This discourse analysis explores the interplay between global and national priorities in education, uncovering factors that enable or hinder the realisation of GCE objectives. By analysing the experiences and expertise of sectoral stakeholders, the report identifies key themes such as alignment with national education policies, resource allocation, stakeholder collaboration, and the impact of socio-political contexts. This examination aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Ireland can effectively navigate the complexities of embedding GCE within its educational systems while addressing challenges that emerge in practice.

This research aims to provide a contemporary understanding of the opportunities and challenges of implementing GCE strategies in Ireland. The information analysed and gathered endeavours to demonstrate the journey and impact from the written policy statements and aspirations to the lived experiences of the various stakeholders who must enact them.



# 1. Global Citizenship Education in Ireland

The Department of Education, under the control of the Minister for Education, is in overall control of policy, funding and direction. The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, formed in August 2020, creates policy and controls funding for third-level institutions. Many other statutory and non-statutory bodies have a function in the education system.

## 1.1 Irish Education System

The Irish education system is structured into several stages, predominantly managed by the **Department of Education**.

1. **Early Childhood Education:** This stage, catering to children aged 3 to 6, is non-compulsory. It is primarily focused on social, emotional, and early cognitive development through play-based learning.
2. **Primary Education:** Compulsory for children aged 6 to 12, this stage lasts eight years. The curriculum covers English, Irish, mathematics, social, environmental and scientific education (SESE), arts (visual arts, music, drama), physical education, social, personal, and health education (SPHE), and religious or ethical education.
3. **Lower Secondary Education (Junior Cycle):** Compulsory for students aged 12 to 15, the Junior Cycle lasts three years. Subjects include English, Irish, mathematics, science, history, geography, a foreign language, and a variety of optional subjects like art, business, and technology. The Junior Certificate exams are taken at the end of this cycle to assess students' progress.
4. **Upper Secondary Education (Senior Cycle):** For students aged 15 to 18, this stage offers two main options: the Transition Year and a two-year Senior Cycle. The Transition Year is optional and focuses on personal development, work experience, and non-academic learning. The Senior Cycle includes multiple pathways—Traditional Leaving Cert, Leaving Cert Applied (focused on practical skills), and Leaving Cert Vocational (with an emphasis on vocational subjects). Completion of the Senior Cycle requires sitting the Leaving Certificate exams, which are crucial for university admission.
5. **Further Education and Training:** Post-secondary education that provides vocational, technical, and adult education through Further Education Colleges, Institutes of Technology, and other training centres.
6. **Higher Education:** This stage includes universities, Institutes of Technology, and Colleges of Education, offering qualifications from undergraduate to postgraduate levels.

Irish schools operate with a degree of autonomy while adhering to national education standards set by the Department of Education. They can adapt curricula to local needs, develop school plans, and adjust teaching methods and extracurricular activities within regulatory guidelines. The 1998 Education Act formalised decentralization, granting schools greater control over staffing and finances while maintaining oversight through assessments and inspections.

Ireland's Curriculum Framework allows flexibility in content delivery, encouraging student-centred learning and innovative assessment methods like the Junior Cycle Framework. Reforms, such as the introduction of Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE), reflect a shift towards fostering critical thinking, democracy, and social responsibility. Despite this autonomy, national standards ensure consistency across schools while allowing for diverse teaching approaches.



## 1.2 Key Concepts – Terminology and Definitions

In Ireland, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is aligned with national educational priorities through a variety of strategies and initiatives, emphasising the importance of global responsibility, sustainability, and social justice. While Ireland does not have a single, unified strategy for GCE, the principles of global citizenship are embedded within several key policy frameworks and educational programs. In addition to Global Citizen Education (GCE), Development Education (DE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are the key terms/concepts which reflect GCE themes, playing a prominent role in policy and curriculum texts.

### Irish Policy Frameworks and Definitions

In Ireland, GCE is framed by documents like the Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development: ESD to 2030, the Action Plan for Education, and the Development Education Strategy led by Irish Aid. These strategies reflect a commitment to integrating GCE principles into both formal and informal education. They are developed and overseen by key stakeholders, including the Department of Education, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Irish non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

### A Cross-Curricular Approach

GCE in Ireland is considered through a cross-curricular educational approach rather than a standalone subject. It aims to integrate themes like sustainable development, human rights, social justice, and diversity across all areas of the curriculum. Subjects like Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE), Geography, and Science often incorporate GCE elements, emphasising the global dimension of local and national issues. The Junior Cycle reform, introduced in 2014, further supports this approach by embedding GCE-related competencies across different subjects, focusing on critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning.

### Key Roots of GCE in Ireland

The development of GCE in Ireland has several historical and thematic roots:

- **Development Education:** Development Education in Ireland has been significantly influenced by Irish Aid, the government's international development agency. This form of education has traditionally focused on issues like global poverty, inequality, and sustainable development. Irish Aid's Development Education Strategy aims to raise awareness and encourage action on global issues, using education as a tool to foster empathy and social justice.
- **Human Rights and Equality Education:** Another pillar of GCE is human rights education, which promotes awareness and understanding of individual and collective rights. This focus is embedded in the curriculum through Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE) and initiatives led by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, aiming to combat discrimination and foster inclusive education.
- **Intercultural Education:** Ireland's approach to GCE also draws heavily on intercultural education, which emphasises understanding and respecting diversity. The Intercultural Education Strategy set a framework for promoting inclusive education that acknowledges and values the cultural backgrounds of all students. This has been especially relevant in the context of Ireland's increasingly multicultural society.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Education:** Environmental education has gained prominence within the framework of GCE, particularly through the influence of the Green-Schools Programme (known internationally as Eco-Schools), a school-based environmental education initiative. This program,





supported by the Department of Environment and Climate Action, encourages students to engage with sustainability issues and take practical actions for the environment.

In Ireland, GCE is viewed as a comprehensive and integrated educational approach that brings together multiple strands—development education, human rights, intercultural education, and environmental education. These different forms of education create a productive ground where GCE can flourish, allowing schools to address complex global challenges in a holistic way. The integration of GCE principles often involves revising curricula, developing school-wide projects, and providing professional development opportunities for educators.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

GCE in Ireland places a strong emphasis on stakeholder involvement, reflecting a commitment to collaborative and democratic education. The implementation of GCE relies on partnerships between schools, local communities, NGOs, and government bodies. Organisations like the Ubuntu Network, WorldWide Global Schools and the Irish Development Education Association play an important role in supporting teacher training and curriculum development related to GCE. This participatory model aims to cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility among all actors involved in the educational process.

## **1.3 Milestones for GCE, ESD and DE in Ireland**

Milestones for Global Citizenship Education, including Education for Sustainable Development and Development Education in the policy and strategy arena. Relevant policies and strategies aligned to global themes e.g. migration, inclusion, gender are referenced where appropriate.

- **1967:** Civics is introduced as a mandatory subject in second level schools and is allocated one class period per week. This subject is not assessed.
- **1974:** Irish Aid, Ireland's development programme is formed. It is a unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- **1984:** Irish Aid begins funding Development Education projects, primarily through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to raise awareness about global poverty, inequality, and development issues.
- **1993:** Irish Aid's Development Education Programme is established, marking the government's formal support for integrating development and global citizenship themes into education.
- **1993:** The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) publishes a discussion document on Civic, Social and Political Education, and a pilot programme is launched
- **1997:** Civic, Social and Political Education becomes a compulsory lower second level subject in post-primary schools and is allocated 70 hours over the three lower second level years. A whole-school approach and in-service training for teachers and school management are advocated.
- **1999:** Comhar, the Sustainable Development Council is established by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government as the forum for national consultation and dialogue on all issues relating to sustainable development.
- **2003:** The Development Education Unit of Ireland Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs is established (DEU).
- **2004:** The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is established
- **2005:** The National Action Plan Against Racism (2005-2008) is published. The plan includes initiatives to improve intercultural awareness among educators and support diversity in schools.

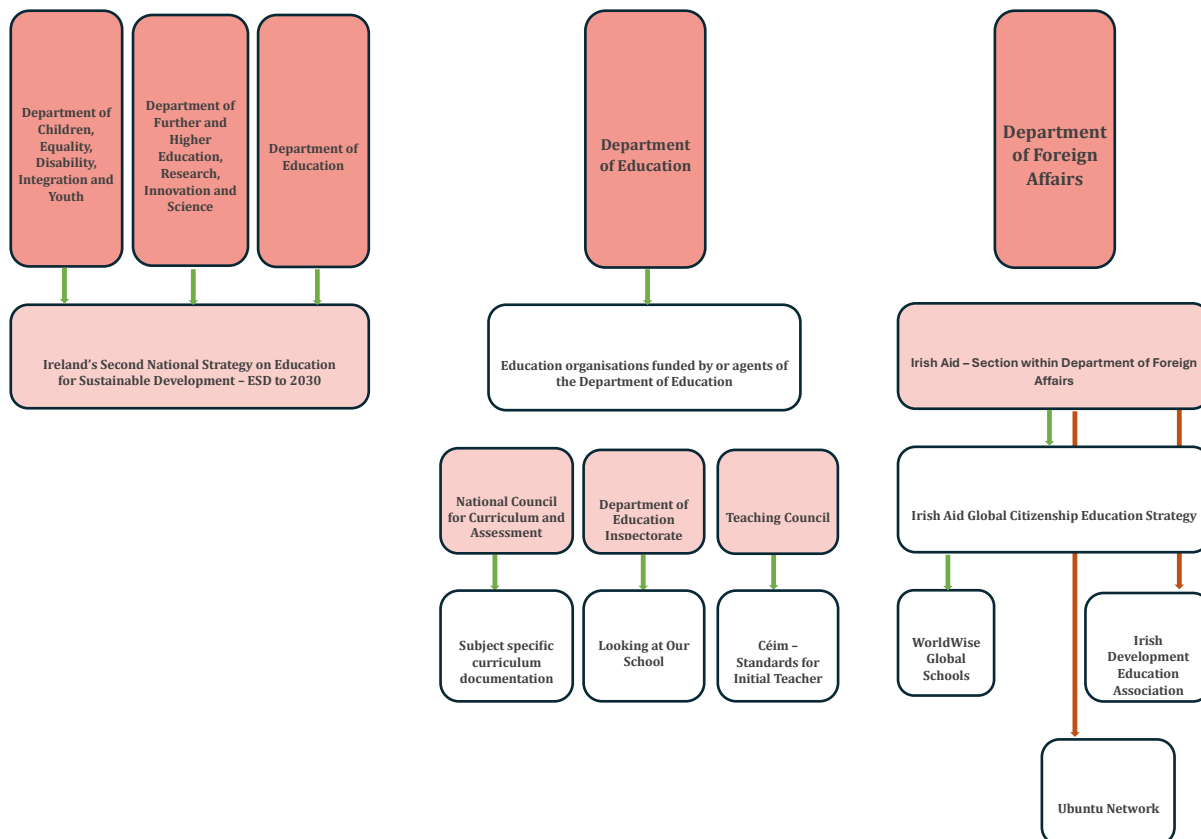


- **2006:** The Ubuntu Network is established to promote development education, education for sustainable development (ESD), and global citizenship education (GCE) among second level teacher educators in Ireland. It is funded by Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs
- **2010:** The Intercultural Education Strategy (2010-2015) is published. This framework aims to promote inclusivity, diversity, and the integration of intercultural education throughout the school system.
- **2013:** WorldWise Global Schools through which Irish Aid support for GCE in second level settings is coordinated, is established. The aim of the programme is to increase the number of second-level settings engaging in quality global citizenship education by providing a comprehensive range of support.
- **2014:** Introduction of the Junior Cycle Reform for lower second level education, embedding GCE principles. The Junior Cycle Framework introduced “Statements of Learning,” which include sustainability and global citizenship concepts across multiple subjects
- **2014:** The First National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development is published, aiming to promote whole institution approaches to sustainability.
- **2015:** Civic, Social and Political Education becomes part of a Wellbeing Programme with external assessment removed. CSPE is now referred to as a ‘short course’.
- **2017:** Launch of the Development Education Strategy (2017-2023) by Irish Aid, with the goal of embedding development education in all levels of the Irish education system, from primary to tertiary, including adult and community education.
- **2018:** Introduction of Wellbeing as a compulsory area of learning in the Junior Cycle curriculum, integrating GCE themes like empathy, environmental awareness, and active citizenship.
- **2019:** The Climate Action Plan is launched, with a focus on educating young people about climate change and sustainability. It includes new guidelines for schools on how to integrate climate education into various subjects.
- **2019:** A Better World – Ireland’s Policy for International Development is published. It commits to a strengthened focus on global citizenship and public engagement.
- **2020:** Introduction of the Senior Cycle Certificate Politics and Society Subject, a course that includes global citizenship, human rights, sustainable development, and social justice, reflecting GCE values at the Senior Cycle level.
- **2021:** Launch of the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030 framework, which Ireland adopts to guide future educational policies around sustainability and global citizenship.
- **2021:** The Irish Aid National Global Citizenship Education Strategy (2021– 2025) is published. It aims to build a broader sense of global citizenship in Ireland, encouraging the public to engage with and learn about the issues that will define the 21st century – including climate change, hunger, peace, global inequality and injustice.
- **2022:** Introduction of the Climate Action Bill, reinforcing the role of schools in educating about climate change, sustainability, and the environment, further embedding these themes into GCE.
- **2022:** Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools is published. This framework contains updated text which supports schools to engage with education for sustainable development as part of their whole school planning.
- **2022:** The Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development: ESD to 2030 is published, aiming to integrate the principles of sustainability, human rights, and global citizenship throughout the curriculum and teacher training.
- **2023:** Publication of the National Action Plan Against Racism. The Plan includes actions to strengthen inclusion and anti-racism at all levels of the education system, including through addressing any bias embedded in the curriculum, and to support approaches that are fully intersectional and intercultural.



## 1.4 Key Stakeholders - Government

### Government of Ireland Ministerial Departments



**The Government of Ireland** (Irish: Rialtas na hÉireann) is the executive authority of the Republic of Ireland. The head of Government is the Taoiseach, who is nominated by parliament and the Taoiseach nominates a deputy (the Tánaiste) and a cabinet of ministers to take responsibility for the departments of government.

Policy documents are generally produced by the civil servants in government departments. The most significant and current document relating to Education for Sustainable Development is the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030, which was published in 2022. This document was developed and published collectively by three government departments who are equally responsible for its implementation – the Department of Education, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

**Department of Education** is a ministerial department, supported by various agencies and supporting bodies. Its mission is to facilitate children and young people, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development.



The Department of Education distributes its work through several sections. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP) is responsible for the support of the development of overall policy relating to assessment, curricula and guidance. CAP provides:

- syllabuses, specifications and guidelines for teachers, circulars to schools and prescribed material for the examinations.
- funding for state bodies whose work aligns to the operation of the work of the Department of Education
- support for the implementation of several strategies and policies including the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland

*The Department of Education Inspectorate* is the division of the Department of Education responsible for the evaluation of early learning and care settings, primary schools, special schools and post-primary schools and centres for education. Inspectors also provide advice on a range of educational issues to school communities, policy makers in the department and to the wider educational system.

*Teaching Council* is the regulator of the teaching profession in Ireland. Their role is to protect the public by promoting and regulating professional standards in teaching. They do this through the statutory registration of teachers, ensuring a highly qualified teaching profession, whose members meet and uphold high standards of professional competence and conduct.

All initial teacher education programmes (primary, post-primary and further education) in Ireland that lead to registration must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council

**Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science** is responsible for the policy, funding, and governance of the higher and further education sectors, as well as research and innovation. It oversees the work of state agencies and public institutions in these areas. The department was established on August 2, 2020, and aims to support Ireland's educational and research infrastructure, ensuring the country remains competitive and innovative on a global scale.

**Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** has as its' mission to enhance the lives of children, young people, adults, families and communities, recognising diversity and promoting equality of opportunity.

**Department of Foreign Affairs** provides a range of services to Irish citizens and works to serve the Irish people, promote their values and advance their prosperity and interests abroad.

*Irish Aid* is the Government of Ireland's development cooperation programme. The programme works with partners around the world to tackle poverty, hunger and humanitarian needs in over 130 countries. Domestically, Irish Aid supports GCE, ESD and DE engagement through a range of supports. Through strategic partnerships, Irish aid provides multi-annual funding to several national organisations to engage with Global Citizenship issues e.g. Irish Development Education Association, Ubuntu Network (supporting Initial Teacher Education at second level) in addition to providing annual grants to a range of small, medium and large community organisations e.g. ECO-UNESCO, Poetry Ireland. Its targeted support for GCE at second level is provided to a consortium of organisations who operate the WorldWide Global Schools Programme.

### **Key Stakeholders – Non-Government**

In Ireland non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are instrumental in embedding Global Citizenship Education (GCE) within the Irish educational system. These organisations play a key role in advancing GCE through advocacy, resources, and partnerships with schools and educational bodies. Irish NGOs collaborate



with the Department of Education and other government agencies to develop and disseminate educational materials, promote teacher training, and secure recognition for GCE within Irish policies and curricula.

In Ireland, NGOs have organised regional and national platforms to coordinate GCE efforts, which allows for streamlined practices and the sharing of best methods across different educational contexts. Networks like the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) foster collaboration among stakeholders, including NGOs, educational institutions, and government bodies, to support a cohesive approach to GCE across the country. IDEA provides extensive resources and policy recommendations to promote GCE.



## 2. Key Strategy Documents and Organisations

The key strategy documents described in the following section highlight the approach to GCE and ESD at government level. Organisations funded specifically by different government departments are presented, particularly aligned to their role in undertaking the work of the larger ministerial and government agencies.

### 2.1 List and Summary of Main Documents

#### 2.1.1 Second National Strategy on ESD

- [Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030](#)
- [ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan](#)

Issued by: *Department of Education, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth*

The **Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030**, was published by the Government of Ireland in 2022. The Strategy is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

#### 2.1.2 Case Study – Take 1 Programme

- [www.take1programme.com](http://www.take1programme.com)

*Funded as part of the ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan - Priority Area 2*

#### 2.1.3 Teaching Council

- [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education](#)

Issued by: *Teaching Council of Ireland*

The development of the Céim standards was influenced by international research on effective teacher preparation. This included looking at best practices from countries with highly respected education systems, such as Finland, Scotland, and Australia. Additionally, the standards were guided by the European Union's recommendations for teacher education, which stress the importance of a coherent, well-structured approach to teacher training.



## 2.1.4 Department of Foreign Affairs

- [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021 - 2025](#)

Issued by: *Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs*

The Department of Foreign Affairs demonstrates its commitment to Global Citizenship Education through its 2021-2025 strategy document which is implemented through Irish Aid.

## 2.1.5 The Irish Development Education Association

- [Code of Good Practice for Development Education](#)

*Funded as part of a Strategic Partnership with Irish Aid*

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network for Development Education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector.

The Code of Good Practice for Development Education in Ireland produced by IDEA is a unique framework that articulates what quality Development/Global Citizenship Education means in the form of twelve shared Principles and related practice Indicators. The Code's main aim is to contribute to Development/Global Citizenship Education practice improvement through several activities.

## 2.1.6 The Ubuntu Network

- [www.ubuntu.ie](http://www.ubuntu.ie)

*Funded as part of a Strategic Partnership with Irish Aid*

The Ubuntu Network was established in 2006 to support the integration of Development Education into post primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland.

## 2.1.7 WorldWise Global Schools

- [www.worldwiseschools.ie](http://www.worldwiseschools.ie)

*Irish Aid developed programme to support GCE in second level schools*

WorldWise Global Schools is an Irish Aid funded programme, designed and established in 2013 as the key channel through which Irish Aid supports GCE in post-primary settings.



## 2.2 Context of Production (Relevant Strategies and Organisations)

### 2.2.1 Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development: ESD to 2030

- [Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030](#)

#### Context of production

The Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030, was published by the Government of Ireland in 2022. The Strategy is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The ESD to 2030 Public Consultation Paper and ESD Survey was developed with input from the Departments' ESD Advisory Committee – which is comprised of representatives from other Government Departments, educational programmes, higher education, the teacher unions, the Irish Second-Level Students' Union, and a range of Non-Governmental Organisations. A stakeholder consultation paper was developed to provide background information on ESD and guidance on the format for submissions.

#### ESD to 2030 – Consultation Report

Ireland's Second National Strategy is informed by policy development internationally, specifically *Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap*, published in 2020 by UNESCO, the lead UN agency for ESD. The UNESCO roadmap identified five key priority action areas which provide a framework for the Irish public consultation paper and the final Consultation Report. As a result, the Irish National Strategy for ESD to 2030 is aligned with this international agenda.

#### ESD to 2030 – Overview

Ireland's ESD to 2030 strategy sets out five key priority areas in line with UNESCO's Framework for ESD for 2030:

- Advancing policy
- Transforming learning environments
- Building capacities of educators
- Empowering and mobilising young people
- Accelerating local level actions

The overarching framework provided by the UN SDGs and Target 4.7 aligned to SDG 4, Quality Education, is a key driver underpinning Ireland's ESD strategy. The strategy spans the continuum of education in Ireland, from early learning and care to third level education and research, and extends beyond to engage with local communities, and youth groups through lifelong learning. It is accompanied by an Implementation Plan 2022 – 2026, with an interim review planned for the second half of 2026.

#### ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan





- [ESD to 2030 Implementation Plan](#)

ESD to 2030 spans 2022 to 2030 and the accompanying Implementation Plan will run from 2022 – 2026 aligning with the five priority areas as identified in the Strategy document.

Government departments have been identified as lead agents of the objectives and actions outlined in the implementation plan. Key stakeholders have been identified by those lead government departments who will support the progress and achievement of the objectives and actions. A report on progress on an annual basis is provided by each of the key stakeholders, which informs the final annual report.

The implementation plan for each Priority Area reflects the following structure.

|     | Objectives                                                                                                                                                                      | Action No. | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Lead                 | Key Stakeholders                                                                          | Timeframe  |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1.1 | <b>Collaboration:</b> Strengthen international, inter-departmental and multi-stakeholder coordination, to facilitate information sharing, accountability and engagement on ESD. | 1.1a       | Review membership and structure of ESD Advisory Group and establish related multi-stakeholder sub-groups as appropriate, to ensure policy coherence, information sharing and widest possible engagement. | DFHERIS, DoE, DCEDIY | Relevant govt depts (DoE, DFHERIS, DFA, DRCD, DECC, DoT, DoAg, DHLGH), Aegis Bodies, NGOs | Short-term |
|     |                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1.1b       | Participate in relevant UN/EU groups relating to ESD to inform Ireland's approach and share learning.                                                                                                    | DFHERIS, DoE, DCEDIY | DFA                                                                                       | Ongoing    |

*ESD to 2030: Implementation Plan - Priority Area 1: Advancing Policy (Government of Ireland, 2022, p. 2)<sup>1</sup>*

A range of objectives are outlined for each priority area. Actions are aligned to each objective, with a government department or relevant agency named to lead the action. Key stakeholders are identified aligned to the actions, with a timeframe of engagement proposed for each action.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Each of the three co-sponsoring government departments (Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) has formed their own ESD Advisory Group. These groups meet on a regular basis (every three months) to discuss and update on actions and progress.

Budget allocations for each action are not outlined in the Implementation Plan but are the remit of the lead department and drawn from their own individual budget. An interim review of the Implementation Plan will be undertaken in 2026. It is expected that review will mirror the initial process of consultation, inviting input from stakeholders and interest groups across all sectors. However, the format of this review has not been defined to date.

## 2.2.2 Case Study

### Take 1 SDG Programme

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/228358/86ea1f5f-ff88-45f0-8ee5-270997007db1.pdf#page=null>

## Embedding ESD in Learning and Teaching

- [www.take1programme.com](http://www.take1programme.com)



The *Take 1 Programme* is a professional learning programme developed from a desire to support senior leaders, middle leaders and teacher leaders in Irish second-level schools to embed ESD in learning and teaching across the lower second-level school curriculum. The training programme was initially piloted in 2019 and is currently funded by the Department of Education as part of *ESD to 2030 under Priority 2 - Transforming Learning Environments – ‘learn what we live and live what*

*we learn’*. Objective 2.1 - Leadership: Develop and support leadership for ESD. (Government of Ireland, 2022b, 6)

The *Take 1 Programme* acknowledges that the content associated with ESD and Global Citizenship Education (GCE) can be complex and vast. Coupled with the sense of urgency generated around climate anxiety, it can be challenging for teachers to know where to begin. The Sustainable Development Goals are used as the conduit for learning and teaching about the many key issues surrounding ESD.

The training approach for the *Take 1 Programme* highlights, with contemporary examples, how ESD and GCE themes are already evident as part of current subject curriculum specifications and do not need to be presented as additional content for consideration and inclusion. Through mapping the learning outcomes of subject curriculum specifications to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the *Take 1 Programme* not only raises awareness of the SDGs for students but also highlights “the implications of these goals for their individual and group lives ((UNESCO, 2020, p. 59)<sup>2</sup>. This integrated and whole-school approach aligned to prescribed learning outcomes ensures that the Take 1 Programme is inclusive of all subjects and all learners, promoting engagement opportunities for every student, in every subject in every class.

Following Take 1 Programme training; participants are encouraged to share their learning and to seek an opportunity to put that learning into action during *Take 1 Week* and *May Day for Sustainability*. These events provide schools, teachers, and students a platform to share their ESD activities, typically following a training workshop. They encourage participants to implement their learning in practical ways. For schools with minimal or no prior ESD engagement, these events serve as a starting point for action. For those with more established GCE/ESD practices, the events offer a chance to further develop and revitalise their efforts

### 2.2.3 Céim Standards for Initial Teacher Education – Teaching Council

- [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie)



<sup>2</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>



## Context

The Teaching Council is the regulator of the teaching profession in Ireland. Their role is to protect the public by promoting and regulating professional standards in teaching. They do this through the statutory registration of teachers, ensuring a highly qualified teaching profession, whose members meet and uphold high standards of professional competence and conduct.

In Ireland, initial teacher education programmes for primary and post-primary teachers are provided by a range of concurrent (undergraduate) and consecutive (postgraduate) programmes. Minimum entry requirements for programmes of initial teacher education are set by the Minister for Education, in consultation with the Teaching Council.

All initial teacher education programmes (primary, post-primary and further education) in Ireland that lead to registration must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council

## Céim Standards for Initial Teacher Education

- [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education](#)

## Context of production

The 2009 report by the Teaching Council, Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education, highlighted the need for a comprehensive and clear set of standards for ITE providers. This report emphasised that quality in teacher education should span from initial preparation to induction and continuing professional development.

The development of the Céim standards was influenced by international research on effective teacher preparation. This included looking at best practices from countries with highly respected education systems, such as Finland, Scotland, and Australia. Additionally, the standards were guided by the European Union's recommendations for teacher education, which stress the importance of a coherent, well-structured approach to teacher training.

## Public Consultation and Stakeholder Involvement:

Throughout the creation and revision of the CEIM standards, the Teaching Council engaged in a process of consultation with stakeholders. This included:

- **ITE Providers** (universities and colleges offering teacher training).
- **Practicing Teachers**, who offered insights into what new teachers needed to be effective in the classroom.
- **Educational Organizations and Unions**, such as the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI).
- **Policy Makers and Researchers** with expertise in teacher education and curriculum design.

Public consultations ensured that the standards were not only academically rigorous but also practically applicable in Irish classrooms.

In October 2020 the Teaching Council published an updated document outlining the required professional standards for all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Irish Colleges and Universities. *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* sets out the requirements which all programmes of qualification for



teaching in Ireland must meet to gain accreditation from the Teaching Council. It is also a benchmark for anybody seeking to register as a teacher in Ireland.

## Implementation

Professional accreditation from the Teaching Council offers an opportunity for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to demonstrate they are providing quality programmes of teacher education which are designed and delivered in line with the Teaching Council's professional accreditation standards. All teacher education programmes in Ireland that lead to registration with the Teaching Council shall have professional accreditation. Accreditation is awarded for a specified time (normally five years). The Teaching Council aims to review all programmes delivered by a HEI consecutively, with each HEI having its own accreditation cycle.

The Programme Standards are the benchmark for the process of review and accreditation. The HEI initially completes a pro forma document and submits to the Teaching Council for a desk-based review. A panel of external experts is appointed to review the pro forma and will also undertake a site visit to the relevant HEI. A draft report is prepared and shared with an opportunity to seek feedback and clarification. The draft report is finalised, presented to the Teaching Council Education Committee who will approve the accreditation of the programme or refuse accreditation.

As part of the Programme Standards outlined for all ITE programmes, specific elements are set out in the Céim document. These elements are delineated as **core elements** of all programmes, to ensure that they underpin all aspects of programmes of ITE. One of these elements is Global Citizenship Education.

In this context, GCE is considered to include Education for Sustainable Development, Wellbeing (personal and community), Social Justice and Interculturalism. The glossary of terms of the Céim document also provides a definition for GCE which reflects the text of Target 4.7 of SDG 4. The standards also note that there should be integration between Inclusive Education and Global Citizenship Education which is rooted in the principle of care for others.

**Table 2: Core Elements of ITE Programmes**

**All ITE programmes shall include the specific elements set out hereunder on an equitable basis. The Council recognises that many of these areas of study may already be included in programmes of ITE either through the foundation studies or professional studies. By delineating them as core elements to all programmes, the Council is ensuring that, these elements underpin all aspects of programmes of ITE.**

- 1. Inclusive Education:** With reference to Inclusive Education as outlined in the Glossary, this includes the fostering of appropriate learning environments, including digital ones, that support the development of student teachers' ability to provide for the learning needs of all pupils by utilising, for example, a universal design for learning framework.
- 2. Global Citizenship Education:** to include Education for Sustainable Development; Wellbeing (personal and community); Social Justice, Interculturalism. There should be demonstrable integration between Inclusive Education and Global Citizenship Education rooted in the principle of care for others.

*Céim Standards – Initial Teacher Education, Teaching Council of Ireland, 2020, p. 14*

When each third level institution applies for the accreditation or reaccreditation of a programme of Teacher Education, a description of how the core elements are reflected and included in programme instruction must be provided. The accreditation process includes the completion of a comprehensive and is reviewed. These elements became applicable to all ITE programmes being accredited or re-accredited from September 2021.



This approach should ensure that all trainee teachers experience GCE as both a modular and embedded element of their training.

## Evaluation

Prior to the production of the current publication in 2020, Céim standards underwent a major review to ensure they remained aligned with contemporary educational needs, including the increasing emphasis on digital literacy, diversity and inclusion, and well-being in schools. The revised guidelines also consider feedback from educators about the realities of the modern classroom. It has also been reviewed in an international context, and is informed by quality research, particularly in school placement.

Currently (2024) the Ubuntu Network based in the University of Limerick is undertaking a project which seeks to build an understanding of the conceptualisations of GCE reflected in post-primary initial teacher education programmes nationally, with a view to informing the professional development needs of teacher educators and pre-service teachers charged with implementation of GCE in their respective programmes/classrooms. This project will draw on the standard for ITE as outlined in the Céim document.

Following the conclusion of the second cycle of accreditation in accordance with the *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*, the Teaching Council is now engaging in an evaluation process associated with the process of review and accreditation to inform Council procedures and identify any areas that may need to be addressed for future accreditation cycles.

## 2.2.4 Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021 - 2025

- [Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021 - 2025](#)

### Context

The Department of Foreign Affairs demonstrates its commitment to Global Citizenship Education through its 2021-2025 strategy document which is implemented through Irish Aid. Irish Aid is the official international development aid programme of the Government of Ireland and while its work is primarily focused in developing countries, it acknowledges the importance of GCE in Ireland to raise awareness and understanding of global issues in an ever-changing world.

Irish Aid defines Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as a lifelong educational process, which aims to increase public awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, inter-dependent and unequal world in which we live. It emphasises the importance of GCE in addressing global challenges like climate change, poverty, and inequality. Irish Aid's work in this area is underpinned by the principles outlined in the Code of Good Practice on Development Education (IDEA 2019).

The development of the 2021-2025 strategy aligns with Ireland's international obligations, particularly those under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 4.7 specifically emphasises education for sustainable development and global citizenship, making it a central focus for the strategy. Nationally, Ireland's commitments to human rights, sustainable development, and justice have influenced the strategy's creation, including Ireland's Policy for International Development: A Better World, which prioritises gender equality, climate action, reducing humanitarian need, and strengthening governance.

The production of the 2021-2025 strategy involved extensive consultation with stakeholders, including educators, civil society organisations, development NGOs, and academic institutions. These consultations





were aimed at ensuring the strategy was inclusive, relevant, and actionable. The consultation process sought to gather diverse perspectives on how best to implement GCE, reflecting a broad consensus on the importance of engaging Irish citizens with global challenges and their role in addressing them.

## **Implementation**

The Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education strategy outlines how Irish Aid will deepen and strengthen its commitment to support life-long learning, working with people of all ages both in and out of formal education. The overarching goal of Irish Aid's Global Citizenship Education Strategy is that people in Ireland have access to quality, lifelong Global Citizenship Education, enabling them to become active global citizens committed to a fairer and more sustainable future for all. Irish Aid's work in GCE is carried out in partnership with many committed individuals and organisations across the formal, non-formal and informal education and civil society sectors in Ireland. Where relevant, Irish Aid coordinates with key organisations such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Teaching Council.

## **Target Groups**

The Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education groups considers teachers, trainers and other educators; pupils and students in early years, primary, post-primary, further education and third level; volunteers; young people and youth workers; migrants; the travelling community; early schools leavers; business; trade unions; adult and community education practitioners and the communities and groups with which they work; educational institutions and NGOs as members of their target groups. Elements of the outputs noted in Irish Aid's GCE Strategy will be undertaken by organisations funded by Irish Aid through a strategic partnership model e.g. Irish Development Education Association and the Ubuntu Network. Its support for GCE in second level settings is implemented through its WorldWide Global school programme which was launched by Irish Aid in 2013

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

A mid-term review of the GCE strategy is currently being conducted and due for publication in 2025. The mid-term review aims to assess its impact and provide insights for improvement. This review is part of Irish Aid's commitment to maintain an adaptive approach by evaluating achievements, identifying challenges, and refining strategies to better support Global Citizenship Education in Ireland.

Key focus areas for the review include progress on embedding GCE in Irish educational policies, supporting educator professional development, and enhancing policy coherence across governmental departments. For example, initiatives such as increased policy alignment with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and active collaborations with the Department of Education aim to embed GCE within Irish primary and post-primary curricula.

The review process will gather feedback from a range of stakeholders including educators, strategic partners, and GCE practitioners to determine the effectiveness of existing programs and partnerships, particularly focusing on non-formal education sectors like community and youth work. These insights will be used to address any identified gaps, align resources, and establish priorities for the strategy's remaining phase

GENE conducted a Peer Review of Global Citizenship Education in Ireland in 2015. An overview of that review proposed that Ireland

- Strengthen institutional frameworks supporting GCE across education levels.



- Increase funding for GCE programs and ensure it aligns with international GCE standards.
- Enhance teacher training and resources for delivering GCE.
- Foster a culture of lifelong learning that encompasses GCE beyond formal education, reaching youth and community groups.

The GENE report positioned Ireland as a leader in GCE, with recommendations that informed the 2017 Irish Aid Development Education Strategy and subsequent GCE strategies.

GENE will undertake a review of GCE in Ireland in 2025 which will be informed by the Irish Aid GCE Mid Term Review report and the submissions made during the Mid Term Review.

## 2.2.5 The Irish Development Education Association

- [www.ideaonline.ie](http://www.ideaonline.ie)

### Context

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network for Development Education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. Established in 2004, IDEA grew out of calls from the Development Education sector for an umbrella body to represent them nationally.

IDEA is funded by Irish Aid and is one of its strategic partners representing over 120 members involved in the practice, promotion and advancement of Development Education in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Membership is diverse and consists of individual members as well as education organisations (e.g. City of Dublin Education and Training Board, Centre for Global Education, Department of International Development Maynooth University), NGOs (e.g. A Partnership with Africa, Concern Worldwide, The Hope Foundation), Teacher Unions (e.g. Irish National Teachers Union) and volunteer groups (e.g. Voluntary Service International Ireland, UCD Volunteers Overseas) among others.

### Code of Good Practice for Development Education

- [Code of Good Practice for Development Education](#)

### Context of production

IDEA works collectively with its members to strengthen Development Education in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role of Development Education in achieving an equal, just and sustainable future. IDEA offers a variety of ways for members to engage, including through Working Groups, representation on the National Council and participating in the many events and training taking place throughout the year.

Together with its members, IDEA has developed the '*Code of Good Practice for Development Education*' to strengthen good practice in Development Education. IDEA members use the terms Development Education, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development and others which are in line with Sustainable Development Goals Target 4.7.

In 2016, at a workshop of IDEA members, a decision was made to build on the existing Good Practice Guidelines in Development Education by creating a Code of Good Practice. A task group of IDEA members drafted the Code content in the form of principles and indicators, explored how the Code could be





implemented by members, and what the support and learning mechanisms might look like. In 2018, the draft Code was piloted and subsequently launched in 2019.

## Implementation

The Code of Good Practice for Development Education in Ireland is a unique framework that articulates what quality Development/Global Citizenship Education means in the form of twelve shared Principles and related practice Indicators. The Code's main aim is to contribute to Development/Global Citizenship Education practice improvement through several activities. Being a Code member, organisation or individual, includes:

- signing a Code Commitment form annually.
- carrying out a Self-Assessment process which includes:
- completing a Self-Assessment Workbook - Code members must self-assess themselves as 'Fully', 'Substantially', 'Partially' or 'Minimally' fulfilling each Principle
- developing an Action plan that is shared with IDEA

IDEA supports code members to contribute to the Code Community of Practice, including sharing successes and learning with other Code members and attending at least one Code network meeting annually.

The Code self-assessment is supported by a panel of experts including IDEA staff and independent GCE consultants based in Ireland and overseas. Their role is to review the self-assessment workbooks and actions plans and contribute to IDEA's feedback to Code members. The Code journey also includes learning events and training, and a chance to celebrate and showcase good practice in Development Education.

## Evaluation

Two relevant evaluation documents informed the most recent publication and updates to the Code of Good Practice. A research report in 2022 and review undertaken in 2023.

- *Code of Good Practice for Development Education in Ireland 2022 Research Report.*

This research identifies trends and changes since 2020, comparing 2022 data with that presented in the 2020 Baseline Report. By the end of 2022, six rounds of Code self-assessment had taken place. This report analyses the workbooks submitted in both rounds in 2022 and compares them to the submissions of 2020 in the first two self-assessment rounds. It also compares against the 2020 Baseline Report findings.

With the growth in Code membership, and because of learning emerging from the rolling out of the Code, there were important efforts to strengthen support systems in 2022. Several publications and supporting documents were updated and shared to help members when self-assessing their work: Developing Your Evidence Guidance Note; Background Notes for All Principles; and the Self-Assessment and Subjectivity Guidance Note.

The work of the Code Panel was also strengthened and supported by an Operational Manual for Panel Members; a Checklist for Panel Members; and FAQs for Panel Members. Post-round surveys revealed that Panel members felt well prepared for the work. A pilot mentoring scheme for Code members was established following consultations with Code members who had expressed the need for this.

- *Code of Good Practice for Development Education in Ireland Three Year Review Report May 2023*



A comprehensive review of the Code was carried out from November 2022 to March 2023. The review considered all aspects of the Code, including the wording of principles and indicators, processes and support structures. The review had two principle aims:

- To establish whether the Code Principles and Indicators fully reflect all aspects of quality DE
- To consider how the Code's processes and support structures can support sustained engagement of the sector in a process of peer-led practice development.

A Review Advisory Group was established, and a variety of methods employed to gather data: a desk-based review, a members' workshop, a members' survey and stakeholder interviews.

## 2.2.6 The Ubuntu Network

- [www.ubuntu.ie](http://www.ubuntu.ie)

### Context

The Ubuntu Network was established in 2006 to support the integration of Development Education into post primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland. It is in the School of Education at the University of Limerick, with partners in 13 Higher Education institutions across Ireland. The Ubuntu Network was initially funded by Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs through its Development Education Annual Grant fund. Since 2022 the Ubuntu Network is funded through a multiannual strategic partnership approach.

Ubuntu's goals are to provide leadership for GCE in post primary Initial Teacher Education, champion creative and transformative pedagogical approaches for GCE, uphold the highest standards through evidence-informed practice and support peer professional learning for GCE. As a community of educators in second level Initial Teacher Education, Ubuntu supports teacher educators and future teachers gain a deep understanding of global development issues, recognise the need to question these issues, and equip them with the skills to integrate these into their teaching.

In line with their values and principles, their concentration on GCE, and the current context of ITE, the Ubuntu Network has four strategic areas:

- Curriculum - supporting teaching, learning and assessment for GCE in ITE
- Capacity Building - enhancing teacher educator capacity to facilitate and model GCE in IT
- Research - drawing from and contributing to the knowledge base on GCE in ITE
- Outreach - sharing learning and advocating for the prominence of GCE in policy, curriculum and practice

### Implementation

The Ubuntu Network operates and engages across four thematic areas.

#### *Curriculum*

Ubuntu supports curricular interventions that embed Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in teaching, learning and assessment in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). This is achieved through partnerships approaches with HEIs and through projects led by faculty members. Projects integrate Global Citizenship Education into Initial Teacher Education, facilitating pre-service teachers to explore global development issues.

#### *Capacity Building*



Ubuntu works to enhance teacher educator capacity to facilitate and model GCE in ITE by assessing the professional learning needs of members and supporting capacity building through events and groups.

### *Research*

Ubuntu draws from and contributes to the knowledge base on GCE in ITE. Research is an important tool to inform practice. With a full time Research Lead, Ubuntu conducts research that provides an insight into Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in ITE,

### *Outreach*

Ubuntu considers that Global Citizenship Education (GCE) must take a leading role in conversations within all educational settings, including curriculum design, policy development, teacher training, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) initiatives. They encourage stakeholders to exchange ideas and help shape policy and curriculum.

### **Evaluation**

The Ubuntu Network sought an external evaluator to assess the effectiveness of the Network in achieving its goals in the period from 2016-2019. The evaluation examined the effectiveness of Ubuntu's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 by reviewing various key areas, including the delivery of Development Education, capacity building of teacher educators, research, policy reform, curriculum change and governance. The report highlights the successes of the Network but also identifies areas for improvement, including expansion of membership, enhanced partnerships with external organisations and a more systematic approach to research and evaluation. The report ultimately suggests that the Ubuntu Network is an asset to Development Education in Ireland and recommends that it should consider a more ambitious plan for future development, potentially involving seeking additional funding and resources.

## **2.2.7 WorldWise Global Schools**

- [www.worldwiseschools.ie](http://www.worldwiseschools.ie)

### **Context**

WorldWise Global Schools is an Irish Aid funded programme, designed and established in 2013 as the key channel through which Irish Aid supports GCE in post-primary settings. WWGS is implemented by a consortium of seven organisations: Self Help Africa an NGO (lead consortium member), Concern Worldwide (NGO), City of Dublin Education and Training Board Curriculum Development Unit, Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (teacher union), Teachers' Union of Ireland (a teacher union), National Association of Principals and Deputies (second level leaders representative organisation), and the Ubuntu Network (community of educators in second level Initial Teacher Education)

The Consortium Steering committee recognise the importance of engaging with post-primary education settings to support the development of Global Citizenship Education. The Consortium Steering committee advises and provides expertise to WorldWise Global Schools on supporting schools in developing GCE that enables teachers and learners to envision a better future. The Consortium engages with key stakeholders, such as the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in relation to curriculum reform at post-primary level and the National Strategy on ESD to 2030. The WWGS Programme Director reports to the WWGS Consortium on behalf of the programme.



The aim of the WWGS programme is to increase the number of post-primary settings engaging in quality global citizenship education by providing a comprehensive range of support, including grant funding, training, events, resources and personalised support. As part of its programme strategy, WWGS aims to bring about an increasing spread, number and mix of post-primary schools engaging in and availing of quality Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland.

## Implementation

### *WWGS Global Passport*

The WWGS Global Passport is a Global Citizenship Education (GCE) quality mark, which offers lower second level education settings a framework to integrate GCE into all aspects of student life. It is a self-assessed and externally audited accreditation for GCE. The Global Passport supports, strengthens, and sustains effective whole-school planning around GCE.

The WWGS Global Passport Framework is a tool developed to support schools with their GCE journey. It can be used as a planning tool and as recognition for good practice in GCE. Schools who apply for a Global Passport are asked to reflect on their level of engagement with Global Citizenship Education in six areas (passport stamps) of school life:

1. Curricular
2. Extra-Curricular
3. Teacher Capacity and Engagement
4. Student Capacity and Engagement
5. Leadership
6. Community Engagement

An education setting's progress in each of these stamps is self-assessed and points are allocated accordingly. The total score achieved in all six stamps determines the level of Global Passport an education setting achieves.

The Global Passport levels are:

- **Global Passport Applicant** (0-29 points): For settings with emerging engagement with GCE.
- **Citizen's Passport** (30-59): For settings who are building their GCE capacity.
- **Diplomatic Passport** (60-89): For settings with established engagement with GCE.
- **Higher Diplomatic Passport** (90-119): For settings with highly established engagement with GCE.
- **Special Passport** (120-150): For settings with exceptional engagement with GCE

WWGS has developed a series of guidelines to help support GCE in the curriculum and the broader school community. These resources are aligned to the specific subject curriculum specifications. The Teacher's Handbook is a 'How-To Guide to Global Citizenship Education', for guidance on embedding GCE in the school community.

Through the Global Passport, second level settings can also apply for small grant funding (up to €800 per year) to support whole school embedding of GCE in their setting. From 2025, the Global Passport and Grant Support to second level settings will be combined. This means to qualify for grant support, school will be required to complete the Global Passport Application.



## Evaluation

### *Global Passport evaluation*

The Global Passport is a self-assessed and externally audited accreditation for GCE. Global Passport applications open in the Spring of each year and close at the end of May. The result of the Global Passport Application which is made will be sent to the lead teacher and principal before the beginning of the upcoming academic year.

### *WorldWise Global Schools Programme Evaluation*

Since 2013, the programme has grown and built on its success year on year. In the 2019/2020 academic year, 507 schools, which represent 70% of post-primary schools, engaged with the WWGS programme. 44,849 students and 1,675 teachers engaged directly with WWGS during that period. As of 2022, 122 second level schools, which is 17% of all schools, hold a Global Passport at the beginning of this school year. In April 2018, the Global Passport Award was the recipient of the Global Education Network Europe (GENE) 2018 Global Education Innovation Award in Brussels.

An evaluation of the WorldWise Global Schools Programme was undertaken in 2023, to provide accountability and to learn lessons from Phase 2 (2018- 2022), which will inform the next stage of the programme (Phase III). The evaluation covers the period up to August 2021. Areas for consideration in the evaluation include:

- Effectiveness
- Coherence
- Impact and Sustainability

The outcome of this evaluation report and finding has not been shared publicly and is not currently available for review.



## 3. Stakeholder Inputs

### 3.1 Introduction

This discourse analysis explores the interplay between global and national priorities in education, uncovering factors that enable or hinder the realisation of GCE objectives. By analysing the experiences and expertise of sectoral stakeholders, the report identifies key themes such as alignment with national education policies, resource allocation, stakeholder collaboration, and the impact of socio-political contexts. This examination aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Ireland can effectively navigate the complexities of embedding GCE within its educational systems while addressing challenges that emerge in practice.

All interviewees discussed a range of questions aligned to the headings used in this report. Where interviewees provided similar information, this is represented as a collective response, with additional or differing information aligned to each heading. Given the breadth of practice experience of each of the interviewees, some had capacity to provide more comprehensive responses to interview questions

### 3.2 Background and Methodology

Educational authorities/agencies in Ireland have been surveyed on the opportunities and challenges of implementing GCE National Strategies (and related strategies and policies). The interviewees represented the following authorities/agencies - third level Initial Teacher Educators, NGO, development education body, curriculum body, researchers and teacher representatives. In some cases, representatives from different agencies, with different experiences or audiences were interviewed e.g. Initial Teacher Educators, teacher representative bodies.

Before starting the interview with each interviewee, the GET project was explained, including an overview of work to date, the funding source for the project, the national implementing NGO (A Partnership with Africa) and the goals of the research.

As agreed with the national coordinator no interviewees are named or identified in this report and interviewees will be reference broadly by the authority/agency they represent.

### 3.3 Interviewee Profile

- Initial Teacher Education x 2 (ITE 1 and ITE 2)
- NGO representative x 2 (NGO 1 and NGO 2)
- Development Education Representative Body x 1 (DE Rep)
- Curriculum development agency x 1 (CDev)
- Teacher Representative Body x 2 (TRB 1 and TRB 2)

The 8 interviewees represented 8 separate bodies whose work aligns both directly and indirectly with GCE themes and activities. The interviews took place online with all participants and lasted for approximately 60 minutes.

*Responsibility of the institutions in terms of GCE*





Two interviewees represent the Initial Teacher Education sector (ITE) at university level. Their work involves planning and instruction on teacher education Degree or Master of Education programmes. Both sectors noted that the term used by their institutions was Global Citizenship Education, particularly aligned to the requirements for teaching standards (Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education<sup>3</sup>) as set out by the Teaching Council of Ireland. However, both noted that the concepts of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and climate action were used within the broader umbrella of GCE.

One of the NGOs works primarily within a Higher Education setting and with ITE, while the other works in the broader areas of formal, non-formal and informal education – encompassing youth and community engagement. The NGO operating within Higher Education noted that the term GCE and that ESD was also used, particularly since it is the term recognised by the Department of Education. The second NGO operates primarily around resource production and training and encompasses the broad thematic areas aligned with GCE, e.g. Human rights and justice, while referencing development in a wider context.

The Development Education Representative Body is primarily a membership organisation, representing members in the practice, promotion and advancement of Development Education. This organisation uses Development Education as a term that includes Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, and related terms. Their members sometimes use different terms, depending on the nature of their work, or their areas of specialism.

The Curriculum Development agency is a statutory body of the Department of Education, working with education stakeholders to shape the curriculum for students in Ireland. They also advise the Minister on assessment procedures used in schools and examinations as part of the curriculum. The role of the representative interviewee includes some responsibility for citizenship education at lower and upper second level.

The two interviewees from the Teacher representative bodies support the schools within their differing but aligned sectors through their boards of management, and primarily the senior leadership within those sectors. One representative referenced the concept of GCE through the lens of sustainability, while the other had more comprehensive engagement with education organisations working in global citizenship. This representative expressed a preference for the term Global Citizenship as it aligned with the values of their organisation and the creation of critical citizenship.

### 3.4 Integration of GCE in Formal Education - Policies

All interviewees referenced the *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*<sup>4</sup> as an important policy document. Interviewees recognised the importance of the inclusion of Global Citizenship Education as a compulsory element of these standards and noted that the definition of GCE in this document was informed by UNESCO.

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<sup>3</sup> [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education | The Teaching Council](#)

Céim sets out the requirements which all programmes of qualification for teaching in Ireland must meet to gain accreditation from the Teaching Council. It is also a benchmark for anybody seeking to register as a teacher in Ireland.

<sup>4</sup> [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education | The Teaching Council](#)



ESD to 2030 – Ireland’s Second National Strategy on ESD was referenced by both NGO 1 and NGO 2, DE Rep, CDev Rep and TR 2. It was noted as a ‘whole of government’ piece aligned to three government departments. While neither of the ITE representatives mentioned ESD to 2030, they did refer to the Dublin Declaration (ITE 1), the OECD Global Competencies Framework (ITE 1 & ITE 2) and UNESCO influence (ITE 1 & ITE 2). Separately NGO 1 referenced the following documents, but did not comment on the issuing actors:

- *Climate Action Plan (2020)*,
- *National Action Plan against Racism (2021)*,
- *National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2021)*,
- *A Better World: Ireland’s Policy for International Development (2019)*.

The CDev representative highlighted the Global Citizenship Education Strategy issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs as having some impact but not as much as the ESD to 2030 Strategy. They also noted that there are no early childhood/primary/post-primary curriculum documents that explicitly mention the strategy on global citizenship education, whereas ESD to 2030 is referenced in some curriculum documents.

## 3.5 Integration of GCE in Formal Education - Implementation

In response to the question of the implementation of integrating GCE in formal education, ITE 1 and ITE 2 both references the *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*<sup>5</sup>. This came from the assumption that as GCE is included as part of a compulsory training standard, that it would be evident in its implementation in formal education. ITE 1 recognised the importance of ‘champions’ for GCE in their organisation, even prior to mandated requirements, noting that Céim was useful from a broader perspective, but that engagement was also happening prior to this requirement.

NGO 1 highlighted two Department of Foreign Affairs (Irish Aid) funded organisations aligned to ‘mechanisms that promote policy implementation’. Good practice examples highlighted by both NGO 1, NGO 2 and the DE representative include the work of the Ubuntu Network and WorldWise Global Schools, both of which have an onwards granting mechanism that provides funding and professional development support to integrate GCE into formal curriculum at ITE and post-primary education levels. This was considered an important lever of implementation and provided a structure to think about what GCE is and what they want it to be

TR1 said they had very little familiarity in terms of steering groups and/or stakeholder groups who would support the implementation of GCE in policy, however this was not the case for TR2. The TR2 representative felt that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment<sup>6</sup> would make efforts to embed GCE in the curriculum, particularly as part of any review process for new or existing subject guidelines. TR2 also noted that practice (school level) was unlikely to be aware of the policy level actions aligned with GCE and felt that they do not tend to link these actions directly to policy directives.

The Curriculum Development representative noted that there are discrete timetabled citizenship education spots throughout the curriculum e.g. Civic Social and Political Education but also noted that GCE is included throughout the broader framework documents. When GCE is mentioned (e.g. importance of addressing real

<sup>5</sup> [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education | The Teaching Council](#)

<sup>6</sup> [About Us | NCCA](#)



world issues or of students developing as active citizens) in curriculum framework documents, it increases the possibility that it will be reflected in a range of subject specifications.

The collaborative approach to communication and engagement was also referenced, where the relevant agencies, organisations and government departments regularly invite contributions to review or consultation processes. The Development Education representative highlighted the use of consortium groups to deliver sector-specific GCE programmes as providing consistency in reaching learners and communities and in contributing to the achievement of collective impact.

In terms of good practice examples, the CDev representative noted that there are several different actors who prioritise adjectival educations e.g. Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission would consider Human Rights as being an umbrella term for GCE and works towards linking those actors. When consultation occurs with these non-formal education actors, efforts are made to find connections and align strategy statements where possible. It was noted that this type of collaborative engagement allows for agencies/organisations outside of formal education to come together while also acknowledging their unique perspectives.

Some representatives referred to specific supporting mechanisms and good practice examples and followed up by sharing these links.

#### *Supporting Mechanisms*

- The Council of Europe (2010) promotes both education for democratic citizenship, which focuses on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural spheres of society, and human rights education, which is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives.  
[Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education - Manual for Human Rights Education with Young people](#)
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment global competence measurement (OECD, 2018)  
[PISA 2018 Assessment and Analytical Framework | OECD](#)
- The UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework  
[Framework for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\) beyond 2019 - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

#### *Good Practice Examples*

- Publication: A Teacher's Handbook on Global Citizenship Education in the Post-primary Classroom.  
<https://ubuntu.ie/teachers-handbook-implementing-gce-in-post-primary-schools>
- UCD – Ubuntu partnership to integrate GCE into ITE programmes in UCD <https://ubuntu.ie/university-college-dublin>
- Case studies – University of Galway, University College Cork, National College of Art and Design  
<https://ubuntu.ie/resources/ubuntu-case-studies/>



## 3.6 Limitations and obstacles for the introduction and implementation of GCE in formal education

ITE 1 and ITE 2 referenced two broad areas of concern aligned with limitations and obstacles – lack of knowledge and understanding and, lack of confidence. They noted that this should not be interpreted as a deficiency or lack of interest from educators, but rather an indication of the demands of pre-service teachers who are trying to balance many competing interests. Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) must navigate the challenges of a formal induction process which must be completed before full accreditation can be given by the Teaching Council. In these circumstances GCE gets pushed further down the list of priorities and tends to only be promoted by a minority of champions who will progress GCE issues regardless. A lack of incentives to do anything differently was noted.

TR1 and TR2 commented on curriculum overload and change as examples of limitations and obstacles. Teachers are busy exploring the existing curriculum and if GCE is seen or interpreted as ‘additional’ it falls through the cracks. TR1 also noted that there may be an unfamiliarity with the extent to which GCE is threaded through the formal curricula. Additional challenges raised included ‘depth’ and ‘time’. In relation to depth, TR1 raised concerns about how much of the engagement remains on the surface with little actual transformational change in behaviour. In relation to ‘time’, TR2 acknowledged that time regularly appears as a barrier to engagement, regardless of the initiative.

TR2 referred to NGO engagement in the GCE space and how NGOs are often responsive in developing modules or lesson plans. While this was applauded, they also noted that schools can become overwhelmed and, aligned to the challenge of achieving ‘depth’ of engagement, there can be fatigue around interventions which can be presented as too moral, too highbrow or too lofty.

NGO 2 reflected similar challenges where GCE may seem too difficult and complex – noting “GCE isn’t for everyone”! Perhaps this links to the drive for academic accomplishment/exam focus/points systems that are markers of ‘perceived’ success in the Irish education system. The DE representative called for clearer mapping and monitoring of GCE engagement to inform and guide practitioners to reach a more diverse range of schools. They also supported more coherence of communications between government departments.

In relation to good practice examples aligned with overcoming limitations several initiatives were raised repeatedly. These included the Ubuntu Network<sup>7</sup>, WorldWise Global Schools<sup>8</sup>, Young Social Innovators<sup>9</sup> and the BT Young Scientist<sup>10</sup>. The Ubuntu Network and WorldWise Global Schools were referenced in terms of the supports they provide to initial teacher education, while Young Social Innovators and BT Young Scientist were seen as useful mechanisms for teachers, who otherwise would not have these outlets to showcase and engage with GCE. The IDEA Code of Good Practice<sup>11</sup> was also referenced as providing coherence and structure to programmes provided by Code members and aligning and collaborating on engagement.

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<sup>7</sup> [Home - Ubuntu Network](#)

<sup>8</sup> [WorldWise Global Schools - Development Education Funding](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Junior Programme | Young Social Innovators \(YSI\) - Young Social Innovators Changing the World for Good](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Find A Listing – BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Code of Good Practice for Development Education | IDEA Irish Development Education Association](#)



## 3.7 Opportunities for the introduction and implementation of GCE in formal education

Many of the opportunities referenced by interviewees were those previously outlined. For example, the *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education*<sup>12</sup> were viewed as an important policy document.

Strong and supported communication opportunities were referenced by TRB 1 and 2. Given the busy workload of teacher, middle and senior leaders, coherent and simple overviews of the cross-cutting opportunities need to be presented to these audiences and their aligned school Boards of Management. It was suggested that this message should come from the Department of Education or the Inspectorate of the Department of Education. ITE 2 spoke about the importance of getting school leaders on board and referred to the Take 1 Programme<sup>13</sup> as an initiative that targets school leaders as part of the Second National Strategy on ESD: ESD to 2030<sup>14</sup>, published by the Department of Education. The Take 1 Programme supports principals and deputy principals as part of Priority Area 2 – Transforming Learning Environments.

The Ubuntu Network and WorldWise Global Schools were again referenced and the DE Rep viewed cross-governmental coherence and communication as a valuable opportunity, particularly regarding how the GCE sector can support/contribute to overall coherence between GCE, ESD, anti-racism education, supporting children and young people. The also noted that more work is required on linking GCE with other strategies including ESD Strategy<sup>15</sup>; Anti-Racism Strategy<sup>16</sup>, Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028.<sup>17</sup>

Examples that make the most of these opportunities were again reflective of earlier responses - the Ubuntu Network<sup>18</sup>, WorldWise Global Schools<sup>19</sup>, Young Social Innovators<sup>20</sup> and the BT Young Scientist<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> [Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education | The Teaching Council](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Take 1 Programme - "Every Student - Every Subject - Every Classroom"](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Second National Strategy on ESD: ESD to 2030](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Second National Strategy on ESD: ESD to 2030](#)

<sup>16</sup> [National Action Plan Against Racism](#)

<sup>17</sup> [National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023 - 2028](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Home - Ubuntu Network](#)

<sup>19</sup> [WorldWise Global Schools - Development Education Funding](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Junior Programme | Young Social Innovators \(YSI\) - Young Social Innovators Changing the World for Good](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Find A Listing – BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition](#)

### 3.8 Importance given to GCE and global issues and its relationship with the curriculum

**\*Note:**

*Junior Cycle Second Level students (12 -15 years) in Ireland follow a prescribed national curriculum, which is designed and implemented by each school and informed by*

- *Eight principles that underpin the entire Framework for Junior Cycle<sup>1</sup>*
- *Twenty-four statements of learning that are central to planning for, the students' experience of, and the evaluation of the school's junior cycle programme*
- *Eight key skills that are required for successful learning by all students*

*The principles, statements of learning and key skills provide a structure for schools to design their junior cycle programme. They facilitate and direct discussion regarding the kind of programme a school can provide. These principles, statements and skills will also inform the development of, and be given expression through, the learning outcomes in subject and short course specifications. Schools will have the flexibility and discretion to decide what combination of subjects, short courses or other learning experiences will be provided in their three-year junior cycle programme.*

*Each of the subjects that makes up the curriculum has an aligned prescribed syllabus, outlining the various themes and associated learning outcomes. These subject syllabuses have been designed to be responsive and flexible, and all currently allow teachers to reflect GCE issues which are explicitly or implicitly referenced through the learning outcomes.*

Most representatives referenced the prescribed nature of the lower second level curriculum in Ireland and spoke to concepts like inclusion and diversity that are aligned to the junior cycle principles and key skills required for successful learning. The interviewees did not express a strong opinion on the importance given by the formal curriculum to GCE in schools as they primarily operate at a macro level. This gave them an overarching sense of the elements of the curriculum, without insight to the specific practical application. They did note that they considered these issues very prominent in the recent reform of the junior cycle curriculum and referenced the addition of senior cycle (upper secondary - 15-18 years) subjects such as 'Climate Action and Sustainable Development' and 'Politics and Society' as being of significance.

The Curriculum Development Agency representative had a more detailed overview and commented on the discrete spaces for engagement aligned to the junior cycle key skills and senior cycle key competencies. They acknowledged that the opportunities presented by key skills and key competencies have not necessarily been utilised to full advantage by GCE actors and highlighted that this may partly be because of capacity issues in the GCE sector.

Most of the interviewees noted that they would not have specific knowledge of the main global issues that are addressed and implemented by schools/teachers. This information would be found at practice level in classrooms and schools and is unlikely to be specifically recorded or noted in the public domain, unless picked up during school inspection visits and noted as elements of overarching reporting. Of the four themes aligned to the GET project, gender was the topic considered to get least attention, with migration also being an issue which may or may not get attention based on context. Climate and its related topics were the issues which was deemed most likely to get attention and engagement. Several reasons for this include media attention, the prevalence of climate related resource materials and the engagement with the issue through student voice initiatives.





The issue of international inequalities provoked a range of responses with the NGO interviewees and the DE Rep noting they consider this topic to very much align with their social justice remit. However, the ITE and the Curriculum Development representatives had a different viewpoint and noted the challenges around recognising what might be understood as 'inequalities' and 'international inequalities'. Many of the second level schools in Ireland align themselves at school and organisational level with the values in their school mission/vision statement which often reference combating inequality and supporting inclusion. It was noted that if inequality is being addressed, it is likely that this may be happening in an implicit way through the core values of the school and the term 'inequality' may not be used.

*In which subjects/school disciplines is it easiest to integrate and implement GCE and global themes?*

In terms of subjects/school disciplines that integrate and implement GCE and global themes, interviewees who did not work directly with schools found it difficult to comment on how this might be happening. The Teacher representatives, the ITE representatives and the Curriculum Development representative noted subjects such as Geography and Science for climate topics and Religious Education for addressing topics on international inequalities. The English specifications were also considered to provide an opportunity to address contemporary issues through reporting, media, unprescribed texts and critical analysis, but no specific details were provided.



## 4. Recommendations and Conclusions

The representative from ITE 1 noted the importance of acknowledging that there needs to be some exploration in terms of how the various stakeholders who work in education may be coming at GCE implementation from different perspectives, whether that's content perspectives or our individual professional perspectives. This exploration was not a proposal that there would be a uniform conceptualisation, but as a way of making different conceptualisations explicit

The issue of 'impact' was also raised. ITE 1 and 2 suggested that there may be a false narrative around the high-level quantitative data that is informing policy development and suggested that the data sets being referenced may not have the breadth needed to inform policy development. They also noted it was important to ensure that there was a critical methodological eye to the datasets that are being utilised to ensure credibility.

### 4.1 Recommendations

#### *Priorities in future national GCE strategy?*

The Teacher Rep 2 felt that the priority should focus on the curriculum development stage, beginning with background papers, ensuring that GCE is embedded without necessarily being explicit. They noted the importance of attitude, aptitude and insights, that a well-structured curriculum would bring rather than persistently highlighting a specific GCE strand. Teachers primarily teach within subject specifications and tend not to engage in additional content. They also noted the importance of political support and proposed a direct instruction that every single curriculum has GCE principles and learning outcomes embedded in it.

NGO 1 also supported the inclusion of GCE related themes in state examinations. They additionally noted that this is not the ideal approach but acknowledged that what is assessed tends to be valued more. They also supported greater priority be given to topics such as identity, values, self-reflection, worldviews and positionality – “how can we look at the world when don't understand ourselves”. Aligned to this the DE representative supported advocating for and fostering more critical GCE, moving away from soft GCE, being stronger on challenging the root causes of global injustices and inequalities, addressing the disconnect between GCE activities and everyday actions and between GCE and conflicting policies.

The Curriculum Development representative proposed that there are opportunities aligned with looking more closely at the skills and competencies aligned with the curriculum and looking at assessment issues.

The ITE representatives considered there are opportunities around teacher professional learning, particularly as a space to gain confidence and knowledge and understanding, particularly professional learning that supports them to understand that they do not need to have all the answers. The ITE 1 representative also considered the challenges around the professional learning space give the contradiction that there is an expectation at pre-service and in-service level of content master, yet the system also advocates for life-long learning.

The DE representative supported the recognition of people as key resources for GCE, providing training supports, and long-term contracts for staff retention within the NGO sector. Additionally, they proposed that support for reach is vital, getting beyond the same schools and educators to achieve national and island-wide reach.



*Recommendations for the GET project in terms of where to direct activities in the next couple of years.*

Capitalise on the opportunities presented by the IDEA Code of Good Practice<sup>22</sup> which support NGOs to complete a shortened version of the self-assessment form combined with an additional activity. This 'activity' option could provide opportunities to engage practitioners with diverse experiences and backgrounds, from the formal, non-formal and informal education arenas, combining expertise for greater impact. This could be particularly impactful for smaller NGOs who may not have the capacity to engage in more robust activities or research. It would also provide opportunities for more responsive engagement in relation to GCE issues and topics.

#### *Additional Observations*

One interviewee observed that the teacher education population in Ireland are a very homogenous group, as are the Initial Teacher Educator cohort. This results in a similar white, middle class, probably mostly Catholic group, engaging in GCE facilitation, which is looking at issues of equality, diversity, inclusions, justice, power, privilege, very interesting, race. No solution/remedy was proposed, but the comment was included as an observation.

In relation to opportunities for the GET project continued collaboration and partnership was encouraged. Specific areas for consideration include:

- Taking advantage of the 'activity' element presented by the IDEA Code of Good Practice, where NGO agencies may have an opportunity to address some specific responsive work aligned to the less prevalent thematic topics e.g. gender, migration.
- Undertake a mapping of State Examinations Commission exam papers. This mapping exercise could seek to explore the prevalence of GCE topics in examination papers, highlighting the link between GCE related learning outcomes in curriculum specifications and the exams and exploring opportunities for further capitalising of these links.
- Emphasis on the diverse nature contexts that exist within the education system, providing multiple approaches to engagement and/or access, highlighting the potential for context-based education and a move away from the perception that 'one size fits all'.
- Support the NGO community to engage with the compulsory and core elements of the Junior Cycle framework e.g. understanding the potential of key skills when developing resource or support materials.
- Encouraging NGOs to acknowledge and engage with a changed curriculum in the lower second level environment in Ireland. This curriculum has undergone significant change since 2013 and may not reflect the schooling experiences of NGO resource developers. The importance of 'knowing the system to change the system' is pivotal.

At national level, the Global Citizenship Education Strategy<sup>23</sup> produced by Irish Aid and the Second National Strategy on ESD: ESD to 2030<sup>24</sup> are important policy documents. Given their relatively recent production and the breadth of their engagement, it is noted that there is unlikely to be any major policy change over the period of the GET project.

<sup>22</sup> [Code of Good Practice for Development Education | IDEA Irish Development Education Association](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Global-Citizenship-Education-Strategy-2021-2025.pdf](#)

<sup>24</sup> [gov.ie - 2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development - ESD to 2030](#)



The GCE landscape in Ireland reflects a collegial and collaborative approach, where stakeholders endeavour to work together towards students and teacher engagement. Relevant agencies, organisation and government departments regularly invite contributions to review planning processes and policy development.

Separately, the use of consortium groups aims to provide consistency in reaching learners and communities, contributing to the achievement of collective impact.

## 4.2 Conclusion

Ireland's commitment to Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and related themes such as Development Education (DE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is strongly reflected in its educational policies. These concepts are increasingly integrated into formal, non-formal, and informal education environments.

In recent years collaboration between government departments and other key stakeholders has been a priority in implementing GCE, DE, and ESD strategies. The Second National Strategy on ESD to 2030, represents a comprehensive effort to engage learners from all levels of education. This strategy includes a detailed implementation plan that outlines objectives, timelines, and roles for stakeholders. The Department of Foreign Affairs, through Irish Aid, has also reinforced its commitment to GCE by supporting life-long learning and working across various educational and community sectors. This work is reflective of a larger whole of government approach towards collaborative engagement.

Ireland's approach to GCE highlights the importance of strategic partnerships, notably with organisations like the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS), and the Ubuntu Network. These partnerships have facilitated meaningful collaboration, ensuring that GCE themes are well-integrated across educational platforms. Despite historical challenges in interdepartmental coordination, Ireland's recent efforts demonstrate a shared vision and practice, promoting the successful implementation of GCE, DE, and ESD strategies.

It was noted that there are many valuable opportunities for engagement through teacher networks e.g. Ubuntu, WorldWise Global Schools, supporting both pre-service and in-service teachers. In addition, there were many opportunities at a community and competitive level which provided an outlet for 'champion' teachers to showcase what was being achieved at local level e.g. BT Young Scientist, Young Social Innovators. In contrast, the risk of relying on those champion teachers was highlighted as ad hoc and unlikely to achieve nationwide system engagement. Greater leadership support was proposed, particularly at policy level.

However, like many other formal education jurisdictions internationally the challenges in translating policy to practice remain. The formal education space in Irish schools is busy, with many competing challenges. There is a comprehensive prescribed curriculum in addition to schools' requirements and challenges in the non-formal and informal learning spaces. The overarching concerns and comments in relation to time constraints and curriculum overload were also noted by the interviewees who worked or engaged more directly with teacher cohorts. They acknowledged the importance of GCE permeating the teaching and learning experience but also noted the ongoing pressure of content coverage and high stakes exam pressures. While the compulsory inclusion of GCE into Initial Teacher Education training standards is welcomed by all, the pressures within ITE and the requirement to 'perform' can mean that GCE engagement and learning experiences for trainee teachers can be quite diverse



In many instances, ministerial funded and/or NGO operated GCE programmes support schools to address the various GCE thematic areas as part of broader teaching and learning engagement. While this external support is valuable and highlights the importance of the interconnected nature of contemporary global issues, it is vital to ensure that GCE does not become an 'add on' element of engagement rather than an embedded approach to teaching and learning.

## Referenced Organisations

- ***BT Young Scientist***

The BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition is a renowned annual science competition held in Ireland. It provides a platform for second level students to showcase their innovative science and technology projects. The exhibition fosters scientific curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among young people, inspiring the next generation of scientists and innovators.

- ***Céim – Initial Teacher Education Standards***

*Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* sets out the requirements which all programmes of qualification for teaching in Ireland must meet to gain accreditation from the Teaching Council. It is also a benchmark for anybody seeking to register as a teacher in Ireland.

- ***IDEA – Irish Development Education Association***

<https://www.ideaonline.ie/>

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) is the national network for Development Education in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. Established in 2004, IDEA grew out of calls from the Development Education sector for an umbrella body to represent them nationally. IDEA with its members has developed the '*Code of Good Practice for Development Education*' to strengthen good practice in Development Education.

- ***YSI - Young Social Innovators***

<https://www.youngsocialinnovators.ie/>

Young Social Innovators (YSI) is a non-profit organisation that empowers young people to use their talents, insights, passion and creativity to come up with innovative solutions to social challenges. Young Social Innovators empowers young people to reimagine the world into one that is more caring, equal and fair, and to come together to bring their ideas to life.

- ***NCCA – National Council for Curriculum and Assessment***

<https://ncca.ie/en/>



The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) works with education stakeholders to shape the curriculum for children and students in Ireland. The NCCA was established in 1987 and reconstituted in July 2001 as a statutory body advising the Minister for Education on curriculum and assessment.

- **Take 1 Programme**

<https://www.take1programme.com/>

The Take 1 Programme provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for second level teacher, middle and senior leaders, supporting them to embed Education for Sustainable Development in their learning and teaching. The Take 1 Programme is funded by the Department of Education as part of the *Second National Strategy on ESD – ESD to 2030 under Priority 2 - Transforming Learning Environments – ‘learn what we live and live what we learn’*.

- **Ubuntu Network**

<https://ubuntu.ie/>

The Ubuntu Network was established in 2006 to support the integration of Development Education into post primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Ireland. It is in the School of Education at the University of Limerick, with partners in 13 Higher Education institutions across Ireland. The Ubuntu Network was initially funded by Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs through its Development Education Annual Grant fund. Since 2022 it is funded through a multiannual strategic partnership approach.

- **WorldWise Global Schools**

<https://www.worldwiseschools.ie/>

WorldWise Global Schools is an Irish Aid funded programme, designed and established in 2013 as the key channel through which Irish Aid supports GCE in post-primary settings.





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This document was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its content is the sole responsibility of the project partners and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.