

Development Education Advisory Committee

SUBMISSION

TO

REVIEW OF IRISH AID WHITE PAPER

APRIL, 2012

1. Introduction

The Development Education Advisory Committee (DEAC) was established in 2003. Its current role is explicitly set out in the Development Education Strategy Plan, 2007 – 2011:

- Advising the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Irish Aid on policy matters and on strategies for the promotion of development education;
- Overseeing reviews and evaluations of development education activities;
- Managing an annual consultation forum on development education.

At this point in time, DEAC is well poised to make a submission to the review of the White Paper. Over the last three years, it has contributed to two significant research and review exercises which have provided both policy insights and empirical data on Irish Aid's development education support, capacities and outcomes. (1)

2. Structure of Submission

The structure of DEAC's submission is based on the set of questions posed in the White Paper review and applied to development education. In using this model, DEAC has sought to achieve coherence between what it believes should be future policy priorities for development education within the changing context for development cooperation and in the context of other government policy objectives.

3. Progress Made

Introductory remarks

As an Advisory Committee, DEAC is conscious that its advice must be both evidence-based to and provide relevant policy insights. It is also mindful of the emphasis on effectiveness, results and performance management which underpins broader government policy. It must, however, be noted that this emphasis frequently gives rise to tensions when applied to the human services, including education. DEAC is sensitive to these tensions and recognises the legitimate concerns against taking an overly empiricist approach to measuring outcomes or the 'value-added' dimension of development education. At the same time, a consistent finding in the reviews undertaken to date has been that of the absence of indicators to assess progress. DEAC now considers that these concerns have to be addressed in future development education policy.

DEU Mid-Term Review

In assessing progress made, it is useful to refer to Irish Aid's stated aims for development education in the 2006 White Paper:

"The Government intends that every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities and understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens as well as their potential for a more just and equal world"

This broad policy objective was subsequently elaborated in the Development Education Strategy Plan, 2007–2011. The sub-title of this Plan is particularly significant – *"Promoting public engagement for development"* – underpinning, as it does, the stated objective in the White Paper. In 2010, Irish Aid, with input from DEAC, commissioned a mid-term review internal review to assess the extent to which the objectives of the DE Strategy were being achieved. A key 'operational tool' in the review was to assess evidence of achievements against each of the four strategic objectives. The most pertinent findings include:

- Development education continues to play an important role in increasing public understanding of the causes and consequences of global poverty and inequality
- In an economic downturn, this role is even more important to sustain public support for the national development aid policy
- The development education sector is vibrant, engaged in a wide range of educational activities carried out across a range of themes
- The objectives of Irish Aid's DE strategy remain broadly relevant and appropriate

However, the review did state that the lack of clear indicators for success and absence of baseline data makes it difficult to measure precisely the extent to which objectives have been achieved for both Irish Aid and the sector as a whole.

Recommendation: Irish Aid continue to (i) engage with development education sector on the development of indicators for measuring outcomes and effectiveness in development education and (ii) support research in development education, bearing in mind the policy recommendations in the DEAC commissioned research, “ Mapping the Past: Charting the Future”.

4. CHANGING CONTEXT

The changing context for Ireland's development cooperation policy has already been well exemplified in pages 9 to 11 of the consultation paper. This context is not just one of reduced resources available to the Irish State but also one of new and emerging global challenges, such as climate change, shifting geopolitics and widening inequality, which require a global response. New relationships between states and continents are being forged which in turn shape foreign policy and development cooperation. The ‘*Outcomes Document*’ of the 2011 Busan Conference reflects these changing global relationships.

DEAC can only add the much reiterated concern of the development education sector that while public support for development cooperation remains strong, as measured in Euro barometer and other surveys, this support has eroded since the onset of the economic recession. This is a worrying trend. Development education needs to face the challenge of rebuilding public understanding and confidence in development cooperation. The 2011 Bond Report, “*Finding Frames; News ways to engage the UK public in global poverty*” (2) presents a stark analysis of the challenges in this regard. Fundamentally, it concludes that short term simplistic messages have little long term impact and there is a need to deepen engagement over a longer period. This requires a sustained commitment to a model of education that is deep and critical; that builds understanding about global inequalities; makes connections between issues at both a local and global level and develops a culture of solidarity.

Across Europe, development education is being enriched by global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, education for mutual understanding, and emerging forms of local and global social activism. (3) Notwithstanding the diversity among such projects, education overall (but more particularly, development education) is seen as central to human development in the context of promoting global solidarity, sustainability and security. In the context of the knowledge society, development education is increasingly adapting to the changing profile of learners (particularly those outside of the formal education sector), to the need to integrate critical thinking skills into all educational activities and the need to develop skills to understand and question the viewpoint of others. This changing paradigm was succinctly formulated by the EU Commissioner for

Development, Commissioner Piebalgs, in a European Parliament hearing in August, 2011.

“Development education is about raising awareness and helping to create a situation in which the European public is both informed about development issues and able to engage critically with global developments. We need this public engagement, not only to support our development policy and its objectives, but mainly to help shape the future of Europe and our relationship with the rest of the world.”(4)

Increasingly, at European level, a strong rationale is emerging for the role of development education in enabling society to develop appropriate responses to global issues **and** also to national and local issues arising from globalisation, the knowledge society, climate change and migration. This rationale was anticipated in the 2006 White Paper which stated that *“every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens as well as their potential to effect change for a more just and equal world”*. Development education is a necessity for Irish citizens if they are to be empowered to live in an increasingly globalised and interdependent world, characterised by complexity and uncertainty, where the skills of critical thinking are vital for ethical and informed decision making in a context of sustained exponential growth in information.

Recommendation: Irish Aid to support a dialogue exploring the links between (i) development education, active citizenship and global citizenship (ii) development education in the knowledge society. In this context, the role of Irish Aid in contributing to curriculum and education policies and to policies for lifelong learning should be strengthened, especially by developing an effective inter-departmental cooperation process.

Changing context in Irish education

Nationally, an important dimension of the changing context is the introduction in 2014 of a revised Junior Cycle curriculum. The new “Framework for Junior Cycle” is explicitly framed on a critique of the capacity of the current Junior Cycle curriculum to prepare young people for living in a rapidly changing world:

“Across the developed and the developing world schooling finds itself at the centre of a set of global concerns about the future of the planet, about food and water security, and about the movement of peoples in the face of climate disasters. The global economic crisis adds to these concerns and increasingly, schools are being asked not simply to teach students about these issues but to shape the next generation of creative problem solvers who can quite literally, ‘save the world’. To us this may seem like a tall order. To our students it is an imperative. They will outlive us, they will have to be the generation of problem solvers.” (4)

In the renewed curriculum, the focus is on students making a better connection with learning; improving the quality of learning that takes place; better literacy and numeracy, including digital literacy; integrating key skills into all areas of learning, including working with others, managing information, critical thinking, communication, being creative and wellbeing. In addition to these learning outcomes objectives, schools can develop local innovations in the junior cycle curriculum, whether through the provision of short course or by a greater focus in subjects on developing deeper conceptual understandings rather than covering content.

These developments are already influencing senior cycle curriculum and will be consolidated by changes to the entry process to third level, as signalled in the joint 2011 HEA-NCCA report, *"Outcomes of the Conference on the Transition from Second to Third-Level Education in Ireland"*. NCCA policy is to provide a continuum of learning from early childhood up to the end of second level, where students experience continuity and progression in learning, acquire the intellectual skills to engage with the exponential growth in information, but also to enable them to live in a globalised world, confronted by problems of inequality, climate change and insecurity.

This changing educational landscape has particular challenges for development education. On the one hand, it will present more space for development education in the curriculum and across subject areas. On the other hand, in the absence of a coherent strategic approach from Irish Aid, opportunities for integrating development education concepts and skills in the revised curriculum, especially at second level, will be lost. One of the most important requirements in the new educational landscape has to be a greater sense of shared leadership of the development education agenda across relevant government departments and agencies.

Recommendation: Irish Aid to continue to prioritise support for development education in the formal education sector. Support for teacher professional development is especially important. The capacity of the development education sector to respond to the changing educational context must be evaluated and supported. A more co-ordinated approach to the development of resource materials is needed. There must be a greater sense of shared leadership of the development education agenda across relevant government departments and agencies.

5. WHAT DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A CHANGING CONTEXT

Chapter 5 of the Consultation Paper sets out the key issues in development cooperation for the Irish Aid programme. They are complex and inter-related. How can development education contribute to supporting progress on these key issues?

- Development education is essential to cultivating a culture of public understanding and engagement with global justice issues. The development cooperation policy of the Irish State reflects core values of the Irish people - that of solidarity, of empathy with the poor and the oppressed, and of a desire to contribute to a better, fairer world. Development education is where those basic values are cultivated, where people are informed and moved to take action against injustice and inequality at home and abroad. In this sense, development education is not just essential for sustaining public support for the State's aid policy: it is central to sustaining an educated citizenship in the State. An educated citizenship is vital for the effective functioning of a democratic Irish State within a globalised world.
- Development education frequently provides the starting point for the engagement of so many Irish people in development NGOs and in volunteering. This engagement is extremely diverse – ranging from fundraising on the ground, advocacy and campaigning work, volunteering overseas, technical expertise, etc. These thousands of individuals are very important actors in the overall development cooperation project. Sections 6.31 & 6.32 of the consultation paper underline the significance of their role. The latter are also very often central to effective partnerships in the partner countries, as noted in Section 6.22.

- A vital dimension of the development cooperation project is political support among the political parties. As noted in Section 3.10, there is at present good cross-party political support for overseas aid expenditure. This cannot be assumed to continue into the future. Within some of the most “pro-development” countries in the European Union, political parties are already in government which do not support such expenditure. Indeed, many of these growing parties are actively xenophobic and are instrumental in seeking to change long established, internationally renowned aid programmes. In Ireland we should be mindful of such political developments.
- Aid policy supports the private sector in partner countries as a cross-cutting measure to reduce poverty, promote gender equality and contribute to more sustainable provision of basic needs. The “Africa Strategy” reflects this policy orientation. Significant barriers exist to the achievement of this objective, not least lack of knowledge of emerging opportunities for trade among Irish businesses. Development education has significant potential to help erode such barriers by presenting a more balanced and realistic understanding of the capacities and opportunities in the developing world.

Ways of Working

A number of the areas in Chapter 6 are particularly relevant to development education. These include better policy coherence, working with civil society organisations, public engagement and ownership, results and accountability. As noted in Section 6.8, aid is only part of the solution. The solutions to climate change, food insecurity, population growth and urbanisation, and growing inequalities in developing countries must come from a renewed political understanding in the developed world of global interdependence and the security of states and regions. Development education is central to creating such understandings and the public discourses which shape aid policy. **Policy coherence** will be strengthened when there is greater public engagement in such dialogues.

The changing national context requires the development education community to reach out beyond traditional audiences to include engagement with the adult and community education sector; the older age groups; the Southern diaspora living in our multi-cultural Ireland, many of whom are very active at community and higher education levels; the business sector in Ireland, including the global IT industries located in Ireland. Creative relationships with the rich range of **civil society organisations and corporate bodies** must be nurtured in future development education policy. It is also of significance that many of the global IT industries located in Ireland have substantial global education programmes, many of them operational in Irish Aid partner countries and all of them generating creative and cost-effective models of delivering quality educational opportunities.

Section 6.36 of the Consultation Paper states that achieving development results – and openly accounting for them – must be at the heart of the provision of aid. The same precept applies to the development education activities supported by Irish Aid. What constitutes **results and accountability** in the human services, but especially in education, is a contested area. Education is a human right. It is also a public good. It is also one of the most potent constituents of social capital. When education is reduced to serving narrow goals which are measurable and malleable, it loses its power to fulfil its mission. It is precisely the empowering role of education that development educators wish above all to promote and retain.

It is why they are nervous about “grafting” on of industry-developed norms of accountability and outcomes onto what is a lifelong process of personal and social development. To move forward in this area, Irish Aid and development education groups need to work together to develop a range of

measurement and impact assessment tools that are relevant and effective when applied across the broad spectrum of development education activity.

The imperative of **public engagement and ownership** is well articulated in the Consultation Paper. DEAC fully supports this analysis. Again DEAC would refer to the aforementioned Bond Report which presents an insightful analysis of challenges facing development education, in particular the urgent need to move from what is colloquially described as the “*mile wide, inch deep*” mode of engagement to one which is itself sustainable over the medium to longer term.

Recommendation: Irish Aid to engage in appropriate strategic partnerships to deepen and extend the range and reach of development education activities to include, in particular, new communities living in Ireland, the older age communities, professional groups, and overseas volunteers. Irish Aid also to engage in developing partnerships with the corporate sector, to sustain developments such as Traidlinks and to promote a greater awareness of opportunities for trade, cultural and educational partnerships in programme countries.

6. CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

The above section has highlighted the lines of alignment between the overall policy on aid and development education. In many respects, these are not new! What is new however, is the vastly changed political and economic context. Future Irish Aid policy for development education will be required to be responsive to both. The conclusion in the 2011 Thematic Review is pertinent in this regard:

“It is clear that there are many aspects of the support provided for development education which are working well and should be continued. .. It is clear that an incremental and phased approach to any changes agreed will be important, and whatever choices are made it will be essential that a clear action plan for the implementation of change is set out and communicated to all stakeholders.”

Specifically, DEAC would identify the following opportunities for development education, which should be taken into consideration by Irish Aid in formulating its future development education priorities:

- Within the formal education system, on-going curricular changes will create opportunities to embed development education in the mainstream curriculum. Similarly, the review of teacher education and development of a framework for continuing professional development by the Teaching Council will create more opportunities for more teachers to engage with development education concepts and skills. These opportunities underline the need for more strategic relationships between Irish Aid, the Department of Education & Skills and the Teaching Council around development education policy as a core part of national education policy.
- Development education opportunities are also to be found with adults who are accessing learning through non-formal channels. Research by AONTAS – the National Adult Learning Organisation has demonstrated opportunities and barriers. (5) It is also

worth bearing in mind those strong synergies that are emerging between this sector and the very many civil society bodies for older people. Creative thinking is required as regards engaging the latter sector in development education activities. Many older people are well educated and have much to contribute to volunteering, for example.

- The importance of the youth sector is reflected in the National Youth Development Education Programme. The Synthesis Review noted the increase in the number of key youth organisations recognising the relevance and value of development education within their agendas, structures and programmes of activity. Development education supports the basic principles of youth work, which include giving a voice and agency to young people, especially those young people who live in marginalised and poor communities. It also stresses the importance of consultation with young people around issues that affect them. Young people are acutely concerned about global issues, and it is important that Irish Aid continues to provide support to the sector to enable young people to engage in educational experiences to understand and respond to such issues.
- Social media and ever expanding modes for social networking present huge opportunities for greater public engagement in development education activities. The Bond Report has some important insights in relation to tapping the potential of social media for both public information activities and development education. There is a need for development educators to explore more deeply the possibilities and limitations of social media, so that online development education initiatives lead to deeper understanding and active engagement.
- The presence of a large Southern diaspora in Ireland presents development educators with opportunities to develop dialogue with Southern voices. The Consultation Paper refers to the rich matrix of relationships which are necessary in both partner countries and at home to sustain the broader development cooperation programme. Development education can create spaces for dialogue with this diaspora community which would not only extend and enrich such partnerships but would also deepen the experience of development education across the formal and non-formal sectors.
- Current Government policy of “joined-up” government, with greater emphasis on coherence of policy across departments, greater sharing of resources, etc, notwithstanding the financial constraints, does present opportunities for development education at a policy level. The existence of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Development (IDCD) is an important starting point in this regard. The pace of change in the education system underlines the importance of developing an inter-departmental approach.

Recommendation: Irish Aid to work with NCCA and Teaching Council to ensure that development education is integrated into mainstream curriculum and teacher education policy. Irish Aid to continue to have a strategic partnership with the youth sector; the adult and community education sector and work to ensure that the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Development (IDCD) serves as a catalyst for the promotion of development education across the spectrum of lifelong learning.

The economic crisis also poses very significant challenges to development education:

- The recession is causing people to question not just the cost of, but the very rationale for, development cooperation. This is already manifesting in the declining levels of public support for aid. There is a real danger that support for aid could further diminish. Equally, there is also the danger of a more inward-looking public mood, with concomitant dangers of racism and xenophobia. These trends are already established in several European countries.
- Constraints on government expenditure have impacted on all aspects of educational services. Capacity for innovative educational work, such as development education, is always constrained in such circumstances due to reduced opportunities for teacher up-skilling, reduced staffing levels, and more pressures on schools to meet core curriculum goals. These circumstances also serve to undermine the morale of teaching staff and their capacity to engage in innovation.
- The Adult and community education sector has been particularly affected by constraints on government expenditure. As funding declines, many adult and community education groups and voluntary organisations are experiencing rapidly contracting capacity, have reduced their services and are unable to retain staffing levels. The capacity of the sector to engage in enriched citizenship education, including development education, as discussed in the Aontas research, is now problematic.

7. Summary

Development education has demonstrated capacity to “deliver” important and enriching educational programmes across the formal education system, and, similarly in the youth sector, higher education sector, and to a lesser degree, in the adult and community education sector. Irish Aid should continue to support this work. Development education makes an important contribution to sustaining public engagement and support for development cooperation. Of equal importance and as argued in the Bond report, of having potentially greater impact, is its role in contributing to the formation of an educated citizenship. The latter goal is vital for the well being of Irish society as a whole and to a successful development cooperation programme for Ireland.

REFERENCES

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“Mapping the Past, Charting the Future”, M Bracken, A Bryan & M Fiedler, Irish Aid 2011
2. *Bond Report: “Finding Frames; News ways to engage the UK public in global poverty”*, A Darnton & M. Kirk, 2010
3. *“ The European consensus on development: the contribution of Development Education and awareness raising”*, EU 2007
“European Development Education Monitoring Report -DE Watch”, J Krause, 2010
4. *“Innovation and Identity: Ideas for a new Junior Cycle”*, NCCA, 2010
5. *“Integrating Development Education into adult education using active citizenship as a focus”*, AONTAS 2009

Summary of DEAC Submission and Recommendations

- **Development education continues to play an important role in increasing public understanding of the causes and consequences of global poverty and inequality**

- In an economic downturn, this role is even more important to sustain public support for the national development aid policy
- The development education sector is vibrant, engaged in a wide range of educational activities carried out across a range of themes
- The objectives of Irish Aid's DE strategy remain broadly relevant and appropriate

Recommendation 1: Irish Aid continue to (i) engage with development education sector on the development of indicators for measuring outcomes and effectiveness in development education and (ii) support research in development education, bearing in mind the policy recommendations in the DEAC commissioned research, "*Mapping the Past: Charting the Future*".

Recommendation 2: Irish Aid to support a dialogue exploring the links between (i) development education, active citizenship and global citizenship and (ii) development education in the knowledge society. In this context, the role of Irish Aid in contributing to curriculum and education policies and to policies for lifelong learning should be strengthened, especially by developing an effective inter-departmental cooperation process.

Recommendation 3: Irish Aid to continue to prioritise support for development education in the formal education sector. Support for teacher professional development is especially important. The capacity of the development education sector to respond to the changing educational context must be evaluated and supported. A more co-ordinated approach to the development of resource materials is needed. There must be a greater sense of shared leadership of the development education agenda across relevant government departments and agencies.

Recommendation 4: Irish Aid to engage in appropriate strategic partnerships to deepen and extend the range and reach of development education activities to include, in particular, new communities living in Ireland, the older age communities, professional groups, and overseas volunteers. Irish Aid also to engage in developing partnerships with the corporate sector, to sustain developments such as Traidlinks and to promote a greater awareness of opportunities for trade, cultural and educational partnerships in programme countries.

Recommendation 5: Irish Aid to work with NCCA and Teaching Council to ensure that development education is integrated into mainstream curriculum and teacher education policy. Irish Aid to continue to have a strategic partnership with the youth sector; the adult and community education sector and work to ensure that the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Development (IDCD) serves as a catalyst for the promotion of development education across the spectrum of lifelong learning.

