

## <Abstract>

This chapter explores the complex historical, political and religious context that frames discussions around citizenship and democracy within education in Ireland, as an independent nation, and as a member of the European Union. What it means to be a citizen in Ireland will be explored. The focus is primarily on the Republic of Ireland, although issues that arise in Northern Ireland will also be covered. The chapter will focus on curriculum subject areas that touch on citizenship and democracy, past and present. The extent to which policy and practice can map onto the key concepts set out in the Council of Europe's framework of competences for democratic culture will be explored, with a specific focus on the extent to which teachers are trained to be able to teach these subjects.

## Chapter 6

---

# Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

*Cathal Butler*

---

(ORCID number: 0000-0001-9429-545X)

### Introduction

Citizenship is a complex, abstract topic that is not necessarily clearly defined and understood in the context of the Irish education system (SCOTENS, 2004). It is further complicated by major shifts in the status of the Republic of Ireland in the last 30 years due to population changes, the increased importance and impact of our membership of the European Union (EU) and the shifting role of the Catholic Church in the Irish landscape. Niens and Mellrath (2010) note uncertainty among teachers, for example about what role nationalism plays in citizenship education. They state that ‘Citizenship is intimately linked to liberal ideas of individual rights and entitlements on the one hand, and to communitarian ideas of membership in and attachment to a particular community on the other’ (Niens and Mellrath, 2010:74). This chapter will explore different conceptions of citizenship that have been prominent in the education system of the Republic of Ireland. It will also briefly explore issues in relation to citizenship education in Northern Ireland. The Impact of EU membership on this topic, and the current status of citizenship in the current primary and secondary curriculum, will be explored in particular. Reference will be made throughout to the extent that policy and practice maps onto the Council of Europe’s *Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (Council of Europe, 2018). The focus will be on Values, Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge and critical understanding to see how well prepared Irish citizens are based on their educational experiences.

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

### Conceptions of citizenship for an independent Ireland

As the Irish Free State was establishing itself, both in the 1920s and beforehand, emphasis was placed on unique elements of Irish culture and civilisation to highlight a distinct Irish citizenship (Rami and Lalor, 2006), particularly within education: this was seen as a reclamation of an education system previously dominated by British Protestantism and whose main aim was, according to Padraig Pearse's *The Murder Machine*, repressive (Simmie and Edling, 2016). The Irish Free State aimed to remove British colonial vestiges as swiftly as possible (Simmie and Edling, 2016), moving towards a 'gaelic civilisation' (Rami and Lalor, 2006). Coolahan (1981) notes a patriotic (Keogh, 2003) cultural nationalism, underpinned by the revival of the Irish language as well as traditions such as sport and music, that played a key role in how Irish education initially transmitted notions of citizenship, firmly enshrined within a nationalist viewpoint. The centrality of language to national and political identity is not unique to Ireland (Ryan, 2014). The Irish language was made a compulsory subject from 1925 (McManus, 2016), highlighting that it was essential for Irish citizens.

Another key element of Irish citizenship is the extent to which it has been inextricably linked with Catholicism (Ryan, 2014), which until 1972 held a special position written into the nation's constitution (Finlay, 2007). In relation to education, the influence of the Catholic Church is difficult to exaggerate (Rami and Lalor, 2006). The 1937 constitution established the pre-eminent role of the Catholic Church (Ryan, 2014), which manages a majority of primary (Simmie and Edling, 2016) and secondary schools (Ken et al., 2002). The Catholic Church was seen as operating in a symbiotic manner with the state (Drudy and Lynch, 1993), with the Catholic Church adopting a paternalistic role (Irwin, 2013). Indeed, to this day difficulties have arisen for parents looking to find schools to send their children to that are not under the patronage of the Catholic Church in some form (Jones, 1996). Their influence in the field of education spreads beyond schools and into teacher education as well (Hartford, 2010). It is only fairly recently that initiatives such as *Educate Together* have been developed to provide educational opportunities that are non-denominational (Rami and Lalor, 2006). The influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland is seen as anomalous; the Catholic Church has amassed a considerable amount of resources in education (Rami and Lalor, 2006), with Eurydice (2012) noting the unusual status of schools in Ireland: a vast majority of schools are designated as privately owned (e.g. under church patronage), but fully state funded. The fact that schools are allowed to protect their ethos and spirit can create problems for employing teachers who do not share a particular faith (Simmie and Edling, 2016). This raises issues in relation to valuing cultural diversity, an important element of the Council of Europe's (2018) framework for democratic culture.

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

The Catholic Church has influenced what and how citizenship-related material is taught and has objected to such teaching (Kerr *et al.*, 2002): the church took the view that such concepts should be/were taught through religious education (Gleeson and Munnely, 2003; Keogh, 2003; Bruen, 2014). Indeed, Finlay (2007) claims that before the 1990s, the official position of both the Catholic Church and the government was that civic and religious education were inseparable. This has led to a position where citizenship education can be closely linked to indoctrination (Niens and Mellrath, 2010). This runs contrary to developments in teaching citizenship areas in the curriculum from the 1960s onwards in Ireland, which will be discussed later, but may explain the issues that arose.

### Contemporary and political discourses around citizenship

While traditionalist, nationalist views around citizenship, and in particular the impact of the Catholic Church, have influenced how citizenship is discussed in the Republic of Ireland, a number of other issues can be considered before citizenship and democratic concepts covered in the Irish curriculum are analysed and evaluated.

First, there has been some interesting debate about the nature of the Republic of Ireland as a republic. Ryan (2014) highlights the views of former Taoiseach Garatt Fitzgerald (2005) calling into question the extent that the Republic of Ireland is truly a republic – he argues that rather than citizens working together actively (see also *Taskforce on Active Citizenship*, 2007) for the public good, Irish citizens tend to be preoccupied with local, tribalist issues (Limond, 2010). Ferriter (2012) similarly states that earlier, more nationalist Catholic influences that informed initial Irish ideas around citizenship have proven difficult to change to a more civically oriented view, driven by a more participatory democracy (Ryan, 2014). Indeed, Fahey *et al.* (2005) highlight issues around the major political parties (Fianna Fail and Fine Gael) in terms of being able to distinguish between their major policies. Garvin (1977), for example, noted how unusual it was for the country to lack a major socialist party. Rather, the key distinction between the two major Irish political parties links back to the sides taken in relation to the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the subsequent Irish Civil War (Gallagher, 1985).

There are also issues related to the increasingly multicultural nature of modern Irish society (Waldron and Pike, 2006), due to a reversal of the previous 150+ year trend for people to migrate from rather than to Ireland (Keogh, 2003). There are issues in citizens' acceptance of 'nationhood', particularly as there are now diversity of schools (Faas and Ross, 2012). Indeed, the difficulties in migrant teachers being able to teach in Irish primary schools attests to this (*Migrant Teacher Project*, Online). Again, this creates issues in relation to valuing cultural diversity (Council of Europe, 2018). The fact that this persists in spite of a marked decline in the dominance of Catholic

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

and nationalist values in the Republic of Ireland (O'Fathaigh and O'Sullivan, 2000), and an increase in what is termed 'nominal Catholicism' (Irwin, 2009), is remarkable. Irish public discourse is still seen as being dominated by a 'White, Heterosexual, Irish, Settled, Catholic' (WHISC) mentality (Tracy, 2000).

Having focused on the impact of religion, it is also worth considering the economic influences: it has been noted, for example, that 'since the 1960s, 'mainstream' Irish education has arguably placed the emphasis on engagement through work and economic citizenship rather than civic engagement through critique' (Khoo, 2006:30). This may be severely detrimental to the type of democratic culture the Council of Europe's (2018) framework of competences espouses. Simmie and Edling (2016), however, claim that teacher educators have tried to contain the influence of education for purely economic purposes, although this is no longer proving effective (Lynch *et al.*, 2012; Murphy, 2006). Secondary education in particular is increasingly driven by a drive for examination success to support entry into competitive university courses (Gleeson and Munnelly, 2003).

### Citizenship and Northern Ireland

Discussions around citizenship on the island of Ireland inevitably must grapple with the thorny issue of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland remains a deeply segregated society, divided along political and religious loyalties (Duffy and Evans, 1997): Catholic/nationalist and unionist/protestant. The education system is equally divided (Cairns and Hewstone, 2002). Northern Ireland came into existence following the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, although territorial claims to Northern Ireland sat within the constitution of the Republic of Ireland until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (Kerr *et al.*, 2002). Northern Ireland originally contained a majority protestant, loyalist population, although with a sizable, and growing, minority Catholic republican population (Kerr *et al.*, 2002).

A prolonged period of conflict in the north between republicans and loyalists, euphemistically known as 'the Troubles', began in the 1960s, fuelled at least in part by Catholic civil rights protests due to discrimination being experienced (Clemishaw, 2008). This conflict was formally brought to a close by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which, among other things recognised the right of the people of Northern Ireland to see themselves as British, Irish or both as they see fit (Smith, 2003). Membership in the EU was key to supporting this due to the shared rights EU membership entails.

Despite the general peace that has prevailed in Northern Ireland post-1998, citizenship remains a tricky issue, especially for educators. The school system remains highly segregated, with the Department of Education, Northern Ireland (2011) noting that only approximately 5 per cent of students attend integrated schools. In attempting to teach citizenship-related issues, teachers

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

are wary of touching sensitive issues relating to the Troubles (Department of Education, Northern Ireland, 1999): a number of curricular initiatives designed to promote social cohesion in Northern Ireland have been attempted, but none seem to have succeeded (Wylie, 2004). Smith (2003) argues that due to a lack of common ground between the two main populations in Northern Ireland, there is the need for a broader citizenship education in Northern Ireland, focusing on human rights as a basis, although teachers would still have to be very aware of what young people may be learning at home (McSharry and Cusack, 2016), which may not support this work. However, McEvoy (2007) notes that avoiding discussion of past conflict may end up being counterproductive. Niens and Mellraith (2010) highlight the concerns that teachers have in teaching controversial issues related to the Troubles.

### Citizenship and democratic practices in the Irish curriculum

#### *Initial coverage of citizenship: civics*

Civics was first introduced into the post-primary curriculum in the junior cycle in 1966 (Kerr *et al.*, 2002). This was seen as a time of greater government interest and investment in education to support economic development, specifically linked to moves towards joining the European Economic Community (EEC: Kerr *et al.*, 2002), an organisation to be covered within the civics curriculum (Keating, 2007). This new subject was obligatory (Murphy, 2014): it would be taught for one lesson a week. Murphy (2014) highlights commentary on this subject from the minister of education at the time. He said that the subject would not be formally examined, in line with the supposed 'spirit' of the subject. Kerr *et al.* (2002) explore the syllabus, which focused on citizenship framed within a nationalist perspective, with little or no emphasis on active citizenship. Keating (2007) notes that as the EEC developed, the concept of European citizenship began to be explored within the civics curriculum.

Jeffers (2008) has highlighted that different official sources painted contrasting pictures of civics. The formal syllabus focused on knowledge-focused learning about organisations and institutions underpinning democratic practices. Jeffers (2008) characterises this as rather dull. On the other hand, notes on the teaching of civics (e.g. guidance for civics teachers) called for a more active approach to the topic, presumably involving greater student involvement, discussion and debate. This particular interpretation aligns fairly well with the competence skills set out by the Council of Europe's framework (2018).

The civics curriculum has been subject to a range of criticisms. Murphy's (2014) claim that it was perceived to be a 'doss' class is the most striking of these. Civics was a subject taught by non-specialists (Keogh, 2003); anybody could teach civics (Hyland, 1993), with little or no preparation provided for

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

staff (although an annual event for teachers of civics did run from 1969 to 1973, see [Murphy, 2014](#)). The lack of formal examination is thought to have contributed to the low status of the subject and a lack of interest in the subject in school principals ([Hyland, 1993](#)), resulting in the subjects' timetable position being taken over by other subjects ([Hammond and McCarthy, 1996](#)). All these issues, alongside significant social and economic changes, particularly during the 1990s ([Kerr et al., 2002](#)), led to the demise of civics as a subject, which had long been deemed as dying ([Harris, 2005](#)). This would allow for a new approach to the concepts of citizenship and democracy, at both primary and secondary level.

### **Primary school curriculum**

The subject area Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) covers areas relevant to the concept of citizenship. Guidelines on this subject area have been available to subject teachers since 2005, and it has been part of the primary curriculum since 1999 (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], Online, A), although the origins of this topic can be found in the 1970s ([Eurydice, 2012](#)). The curriculum for this subject area includes three strands:

- Myself
- Myself and others
- Myself and the wide world

It is noted that the one aspect of this curriculum area is to enable a child to 'become an active and responsible citizen in society' ([Department of Education and Science, 1999a](#):2). These align well with the knowledge and critical understanding competences set out in relation to knowledge of the self by the [Council of Europe \(2018\)](#).

This subject aims to introduce children to their rights and responsibilities as members of society, locally and more globally. This is particularly pronounced in the 'Myself and the wider world' section of the curriculum. Towards the end of the primary curriculum, teaching around national, European and wider communities is introduced, including an exploration of the political processes (president, constitution, elections). Again, this anticipates elements of knowledge and understanding set out in the [European Council's \(2018\) Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#). Cultural aspects such as Irish traditions are also introduced, alongside an acknowledgement and respect for other cultures and traditions.

Teacher guidelines for this subject area ([Department of Education and Science, 1999b](#)) highlight the active role the child plays in this subject, noting that children should:

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland experience and practise the democratic process where

- rules are negotiated
- responsibility is shared
- the opinions of parents, children and teachers are valued
- they feel a sense of belonging
- a sense of commitment to a common purpose is developed and understood.

(Department of Education and Science, 1999b:24)

The role of processes like school assemblies and children playing an active role in decision making are included. In line with this, the method of teaching in this subject area eschews traditional didactic approaches to teaching, focusing more on active learning approaches (Eurydice, 2012). Again, this can be seen as well aligned with values and skills set out by the Council of Europe (2018).

### **Secondary school curriculum**

#### *Civic, social and political education in the junior cycle*

The subject Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) has been a core element of the junior cycle in secondary education since 1997 (SCoTENS, 2004), following piloting earlier in the 1990s (Smith, 2003). This reflects a period of time during which the minister of education looked to place citizenship at the top of the curriculum agenda (Kerr et al., 2002). This particular syllabus will no longer be in effect after 2018/19, however, and will from 2019/20 onwards be available as an optional short course within the junior cycle (NCCA, online B). The subject as originally envisioned (NCCA, 1994) is a mandatory part of the junior cycle of secondary school and should be taught for a minimum of one lesson per week, with schools encouraged to support this. The Department of Education (1996), for example, suggests timetabling CSPE teachers to appear and teach within other subjects. Also, it interestingly specifically called for particular timeslots, with the final lesson on Friday to be avoided.

As the name of the subject asserts, this subject area is inter-disciplinary in nature (NCCA, 1994), and the potential of the topic to be cross-curricular, and several aspects of it set out in the following, will necessarily interact with the nature and ethos of the school. Indeed, the Department of Education (1996) call for schools to have an awareness of how their own cultures can help to support the aims of CSPE, for example through supporting an active and engaged student council, to allow for whole school involvement in this subject area. The Department of Education (1996) highlighted the importance of



## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

school management to support this subject area. The likelihood of schools engaging with this, particularly when there are reported instances of schools enacting exclusionary policies to maintain reputations and league table standing (Murphy, 2006; Cahill, 2015, Irish Times, 2004), is questionable. This again calls into question the extent to which students experience 'democratic culture' (Council of Europe, 2018). Indeed, Niens and McIlrath (2010) note that authoritarian approaches to school management are prominent and act as a barrier to democratic practice developing in schools.

The course incorporates seven key concepts (Department of Education and Science, 1999):

- Democracy
- Rights and responsibilities
- Human dignity
- Interdependence
- Development,
- Law
- Stewardship

This subject is taught through four units of study:

- The Individual and Citizenship
- The Community
- The State
- Ireland and the World

Again, these can be mapped onto the values, in particular the knowledge and critical understanding competences, in the Council of Europe's (2018) framework. This format follows on from the primary Personal, Social, Health, and Economic (PSHE) Education curriculum. An aim of CSPE is to

produce knowledgeable pupils who can explore, analyse and evaluate, who are skilled and practised in moral and critical appraisal, and capable of making decisions and judgements through a reflective citizenship, based on human rights and social responsibilities.

(NCCA, Online C)

The child, as a result of learning within this curriculum area, should have self-confidence, independence, and a high level of social literacy.

(Rami *et al.*, 2006:3)

As with PSHE, the focus is on active learning:

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

Its employment of active and co-operatively structured learning methodologies enables and empowers the pupil to become an active and participative young person.

(NCCA, Online C)

This is clearly reflected in the assessment tasks for this subject, with 40 per cent of the marks awarded from this subject examination based, and 60 per cent based on the production of action projects. These projects allow students to focus on contemporary issues, both social and political. This is a very deliberate choice:

The form of assessment/examination and certification which is most fruitful to this goal one which is primarily focuses on the ongoing development of the civic, social and political student.

(NCCA, 1993:23)

Again, this can be seen as well aligned with the skills, knowledge and critical understanding set out in the Council of Europe's (2018) framework of competences. In guidance, it is further specified (State Examinations Commission, Online) that the action project should touch on one of the seven key concepts of the course (set out prior). It should also engage with issues relevant to human rights and social responsibility, further developing key skills (Council of Europe, 2018). It must incorporate an active component and include reflection on this action. Within this action project, students are encouraged to engage with communities. The report may be submitted in audio format or as a video report.

There has been some interesting discussion over the last 20 years about CSPE. Some aspects (Kinlen *et al.*, 2013) were quite well received, particularly the action project aspect. These action projects often focus on important real world themes, with topics around human rights being quite popular (Wilson, 2008). Eurydice (2012) notes that these action projects can involve in-school activities such as carrying out mock elections, as well as field trip visits, to county council offices for example. This type of activity can certainly support the development of competence attitudes related to civic-mindedness (Council of Europe, 2018).

Kinlen *et al.* (2013) also highlight the positive reception towards the more considered approach to citizenship education. Keating (2009) for example notes that this model marks a shift from traditional models of the past in a way that is termed post-national and cosmopolitan, in that it aims to avoid focusing on nationality and patriotism, focusing instead on more general universal values. This avoids issues with citizenship education acting as a form of nationalist indoctrination (Faulks, 2006). Again, clear links can be made to the values and the attitudes captured by the Council of Europe's (2018) framework of competences. As Hammond and Looney (2004) note, these

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

universal values are drawn from key UN documents, such as the *UN Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention*. However, this abstract and ahistorical approach may prove counterproductive; [Worden and Smith \(2017\)](#), for example, describe the consequences of the curriculum in Rwanda avoiding discussion around the genocide that occurred in the 1990s – a failure to cover the topic in the formal curriculum can lead to children learning about it through other means, via family or other politically motivated channels, in a way that clearly can have negative consequences. An ahistoric approach is also not necessarily aligned to the broader aim of this subject area to be active and engaged with contemporary issues; the current debates around the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is clearly a contemporary topic of great political significance due to Britain exiting the EU.

CSPE as a subject area has encountered challenges, however. [Jeffers \(2008\)](#) highlights that the specified minimum amount of time devoted to this subject area, one lesson a week, does not provide time for this unit to be fully explored and that the active teaching approach in particular does not benefit from such a short amount of time being devoted to it: rather, the rhetoric of citizenship and its importance is not necessarily matched by the reality of what goes on in the school, particularly in comparison to other subjects. In addition, the lack of a follow-on curriculum area in the senior cycle ([NCCA, 2006](#)) is seen to further devalue this subject area. In other words, while a case can be made that the competences set out in the Council of Europe's framework can be seen, students are not necessarily getting the support to achieve and fully demonstrate these competences.

There has also been criticism of content, with [Jeffers \(2008\)](#) highlighting researchers such as [Wylie \(1999\)](#) focusing on the individualistic and mainly procedural focus of the content. [Jeffers \(2008\)](#) also cites former taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald as saying that the CSPE curriculum was 'remarkably timid in relation to its political component' ([Jeffers, 2008](#):14). [Jeffers \(2008\)](#) further critiques the curriculum as being broadly conservative in how it approaches the topics of rights and the representation of marginalised groups such as the travelling community ([Brvan, 2007](#)). This rather brings into question whether valuing cultural diversity ([Council of Europe, 2018](#)) is actually achieved within this curriculum. This also does not seem in line with the notion of the student becoming an active, engaged, socially literate citizen. There are also questions about the extent to which it truly involves co-operation between school and community to achieve its aims in relation to active citizenship ([Redmond and Butler, 2003](#)).

### *Politics and society in the senior cycle*

[Keogh \(2003\)](#) noted that extending the general subject area of CSPE into the senior cycle was being explored. [Eurydice \(2012\)](#) noted that an elective

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

subject area Politics and Society has been developed. The Irish Development Education Association ([IDEA 2016](#)) noted that this would be phased in from September 2016. The NCCA (Online) currently note that the subject will be available to all schools from the beginning of the 2018/19 school year, although some aspects of the course still seem to be under construction. Politics and Society again highlights the concept of active citizenship, informed by the principals of social and political science (NCCA, Online D). The subject area includes four units, with two key topics within each unit (see [Table 6.1](#)).

*Table 6.1* Units and topics in Politics and Society.

<i>Unit</i>	<i>Topics</i>
Unit 1: Power and decision making	Topic 1: Power and decision making in school Topic 2: Power and decision making at national and European level
Unit 2: Active citizenship	Topic 3: Effectively contributing to communities Topic 4: Rights and responsibilities in communication with others
Unit 3: Human rights and responsibilities	Topic 5: Human rights and responsibilities in Ireland Topic 6: Human rights and responsibilities in Europe and the wider world
Unit 4: Globalisation and localisation	Topic 7: Globalisation and identity Topic 8: Sustainable development

Unit 2 is said to involve a strong focus on debate and discussion, with the skills that underpin this needing to be explicitly taught (NCCA, Online D); students will be given competing ideas to critically contrast and evaluate. This would certainly support the development of skills set out by the [Council of Europe \(2018\)](#).

There will also be a citizenship project – presumably similar to the types of action projects in CSPE in the junior cycle, although it seems it will only account for 20 per cent of the grade in this instance (NCCA, Online D). Projects will be informed by annual briefs which set out potential topic areas. In this unit (and elsewhere), there is also an expectation that issues will be explored at all levels from local to global (NCCA, Online D). Specifications call for one double class a week for this subject area, or 180 hours in total (NCCA Online D), broken down to 30 hours teaching per unit, 30 hours for revision of strands and 30 hours to support the project. It will be interesting to

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

see if this specification addresses some of the concerns set out in relation to CSPE in the junior cycle.

### *Teacher training for civics, CSPE, politics and society in secondary schools*

How well trained are Irish teachers are to support the development of the competences in the [Council of Europe's \(2018\)](#) framework? [Lynch \(2000\)](#) noted that expertise was a foundational necessity for subject teachers. Starting with the introduction of civics as a subject in the 1960s, there is little or no evidence of teachers being able to access coherent training to ensure they are able to deliver this subject, particularly before the introduction of the subject ([Murphy, 2014](#)). Once the subject was introduced, annual seminars and regional courses were conducted ([Hyland, 1993](#)). Receiving training after the course has been introduced inevitably means that courses are taught by teachers without appropriate expertise, contradicting Lynch's view on the need for expertise as a prerequisite for teaching.

For the subject area CSPE, the same issues in relation to training remain. The [NCCA \(2003\)](#) called for the introduction of in-service teacher training resources and specific training resources. Most information on teacher training in relation to CSPE seems to focus on in-service rather than pre-service. It has been reported that no specific qualifications for this subject area exist, although [Kerr et al. \(2002\)](#) recommended the development of such a qualification. Similar concerns have been raised about the lack of qualifications and trained staff for the new Politics and Society subject in the senior cycle ([Eurydice, 2012](#); [Irish Human Rights Commission, 2011](#)). Returning to in-service support, an [Eurydice \(2012\)](#) report noted that a specific support team within the Professional Development Service for Teachers organised workshops and spent time in schools between 1998 and 2008, as a form of support for teachers of CSPE. The focus of their in-service seems to have been on the active pedagogical strategies called for by this subject and the development of resources. The [Irish Human Rights Commission \(2011\)](#), however, noted concerns about funding cuts leading to a significant diminution of the services and resources available to teachers of CSPE.

The overall impact of in-service for CSPE teachers remains unclear. The research of [Niens and Mellrath \(2010\)](#), for example, noted the strong likelihood of citizenship being a neglected, 'Cinderella' subject. It is seen to be a low status subject ([NCCA, 2003](#); [Kinlen et al., 2013](#)), often taught by teachers with little to no training or interest in the subject area. Shannon (2002) also notes that attendance for inservice sessions in this topic was an issue. [Jeffers \(2008\)](#) notes a potential link between the status of the subject and teacher turnover. This echoes issues experienced by its predecessor. [Niens and Mellrath's \(2010\)](#) research also raised questions about continuing

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

professional development (CPD) and formal qualifications available for citizenship teachers, noting that it was often the case that people teaching this subject were not particularly interested or motivated – it is added to their timetable, but did not necessarily reflect their backgrounds and interests. Turnover in the teachers covering this area has also been highlighted (Kinlen et al., 2013). The NCCA (2003) has already identified this as an issue: teacher turnover can mean that whatever training is provided to CSPE teachers does not have a long-term impact, as so many quickly stop teaching this subject and are replaced by new teachers, who in turn will require substantial in-service training. Without properly trained and motivated teachers, it is unlikely that the competences set out by the Council of Europe (2018) could be achieved, based on teaching of CSPE in Ireland.

### Citizenship and EU membership

As noted, EU membership has helped address some of the tensions arising on the island of Ireland. This impact is noteworthy:

As Ireland approaches the twenty-first century, a strong sense of European citizenship increasingly complements a robust Irish identity. Ireland's links with Europe have deep historical roots. This European tradition, in Irish affairs, is reinforced in modern times through Ireland's membership of the European Union and its full participation, in partnership with the other Member States in policy-making at European level. Ireland's development is now linked in an integral way with the development of Europe. This poses no threat to our national identity. Rather it offers significant opportunities for growth and development in the broader European context.

(Government of Ireland, 1993:215)

Stoer and Cortesão (2000) have noted how the EU has underpinned a broader shared identity and citizenship that unites the member states of the EU; this is supported by initiatives focused on engaging citizens (Murray, 2008), although such initiatives have not always proved successful (Keogh, 2009b). In a modern context, it is seen that citizens can engage with multiple identities that complement each other (e.g. Cederman, 2001), although any formal movements towards acknowledging an European identity have been tentative at best (Keating, 2009).

The European Union has also, as noted, had an impact on the content of citizenship-focused teaching in the Irish curriculum. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013) notes that schools and curricula can play an important role in supporting political and cultural integration to support the European project. Indeed, the curriculum has at times been criticised as too Eurocentric, without much attention focused

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

on the rest of the world (Keating, 2009). SCoTENS (2004) makes a similar point, calling for EU citizenship, which has gained increased significance in the Irish curriculum (Keating, 2009), not to dominate in relation to citizenship education. It must be noted, however, that the EU in and of itself does not directly provide input into the curricula of individual member states (Taskforce on Active Citizenship, 2007). Jeffers (2008) notes that as laws such as the European Convention on Human Rights become Irish law, this has an impact on Irish curricula: the curriculum must adapt and be updated to ensure these concepts are fully covered. However, as Keating (2009) notes, an active approach, focusing on ‘education through citizenship’ rather than ‘education about citizenship’, which is in line with what is espoused in relation to the current Irish curriculum, helps ensure that issues such as these are addressed.

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explore the complications that arise for students, teachers, schools and teacher trainers when grappling with how to provide input on complex concepts such as citizenship and democracy. In the Irish context, historical and religious issues impinge on the extent to which honest conversations can occur and the extent to which teachers have the freedom to fully explore challenging topics. While it is clear that the aspirations set out in a range of Irish educational policy documents support the development of the types of democratic competences set out by the Council of Europe’s (2018) framework, the reality on the ground seems to be that teachers are not always in a position to ensure that students fully develop these values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding.

### References

- Bruen, J. (2014) ‘Politics: Interest, Participation and Education: Comparing the Republic of Ireland with Germany’ *Irish Educational Studies*, 33 (1), pp. 37–55.
- Bryan, A. (2007) ‘The (Mis)representation of Travellers in the Civic, Social and Political Education Curriculum’ in Downes, P. and Gilligan, A. L. (eds.) *Beyond Educational Disadvantage*. Dublin: IPA, pp. 247–258.
- Cahill, K. (2017) ‘Seeing the Wood from the Trees: A Critical Policy Analysis of Intersections between Social Class Inequality and Education in Twenty-First Century Ireland’ *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 8 (2), pp. 301–316.
- Cairns, E. and Hewstone, M. (2002) ‘The Impact of Peacemaking in Northern Ireland on Intergroup Behaviour’ in Salomon, G. and Nevo, B. (eds.) *The Nature and Study of Peace Education*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 217–228.
- Cederman, L. (2001) ‘Nationalism and Bounded Integration: What It Would Take to Construct a European Demos?’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 7 (2), pp. 139–174.

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

- Clemithshaw, G. (2008) 'Citizenship without History? Knowledge, Skills and Values in Citizenship Education' *Ethics and Education*, 3 (2), pp. 135–147.
- Coolahan, J. (1981) *Irish Education: History and Structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- Council of Europe (2018) *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Department of Education (1996) *Civic Social and Political Education Syllabus*. Dublin: The Stationary Office.
- Department of Education and Science (1999a) *Social, Personal, and Health Education*. Dublin: The Stationary Office.
- Department of Education and Science (1999b) *Social, Personal, and Health Education, Teacher Guidelines*. Dublin: The Stationary Office.
- Department of Education and Science (1999c) *Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Syllabus*. Dublin: The Stationary Office.
- Department of Education, Northern Ireland (1999) *Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Education for Diversity*. Belfast: DENI.
- Department of Education Northern Ireland (2011) *Integrated Schools*. Available at: [www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/10-types\\_of\\_school-nischools\\_pg/16-schoolsintegratedschools\\_pg.html](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/16-schoolsintegratedschools_pg.html) (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- Drudy, S. and Lynch, K. (1993) *Schools and Society in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.
- Duffy, M. and Evans, G. (1997) 'Class, Community Polarisation and Politics' in Dowds, L., Devine, P. and Breen, R. (eds.) *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland: The Sixth Report*. Belfast: Appletree Press, pp. 102–137.
- Eurydice (2012) *Citizenship Education in Europe*. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/citizenship\\_education\\_in\\_europe\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/citizenship_education_in_europe_en.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- Faas, D. and Ross, W. (2012) 'Identity, Diversity and Citizenship: A Critical Analysis of Textbooks and Curricula in Irish Schools' *International Sociology*, 27 (4), pp. 574–591.
- Fahey, T, Hayes, B. and Sinnott, R. (2005) *Conflict and Consensus: A Study of Calues and Attitudes in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*. Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Faulks, K. (2006) 'Rethinking Citizenship Education in England: Some Lessons from Contemporary Social and Political Theory' *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 1 (2), pp. 123–140.
- Ferriter, D. (2012) 'State Now Morally as Well as Economically Bankrupt' *The Irish Times*, 26 March.
- Finlay, G. (2007) 'Comprehensive Liberalism and Civic Education in the Republic of Ireland' *Irish Political Studies*, 22 (4), pp. 473–493.
- Fitzgerald, G. (2005) *Ireland in the World: Further Reflections*. Dublin: Liberties Press.
- Gallagher, M. (1985) *Political Parties in the Republic of Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.




## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

- Garvin, T. (1977) 'Nationalist Elites, Irish Voters and Irish Political Development: A Comparative Perspective' *Economic and Social Review*, 8 (3), pp. 161–185.
- Gleeson, J. and Munnely, J. (2003) *Developments in Citizenship Education in Ireland: Context, Rhetoric and Reality*. Paper read at International Conference on Civic Education, New Orleans, November.
- Hammond, J. and Looney, A. (2004) 'Revisioning Citizenship Education: The Irish Experience' in Lawton, D., Cairns, J. and Gardner, R. (eds.) *Education for Citizenship*. London: Continuum, pp. 175–182.
- Hammond, J. and McCarthy, S. (1996) *The Development and Work of the CSPE Pilot Project 1993–1996*. Dublin: NCCA.
- Harris, C. (2005) 'Democratic Citizenship Education in Ireland' *The Adult Learner: The Journal of Adult and Community Education in Ireland*, 6 (3), pp. 227–243.
- Hartford, J. (2010) 'Teacher Education Policy in Ireland and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century' *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 33 (4), pp. 349–360.
- Hyland, Á. (1993) *Educate Together Schools in the Republic of Ireland: The First Stage 1975–1994*. Available at: [www.educatetogether.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Educate-Together-Schools-in-the-Republic-of-Ireland-1975-1994.pdf](http://www.educatetogether.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Educate-Together-Schools-in-the-Republic-of-Ireland-1975-1994.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- Government of Ireland (1995) *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- IDEA (2016) *Development Education: Policy and Practice for the Formal Sector in Ireland*. Dublin: IDEA.
- Irish Human Rights Commission (2011) *Human Rights Education in Ireland: An Overview*. Dublin: Irish Human Rights Commission.
- Irish Times* (2004) 'Limerick Schools', 12 May.
- Irwin, J. (2009) 'Interculturalism Ethos and Ideology: Barriers to Freedom and Democracy in Irish Primary Education' *REA: A Journal of Religion, Education, and the Arts*, 6 (2).
- Irwin, J. (2013) 'Toward Change: Exploring Tensions in Ethical-Religious Pedagogy in Irish Primary Education' in Byrne, G. and Kieran, P. (eds.) *Toward Mutual Ground Pluralism, Religious Education and Diversity in Irish Schools*. Dublin: The Columba Press, pp. 177–186.
- Jeffers, G. (2008) 'Some Challenges for Citizenship Education in the Republic of Ireland' in Jeffers, G. and O'Connor, U. (eds.) *Education for Citizenship and Diversity in Irish Contexts*. Dublin: IPA, pp. 11–23.
- Jones, M. (1996) 'The Sunday Tribune' in Hyland, Á. (ed.) *Multi-Denominational Schools in the Republic of Ireland 1975–1995*. Available at: [www.educatetogether.ie/sites/default/files/multi-denominational\\_schools\\_in\\_the\\_republic\\_of\\_ireland\\_1975-1995\\_by\\_aine\\_hyland.pdf](http://www.educatetogether.ie/sites/default/files/multi-denominational_schools_in_the_republic_of_ireland_1975-1995_by_aine_hyland.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

- Keating, A. (2007) *The Europeanisation of Citizenship Education: Politics and Policymaking in Europe and Ireland*. Doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge.
- Keating, A. (2009) 'Nationalizing the Post-National: Reframing European Citizenship for the Civics Curriculum in Ireland' *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41 (2), pp. 159–178.
-  Keogh, H. (2003) 'Learning for Citizenship in Ireland: The Role of Adult Education' in Medel-Anonuevo, C. and Mitchell, G. (eds.) *Citizenship, Democracy, and Lifelong Learning*. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132847> (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- Kerr, D., McCarthy, S. and Smith, A. (2002) 'Citizenship Education in England, Ireland and Northern Ireland' *European Journal of Education*, 37 (2), pp. 179–191.
- Khoo, S. (2006) 'Development Education, Citizenship and Civic Engagement at Third Level and Beyond in the Republic of Ireland' *Global Citizenship*, 3, pp. 26–39.
- Kinlen, L., Hansson, U., Keenaghan, C., Canavan, J. and O'Connor, U. (2013) 'Education for Civic Engagement in Post-Primary Schools in Ireland and Northern Ireland: A Rights Perspective' *The Children and Youth Programme*. Available at: [www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/cyp\\_book\\_5\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.childandfamilyresearch.ie/media/unescochildandfamilyresearchcentre/documentspdf/cyp_book_5_full_report.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- Limond, D. (2010) 'An Historic Culture Rapidly, Universally, and Thoroughly Restored? British Influence on Irish Education since 1922' *Comparative Education*, 46 (4), pp. 449–462.
- Lynch, K. (2000) *Education for Citizenship: The Need for Major Intervention in Social and Political Education in Ireland*. Paper presented to the CSPE Conference, Bunratty, Co. Clare, 29 September.
- Lynch, K., Grummell, B. and Devine, D. (2012) *New Managerialism in Education: Commercialization, Carelessness and Gender*. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McEvoy, L. (2007) 'Beneath the Rhetoric: Policy Approximation and Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland' *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2 (2), pp. 135–157.
- McManus, C. (2016) 'Irish Language Education and the National ideal: The Dynamics of Nationalism in Northern Ireland' *Nations and Nationalism*, 22 (1), pp. 42–62.
- McSharry, M. and Cusack, M. (2016) 'Teachers' Stories of Engaging Students in Controversial Action Projects on the Island of Ireland' *Journal of Social Science Education*, 15 (2), pp. 57–69.
- Migrant Teacher Project (Online) *Migrant Teacher Project*. Available at: [www.mie.ie/en/Research/Migrant\\_Teacher\\_Project/](http://www.mie.ie/en/Research/Migrant_Teacher_Project/) (Accessed 25 June 2019).

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

- Murphy, D. (2014) *Civics Revisited? An Exploration of the Factors Affecting the Implementation of CSPE in Five Post-Primary Schools*. MA Dissertation, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.
- Murphy, T. (2006) 'The Civic Remit of Educational Practice in the Republic of Ireland: A Review of the Potential of Service Learning' *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 1 (3), pp. 203–210.
- Murray, M. (2008) 'Planning through Dialogue for Rural Development: The European Citizens' Panel Initiative' *Planning Practice and Research*, 23 (2), pp. 265–279.
- NCCA (1993) *Civic, Social and Political Education at Post-Primary Level*. Dublin: NCCA.
- NCCA (2003) *Civic, Social and Political Education, NCCA Response to NEXUS Report on Survey of Principals and CSPE Teachers*. Dublin: NCCA.
- NCCA (2006) *Social and Political Education in Senior Cycle: A Background Paper*. Dublin: NCCA.
- [NCCA](#) (OnlineA) *Social Personal and Health Education Curriculum*. Available at: [www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social-Personal-and-Health-Education-Curriculum](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social-Personal-and-Health-Education-Curriculum) (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- [NCCA](#) (OnlineB) *Civic Social and Political Education*. Available at: <https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-Subjects/Civic-Social-and-Political-Education> (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- [NCCA](#) (OnlineC) *CSPE Syllabus*. Available at: [https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/b4cf7fd4-46d0-4595-baa9f6c38923c75f/JCSEC04\\_CSPE\\_Syllabus.pdf](https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/b4cf7fd4-46d0-4595-baa9f6c38923c75f/JCSEC04_CSPE_Syllabus.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- [NCCA](#) (OnlineD) *Politics and Society: Curriculum Specification. Leaving Certificate: Ordinary and Higher Level*. Available at: <https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/e2a7eb28-ae06-4e52-97f8-d5c8fee9613b/13764-NCCA-Politics-and-Society-Specification-v2b.pdf> (Accessed 25 June 2019).
- Niens, U. and McIlrath, L. (2010) 'Understandings of Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: Public Discourses among Stakeholders in the Public and Private Sectors' *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 5 (1), pp. 73–87.
- O'Fathaigh, M. and O'Sullivan, D. (2000) 'Five Decades at UCC, 1948–1998: From Roman Catholic Social Reconstruction to Community Partnership and Empowerment' in Cooke, A. and MacSween, A. (eds.) *The Rise and Fall of Adult Education Institutions and Social Movements, the Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on the History of Adult Education*. London: Peter Lang.
-  Rami, J. and Lalor, J. (2006) 'Citizenship and Identity Education in Ireland in the Post-Celtic Tiger Era: Impacts and Possibilities' in Ross, A. (ed.) *Citizenship Education: Europe and the World*. London: CiCe, pp. 521–530.
- Rami, J., Lalor, J., Berg, W., Lorencovicova, E., Lorencovic, J., Maiztegui Oñate, C. and Elm, A. (2006) *Competencies for Educators in Citizenship Education &*

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

*the Development of Identity in First & Second Cycle Programmes*. Volume 2. London: CiCe.

Redmond, D. and Butler, P. (2003) *Civic, Social and Political Education, Reports on Survey of Teachers and Principals to NCCA*. Dublin: NEXUS Research Co-Operative.

Ryan, A. (2014) *The Road to Democracy in Irish Primary School education*. EdD Thesis, University of Sheffield.

SCoTENS (2004) *Annual Report*. Available at: <http://scotens.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2004-scotens.pdf> (Accessed 25 June 2019).

Shannon, M. (2000) *Curriculum Implementation: Theory and Practice and the Role of Leadership*. M.Ed. Thesis, N.U.I. Maynooth.

Simmie, G. and Edling, S. (2016) 'Ideological Governing Forms in Education and Teacher Education: A Comparative Study between Highly Secular Sweden and Highly Non-Secular Republic of Ireland' *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 1, pp. 1–12.

Smith, A. (2003) 'Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland: Beyond National Identity?' *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33 (1), pp. 15–31.

State Examinations Commission (Online) *Junior Certificate Examination 2019 Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE): Report on Action Project (RAP) Course Work Assessment Book (CWAB)*. Available at: [www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-83721957.pdf](http://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-83721957.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).

Stoer, S. and Cortesão, L. (2000) 'Multiculturalism and Educational Policy in a Global Context' in Burbules, N. and Torres, C. (eds.) *Globalization and Education: Critical Perspectives*. London: Routledge, pp. 253–274.

Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) *Report of the Task Force on Active Citizenship*. Dublin: Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

Tracy, M. (2000) *Racism and Immigration in Ireland: A Comparative Analysis*. Dublin: Department of Sociology, Trinity College.

UNESCO (2013) *Hangzhou International Congress Culture: A Driver and Enabler of Social Cohesion*. Available at: [www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/Culture\\_DriverEnablerSocialCohesionENG.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/Culture_DriverEnablerSocialCohesionENG.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2019).

Waldron, F. and Pike, S. (2006) 'What Does It Mean to Be Irish? Children's Construction of National Identity' *Irish Educational Studies*, 25 (2), pp. 231–251.

Wilson, M. (2008) 'The Action Project as a Teaching/Learning Tool' in Jeffers, G. and O'Connor, U. (Eds.) *Education for Citizenship and Diversity in Irish Contexts*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Worden, E. and Smith, A. (2017) 'Teaching for Democracy in the Absence of Transitional Justice: The Case of Northern Ireland' *Comparative Education*, 53 (3), pp.379–395.

Wylie, K. (1999) 'Education for Citizenship: A Critical Review of Some Programmes in England and Ireland' *Irish Educational Studies*, 18 (1), pp. 91–102.

## Chapter 6 Education for democratic citizenship in Ireland

Wylie, K. (2004) 'Citizenship, Identity and Social Inclusion: Lessons from Northern Ireland' *European Journal of Education*, 39 (2), pp. 237–248.