

## **Education for Pluralism, Human Rights and Democracy**

### **Overview**

UNESCO Centre research has impacted on education policy, locally and globally, attracting research grants of more than £6M in the last decade. Three significant research impacts are: the statutory inclusion of Local and Global Citizenship in the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) for all schools from 2007; research on 'conflict sensitive' education that provided the conceptual framework for the 2011 UNESCO Education Global Monitoring Report and used by UNICEF to secure funding addressing peace-building and education in conflict affected countries; and a rights-based outcome indicators framework developed for the Office of the Minister and Deputy First Minister to inform NI reporting as part of the State (UK) submission to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Research underpinning this case study is clustered into three key themes: citizenship, conflict and children's rights.

### **Citizenship**

Research into *Education for Mutual Understanding* (a cross curricular theme of the NIC 1991 -2007) provided a critique that underlined the need for a stronger curriculum focus on civic responsibility, human rights, justice and democracy, particularly in the context of the Good Friday Agreement (1998). In a seminal article, Smith (2003) argued for the inclusion of an inquiry-based approach to citizenship education that is defined in terms of citizens' rights and responsibilities rather than their national identities. Research funding, leading to the development of a conceptual framework grounded in pluralism, human rights and democracy in a conflict-affected society (Smith 2003), was the basis of *Education for Local and Global Citizenship* which became a statutory requirement for all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland from 2007. The research was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, Northern Ireland Department of Education (DENI) and the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

### **Conflict**

Research, initially in a report for the Department for International Development (DFID) (Smith and Vaux, 2003) and in a subsequent publication by Smith (2005), was pivotal in the conceptual development of *conflict sensitive education* which has now become a priority for donors and international development agencies. Smith became a contributing author (2010) to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2011) on education and conflict and co-authored new research for UNICEF on the role of education in peace building (Novell and Smith, 2011). UNICEF (2011) explicitly referenced Smith's (2005) definition of conflict sensitive education in a proposal on education and peace building. This was used as the basis for a \$150M initiative funded by the Government of the Netherlands over a four year period (2012-15), in 14 conflict affected countries (Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, occupied Palestinian territories, Yemen and Pakistan).

### **Children's Rights**

A £1.4M grant from Atlantic Philanthropies (2011-15) has enabled the UNESCO Centre to develop a rights-based approach to monitoring the well-being of children and youth in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This led to funding (£104K) from the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) to develop a rights-based *Outcome Indicators Framework* based on the provisions outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2013, rights-informed research carried out on behalf of the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) on education policy in Northern Ireland (Hansson et al, 2013) has impacted on policy recommendations contained in a Government appointed Ministerial Advisory Group report on the future of the education system in Northern Ireland, which have been accepted by the Northern Ireland Minister for Education, John O'Dowd MLA (22nd October 2013, Northern Ireland Assembly)

**Key Researchers** for research period 1998-2013: Professor Alan Smith, Dr Alan McCully, Dr Una O'Connor, Dr Ulf Hansson, Dr Ulrike Niens, Dr Carmel Gallagher, Dr Alison Montgomery, Marina Monteith, Dr John McCord, Christine Smith Ellison.

### **Details of Impact**

The impact of the research is not just confined to education; it is integral to the building of a stable society in Northern Ireland. At the same time, the cumulative impact of this work has led to significant growth in the international aspect of research activity in recent years. This has created a virtuous circle, whereby lessons learned nationally have utility and currency in a global setting, whilst experience gained internationally has been used to inform, influence and impact on government policy in Northern Ireland in 2013.

#### **1. Citizenship and Conflict**

- By bringing forward research evidence to show that reform of parts of the NIC could be integral to building a stable and shared society (including research commissioned by DE on interschool links and evaluations of Education for Mutual Understanding), the UNESCO Centre has been a pivotal actor in curriculum reform in Northern Ireland. As a consequence, this has had direct impact on the 329,000 children and young people currently enrolled in schools and on the school staff of 20,000 teachers. An Overview Education and Training Inspectorate report highlighted, '*... the recognition by the pupils of the value of Citizenship which differs in several respects to other subjects that they study*'.
- Working in partnership with the CCEA and those tasked with formulating education policy ensured that the framework developed by UNESCO Centre researchers (Smith, McCully, O'Connor, Gallagher), both in approach (inquiry-based) and in core concepts (Diversity and Inclusion, Equality and Social Justice, Democracy and Active Participation, and Human Rights and Social Responsibility), was included and developed as a statutory area of the revised NI curriculum.
- Research carried out for the 2011 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (GMR) exploring education and conflict has been recognised as '*achieving a global policy impact*', leading to positive reform of governments and aid agencies around the world. This is reflected in the testimonial from Mr

Kevin Watkins, Executive Director of the Overseas Development Institute and former director and lead author of UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring to the GMR.

- The concept of conflict sensitive education, first referenced in Smith's 2005 Compare article, is cited and accepted as UNICEF's understanding of the term, and used by the agency in an October 2011 proposal to the Dutch Government in relation to education and peace building, *Conflict Sensitive Education – Systemic Analysis and Delivery of Education Systems From a Conflict Perspective as a Routine Part of Educational Planning and Practice*.
- Research for UNICEF (Novelli and Smith, 2011) has led to a major global initiative (€120M programme in 14 countries) to highlight the importance of education as a central part of working in conflict affected societies. Corien Sips, Senior Policy Advisor, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commenting on the impact of the research, stated that, *'the interesting study of Mario Novelli and Alan Smith about Education and Peace building was used as a building block for the new programme'*.
- The UNICEF *Peace building, Education and Advocacy Programme – Goals and Outcomes* report has highlighted how UNESCO Centre research has directly benefited children in conflict affected countries where aid donors have prioritised conflict sensitive education.

## **2. Rights**

- Rights-informed research carried out on behalf of the IEF in Northern Ireland (Hansson et al., 2013) has provoked a major debate on the future direction of education policy. Crucially, this research made an important contribution to a major Northern Ireland government report, *Advancing Shared Education* (2013), and has been recognised in the press as critical in, *'... informing policy makers and influencers in Washington, London, Brussels and Dublin'*.
- UNESCO Centre researchers' experience on embedding a rights-based approach to the well-being of children and young people in Ireland and Northern Ireland has led to OFMdfM commissioning the Centre to develop a child rights Outcome Indicators framework that will be used to inform reporting as part of State obligations to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as informing future children's policy in NI, including the review of the Children and Young People's 10-year strategy. The framework has been acknowledged as a critical policy lever by the First Minister of Northern Ireland, Peter Robinson MLA who stated *'The exercise provides us with an opportunity to take a critical look at the state of children's lives, using the Child Rights Indicator Framework which we are developing with the UNESCO Centre. The Framework will provide an evidence base not just for the report but also for assessing progress on the Executive's 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People and for informing policy development in relation to children and young people over the longer term'*.

## **Outputs from the Research**

Research outputs are wide-ranging and include significant policy contributions nationally and internationally as well as influential peer reviewed journal articles.

- Smith, A. (2003) Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland: beyond national identity? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, Vol. 33, No.1, pp.15-31.
- Smith, A. and Vaux, T. (2003) *Education, Conflict and International Development*. London: Department for International Development (DFID).
- Smith, A. (2005) Education in the 21st Century: Conflict, Reconstruction and Reconciliation. *Compare, Journal of the British Association for International and Comparative Education*, Vol 36, No. 4, December 2005, pp.373-391.
- Smith, A. (2010) *The Influence of Education on Conflict and Peace Building*. Paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011. The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education. Paris: UNESCO.
- Novelli, M. and Smith, A. (2011) *The Role of Education in Peace Building*. A synthesis report of findings from Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone. New York: UNICEF.
- Hansson, U., O'Connor, U. and McCord, J. (2013) *Integrated Education: A Review of Policy and Research Evidence*. Belfast, Integrated Education Fund.

### Sources to Corroborate Impact

CCEA and University of Ulster deliver report to assist teaching of citizenship:

[http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/newsroom/press/2006/press\\_280306.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/newsroom/press/2006/press_280306.asp)

Education and Training Inspectorate, Report on the Introduction of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 in Northern Ireland: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/report-of-the-introduction-of-local-and-global-citizenship-at-key-stage-3-in-a-sample-post-primary-schools.pdf>

Evaluation of the Pilot Introduction of Education for Local and Global Citizenship into the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum, CCEA 2009: [http://www.welb-cass.org/downloads/28/267\\_25\\_UU%20Evaluation%20Summary%20Report.pdf](http://www.welb-cass.org/downloads/28/267_25_UU%20Evaluation%20Summary%20Report.pdf)

Interview with Corien Sips, Senior Policy Advisor, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://ethioharmonyschools.wordpress.com/2012/11/26/interview-with-corien-sips-of-the-dutch-ministry-of-foreign-affairs/>

Testimonial from Mr Kevin Watkins, Executive Director of the Overseas Development Institute and former director and lead author of UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report.

Proposal on Peace building and Education, Presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Netherlands. Presented by Education Section, UNICEF New York. October 2011  
[http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/UNICEF\\_Proposals\\_-\\_PEACE\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/UNICEF_Proposals_-_PEACE_-_final.pdf) (see page 4)

UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme – Goals and Outcomes:  
[http://www.unicef.org/education/bege\\_65480.html](http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_65480.html)

'Executive Slammed Over Failure to Support Integrated Education', Belfast Telegraph, Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013

Testimonial from the Integrated Education Fund (Northern Ireland) acknowledging and outlining UNESCO Centre contribution to policy change

Peter Robinson, Northern Ireland First Minister, Northern Ireland Assembly, April 2013.