

EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION (PHASE TWO) PROJECT

Project reference: 0111-0014 Education for Reconciliation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Among the conclusions of the report on Phase One of Education for Reconciliation was that it had achieved its main goal of developing key curricular ideas and practices, and students' experiences of it had been very positive. Phase Two would examine how these curricular ideas and practices might be mainstreamed, the accreditation of teachers and the need for a programme of research. Much of the mainstreaming would revolve around the dissemination of the EfR process, pedagogy and methodology, and the development of the classroom-based EfR network into the wider school and even wider policy environments.

A key to future success would be building teachers confidence and training them to deal with the "hard topics" raised by EfR: "teacher development is the key to handling the complexity and difficulty of the theme of reconciliation in the classroom and ensuring that it becomes a positive educational experience for all participants."

Another element that would have to be addressed in Phase Two would be "longitudinal, qualitative research that moves towards evaluating the impact of citizenship education on participants' attitudes, values and dispositions over time."

Overall the evaluators believe this to be a superb project, timely and important in the context of the new era of more harmonious relations and moves toward mutual understanding, North and South, brought in by the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. It is characterised by excellent leadership, high motivation by the participating teachers, and a courageous effort to grasp one of the most difficult 'nettles' of the post-conflict period in Ireland, the demands of reconciliation.

The first year of Phase Two has seen more progress in teacher development than in research. Given that there was a year's gap between the end of Phase One and the start of Phase Two, it was perhaps inevitable that the project would take a number of months to get back to where it had left off. However when the evaluators attended their first in-service workshop eight months into the project, it was clear that the momentum in terms of participating teachers' motivation, commitment and learning was at a high level, and that the project manager's leadership qualities and pedagogical skills were driving the project forward (he will not be easy to replace when he leaves the project in August 2003).

The evaluators were particularly impressed by the work going on in a number of Northern Catholic schools, using active learning (including drama and music) to engage students with difficult issues like sectarianism and national identity. It was stressed that such active learning techniques were rarely used in classrooms at the moment, particularly in the Republic. However with greater exposure to these types of active learning methods, more teachers in the Republic are now beginning to develop the confidence to use them in the classroom.

The Advisory Committee held one meeting during the project's first year. It is fully representative of the key educational institutions (with the exception of the North/South Ministerial Council's education section). Its main role is to advise on how EfR can benefit from cross-border institutional collaboration and how this collaboration might be instigated and developed.

A researcher, or researchers, are currently going through the process of appointment at time of writing. The project manager has advised and supported the UNESCO

Centre in the University of Ulster and the Education Department in Trinity College Dublin in preparing a joint application to the Higher Education Authority's North South Research Programme (April 2003) for funding to support a research project entitled: *Citizenship education, parental attitudes and community involvement: Evaluating the impact of citizenship education on the development of pupils' political attitudes and identities.*

A quality research element is crucial if EfR is going to achieve its first two aims: to embed Education for Reconciliation within the curricula of CSPE in the Republic of Ireland and Local and Global Citizenship in Northern Ireland, and to create ownership of the reconciliation dimension to citizenship education among the key educational institutions in both jurisdictions. Strengthening the mechanisms for extending the project beyond the present small group of committed and motivated teachers remains one of the project's key challenges (although this is beginning to be addressed in the form of work with citizenship education teams in the schools). In the words of one sympathetic senior official, EfR "needs to become part of the culture within citizenship studies."

The evaluators have been very impressed at the pioneering work EfR is doing in developing teachers confidence and competencies in the difficult area of reconciliation studies. This is the only North-South educational project working in this area. As far as the evaluators can ascertain, it is currently also the only significant post-1998 cross-border secondary education project of any type which involves teachers, North and South, working together on curricular issues. However it still has significant work to do in taking forward the process of persuading the educational authorities in both jurisdictions to provide the necessary long-term support to begin to mainstream the curricular ideas and practices it is developing in their citizenship curricula. This will be a challenge for the final two years of the project, and will require considerable commitment by members of the Advisory Committee and the development of a quality research agenda.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

For this first year report, the evaluation methodology has consisted of attendance at and observation of the project's in-service days; interviews with the project manager and an overseeing senior CCVEC Curriculum Development Unit official; interviews with four participating teachers, two from the North, two from the South; and consultation of the documentation produced by the project.

1. ESTABLISHING THE BASELINES

1.1 AIMS, OBJECTIVES, CONDITIONS, OUTPUTS, MILESTONES

The **main aims** of this project, which builds on Education for Reconciliation Phase One (1999-2001), also involving a group of teachers of civic, social and political education in both Irish jurisdictions, are as follows:

- It seeks to embed Education for Reconciliation within the curricula of CSPE and SCPE (now called Local and Global Citizenship).
- It aims to create ownership of the reconciliation dimension to citizenship education among the key educational institutions North and South of the Border
- It seeks to advance the debate on the value of Education for Reconciliation and citizenship by pursuing a quality research agenda.

Its **specific objectives** are as follows:

- In relation to the first aim – to consolidate and deepen the current network of teachers/schools while simultaneously generating mechanisms (the training of trainers and the development of materials) to extend it.
- In relation to the second aim – to seek to ensure that the key educational institutions North and South of the Border become engaged with the project through enlarging the current Advisory Group and ensuring that this group takes a lead role in steering the direction of the project.
- In relation to the third aim – in the belief that good practice in teaching needs to be supported by quality research – to seek to develop three research strands: one focusing on students, a second on teachers and a third on assessment and examination.

[N.B. The project manager stresses that while this third assessment and examination strand was written into the proposal by the project promoters, it is not a realistic option since the curriculum bodies – CCEA in Northern Ireland and NCCA in the Republic of Ireland – see citizenship education as their domain and in the case of the NCCA the procedures are already established. It is the legal function of the NCCA to advise the Minister in the Republic on these issues.]

The **conditions** attached to this project are as follows:

- A minimum of 25 schools to be located in Northern Ireland and the six Southern border counties
- The Project Advisory Committee should seek representation from the Departments of Education, North and South; the CSPE Support Service and the North/South Ministerial Council (education).

The following project **targets/outputs** have been set for this project:

- Three posts funded
- 190 teachers participating
- 5,700 students participating
- 30 schools participating

The following **milestones** have been set to help monitor the project's performance:

- January 2004: Interim Review on mainstreaming progress presented to ADM/CPA
- September 2004: Formal response in place from the Department of Education and Science on future funding for the project

1.2 BASELINE SITUATION

The baseline situation for this project has been clearly set out in the report on Education for Reconciliation Phase One (1999-2001) by Dr Eilís Ward in October 2002.

This quoted the working definition of reconciliation agreed by the participating teachers (needed to enable them to effectively design their own citizenship curriculum within the parameters of CSPE and Social, Civic and Political Education, the University of Ulster's 'pilot' predecessor to Local and Global Citizenship): "...learning self-respect and respect for other people, especially if they come from other cultural traditions. It is also about understanding how individuals and communities depend on each other, how co-operation between them can be fostered in practical ways, and how conflict can be resolved."

Working from this definition, the teachers identified **three learning goals** that should drive the project:

Knowledge based on an understanding of

- ❑ our own identities in relation to others
- ❑ similarities and differences between groups in society and how we cope with an intolerance of difference; a knowledge of social norms;
- ❑ conflict as part of human relations
- ❑ human rights and responsibilities

Skills required to manage feelings, respect equality and resolve conflict

- ❑ the art of compromise
- ❑ how to listen
- ❑ how to build bridges
- ❑ how to communicate
- ❑ how to be self observant
- ❑ the value of self-criticism

Attitudes that were felt to have an influence on the acceptance and appreciation of diversity

- ❑ openness
- ❑ an appreciation of interdependence
- ❑ acceptance

Three **cluster groupings** provided the structure around which the planning of class time and activities were built, and each cluster developed pedagogical guidelines and drew up lessons plans. The class content evolved from these clusters in three areas:

1. The issue of sectarianism
2. Communication and exchange between schools from different jurisdictions and across the political and social divides

3. conflict resolution in the process of reconciliation

Phase One of the project led to the development of a more interactive pedagogy and methodology by the participating teachers and a quest to explore values, ethics and morality within the context of reconciliation. Five areas were identified as having been the focus of critical learning within Phase One of Education for Reconciliation:

1. The concept of reconciliation

Although opinions varied (notably on the appropriateness of condemnation of past acts and the need to apologise for past wrongs), the participating teachers agreed that reconciliation, and education for reconciliation, necessarily involved: building relationships through personal development and change; acknowledging past hurts; an awareness of the law and its role in terms of delivering justice; a challenge in terms of personal values; a healing process that was more than conflict resolution and might require expressions of regret and forgiveness.

The external evaluation of Phase One (Smith and Birthistle, University of Ulster, 2001) commented that the quality of learning about reconciliation was high and sophisticated despite the fact that the concept brought students into a complex and sensitive area.

2. Appropriate Pedagogy

Initial analysis of classroom work undertaken in Phase One indicated that the main emphasis was on developing students' affective and pragmatic domains: building relationships, learning how to handle differences, learning how to manage conflict. However these were underpinned by work at the cognitive domain: learning what human rights were, learning about conflicts and how they emerged over time, and defining what constituted sectarianism.

3. Appropriate Methodology

Active learning and the inclusion of students' own experiences to provide a baseline for discussions or activities formed the heart of the methodology adopted for the project. Citizenship education requires knowledge of relevant institutions but most of all it requires practical skills (how to communicate and negotiate conflict) and developing appropriate values such as tolerance, respect for others and an appreciation of diversity. Therefore active learning (story telling, debates and promoting exchange) was at the core of the project, and was identified by the external evaluators as a successful element that was suitable for dissemination elsewhere.

4. The Curriculum Context

There were both challenges and opportunities in the decision to locate Education for Reconciliation in CSPE in the Republic of Ireland and SCPE in Northern Ireland (which was being piloted as the citizenship curriculum at the time). The sharing of similar concepts and methodologies made EfR easily connectable to the goals of the two citizenship curricula. However there were also difficulties caused by the relative marginalisation of CSPE in the Republic and the very limited time allocated to it within the school timetable.

5. Teacher development

Of critical importance to the project was the foundation laid down by the cross-border and cross-community network of pre-training and support for the participating teachers, which allowed them not only to devise an EfR dimension for the official syllabi already developed or being developed at this time, but also to learn about reconciliation while they were doing this. They became learners and facilitators of learning by dealing with their own anxieties and fears, reconsidering their relationships with their students, and being challenged to create a more democratic classroom and to tackle difficult topics. They developed skills that allowed them to relate to each other (and particularly to teachers from the other jurisdiction) and to their students in a different way.

One of the overall strengths of the project, in the view of the external evaluators, was the collaborative and empowering model of teacher development that it followed. This led to a high level engagement of participating teachers with the project. However the need for teacher accreditation was an issue, and it was stated that this would be addressed in Phase Two.

Among the CONCLUSIONS of the Ward report on Phase One were:

- Phase One had achieved its main goal of developing key curricular ideas and practices. Phase Two would examine how these might be mainstreamed; accreditation of teachers; and the need for a programme of research. “Much of that mainstreaming and development will revolve around the dissemination of the process, the pedagogy and the methodology, the development of the network and other practical mechanisms that expand on and build the pilot project structure and content.”
- The development of citizenship skills in the classroom tends to stand against the trend for cognitive learning and quantifiable achievement by valuing the creation of human interconnectedness, the encouragement of human potential across creative, spiritual, ethical and cognitive domains, and the fostering of respect for the rights and beliefs of others.
- This is a process which makes particular demands on teachers and, like the reconciliation process itself, needs time. Time is also important in another sense – the limited time (one period per week) allocated to citizenship within school timetables was a serious barrier to the exploration of Education for Reconciliation.
- Also important is the incorporation of the classroom-based Education for Reconciliation process into the wider school environment and into the even broader policy environment.
- Reconciliation is a complex and controversial concept and process. Education for Reconciliation will inevitably bring the hard topics to the fore, and teachers, school managers and parents may express anxiety about difficult and sensitive topics being discussed in the classroom. Once reconciliation is placed on the classroom agenda, teachers must be prepared to tackle it in its fullest and thorniest embodiment. Dealing with the hard topics in a reconciliatory manner is itself part of the learning process of EfR.
- However only where teachers are themselves equipped to deal with the hard topics will this invaluable learning take place. Hence confidence building with teachers is a precondition to success, since a confident teacher will be empowered to usefully turn the difficult topics – even those that touch the students personally – into part of the process of reconciliation by learning and teaching the skills of dealing with conflict, learning to respect other people’s experiences and stories, learning not to rush to judgement and so on.

- “A conclusion of this programme is that teacher development is the key to handling the complexity and difficulty of the theme of reconciliation in the classroom and ensuring that it becomes a positive educational experience for all participants.”
- Making links between attitudinal change and an educational process is a significant challenge. However the students’ experiences of participation in the project were extremely positive, according to the Phase One external evaluation: the conflict resolution cluster grouping reported that students learned to listen better, to communicate better and to co-operate in thinking through problems. Phase One of the project underlined the need for “longitudinal, qualitative research that moves towards evaluating the impact of citizenship education on participants’ attitudes, values and dispositions over time.” This would be addressed in Phase Two.
- The Ward report finishes with some observations on two difficulties caused by the “blurring” between the educational process of projects like Education for Reconciliation and the wider socio-political process in which they are situated. “The first is that when concepts such as ‘citizenship’ ‘peace’ and ‘reconciliation’ are highly contested by different communities within a state and across state boundaries, an educational project that addresses these themes is vulnerable to accusations (whether valid or not) of partisanship. A second relates to the risk of the project goals (the learning of skills, values and attitudes) becoming distorted by the immediately pressing specific political context (in this case making the case for reconciliation as integral to a consolidation of the peace process within a particular framework).”
- The report stresses the importance of judging the process of Education for Reconciliation according to educational goals and best practice agreed in advance by the participants (teachers and project staff) and not according to any external, outcome-specific goals. “By maintaining the educational as the *priority* of the project (tackling cognitive learning, affective and practical skills) projects such as EfR can continue to tackle the difficult topics without fear of being undermined by political battles or criticised for being ‘too political’ – in the eye of the accuser this usually means ‘partisan’.
- This will ensure that “EfR is bringing students to a space where they can draw their own conclusions, on the basis of full information and a full perspective, about difficult subjects.”

1.3 ENSURE APPROPRIATE SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

A brief examination of project documentation and statistics showed meticulous adherence by the EfR project manager and other employees to the requirements laid down by ADM/CPA for the collection of necessary information and data. Similarly the evaluators’ perusal of the two ADM/CPA books of templates – *ADM/CPA Information Pack* and *ADM/CPA Promoter’s Information Pack* – indicated that these templates had been adhered to by the EfR team. The evaluators were particularly impressed by the way the project manager had reacted to significant changes in the project’s original terms of reference (forced on him by circumstances beyond his control) by drafting detailed and meticulously calculated requests to transfer parts of the original budget to other headings and years within it.

It is not part of this evaluation report’s brief to analyse in detail the project’s financial and reporting procedures. However it should be noted that in the first four months of the project a very considerable proportion of the project manager’s time (up to 75%)

was absorbed in simply negotiating and putting in place financial procedures acceptable to both ADM/CPA and the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee.

2. MONITORING PROCESS

2.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

2.1.1 CONSOLIDATE, DEEPEN AND EXTEND NETWORK

There are 21 schools (and 22 teachers) involved in EfR at time of writing (June 2003). Of these 10 are from Northern Ireland: one voluntary grammar (mainly Protestant); two controlled (mainly Protestant) and seven maintained (mainly Catholic). These schools are situated in Belfast, Ballymena, Lurgan and Newry, and a significant number are designated disadvantaged with a high proportion of free school meals [it was not possible for the evaluator to check the exact number at time of writing because of the school summer holidays].

[It is understandable, given the political situation in Northern Ireland, that only a small number of mainly Protestant controlled and voluntary grammar schools have been recruited for this cross-border project. It would be desirable that at least two out of the four or five Northern schools still to be recruited should come from these sectors.]

11 are from the Republic of Ireland: one vocational school, one Southern Protestant secondary school and nine Southern Catholic secondary schools. These schools are situated in Dundalk, Drogheda, Monaghan, Buncrana, Lifford, Ballyjamesduff, Birr, Carlow and Dublin, and seven of them have disadvantaged status.

The project manager, Stephen McCarthy, has stressed that it was never envisaged, nor considered possible, that the total complement of schools proposed in the project application (30), would come on board immediately the project started in September 2002. Rather he proposed to recruit 15 schools in 2002-2003 and 15 more schools in 2003-2004, so he has exceeded his target for the project's first year. The aim is to have 30 schools involved in the project by September 2004, with a minimum of 25 of these schools located in the six Southern border counties and Northern Ireland. Eight more schools have been identified as potential participants in the year 2003-2004. However there is significantly more interest in joining this project in Northern Ireland (10 schools have applied from the Western Education and Library Board), where teachers are looking for training in citizenship as part of the new Local and Global Citizenship programme, than in the Republic. The evaluators' impression is that in the Republic's border region there may be too many EU projects chasing too few schools.

Despite some delays at the start of the project and initial difficulties with recruiting Northern schools (*see 2.3.1 below*), by the time the first in-service training workshops took place in December 2002 and January 2003 took place, 21 schools were signed up, four more than completed EfR Phase One.

There have been three two-day in-service workshops in the first phase: in December 2002 in Carrick-on-Shannon and in January and March 2003 in Monaghan. The evaluators, who were taken on in January, attended the latter two of these. The main emphasis in both of them – which were facilitated by Mr McCarthy – was to train teachers who can then train other teachers in EfR through the citizenship programmes North and South.

SECOND IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP

The second in-service workshop in January covered handling controversial issues in the classroom (moderated by two teachers, one from the North and one from the South, who had been on Phase One), emphasising the need for careful management of potentially dangerous issues and for post-class 'debriefing' strategies. There was also some preliminary work on active learning techniques (e.g. 'post-its' on people's backs to show how different people make up a community, and 'freeze frame' tableaux to illustrate the uses of drama in education), and discussion of the problems and opportunities of group work.

The group of teachers were asked to prepare lesson plans using active learning methodologies and, if possible, to test them in a class before the next workshop. One problem discussed at this workshop was the perception in the Republic that sectarianism, such a fundamental issue in Northern Ireland, was of significantly less interest and relevance in the South – although one Southern teacher said that stories of being bullied and bereaved came out of a discussion of sectarianism.

THIRD IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP

The third in-service workshop in March concentrated on active learning techniques: the different zones of the dartboard to understand the different levels of community; a 'walking debate' with people going to different groups on the basis of whether they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement and then explaining the reasons for their decision; the 'giant steps' game, with people taking different sized steps to illustrate the obstacles to reaching educational goals facing people who are excluded on grounds of race or religion.

A teacher from Lurgan then illustrated with a graphic slide show how her Catholic students had come to understand the Drumcree stand-off better by using imaginative active learning and role playing games. A teacher from a Catholic boys school in Belfast illustrated how an 'active learning' debate (with music) on cultural and national identity and difference could move young people's informed attitudes away from the received and passionately believed stereotypes they often started off with. A teacher from County Cavan then illustrated, again using music, to show how her students had learned about the new multiculturalism in their small town.

Among the participating teachers' comments on the third in-service day evaluation sheet (under 'strengths of in-service day') were: "Provided excellent back-up for inclusion of conflict resolution into a scheme of work for citizenship"; "as usual, well-presented, interesting methodologies, super ideas, resources and hand-outs, and good conversations with like-minded people"; "a tangible ownership of Education for Reconciliation appearing, leading to a better exchange"; "enthusiasm, energy and commitment of the group"; "great rapport between participants – very, very enjoyable". The worst things anybody could say under 'weaknesses of in-service day' were that the acoustics of the workshop room were poor for discussions and the Monaghan venue was "isolated"!

All the teachers agreed that their students had gained both great enjoyment and significant learning from these active learning exercises. It was clear, in particular, that the seven teachers who made presentations when the evaluators were present had been energised both by the project's reconciliation goals and its active learning techniques.

However it was stressed by both the project manager and the teachers that such active learning techniques are rarely used in classrooms in either Irish jurisdiction at present (Southern teachers said no active learning techniques had been imparted

during their H.Dip courses). To the extent that they are used, the in-service presentations appeared to show that Northern teachers are significantly more open to the concept of and advanced in the practice of active learning generally. The Northerners appeared to be more willing to share the lessons of their classroom practice; more open to the idea of the “democratic classroom” with the teacher as facilitator rather than didactic lecturer; more comfortable with using new, IT-based techniques; keener to be trained in citizenship education techniques (because of the imminent mainstreaming of Local and Global Citizenship) and more conscious of the urgency of learning how to deal with the difficult issues thrown up by Education for Reconciliation. Teachers in the Republic generally do not have a history of discussing or sharing their classroom ideas and practices with their fellow teachers, and it can take considerable time to build up a level of trust and confidence that will allow them to overcome this.

2.1.2 ENGAGEMENT OF KEY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The two Departments of Education, North and South; the two Curriculum Councils, North and South; the CSPE Support Service and the Western Education and Library Board are now all represented on the Advisory Committee. Among the elements which will be represented in the near future are a teacher/trainer representative from the project, North and South, and a school management representative from the project, North and South. Representation is also being sought from the education section of the North/South Ministerial Council.

The Advisory Committee has discussed a discussion document on a mainstreaming strategy prepared by the project manager. This outlined opportunities for EfR to access, employ, inform and impact upon the citizenship curricula, North and South, and on the development of policy in relation to these curricula. The document suggested that there were four distinct mainstreaming opportunities available to this project:

- a. within the teaching and learning process of citizenship education*
- b. through working with key educational institutions in both jurisdictions*
- c. through a quality research programme*
- d. through a programme of evaluation*

The main element of **a.** in Phase Two is a ‘training of trainers’ programme, which will put an EfR teacher-trainer as a permanent resource into all participating schools so as to provide training and resources in EfR for all the CSPE/LAGC teachers on the staff. Two teachers from the project have been identified to become EfR support teachers and work with the teacher trainer in each school to design and provide EfR training to staff; develop EfR teaching resources and methodologies; liaise with other national or local support services and projects; and explore EfR delivery models other than the standard one class period per week approach.

The main element of **b.** in Phase Two is the broad-based EfR Advisory Committee (*see above*) which will advise on how EfR could benefit from cross-border institutional collaboration and how this collaboration could be instigated and developed; advise on future funding for and/or other means of sustaining and mainstreaming EfR once EU Peace Two funding has expired; advise on the research dimension; and advise on collaboration with other organisations working in the area of peace and reconciliation and/or citizenship education.

The elements of c. are outlined in the next section.

2.1.3 QUALITY RESEARCH

The research element of Education for Reconciliation will begin with the employment of a researcher/researchers in autumn 2003 (post advertised in May; interviews held on 19 June). The project will employ the following strategies in relation to mainstreaming DfR through a quality research programme:

1. A person/persons will be employed to undertake the research related to the project.
2. A programme of research appropriate to the project will be identified in consultation with key educational partners. It will also be informed by experience of Phase One of the project.
3. Research, where appropriate, will be pursued on a partnership basis with other educational organisations, research institutions or relevant departments in third level institutions.
4. Partnership and alternative funding sources will be sought to support an extended research agenda.

There have been detailed discussions with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in the Republic on a proposal to commission joint research (possibly with the ESRI) to examine Southern students' perceptions of CSPE and issues relating to the political situation on the island, North and South. The project manager had earmarked the first year's research budget of 13,440 euros for this – unfortunately, however, the NCCA was not in a position to begin this research until 2004/2005.

The project manager has advised and supported the UNESCO Centre in the University of Ulster and the Education Department in Trinity College Dublin in preparing a joint application to the Higher Education Authority's North South Research Programme (April 2003) for funding to support a research project entitled: *Citizenship education, parental attitudes and community involvement: Evaluating the impact of citizenship education on the development of pupils' political attitudes and identities.*

2.2 CONTRIBUTION TO RELEVANT MEASURE AND PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

In its application for funding the City of Dublin VEC stated that Education for Reconciliation Phase Two "seeks to build sustainable peace through ensuring that reconciliation becomes a dimension within citizenship education on this island." While recognising that the context of the Northern Ireland conflict and the impact of that conflict on the whole island required the development of particular skills among teachers, it took the view that reconciliation is a multi-dimensional activity, seeking to develop students' understanding of reconciliation from a personal, through a community, cross-border and international context. EfR would seek to equip teachers to deal with a variety of sensitive and sometimes difficult issues, such as racism and other equality issues. Therefore this project seeks to provide opportunities for teachers to promote reconciliation and peace-building and to encourage the students

within their communities to develop the understanding, skills and attitudes necessary to build sustainable relationships within communities and across communities.”

From their observations of two of the first three in-service workshops, the evaluators were impressed at the breadth and wealth of guidance materials on reconciliation, racism, multi-culturalism and social exclusion prepared by the project manager for the participating teachers. These included materials from the Civic, Social and Political Education programme in the Republic, but also written and illustrative material from a wide range of contexts and organisations (including Trocaire, the Combat Poverty Agency and Amnesty International). The project manager and workshop facilitator, Mr McCarthy, handled these materials in a highly skilled and professional manner.

The seven teachers who made presentations when the evaluators were present were fluent and convincing. They were particularly impressed by the Lurgan teacher’s presentation of an extremely difficult issue, the Drumcree stand-off. This lesson scheme began with photographs of different ethnic groups with the theme ‘equal but different’, went on to examine the Drumcree situation using students in ‘role plays’ as marchers, protesters, mediators and judges, and concluded with proposals for resolving the dispute which were similar to those of the government-appointed Quigley Report on the Parades Commission (which the students would not have been aware of).

They were also impressed at the successful efforts of a teacher in a school in a strongly Republican Belfast area to use a discussion about symbols and icons to widen his students understanding of identity away from their own strongly but narrowly held views to a realisation of the complexity and overlapping nature of identities in Northern Ireland (although it was pointed out that this teacher had the advantage of teaching citizenship to his ‘base class’ with the result that he was able to devote 70 minutes – a double class – to this exercise. Few teachers normally have this amount of time to deal with a difficult issue of citizenship and identity). They were similarly impressed by the exploration by a County Cavan teacher with her students of multiculturalism in a small rural town which in recent years had seen the immigration of people from 12 different nationalities.

Out of these examples came the preparation of a scheme of lessons on the topic of ‘Living in a Diverse Society.’ In the light of this kind of work, which the evaluators believe is probably unique in the second-level education systems, North and South (and is certainly unique when done on a cross-border basis), they believe Education for Reconciliation is beginning to fulfil the aims and objectives it has set for itself in line with the Measure and Priority Objectives of the Peace Two Programme. It should also be noted that Education for Reconciliation is now the only significant post-1998 cross-border secondary education project which involves teachers, North and South, working together on curricular issues. The other major curricular project, the European Studies Project, has been running since the late 1980s.

2.3 COMPLIANCE WITH ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS OF GRANT AID

2.3.1 NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

21 out of the 30 schools required for this project have so far been recruited. The project manager, Stephen McCarthy, has stressed that it was never envisaged, nor considered possible, that the total complement of schools proposed in the project application, would come on board immediately the project started in September 2002. Rather he proposed to recruit 15 schools in 2002-2003 and 15 more schools in 2003-2004, so he has exceeded his target for the project's first year.

Among the reasons for lowering the target for the number of participating schools in 2002-2003 were:

- 1) Mr McCarthy joined the project in September 2002, four months after the official start date of May. Nine of the early recruits were schools which had been on EfR Phase One (seven from the Republic of Ireland, two from Northern Ireland).
- 2) He decided that the best approach to take to recruit new schools was to work through the CSPE Support Service in the RoI and the Education and Library Boards in NI. This would ensure the involvement of key educational institutions. However the majority of Northern schools only joined the project in late November-early December 2002. This was mainly because the pilot University of Ulster citizenship project (now called Local and Global Citizenship) had transferred to the Department of Education and the NI Council for the Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations following a decision to mainstream it throughout the Key Stage 3 (12-14) curriculum in the North. The Education and Library Boards (ELBs), who were charged with responsibility for recruiting and training teachers for this citizenship programme, only began their in-service programme in November, with the result that schools were not prepared to sign up to EfR until they were clear about the commitment they would have to make to the ELBs.

2.3.2 ADVISORY GROUP

The Advisory Group met for the first time in the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh on 22 May 2003. The reason for this delay was a reshuffle of senior officials in the Department of Education and Science in late 2002-early 2003, making it difficult to find a DES nominee to sit on the group. Organisations represented at the first Advisory Group meeting were: the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland), the City of Dublin VEC Curriculum Development Unit, the CSPE Support Service, the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Queen's University Graduate School of Education (Michael Arlow, until recently heading the Local and Global Citizenship team at CCEA), the Western Education and Library Board, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in the Republic, and the Centre for Cross Border Studies (evaluator). The project manager is continuing to seek representation from the North/South Ministerial Council.

2.4 ACHIEVEMENT OF MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

Two posts have been funded to date: project manager and project administrator. The project promoters found it difficult to obtain someone suitable for the latter post (the person eventually appointed moved to England one month after taking up the position). However following a restructuring within the CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit administration staff, a highly competent clerical officer was re-assigned to this post in April 2003.

The project manager, Stephen McCarthy, is due to leave the project at the end of August 2003. An advertisement seeking a replacement was placed in the press on 19 June. However it may not be easy to find such another such highly skilled, knowledgeable and widely-respected leader, with extensive contacts at senior levels in the two educational systems (particularly in the Republic), for the remainder of this project.

An advertisement was also placed in the *Irish Independent* in May for a researcher (or researchers), either full-time or part-time, and interviews took place on 19 June.

Two teachers participating in the project will also be identified as **EfR Support Teachers** for its second and third years. Negotiations are continuing to obtain the release of these teachers from their schools on a one day/two days per week basis. The function of these support teachers will be to visit participating schools in their local cluster in order to:

- Assist the teacher 'trainer' in each school in designating and providing EfR training to staff
- Organise local network training
- Develop EfR teaching resources and methodologies
- Liaise with other national or local support services or projects
- Explore models of delivery of EfR other than the standard one class period per week.

The project team has produced figures showing the 'ripple' effect of Education for Reconciliation Phase Two on the teachers and schools involved. These indicate that in its first year the 22 teacher 'trainers' actually on the EfR course have been augmented by 84 more teachers (36 in the North, 48 in the Republic) on citizenship education planning teams (in 11 schools: eight North, three Republic) to whom they report.

These figures also show that participating teachers have implemented aspects of the EfR project with over 1900 students (825 in the North, 1078 in the Republic). On the basis of the classes they and their fellow citizenship planning team members take, this has the potential to rise to 6,595 students (3975 in the North, 2620 in the Republic).

The achievement of the target figure of 30 schools has been outlined above in 2.1.1

2.5 MEETING THE DISTINCTIVENESS CRITERIA

2.5.1 ADDRESSING THE LEGACY OF THE CONFLICT

In their application, the project promoters wrote: "The legacy of the conflict is evident in approaches to teaching and learning among teachers north and south of the

Border. It has resulted in many cases in an avoidance of addressing sensitive issues of identity, difference, conflict and peace-building. This avoidance is particularly evident in the majority of classrooms in the Republic of Ireland....This project, with its focus primarily on the personal and professional development of teachers as they are working alongside their students, seeks to mainstream approaches to reconciliation within citizenship education in both jurisdictions. Such mainstreaming requires a breadth of educational activity at a local, cross-Border and national level. The current educational and political climate is appropriate for creating the conditions within which the conflict of Northern Ireland and other issues relating to reconciliation can be addressed within the curriculum. The project thus enables teachers working in communities that have been adversely affected by the conflict (in the six Southern border counties as well as further south, and communities in Northern Ireland) to begin to address the legacy of the conflict.”

In the view of the evaluators, Education for Reconciliation, by concentrating on teachers and teacher development as the key to handling the complex and difficult themes of reconciliation in the classroom, is working with the key ‘cultural multipliers’ in the education systems North and South. In the present post-Belfast Agreement climate, EfR makes it possible to bring together a group of teachers – Protestant and Catholic, Northern and Southern – to explore the potential of introducing the themes of reconciliation through the citizenship curricula (relatively recently established in the Republic of Ireland; currently being introduced in Northern Ireland). In this process it is unique among North-South educational initiatives on the island of Ireland for the timeliness and relevance of its work.

Similarly EfR is one of the few cross-border educational projects (probably the only other comparable, although non-curricular, project is the ‘Let’s Talk’ series of student conferences to discuss issues of peace, reconciliation and human rights) which tackles the difficult issues of sectarianism, prejudice, conflict and exclusion ‘head on’ and attempts to construct active learning techniques and curriculum materials to allow students to discuss and explore them. This makes it different and more significant in dealing with the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict than other cross-border projects at second level such as the European Studies Project (which has an international curricular programme not specifically related to Northern Ireland) or Civic Link (which involves students in local community issues but tends not to deal directly with the ‘difficult’ issues raised by the conflict).

Another area in which EfR is having a small but powerful effect is in relationships between teachers, North and South. This was one of the common themes of responses to evaluators’ questions from selected participating teachers. Northern teachers said they had learned a lot from Southern teachers’ experience of CSPE that they would use as they ‘tried’ LAGC in the North in the coming years, particularly the usefulness of CSPE action project work (one highly motivated Northern Catholic teacher admitted that she didn’t even know citizenship was taught in the South until she did an EfR in service day!). One said she had not realised the value of ‘shock’ tactics (such as making an outrageous racist statement) to get students’ attention, and said giving them controversial incidents to discuss (which they could, for example, relate to what they saw on the television) was far more valuable in engaging them than any traditional ‘chalk and talk’ method.

Some Southern teachers were a little concerned that dealing with issues like sectarianism and religious divides would not be seen as relevant by their students (one said there was a “greater sense of urgency” about citizenship education in the North after 30 years of civil conflict). They emphasised that timetabling was often a problem with only one CSPE class per week (which might occasionally be dropped),

leading to a 'stop go' approach to a difficult, time-consuming topic like reconciliation. They understood the need for teachers to learn conflict and difference resolution skills as part of moves towards a more democratic classroom, but often found them hard to apply (one teacher in a border town talked about "the decreasing ability of youngsters to resolve differences in a non-aggressive way)."

On the positive side, even after one year Education for Reconciliation is having significant 'spin off' effects. For example, as a result of the work of one Lurgan school (see 2.1.1 and 2.2 above), an animated film on children's perceptions of living in a town divided by sectarianism is being made in partnership with the Nerve Centre in Derry (with financial support from the EU Peace Two programme). It is hoped that this film will help other schools coping with sectarian divides in Northern Ireland.

2.5.2 TAKING OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM PEACE

In their project application, the promoters wrote: "The curriculum is never static and therefore education can be viewed as a sector experiencing new opportunities for growth and development as a result of peace. This is true on two accounts. Firstly, arising from the Good Friday Agreement, the establishment of the North South Ministerial body for education has created the potential for greater engagement and dialogue among educators and educational institutions across the Border. Secondly, since the Good Friday Agreement there has been a growing awareness of the importance of citizenship education within the curriculum of both jurisdictions. This growing awareness means that the issue of reconciliation and peace-building has now an opportunity to secure an explicit place within the curriculum which heretofore did not respond to the conflict."

Apart from the European Studies Project (which dates back to the 1980s), EfR is currently the only curriculum-based, teacher-centred cross border project at second level on the island of Ireland. This makes it unique and potentially mould-breaking in two ways: its emphasis on teacher development as the way forward in North-south co-operation in education, and its focus on the sensitive, often difficult, but extremely important (in the Irish context) themes of post-conflict reconciliation.

The project's 'ripple effect' dissemination strategy, according to which a core of teacher-trainers work to disseminate the learning of the EfR training workshops through the citizenship education teams in their schools (together with the creation and dissemination of materials, methodologies and lesson plans developed during those workshops), remains to be tested. However it seems to the evaluators to be a legitimate strategy to try to 'mainstream' a difficult curricular concept like reconciliation through the established and (in the North) expanding curricular framework of citizenship education, which is keen to find 'action learning' projects as part of its delivery to schools. This is doubly so when the project is being run by a highly professional former head of the Republic of Ireland's CSPE Support Service, with wide experience of implementing citizenship education and planning its curriculum through the CSPE, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and Trocaire (although he is leaving the project in August 2003).

A significant step forward has been achieved with agreement between the project manager and the NCCA/CSPE drafters to submit two pages on an Education for Reconciliation module for possible inclusion in the forthcoming draft version of the official Department of Education and Science CSPE guidelines (due to be published in October 2003). These guidelines will have to be approved by the NCCA course and Junior Cycle committees and Council before they go to the DES. However, if

approved, they will make it more attractive for a wider range of schools in the Republic to become involved in EfR (ensuring statutory funding for training, substitute cover etc).

However a senior CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit official warns about serious issues (he calls them “hard questions”) which will still have to be addressed if EfR is to become sustainable beyond its EU Peace Two funding period. While noting that the project has “come good”, he warns that if it does not go beyond a small group of committed and motivated teachers it will not be sustainable (he points out that there was a year-long gap between the end of EfR Phase One and the beginning of EfR Phase Two because EU funding ran out, and it took a significant part of the first year of EfR Phase Two to get to the point where Phase One had left off).

He says the vital thing is that EfR “becomes part of the culture within citizenship studies”, so that the principals and teachers involved take ownership of it and place demands on resource-providing bodies like the City of Dublin VEC to continue to resource it. He points out that EfR is like other areas of citizenship, human rights and development education that the CDVEC is involved in: a small group of people are very interested in these pilot areas, but the question is how can they be expanded into larger, long-term educational networks which place real demands on the system.

2.6 PAVING THE WAY TO RECONCILIATION

In their project application, the promoters wrote: “Education for Reconciliation is ideally placed to help develop a more integrated approach to citizenship education and education for reconciliation on the island. In this way it will help pave the way for reconciliation through ensuring that all levels within the education system – students, teachers, schools, curriculum bodies, and Department of Education personnel – are all engaged in the active promotion of reconciliation and mutual understanding.

“At **student** level, students will be given the opportunity to engage in issues relating to reconciliation through their curriculum experience of CSPE and SCPE. **Teachers** will have the opportunity to develop their capacity to engage with sensitive and controversial issues, which are often the basis of conflict in and between communities. **Schools** will be given the opportunity to make more explicit their commitment to peace and reconciliation through the development of a team of teachers who can support each other through tackling these issues. **Curriculum bodies** and the **Departments of Education** of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will together, through their involvement on the Steering Group of this project, work in a cross-community and cross-jurisdictional basis to develop appropriate actions to support education for reconciliation”.

It is clear from the presentations at the in-service workshops (see 2.1.1 and 2.2) that **students** in classes from Belfast to Cavan to Carlow, from Dundalk to Lurgan to Ballymena to Birr, are beginning to engage in the kind of active learning exercises which can allow them to tackle the difficult issues of sectarianism, multiculturalism, violence and exclusion on the basis of religion, race and class which must be tackled as part of moves to reconciling people and communities on the island of Ireland.

Similarly the commitment and engagement of the core group of participating **teacher ‘trainers’** augurs well for the future of this project. The next step must be the further development of teams of teachers in each participating school who can support each

other in tackling these issues and provide models of good practice for teachers elsewhere in the two education systems.

The **curriculum bodies** (CCEA and NCCA) and the **Departments of Education** in both jurisdictions are now engaged on the Advisory Group. Their commitment to extending and eventually mainstreaming the Education for Reconciliation themes throughout the citizenship curricula, North and South, remains to be tested.

Educational management is represented on the Advisory Group at various levels: from departmental level (including the inspectorate), curriculum council level, education and library board level and individual school management level (two members representing individual school managements, North and South, have yet to be appointed).

The main **beneficiaries** – apart from participating teachers and officials – are the 21 schools (soon to be 30); the 84 teachers involved in citizenship education planning teams in those schools; the citizenship education advisers in the Belfast, Southern and Western Education and Library Boards and members of the CSPE Support Service; and the approximately 1,900 students who have benefited either directly (through the participating teachers) or indirectly (through the citizenship education teams in their schools) from EfR to date.

The participation of teachers and students in EfR is detailed in 2.4 above. The high proportion of disadvantaged schools involved, particularly from the Southern Border counties, is detailed in 2.1.1. Seven counties contiguous to the Border (Down, Armagh, Louth, Monaghan, Cavan, Leitrim and Donegal) are represented in the participating schools, as are Belfast, Ballymena, Dublin, Carlow and Birr, Co Offaly.

EfR should also complement other parallel initiatives such as The Training Trust's proposal to provide an ICT link between schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and schools in Kenya (this is already being explored with the participating EfR teachers), and the Centre for Cross Border Studies' ICT-based Citizenship and Science Exchange project (CaSE), which covers the same Northern Ireland-six Southern countries region as EfR and the same 12-15 age group but with an emphasis on the links between citizenship and science.

It is also clear to the evaluators from anecdotal evidence that in the process of developing and activating the difficult concept of reconciliation in Ireland, the work of Education for Reconciliation Phases One and Two have played a part. For example, the four part diagrammatic summary of the 'distinguishing elements' of reconciliation developed in Phase One – outline of the process, the key components, levels of reconciliation, and degrees of reconciliation – has influenced the material that has gone into the Local and Global Citizenship citizenship programme in Northern Ireland. The 'distinguishing elements' summary and the thinking that has come out of the EfR project have also fed into ADM/CPA's two leaflets on peace-building in the border counties: Leaflet I – *Exploring Concepts*, and Leaflet Two – *Prompts for Discussion*.

2.7 COMPLIANCE WITH HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

- a. **Additionality.** Education for Reconciliation is an innovative, curriculum-based, cross-border citizenship project centred on teacher development and the development of lesson plans and

other materials which is unique and unprecedented on the island of Ireland. There is no other project in either jurisdiction or across the jurisdictions that deals with reconciliation in a comparable way.

- b. **Environmental Sustainability.** This project has no impact on the environment.
- c. **Economic and Social Sustainability.** The project manager has produced a discussion document on mainstreaming and sustainability for the Advisory Group dealing with mainstreaming within the teaching and learning process of citizenship education ; through working with key educational institutions in both jurisdictions; through research and through evaluation. However ultimately the decision-making responsibility for teacher development in the area of education for reconciliation– the project's main focus – will rest within the domain of the Department of Educations of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- d. **Equal Opportunities.** EfR, by engaging teaches and students in considering issues relating to identity, difference, conflict and reconciliation, is promoting positive equal relationships between people, particularly between people of different religious beliefs, political opinions and racial groups. Contact between teachers and students from different jurisdictions and communities on the island of Ireland is enhancing an appreciation of difference and respect for the equal dignity of each person.
- e. **Impact on Poverty.** This project has no impact on poverty.
- f. **Impact on Rural Development.** This project has no impact on rural development.
- g. **Publicity and Transparency.** An article on Education for Reconciliation by Reva Klein will appear in the *Times Educational Supplement* in early July 2003. At this early stage of the project no newsletters and no educational materials or research resulting from the project have yet been published.