



# POLICY SUBMISSION

**Towards Social, Political and citizenship  
Education in the Established Leaving Certificate**

**Submission to the National Council for  
Curriculum and Assessment**

**January 2000**

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## Summary of recommendations

Arising from an exploration of issues relating to the incorporation of a social, political and citizenship education dimension to the Established Leaving Certificate the Agency proposes the following recommendations. We value the opportunity to make these proposals and to acknowledge the contribution and advice of the individuals and agencies named in Appendix 1.

We would also be interested in contributing to any future opportunities to discuss this paper with you or to assist in the formulation, design and implementation of any initiatives with the objective of incorporating a social, political, citizenship dimension to the Established Leaving Certificate curriculum.

### Key recommendations

- Commission evaluation of Junior Cycle Civic Social Political Education and publish the report
- Develop an inclusive and transparent consultation process for considering social, political and citizenship education in the Established Leaving Certificate. This process should involve relevant community interests, students, parents, teachers, school management, social partners.
- Establish a Course Committee on Social, Political and Citizenship Education within the Established Leaving Certificate. This should be comprised of broad ranging representation similar to those listed above.
- Commission and publish a discussion paper that identifies issues, implications and options for incorporating Social, Political and Citizenship Education within the Established Leaving Certificate.
- Undertake a further round of consultation based on this. Consultation mechanisms should include a range of processes including submissions, seminars, round-table discussions and focus groups.
- Develop and pilot of a number of approaches and undertake detailed evaluation of these.
- Secure and allocate adequate resources for development, pilot and implementation phases for incorporating Social, Political and Citizenship Education within the Established Leaving Certificate.

### *What will students learn?*

Perhaps one of the most fundamental understandings that students might achieve is that societies and their political and economic systems are shaped by human beings and therefore can be changed by them. Also that they come to understand that they can influence change both personally and in the wider society and world and that they can do this now and not only in the future when they are adults. The importance of

stressing human agency in shaping the world is central as issues and phenomena are often presented as if they are immutable or moved by unseen non-human forces. This is particularly true in the area of economics which is often discussed in this way, e.g. the market fluctuates, as opposed to highlighting how these are affected by the actions of human beings making conscious choices to move investments around.

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The literature in this area highlights that meaningful citizenship education is not about a list of topics and issues or just about the political structures and the constitution although these can indeed form part of what students learn. The emphasis is on how students learn and in particular here on the importance of developing understanding, skills and attitudes over acquisition of knowledge. A recent report of *the Multiple Intelligences-Curriculum and Assessment Project* highlights the value of approaches such as Teaching for Understanding and Multiple Intelligences in Social Political and Citizenship education. A participating CSPE teacher observed that

*We cannot go back to the hierarchical structure of teaching, rather we must grasp the notion of constructivism with both hands and give students the freedom to explore and construct knowledge and understanding. (Final Report – of the Multiple Intelligences-Curriculum and Assessment Project 2000)*

It is also important when deciding areas of content to balance issues and topics with the exploration of theories and perspectives including sociological, political, philosophical and psychological, in a way that is accessible and not overly academic and that is related to the experience of the student.

It is equally important to place the exploration of issues in a wider context otherwise they can appear as a series of unrelated phenomena which may lead to overly simple conclusions regarding causes and therefore possible solutions. An example here would be if the issue of poverty was explored leaving out the structural causes including how we distribute resources and who benefits, this may lead to the conclusion that poverty is ultimately a question of bad luck or personal failing. It is also important here that a range of views is explored in relation to any issue. The course/subject should be informed by a set of core concepts similar to those in the JC CSPE course and also to the values outlined later in this submission.

The course should also not be overly prescriptive so as to allow for development at local school level. The key issue of relevance to students is important and they should be given the opportunity to identify concepts and issues which they wish to explore in addition to being supported by the teacher to see the relevance in issues which at first glance may not seem relevant to them. Sometimes issues are left off the agenda because they are perceived (by teachers) to be too controversial. It has been the experience of the Combat Poverty Agency that poverty is often seen in this way. All Social Political Education is potentially controversial but this is not a reason to avoid it but rather to ensure that teachers are equipped to handle these controversial issues in a constructive way which results in positive learning outcomes for students.

(Teaching Controversial Issues, R. Stradling et al 1984)

## **1. Introduction**

The Combat Poverty Agency is a statutory agency working for the prevention and elimination of poverty and social exclusion. It was set up under the Combat Poverty Agency Act 1986. Our aim, set out in our mission statement is to promote a more just

and inclusive society by working for the prevention and elimination of poverty and social exclusion. The Agency values the opportunity to make this preliminary submission on incorporating social, political and citizenship education in the Established Leaving Certificate and would strongly welcome future opportunities to contribute to any consultations or discussions on this matter.

Poverty is still a serious problem in Ireland despite the economic boom. Child poverty is a particular problem. Ireland has one of the highest rates of child poverty in the European Union. While nearly everybody has benefited somewhat from economic growth, the gap between the rich and poor actually widened in the mid to late 1990s. Currently as inflation rates rise, those on the lowest incomes will be worst affected as the inflation erodes the increases they will have received in the last Budget.

## **2. The work of the Combat Poverty Agency**

Ultimately the Agency's job is to advise policy makers about the best strategies to tackle poverty and bring about a fairer society. The Agency does this in four main ways

- Policy advice to the Minister for Social Community and Family Affairs and Government
- Research into the causes and effects of poverty
- Raising public awareness about poverty through publications, conferences and the media
- Supporting innovative community development and anti-poverty projects.

As part of its public awareness work the Combat Poverty Agency promotes and supports the inclusion of social/political education and education for citizenship in the post primary curriculum.

Since 1990 the range of education and curriculum related work includes:

- Involvement in feasibility and pilot phase of Junior Cycle (JC) Civic, Social Political Education (CSPE). This included input into development of Unit Three – *Going National* and in-service training for teachers
- Design of Contemporary Issues module for pilot phase of Leaving Certificate Applied Programme and subsequent input into in-service, resource material provision and evaluation of the module
- In-service and resource material provision for Transition Year including the development of resource *Poverty in Focus* and the design and in-servicing of pilot module entitled *Take a Better Look*
- Provision of resource material and in-service for specific subject areas including Religious Education and Home Economics
- Development of submissions and teacher guidelines including Geography, Economics, Home Economics and Religious Education
- Submission to Expert Advisory Group on Teacher Education
- Promotion and support of social justice education, with a global perspective, as part of WEBS (formerly DETY) Network

- Funding of a curriculum development project “Poverty, the Curriculum and the Classroom” within the CDVEC- CDU, to explore strategies for introduction of poverty as a social issue into the classroom
- Drafting, publication and promotion of *Food Issues* a second year Junior Cycle module
- Co-hosting of national seminar on Issues, Opportunities and Challenges for Social, Political and Development Education in the Post-Primary Classroom with National Committee for Development Education and Network of Grassroots Organisations in Development Education. Publication of conference proceedings
- With the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, ADM and CDVEC CDU commissioning and publishing *Education for Reconciliation, A Curriculum Investigation*
- With the Equality Authority and a number of NGOs, currently developing a CSPE curriculum related web site for students, parents, teachers on poverty, equality and social justice
- With the CDVEC CDU and local education networks, management and funding of a Poverty Awareness Module for teachers in Killinarden through the work of the Agency’s Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage.

The experience gained through this work helps inform this submission. To further inform the development of the submission the Agency invited a range of relevant and interested people to an advisory meeting (see Appendix 1). This group included people involved in curriculum development, teachers of CSPE, third level academics, community development and educational disadvantage, NGOs, and other statutory agencies.

### **3. Agency’s View of Education**

The Agency believes that the education system should provide a vision of society that is committed to the values of social equity and justice. This ethos should permeate all levels of education and all subject areas and should enable all participants in the education system to learn to respect and value themselves and others (Agency submission to the Education Green Paper, p.7/8). This principle is reflected in the Agency’s educational approach which promotes

- Skills development e.g. critical thinking, communication, presentation
- Positive attitudinal development e.g. tolerance, empathy
- Conceptual understanding e.g. justice, human rights, relative poverty
- Knowledge acquisition e.g. causes of poverty, extent and nature of poverty, tackling poverty.

For education to be an effective anti-poverty measure

- Quality education must be available to all young people
- Schools and teachers must have an understanding of the barriers which children from disadvantaged backgrounds and groups and, especially those living in poverty, have to overcome if they are to participate fully in the education system
- Preventive measures to prevent educational failure must be put in place at a number of critical points in the education cycle
- Compensatory education must be available for adults so as to contribute to breaking the cycle of disadvantage arising from poor educational opportunities

- Community involvement in education is necessary to enable education to be more responsive to people's needs and pro-active in addressing these
- Lifelong learning must be facilitated by the provision of continuity and connection between schooling and adult education and between school and community provision.

The Agency has also undertaken a range of research and policy work related to educational disadvantage. It is currently involved in a number of Department of Education initiatives and in managing and funding initiatives at a local level that are seeking to address early school leaving and educational disadvantage through an integrated services approach.

#### **4. Understanding of Citizenship and Citizenship Education**

The Combat Poverty Agency believes that poverty and social exclusion are a denial of fundamental human rights and a barrier to full citizenship. Citizenship is understood here as conferring on members of a given society sets of rights such as civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It also carries with it responsibilities both as citizens e.g. pay taxes, vote in elections and also to ensure that the rights of others are protected.

Denial of rights can be both a cause and effect of poverty. For example, lack of opportunities to participate fully in appropriate and relevant education is a denial of a social right and also can lead to a denial of other rights including political rights. Research has shown that people effected by poverty are less likely to be in a position to fully exercise their political rights because of lack of access to resources, political skills and lack of access to power structures. Research carried out for the Agency highlights that:

.... a narrow focus on social rights in combating poverty is socially divisive and diverts political attention away from the structural and institutional forces of poverty and social exclusion towards ameliorative policies. The indivisibility of rights is stressed. A social rights approach to poverty and social exclusion is most meaningful when seen as part of a strategy of equality and democratic reform. (Yeates 1995)

Therefore the Agency believes it is important to link any discussion of citizenship and associated rights to a framework of equality and participative democracy (in addition to representative democracy).

This framework should inform the development of education for citizenship. The Agency believes that such education must be based on and promote certain core values. All education is value laden but often these are not made explicit. The fostering of common values that uphold social justice principles along with tolerance of difference and individual freedom is enormously important. The education system has a central role to play in facilitating a knowledge and understanding of these values and in building young citizens' capacity to be active in social and political processes both now and in the future. In the case of social/political and citizenship education, values should be made explicit and become part of what is explored by students and teachers. As the White Paper on Education itself acknowledges, educational aims include creating tolerant, caring and politically aware members of society; ensuring that Irish young people are equipped with a global awareness; providing students with necessary education and training to enable them to make their particular contribution to society in an effective way and to promoting equality for all.

The values envisaged by the Agency for social, political, citizenship education are:

- Equality
- Social justice
- Human rights
- Democracy – both representative and participatory
- Consultation and participation
- Dialogue and collaboration
- Sustainable development
- Reconciliation.

## **5. The Current Context and Rationale**

In order to combat poverty and social exclusion, to create a more equal and democratic society and to offer all students meaningful opportunities for social and political development the Agency considers that there is a need for the further development of social, political and citizenship education in the post primary curriculum, and, in particular as part of the established Leaving Certificate Programme. There is currently a growing interest in many countries around the world in education for citizenship and democracy including older established democracies and those emerging democracies particularly in Eastern Europe (Torney-Purta, Schwille and Amadeo, 1999). Also at its Final Declaration, the Second Summit of the heads of States and Governments of the Council of Europe identified education for democratic citizenship as an area of work to be given immediate priority.

A number of factors exist in the civic/political arenas and also within the social and economic context that are relevant to developing a rationale for the further development of social/political and citizenship education. These are outlined briefly below.

### *Civic/Political Context*

The current developments which are relevant here include:

- The Good Friday Agreement
- Ireland's ratification of international conventions including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- The Government's pledge to honour the promises in the Beijing Platform
- The Government's support for the outcomes of the UN General Assembly "World Summit for Social Development and Beyond"
- The establishment of a number of statutory bodies such as the Equality Authority, and the Human Rights Commission (forthcoming)
- The establishing of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism
- The current climate of negativity regarding politics and politicians following on the revelations of corruption leading many young people to wonder if it is worthwhile voting.
- The lack of knowledge about civic and political structures including how to vote, the fall in voting patterns and the growing apathy regarding politics
- Lack of political debate regarding the model of development being currently pursued
- Lack of political debate around issues of immigration policy and policy on refugees and asylum seekers

- The ongoing implementation of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the development of a National Children's Strategy
- Introduction of 'poverty-proofing' within the public administration system where key policies and programmes are assessed for their impact on poverty.
- The current reform of local government and the increased emphasis on participation and consultation and on issues of poverty and social exclusion.

### *Social/Economic*

Despite many positive changes including a growth in employment, drop in level and depth of poverty, fall in forced emigration and positive achievements for women there are still a range of issues that need to be addressed.

- The widening gap between rich and poor and evidence that the latter are not gaining as much from the economic boom and in particular the high rate of poverty experienced by children
- The growing diversity in Irish society and the growing manifestation of racism
- The lack of social inclusion for groups experiencing racism and/or prejudice and discrimination such as Travellers, other minority groups, people with a disability, gay men, lesbians, prisoners and ex-prisoners and others living on the margins of society
- The widening gap between the "developed" world and the "developing" world
- The need to promote understanding and tolerance of the growing diversity in Irish society.
- The continuing inequality experienced by women throughout the world including Ireland despite many positive changes
- The growth in consumerism and individualism at times to the detriment of social and global responsibility
- Globalisation in economics, politics and communications
- Ecological concerns re sustainability and respect for the environment.
- The limited opportunities for participation and involvement in the development of local communities.

All of this indicates that young people are living in a more complex world than previous generations and that this has implications for the type of education required, including what is required to equip them to understand and be able to play a full and constructive role in shaping this complex world.

There are also important aspects of the educational context that are relevant to a rationale for social, political and citizenship education in the established Leaving Certificate.

### *Educational Context*

A number of programmes have been introduced successfully which appear to affirm the value of social, political, citizenship education. These include JC- CSPE, Social Education Programme in LCA, Link Modules in LCVP and Social Education Modules in Transition Year. However there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation of these programmes particularly including the views of students, to inform future developments.

There are also a number of reviews either just completed or in progress which are of particular relevance and value here including; Junior Cycle; Senior Cycle; Transition Year; Leaving Certificate Applied.

The review of the Junior Cycle Programme highlighted a number of valuable lessons, which should inform the current Senior Cycle review and also the development of any new programme or courses including social, political education.

These included:

- The need to move from a strict subject orientation to structuring a curriculum around key areas of experience including social political and environmental education
- The importance of stressing learning outcomes
- A focus on the development of key skills
- The importance of a range of learning and assessment approaches
- The need to retain flexibility to enable school based curriculum development
- The development of teachers
- The development and importance of whole school organisation
- The importance of ensuring that programmes and course are accessible to all students particularly those experiencing educational disadvantage and students with special needs
- The importance of the motivation of students and the fact that education should be enjoyable.

If schools are to have greater flexibility in curriculum provision they will need time to prepare and plan for taking on greater responsibility in this area. In a context of future flexibility and freedom at school level, the eight areas framework, as well as the outcomes and key skills would be the basis for ensuring equality of opportunity and the communication of culture. (*The Junior Cycle Review, NCCA 1999*)

The completion of the first full cycle of the JC- CSPE course and the lessons learnt from this process can inform future developments.

There are also valuable lessons being learnt from a number of innovative curricular initiatives recently or currently being developed, including in the areas of human rights education, education for peace and reconciliation, anti-racist and multi-cultural education, anti- poverty education and education for gender equality

There is also the ongoing challenge posed by continuing high levels of educational disadvantage and early school leaving and the need for greater efforts to ensure equality of access, participation and outcomes for all groups of students including those with special needs and Travellers. The Agency acknowledges the welcome introduction of educational initiatives such as Breaking the Cycle, the New Deal, the Educational Equality Initiative, the Stay-in-School Initiative and the initiative for 8-15 year olds. The recent review of Teacher Education is also welcome and we look forward to its report.

There is a recognition of the need for partnerships in education broader than previously understood including local community organisations, parents, statutory bodies, NGO's non-formal providers and students. The Agency's own work through the Demonstration Programme on Educational Disadvantage and the work of the local area-based partnership companies are relevant here.

The growing emphasis on whole school development including planning and evaluation is also particularly important.

## **6. At the Heart of the Matter**

The context highlighted above includes both opportunities and reasons for the development of social/ political and citizenship education at Leaving Certificate level. However the most fundamental reason for arguing for this development is the contribution it can make to the holistic development of students. It will give them an opportunity to build on the experience gained at Junior Cycle and should offer opportunities to engage with issues which are relevant to them.

A recent study commissioned by the CCEA highlighted that students have difficulty in seeing relevance in much of what they are required to learn in school and they want more of the following:

- more physical education
  - more personal education
  - more political/environmental education
  - more information technology and communications
- (CCEA presentation –Belfast, April 2000)

This submission is also based on a belief that the engagement of students in a meaningful and well-structured social/political and citizenship education programme can contribute to the long term achievement of a more equal and inclusive society and world.

There are however difficulties with the latter assumption as there appears to be little empirical data to back this up, partly because of lack of research in this area, particularly from the point of view of students themselves. This type of research is urgently needed and there is now an opportunity to establish if students who engaged in programmes such as CSPE, display any greater propensity toward active citizenship than students who did not. This could be done in relation to students who completed the JC- CSPE programme in 1999 and 2000 and also those who completed the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme.

The second phase of a study being conducted by The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement should also offer valuable insights which can help inform this debate. This will include a survey of young people across a broad range of countries.

## **7. The Approach to Social, Political and Citizenship Education**

The Combat Poverty Agency wishes to support the development of a form of social/political and citizenship education that will contribute to the holistic development of students. This is to enable them realise their full potential and also to play a role as participative and reflective citizens working for the achievement of a more equal and inclusive society and world

The approach will be informed by core values as stated earlier, as all education is informed by values, often implicit. Citizenship is equally linked to certain values which vary over time and in different contexts. David Kerr highlights this in the UK context by arguing that the discussion of active citizenship and citizens' rights had very different meanings in Conservative rhetoric and in Labour rhetoric. In the former the stress was on rights and responsibilities of the individual over those of the state, whilst the Labour rhetoric has emphasised communitarian values and civic morality. (Civic Education Across Countries, IEA, 1999)

The Combat Poverty Agency would see the values proposed earlier in this document as central.

A clear understanding of what constitutes the curriculum is important when considering any curricular changes. The Agency considers the definition of curriculum outlined in the Education White Paper is useful in this regard.

*The term curriculum encompasses the content, structure and processes of teaching and learning which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values. It includes specific and implicit elements. The specific elements are those concepts, skills, areas of knowledge and attitudes which children learn at school, as part of their personal and social development. The implicit elements are those factors which make up the ethos and general environment of the school. The curriculum in schools is concerned not only with the subjects taught but also with how and why they are taught and with the outcomes of this activity for the learner. (Charting our Future- White Paper On Education 1995)*

This inclusive notion of curriculum is particularly relevant to the development of social/political and citizenship education and in particular its stress on the importance of the school ethos and environment. The Combat Poverty Agency believes that in order to achieve positive learning outcomes for students in this area than the following aspects of the whole school are important

- The importance of the development of the overall culture of the school so that it is an open and respectful environment which is guided by and promotes equality and human rights
- The provision of structures and opportunities for students to input into school policy
- The importance of the support of the school principal for social, political education
- The importance of whole school planning and evaluation
- The need to involve more partners in the educational process particularly local organisations including community development organisations
- The need for schools to develop anti- discrimination policies which are implemented and reviewed
- The need for resources to be allocated to schools to facilitate the above developments.

This will ensure that students learn through citizenship and not just about it.

#### *Subject or Cross Curricular Theme?*

The main emphasis in this submission is that students should be given meaningful opportunities to participate in Social Political and Citizenship Education building on the experience of C.S.P.E. at junior cycle. There will be a need for more research, analysis and debate before clear recommendations can be made as to how this should be done within the Established Leaving Certificate Programme.

It is important that Social/Political and Citizenship Education is interwoven through a range of subject areas and also through extra curricular activities. The current Senior Cycle review creates opportunities to adopt an approach similar to those recommended in the Junior Cycle Review i.e. to name key areas of experience to which all students should be exposed. Learning outcomes and key skills will be named and assessment will be based on these. However research seems to support the fact that this is not enough in itself, as cross-curricular approaches are often not

implemented because no one person is responsible. ( Torney-Purta et al 1999). Given the deeply subject dominated nature of our post- primary system it is important that Social Political and Citizenship Education is also offered as a short course and/or full subject. There are no mandatory subjects at senior cycle and also making this form of education mandatory would contradict the principles underlying the programme. Therefore creative ways of attracting students to the course /subject need to be identified. With regard to a possible structure the Combat Poverty Agency considers that the submission made by the CDVEC-CDU is useful. (CDVEC-CDU, 2000).

*What will students learn?*

Perhaps one of the most fundamental understandings that students might achieve is that societies and their political and economic systems are shaped by human beings and therefore can be changed by them. Also that they come to understand that they can influence change both personally and in the wider society and world and that they can do this now and not only in the future when they are adults. The importance of stressing human agency in shaping the world is central as issues and phenomena are often presented as if they are immutable or moved by unseen non- human forces. This is particularly true in the area of economics which is often discussed in this way, e.g. the market fluctuates, as opposed to highlighting how these are affected by the actions of human beings making conscious choices to move investments around.

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The literature in this area highlights that meaningful citizenship education is not about a list of topics and issues or just about the political structures and the constitution although these can indeed form part of what students learn. The emphasis is on how students learn and in particular here on the importance of developing understanding, skills and attitudes over acquisition of knowledge. A recent report of *the Multiple Intelligences-Curriculum and Assessment Project* highlights the value of approaches such as Teaching for Understanding and Multiple Intelligences in Social Political and Citizenship education. A participating CSPE teacher observed that

*We cannot go back to the hierarchical structure of teaching, rather we must grasp the notion of constructivism with both hands and give students the freedom to explore and construct knowledge and understanding. (Final Report – of the Multiple Intelligences-Curriculum and Assessment Project 2000)*

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including how we distribute resources and who benefits, this may lead to the conclusion that poverty is ultimately a question of bad luck or personal failing. It is also important here that a range of views is explored in relation to any issue. The course/subject should be informed by a set of core concepts similar to those in the JC CSPE course and also to the values outlined earlier.

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(Teaching Controversial Issues, R. Stradling et al 1984)

### *Core skills*

The emphasis in the approach being proposed and in line with the JC review stresses the importance of the development of core skills which can serve students across all areas of their lives. The importance of a greater focus on the development of skills was highlighted in the Chief Inspectors Report on the Junior Certificate CSPE Assessment and Examination. (Chief Inspectors Report 2000).

A matrix of skills (developed by the CCEA) and adapted<sup>1</sup> by adding a category of acting skills, is offered here as a useful framework for the identification of key skills in relation to social, political and citizenship. The framework suggested here is based on the proposed framework contained in the CCEA document- *Proposals for Change to the Northern Ireland Curriculum*; the framework however has been adapted for the purposes of this document.

This outlines 5 categories of skills

1. Personal
2. Interpersonal
3. Thinking
4. Learning
5. Acting

Whilst there are overlaps in this categorisation it is nonetheless useful in helping to organise a comprehensive set of skills.

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<sup>1</sup> Adaptation by Maureen Bassett, who acts as curriculum advisor to the Combat Poverty Agency

Personal Skills	Interpersonal skills	Thinking skills	Learning skills	Acting skills
<b>Personal skills are those skills which are necessary for effective operation at an individual level .They include:</b>	<b>Interpersonal Skills are those skills, which are necessary for effective interaction with others. They include:</b>	<b>Thinking skills are those intellectual skills, which are necessary for the realisation of human potential. They include</b>	<b>Learning skills are those skills which enable individuals to engage with uncertainty and address the process of change. They include</b>	<b>Acting skills are those skills which enable individuals act in a reflective and strategic way to achieve identified goals</b>
Self Management: the ability to recognise and deal with personal characteristics, strengths and limitations, emotions, behaviours and experiences in a range of situations and contexts	Communication: the ability to select and apply a range of appropriate communications skills in order to express oneself effectively within a range of situations and contexts	Critical thinking: the ability to use a range analytical evaluative and decisionmaking processes in order to achieve a reasoned outcome	Self-assessment: The ability to reflect on personal strengths and limitations as a basis for identifying learning needs and evaluating new learning	Research: the ability to collect and collate information and to analyse and identify key issues
Self reliance:the ability to be self directed to work independently and to undertake and complete tasks on an individual basis	Working with others: the ability to collaborate with others in working towards a common goal	Creative thinking the ability to be generate “new” ideas, visualise processes and imagine outcomes	Learning Styles: the ability to identify, expand and monitor preferred ways of learning	Clarification of issues: the ability to identify and agree on the issues on which action will be taken individually or collectively
Assertiveness: the ability to express a personal view in a positive an non threatening manner	Empathy: the ability to engage with the feelings and contexts experienced by others	Caring thinking: the ability to be sensitive to the context, experience and needs of others	Goal setting: the ability to set short and longer term targets for learning and to identify strategies by which these can be met	Strategic thinking: the ability to make decisions on the basis of what will best achieve hoped for outcomes
Language and literacy: the ability to engage with the spoken and written word in various forms	Leadership: the ability to assume responsibility and to motivate others towards the achievement of a particular goal	Problem solving: the ability to select and apply a range of appropriate skills to meet an identified need to produce a desired outcome	Information handling: the ability to access knowledge and information to devise strategies for assimilation and recall	Planning: the ability to develop a plan which includes hoped for outcomes, actions and allocation of tasks and timeframe
Application of numbers: the ability to select and apply a range of numerical skills to real situations and contexts in order to meet a desired outcome			Improving own learning performance: the ability to select and apply a range of appropriate skills to promote self improvement	Implementation and reviewing skills, the ability to carry out, plan and to review progress
Creativity: the ability to be imaginative and inventive in creating outcomes and products				Evaluation: the ability to reflect on actions and outcomes and make assessments of contribution

*Action Projects*

Opportunities to engage in well structured and guided action projects has been shown to have considerable learning value (Chief Inspectors Report). However the report was also critical of the fact that guidelines which had been provided by the Department of Education and promoted by the support service were not always adhered to, resulting in less valuable projects from the students point of view. It is important that teachers are trained in working with students on action projects

The opportunity to engage with voluntary and community organisations can also offer valuable learning opportunities. However, the organisations need to be consulted on the most appropriate forms of engagement. For organisations on low budgets a fund should be made available to support the development of this work. Clear guidelines should be developed by the key partners in this enterprise. This could include school principal and relevant teachers, students and the organisations in question. Pilot initiatives should be supported which can then be evaluated from the perspective of all the partners involved.

*Teaching/learning approach*

This has already been referred to because of the form of social/political and citizenship education envisaged here. It is as much about how students learn as what they learn. The learning outcomes highlighted above already imply a teaching approach, as these cannot be gained through didactic teaching although this can have a role. There is a growing acceptance of the importance of experiential and active learning methods as reflected in a range of educational literature and documents.

*Active Learning can be defined as learning methods where students are given the opportunity to actively engage with the subject, issues or material at hand, - through discussion activities, simulations, research activities, action projects etc.- under the guidance of teachers. It is difficult to imagine students as active citizens if their experience of learning about citizenship has been predominantly passive (NCCA Discussion Paper "Civic, Social and Political Education at Post-Primary level, 1991)*

However it is also important that active learning methods are seen as a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Ultimately education is about creating meaningful learning and development opportunities for students. In this context the *Teaching for Understanding* approach referred to earlier appears to offer a useful framework in which to place active learning methods and the use of a multi intelligence approach. From the perspective of the Agency these approaches have also been found to benefit students of all abilities levels including those who are not academically inclined. As many students affected by poverty fall into this category it is particularly important to promote the use of such approaches as it can have a two- fold benefit for such students. It can be part of a meaningful educational and development experience and also can contribute to the student's capacity to work with others to bring about change in society in relation to an issue which directly affects them.

*Assessment*

Once again the use of ongoing assessment is implied, particularly within a *Teaching for Understanding* approach. It forms a central component of this, as students and teachers reflect on the learning which is taking place in an ongoing way. On the wider question of formal assessment there was considerable debate during the feasibility phase of the CSPE –JC. The issues raised are relevant to whether or not the proposed Leaving Certificate course/subject be formally assessed. Those

opposed to formal assessment felt that it would be detrimental to fail students in a course which had as its aim their development as citizens. There were also concern regarding the difficulty in assessing the type of learning envisaged. On the other hand there were those who argued that given the examination oriented nature of our education system that non- examined subjects lack status both with staff and students. The decision to formally assess and to value non- examination assessment to the extent of 60% appears to have been a good compromise. However it is also important to note some of the shortcomings in assessment procedures as highlighted in the Report and learn from this for future developments. As part of the evaluation proposed earlier it is important to evaluate the assessment processes also.

In relation to a Leaving Certificate course/subject the imperative to include formal assessment will be even greater given the examination orientation of the programme. As with JC- CSPE it is important to include both creative forms of assessment as well as a terminal examination, with the balance in favour of the former. It is also important that a wide range of assessment tools are employed including portfolios, learning/reflective journals and action research projects.

#### *Who are the Teachers?*

Part of the approach proposed here i.e. to have a cross curricular element across a range of subjects will mean that all teachers will require in-service training to support them to do this within their own subjects. The report entitled *A Global Curriculum?* highlighted how this form of education can be part of a wide range of subjects at Junior Cycle, (Hammond 1995). It is likely that the same is true of the Established Leaving Certificate.

Teachers will need training to assist them to identify aspects to be covered and also in the teaching and assessment methodologies being proposed. Time will also need to be allowed for planning and co-ordination.

In the specific course/subject being proposed there will need to be a cohort of trained Social Political and Citizenship Education teachers to ensure high standards. Teachers involved in the feasibility stage of the development of CSPE highlighted the need for comprehensive in-service training. They identified the need for training to assist them to develop aptitudes and skills for generating classroom discussion, handling group work, developing links with community organisations and generating local educational material. The Final Report expressed the view that completion of such a programme would result in the development of a cohort of teachers of civics, social and political education over a period of time. (Civic Social and Political Education –Feasibility Study- Final Report, NCCA, 1993).

Whilst considerable in-service training was subsequently provided over the period of the 3 year pilot phase and the first three years of full implementation there is evidence that the value of this was weakened by the fact that teachers were pulled in and out of teaching the CSPE programme often because of timetabling issues. This resulted in teachers who had received training being moved on and new untrained teachers being put in place, who then had to be trained. None the less there is a cohort of teachers who have received training and this is further strengthened by those who have been involved in teaching The Social Education Programme of Leaving Certificate Applied and also those who completed pre-service and postgraduate courses in citizenship education provided by a number of the Universities. There will be a need to build on their knowledge and skills in this area as the programme at Leaving Certificate will need to go deeper than at Junior Cycle and include more theoretical and analytic approaches.

The development of teachers for Leaving Certificate Level should make use of the core of highly trained teachers who formed the support services for Junior Cycle-CSPE and Leaving Certificate Applied in addition to others who have gone beyond the basic training. Also the Education Departments in the Universities which offer citizenship education modules and course have gained useful knowledge in this area which can contribute to the development of a comprehensive pre-service and post graduate training. It is important the teaching/learning approach in these programmes mirror the proposed approach in the school-based programmes. Given the proposal that all teachers will have some input in this area and in line with the increasing emphasis on participative approaches across the curriculum all pre-service training for teachers needs to take this into account. In addition teachers themselves also need to be encouraged and supported to develop their own social political understanding and skills.

The contribution that relevant statutory agencies including NCDE, the Combat Poverty Agency and others and also NGOs and community organisations can make to teacher training and development should also be given serious consideration. Between them they have considerable experience of a wide range of social, political and citizenship issues, also many have experience in curriculum development, resource material production and in-service training. Interested organisations should be consulted as to what their role might be and mechanisms put in place including resources to support their input.

Creative approaches for offering in-service need to be developed to avoid the problem of too many teachers being out of school at the same time including summer schools

(similar to primary level), parallel days covering the same material and the use of staff development days. The issue of expenses for teachers to attend courses outside of normal working time should also be considered including travel, subsistence and child/family care.

For those courses held during school term substitution costs will need to be met. The central role of Principals in supporting the development of new initiatives within their schools also needs to be addressed in planning training and development programmes.

### *Resources*

It is important that adequate resources are allocated to the development of a new programme including a pilot phase. There will also need to be provision of adequate resources for the implementation phase. The model of coordinator and a support service used for other new initiatives including JC-CSPE should be used here. The main areas for which financial resources will be needed include:

- Initial development costs including an education officer
- Teacher development including a comprehensive inservice programme
- Development and Provision of student and teacher friendly Exemplar materials
- Substitution costs
- Travel/expenses including child/family care
- Provision of facilities and equipment (e.g. videos overheads etc) and appropriate storage space
- Resourcing of partnership development including local and community organisations

The funding of equipment is vital from an anti-poverty perspective to ensure all students have access to highest quality provision, the resourcing of partnerships is also important to promote the engagement with community development groups

### *Consultation*

The Combat Poverty Agency appreciates this opportunity to make a submission on this important matter and trusts that it is just an initial step in a wider and deeper consultation process. It is important that a fuller consultation process be initiated which will include as wide a range of perspectives as possible, including organisations with a social justice and equality orientation. It is also vital that students and other young people are consulted including those who have participated in social/political education and those who did not. It is important that all consultation processes are transparent and accessible.

When a course committee is established the representation should be broader than heretofore and include representation from organisations highlighted above

## **8. Recommendations**

Arising from this exploration of issues relating to the incorporation of a social, political and citizenship education dimension to the Established Leaving Certificate the Agency proposes the following recommendations. We value the opportunity to propose these and to acknowledge the contribution and advice of the individuals and agencies named in Appendix 1.

We would also be interested in contributing to any future opportunities to discuss this paper with you or to assist in the formulation, design and implementation of any initiatives with the objective of incorporating a social, political, citizenship dimension to the Senior Cycle Established Leaving Certificate curriculum.

### **Key recommendations**

- Commission evaluation of Junior Cycle Civic Social Political Education and publish the report
- Develop an inclusive and transparent consultation process for considering social, political and citizenship education in the Established Leaving Certificate. This process should involve relevant community interests, students, parents, teachers, school management, social partners.
- Establish a Course Committee on Social, Political and Citizenship Education within the Established Leaving Certificate. This should be comprised of broad ranging representation similar to those listed above.
- Commission and publish a discussion paper that identifies issues, implications and options for incorporating Social, Political and Citizenship Education within the Established Leaving Certificate.
- Undertake a further round of consultation based on this. Consultation mechanisms should include a range of processes including submissions, seminars, round-table discussions and focus groups.
- Develop and pilot of a number of approaches and undertake detailed evaluation of these.

- Secure and allocate adequate resources for development, pilot and implementation phases for incorporating Social, Political and Citizenship Education within the Established Leaving Certificate.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **ATTENDEES AT ADVISORY MEETING 19<sup>TH</sup> July 2000**

Maureen Bassett, Curriculum Advisor-Combat Poverty Agency  
Hannah Clark, CSPE teacher-Member of ACT  
Maire Clarke, Department of Education –UCD  
Aidan Clifford, CD-VEC-Curriculum Development Unit  
Angie Daley, KEN ( Killinarden Education Network)  
Barbara Gill, CD-VEC- Curriculum Development Unit  
Niall Haran, Educational Disadvantage Demonstration Programme  
Ger Horgan, National Committee for Development Education Studies-UCD  
Dr. Ann Lodge, Equality  
Karen McAuley, Children's Rights Alliance  
Joan O'Flynn, Combat Poverty Agency  
Brendan O'Regan, CSPE teacher-Member of ACT  
Karen O'Shea, CD-VEC- Curriculum Development Unit  
Philip Watt, National Consultative Council on Racism and Multi-Culturalism

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