GCS SUBMISSION to National Strategy on ESD to 2030

**INTRO: (Info about GCS for insertion at beginning)**

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**Global Citizenship School’s vision** is that all primary school teachers and children will learn about global citizenship and that schools will take consistent primary school appropriate action to help make the world a better place for all. The G.C.S. motto states: “We are working for a better and fairer world for everyone and it starts with me. Ní neart go cur le chéile.” We strive to have Global Citizenship Education mainstreamed in and across the primary school curriculum. We also aim to be a support for anyone involved in Primary School Global Citizenship Education.

**We in GCS have considered the UNESCO Key Priority Areas** for the progression of ESD to 2030 and are not responding directly to them, rather we in G.C.S. are articulating our vision and are offering suggestions to aid the ESD 2030 Strategy. All our suggestions relate to the Primary Education Sector.

**Our definition of G.C.E. is as follows:** “Global Citizenship Education is a sense of belonging to a broader community sharing a common humanity. G.C.E. aims to open learners eyes and minds to the realities of the world, to critically view all information and upskill all learners to assume roles as engaged active citizens in helping to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and Human Rights for all at local, national and global levels.”

**‘Education for Sustainability 2014’ stated aims are:** “to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the ‘what’), the key dispositions and skills (the ‘how’) and the values (the ‘why’) that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed active citizens who take action for a more sustainable future.”

**This 2021 consultation survey preamble states:** “There are four dimensions to sustainable development – socio-economic, environmental, political and cultural – which are intertwined, not separate. ESD empowers people to change the way they think and work towards a sustainable future. ESD is a key priority in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **SDG Target 4.7** aims to ensure that: "by 2030 all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

One potential pitfall arises, despite our agreement with the above preamble. In G.C.S. we are concerned that “Sustainability” as a descriptor becomes associated with the environment alone without due regard for the necessary Human Rights, Poverty and inequality components.

**For insertion into 5(a): advancing the UNESCO 5 key priorities**

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**UNESCO KEY PRIORITY AREA No.1: Policy:** (Advancing policy/policy coherence.)

**Department of Education Policy** plays a key role in the effective implementation of ESD. Quality teaching and an engaging curriculum fit for our times are important. The primary school curriculum, currently under review by the NCCA, is strategic in the promotion of ESD. The 17 Global Goals for Sustainability (SDG’s) and the philosophy that underpins them should be incorporated across the curriculum in strands and strand units where possible. Importantly they can be integrated into all areas of the curriculum ensuring the inclusion of all 7 competencies and the key principles as set out in the revised curriculum. The development and provision of effective and engaging learning/resource materials and the assessment of ESD work in schools by pupils, teachers, schools and the inspectorate are critical to the successful implementation of ESD across the Primary School. We see a whole school approach as being integral to real societal and global change. Global Citizenship and Human Rights Education need to be named and sufficient time allocated in any revised structures. Curriculum content has to be specified and officially evaluated and must be a part of the school plan, teachers planning and the ‘Cúntas Míosúil’ (Teachers monthly reports) to ensure its place of importance in the classroom.

In accepting that the primary school curriculum is a living document and understanding that it is ultimately designed for the improvement of the child, and the benefit of the state we offer that Global Citizenship Education is how we learn together to play an active and contributing part of the Wider World. It is important that pupils, parents, staff and management are aware of what is being ‘taught’ in our national schools and are involved and contribute as participants in the process.

**A scoping exercise to research:** In an effort to develop a planned and coordinated approach to ESD / GCE we value the need for a scoping exercise that undertakes to research current practices at Primary Level as we include all those involved. ESD/Global Citizenship Education is currently being planned for in the revised primary school curriculum. ESD, alongside GCE can provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower people to transform societies for a better future for all. This necessary work at primary level needs to be coordinated and properly resourced.

**KEY PRIORITY AREA No.2: Education and Training**: (Transforming learning & training.)

Flexible and transformative teaching methodologies and education delivery are important to cater for the professional competencies and possibilities of the teaching profession as well as for all the partners in education and taking account of the local school culture. However this must be within a framework of accountability in delivering the full primary school curriculum to all pupils in all state supported schools.

All the partners in education – management, parent and teacher representative bodies and the Department of Education itself – need to be supported in the continuous transformation of Irish primary education. In particular Principals/school leaders need support in strengthening teaching competency for ESD transformative learning approaches and the integration of ESD/GCE into standard educational day-to-day work.

**KEY AREA No. 3: Capacity Building for Educators and Trainers**.

Developing quality classroom delivery for pupils from teachers and Principals requires a range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) opportunities to achieve the following:

Understanding SDG 4.7 and exploring how the SDG targets might be attained/achieved.

Reframing curriculum learning outcomes with ESD across all school plans.

Embedding new sustainability thinking and practice in learning, leadership & management.

CPD and ITE opportunities to integrate environmental issues with global justice, inequality, human rights and cultural diversity are an important step towards competent GCE. It is crucial that “Sustainability” is not merely equated with the “Environment” and Human Rights (and responsibilities) but that it should be central to all Education and Training.

Quality teacher training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in ESD/GCE must emphasise critical thinking and problem solving methodologies as we assist our Primary School Students to take up their responsibilities as active citizens. We must champion the researching of reliable quality data and delivery of stimulating democratic content that inspires and provokes.

**KEY PRIORITY AREA No.4: Youth**: Empowering & mobilising youth.

Global Citizenship School promotes and encourages Whole School Community approaches as we engage with all ESD and GCE content. To this end and critically, we believe that all sections of society should be involved in ESD. There are no agreed specific definitions for ‘youth’ and the ‘elderly’ etc. in Irish society but the principles of “leaving no-one behind’, ‘including all’ and ‘equal representation’ must be part of our democracy which according to our constitution is a republic for all of the people.

Across Ireland there are significant youth organisations, movements and programmes that work within and outside the formal education system that can be further resourced and developed to ensure ESD is embedded in the lives of all citizens. Young people must be meaningfully involved and included in decision making at the core of all processes and decisions on ESD. Enhancing democratic culture by the meaningful inclusion of youth must be part of ESD.

**KEY PRIORITY AREA No.5: Communities:**

(Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level & engaging with the wider community.)

Global Citizenship School promotes Whole School Community approaches to everything concerned with ESD and GCE. We consider that no child is an island and children can be hugely influential in family life decisions and community development, especially children in the primary schools. The successful implementation of the SDG’s and their 169 Targets will depend on a true partnership of Government, Civil Society, the Voluntary Sector, Business and Trade Union sectors of Irish society along with the buy in of the general population. This implies the government leads on the implementation of the 17 Global Goals Agenda with the various sectors delivering on specific SDG Targets as they relate to them. Critically the government must take the initiative in creating an awareness of the importance of the SDGs and of the part that each person must play. As a first step, the inclusion of the SDGs Agenda in the revised ESD Curriculum is a must.

**For insertion into 5(b)….other priority areas.**

**SUGGESTION**! The terms “for all” and “leave no-one behind” and “commitment to a common humanity” need to be addendums to all key principles, recommendations and priority actions in the National Strategy on E.S.D. in Ireland to 2030. Importantly we must also ensure that “we reach the furthest behind first” in an effort to include all.

*What has changed since 2014, both in the education sector and broader society, and how should that be reflected in the new ESD 2030 strategy?*

1. Inequalities globally have increased since 2014 and the global Covid-19 pandemic has made these all the more evident. 1% of the world’s adults are millionaires and c. 10% of people (almost one billion people) are in extreme poverty. Over 80 million people are currently displaced due to conflict and famine. The need to incorporate GCE into the primary school curriculum becomes clearer and more crucial every day. Teaching the skills, values and attitudes of  ESD/GCE and equally important, giving children a voice, a space, an audience and a reason to act upon these key and core skills to create a fairer and more just society in a globalised world gains more urgency in these unsettled and unsettling times.
2. Covid-19 with lockdowns, increased on-line learning, the digital divide and a definite growing global awareness of the importance of quality education are trends that must be addressed in this ESD strategy.
3. Black Lives Matter, anti-racism action and education, the potential growth of the Alt-Right (e.g. Grafton St. disturbances in Dublin Feb. 2021), the shame of Direct Provision and the Digital Divide during Covid-19 are examples of a changing landscape in recent years.
4. The Rise of Misinformation: Globally and more recently nationally, we have seen the effects of the spread of misinformation. At times, this has been used to marginalise certain groups of society and at other times it has been used to discredit positive environmental movements. It is vital that children are empowered from an early age with critical thinking skills. Children need to be able to question, evaluate and to distil the information the information they are receiving to reach their own conclusions and not be misled by alternative false narratives that may be presented by some to further their own agendas.
5. Climate Change and Just Transition are undoubtedly the most important issues that challenge the survival of humanity. The youth of the world are, in many cases, leading the calls for action. It behoves us to listen to their call.
6. Technology and social media, with 5 billion plus internet users worldwide today, has facilitated increased connectedness and global awareness of justice, equality and sustainability issues in every village around our planet.

For these reasons we in Global Citizenship School suggest again that the terms; “for all” and “leave no-one behind” and “commitment to a common humanity” need to be addendums to all key principles, recommendations and priority actions in the National Strategy on E.S.D. Action must be taken to implement the new ESD Strategy as fully as possible by the Department of Education, the Government and citizens of Ireland. Poverty, inequality, and conflict resolution(~~s)~~ for all are inextricable elements of the sustainability of humanity on planet earth and as John Hume is quoted as saying: “The basis for peace and stability in any society, has to be the fullest respect for the Human Rights of all its people. Difference is the essence of humanity. The answer to difference is to respect it. All conflict is about difference; whether the difference is ethnicity, religion or nationality. Difference is an accident of birth and it should therefore never be the source of hatred or conflict.”

Pandemics, food and water shortages, mass migrations, armaments escalations and energy supply issues are current and escalating potential areas of conflict worldwide. Our new ESD Strategy 2030 can be a beacon of hope for the world if we in Ireland, with our history of oppression and famine, our diaspora and our place on the U.N. Security Council are utilised to help us lead the world into a sustainable future for all, with no-one left behind based on a real commitment to a common humanity.

Possible extra PRIORITY AREA No.6: Culture

Put simply, one can bring a horse to water but one can’t make the horse drink. Cultural changes in attitudes, values and behaviours will make ESD 2030 succeed or fail. The ESD 2030 Strategy challenges the ideas, customs and social behaviour of people as they develop progressively and the following suggestions may help:

* Anti-racism strategies need to be considered and implemented across all parts of Irish society and not merely left to schools to implement. The basic principles of a common humanity must be promoted as core to an effective ESD Strategy.
* Care and understanding of the language used in all facets of life in Ireland must be undertake. Words such as “influx of immigrants or asylum seekers” come loaded with negative meaning/connotations. All places and communities require balanced reporting as distinct from shaming.
* All religions, belief systems and non-religious belief systems must be equally respected especially in terms of curricular change at primary school level.
* Simplistic ‘one-message’ pictures that covers the rich history of many different countries need to be avoided, e.g. Africa is not one poor country.

Submitted on behalf of the steering committee of Global Citizenship School.

[www.globalcitizenshipschool.ie](http://www.globalcitizenshipschool.ie)