

# Higher Education and NGO Collaboration in Teacher Education

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CiCe  
Guidelines  
on the  
Design of  
Higher  
Education  
Courses

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This Guide has been written and prepared by a CiCe Network Working Group

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Collaboration in Teacher Education:**  
*Course Design and Implementation*

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## 1. Introduction

This booklet is written by the members of the CiCe 4, Strand 5 Working Group: Society, Diversity and Citizenship. The work focuses on developing links between higher education institutions and those NGOs that are concerned with social understanding, tolerance and respect for human rights, in developing the citizenship education/developing identities curriculum in higher education.

The main focus of this booklet is to look at how NGOs and those working in teacher education courses in HEI can collaborate more effectively in the areas of course design and implementation. It is intended that this will be material that university teachers can use with students. Students need support in creating inclusive education strategies that cover situations where there are new minority students in the school, and equally, when they are represented in wider society but not found in the school.

In our previous booklet, *Developing the Curriculum with NGOs* (Kalioniemi et al, 2009), we analyzed the goals in citizenship education that Higher Educational Institutions and NGOs could share. This current booklet looks at potential partnerships between NGOs and HEIs that offer courses in teacher education. The main question concerned the cooperation between NGOs and HEIs in presenting ideas and developing student teachers' competences in teaching Citizenship Education at a professional level of education. In the process of qualitative analysis we chose a number of non-governmental organizations, whose activities could be said to concern themes related to Citizenship Education and on the basis of their activity we observed the potential to cooperate with them at the level of teacher education. The NGOs differ from each other, as different situations prevail in different countries in terms of social needs and other factors. The case studies were done in Ireland, Finland, Lithuania and Poland. These countries joined the European Union at different times and at different stages and levels of democratic development, therefore the situation in each country is different with regards to cooperation between NGOs and HEI systems.

## 2. Background to the research

The context of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) is rapidly changing. Globalisation, integration, environmental questions and increasing multiculturalism have presented several challenges to Higher Education Institutions. Higher Education Institutions in European societies have traditionally been nationally focused institutions but in recent years developments such as the Bologna process and other initiatives have opened up many possibilities for cooperation and collaboration between HEIs throughout Europe. Western societies have also rapidly changed. Immigrants, refugees and questions about wellbeing and social security are nowadays the focus of discussions and debate in many European countries.

The rising numbers of immigrants and refugees has raised questions about identity and how to integrate people from different, diverse backgrounds into long-established societies. European societies have developed different kinds of immigration policies to respond to these phenomena and HEIs play a role in this process. Higher Education Institutions are key organisations in societies and are responsible for, amongst other important activities, the task of educating tomorrow's teachers. One of the key subject areas in Teacher Education programmes, whose content and approaches both reflects and attempts to influence society, is Citizenship Education. Citizenship Education is concerned with, amongst other things, the development of students' awareness of, and the facilitation and encouragement of, their active engagement with civil society. It does this through its content matter and through its pedagogical processes.

In recent years Active Citizenship and participation in society have been to the fore in debates in European societies. The number of people who vote and participate in activities in society is decreasing all the time. Many politicians are surprised as to the reasons why young people are so passive in this respect. Schools have an important role in increasing awareness of matters in society and HEIs in turn have a very important role in educating teachers for future generations.

### 3. The relationship between NGOs and Citizenship Education

NGOs are also important actors in civil society and their rational and activities can often mirror the concerns of HEIs in the area of teacher education particularly in the field of Citizenship Education. Around Europe there are many different kinds of NGOs. The World Bank defines NGOs as 'private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development (World Bank, 1989). The basic idea of NGOs is that they operate independently of any government and usually have no governmental status. NGOs can be characterized by their basic orientation and level of co-operation: charitable orientation, service orientation, participatory orientation and empowering orientation. In different countries the role of NGOs can vary. NGOs have both national and international tasks and significance. Their national role is different according to local cultural, historical and economic situations. In Northern European countries the role of NGOs differs to that in Southern Europe (Harju, 2006). In recent years NGOs have enjoyed greater influence at a global level and they have raised questions about pollution, human rights, common social responsibility and the problems encountered by developing countries. NGOs vary in their methods and approaches. Some act primarily as lobbyists, while others mainly conduct programs and activities. NGOs usually organize sophisticated public relations campaigns and usually mobilize public support and voluntary contributions.

There are many different kinds of NGOs. Operational NGOs usually attempt to make small kinds of changes directly through different projects. Campaigning NGOs try to organise large-scale change promoted indirectly through trying to influence the political system. Some NGOs also make use of both operational and campaigning activities. The role and influence of NGOs have increased in recent times and it is important in this context that this does not go unnoticed by HEIs because in some cases it can be claimed that the work engaged in by NGOs, for example, attempting to increase citizens' activity and participation in society, supporting equality and supporting caring and responsibility, echoes the thematic concerns of Citizenship Education programmes which operate in HEIs and other education contexts. So how do we create a bridge between the work of NGOs and the work conducted in teacher education programmes and in particular, Citizenship Education courses?

We begin to answer that question by examining the role of one of the key stakeholders in this process, the teacher. It is important to consider this question, because, as will be seen, the roles, values and beliefs of teachers play a key part in all subject areas but particularly in Citizenship Education. In addition, the area of teacher values and approaches for those working in Citizenship Education courses was considered by the research team to be a crucial element in such courses and this theme will feature in the suggested course which is outlined further on in the text.

#### 4. Citizenship Education and teacher educators

In 2007 the EU commission published 'Improving the Quality of Teacher Education', a report which describes how teacher education should improve and develop. The teaching profession is regarded, according to this report, as a well-qualified, life-long profession, which is based on co-operation. According to Ross (2003) 'teachers are a particular and special category: they are the one face of civil society that every child will meet, every working day, through the whole of their formal education'. Teachers are key agents in offering pupils a range of opportunities to develop their skills to participate more fully in society i.e. how to act, think about and behave in society. In addition, much literature has been devoted to the pivotal role played by teachers in the creation and perpetuation of culture within society or what some have described as the passing on of the wisdom of one generation to the next.

Ross (2000), for example, claims that 'the ways in which the curriculum may influence social reproduction may be contested, but the fact that it does have an influence on the nature of future society is no longer an issue'.

Spinthourakis and Papoulia-Tzelepi (2001) also suggest that the relationship between society and education systems is tightly knit and that 'few would argue with the premise that education is based on the knowledge, beliefs and the values of a society. Through formal and informal means, the education system promotes the learning of elements of its culture to develop productive members of society. The nature of the world in general..... challenges our schools in terms of the curriculum, instructional techniques and the training provided for educators'. Teachers are amongst the principal stakeholders in this relationship.

Ross (2000) argues that 'the transmission of culture cannot be considered purely as something that is defined in formal curriculum terms: it is not composed only of what is taught, and the way that it is taught...but is also crucially affected by who does the teaching'. In Ireland, the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), in a series of guidelines devised to assist teachers working in intercultural education contexts, suggest that 'education not only reflects society but is also an influence in shaping its development. As such, schools are one of the institutions that have a role to play in the development of an intercultural society' (NCCA, 2005).

Ross (2003, p4) speaks of teachers as being 'super-cultural transmitters' and suggests that 'education has a particular role to play in the maintenance of culture' (ibid) and he claims that this process is fluid and mutable because 'what we are doing is not neutral. Nor is it static: our societies are changing, and we are in the thick of the debate about what should be conserved and what should be different about tomorrow's society' (ibid). He maintains that the formal



curriculum is not the only medium for the transmission of these cultural norms and that the "hidden curriculum" is also an agent in this; if teachers are important in these realms then the values that inform their activities and practices are also worthy of mention. It is particularly important in the area of Citizenship Education that teachers values are considered, examined and reflected upon.

So it can be argued that schools and their principal agents, teachers, have a key role in influencing and reflecting the ways by which learners become active and engaged citizens and that they do this through particular programmes of instruction, by utilising particular forms of interaction and by drawing on their own values and beliefs. We now turn to examine the role of NGOs in the partner countries and how cooperation might best be fostered between their work and the work of those HEIs running teacher education courses.

## 5. Country Case studies

Finland can perhaps be regarded as a relatively long established democratic society, where democratic procedures as well as awareness within the society about the needs and importance of democracy are high. The non-governmental sector has a long tradition in Finland. Ireland has a shorter experience of such processes but has enjoyed nearly a century of democracy. It too has faced great social changes over the last twenty years and went from being a country of emigration to a country of immigration. This trend has reversed somewhat in recent times due to the economic crisis affecting the country but official data will not be available from this years (2011) population Census until after this booklet is published.

We also look at two so-called “young democracies” for our research, Poland and Lithuania. Both of these countries have had an experience of communism and the idea of democratic values in the society is rather young. Through these case studies, we looked at the possibility of integrating the experience and expertise of NGOs into the system of teacher education.

We chose NGOs, which were most relevant to each of the countries or regions of countries, with the presumption that they were aware of the social needs in the field of citizenship education in their country. From Lithuania there were two NGOs: Lithuanian College of Democracy and the NGO confederation. The Lithuanian College of Democracy (LDUK), founded in 1997, is a voluntary non-governmental organization seeking to promote the ideas of democracy in society. The College organizes seminars, develops projects and programs for the promotion of democracy, civic education and development to carry out the program of public education, public debates, publication of material, and promotion of research. Its main activities are:

- Initiation and development of Citizenship education curriculum, teaching and learning materials
- Development of civic leadership training projects for teachers, class teachers, social educators, child welfare professionals and non-governmental organizations as well as the use of interactive methodologies
- Integration of the project “Citizen” into university civic education programs, network collaboration fostering of children and youth, education of capacity building to solve problems
- Active participation in the protection and implementation of children’s rights and ensuring the participation of children, drawing government attention to child and youth issues
- Development of national and international conferences on civic education of democracy issue.

The second NGO chosen for analysis was the Confederation for Children. It was established in 2005 and currently connects more than 70 national organizations working with children and for children. It also represents Lithuania in the international NGO/UNICEF network. The Confederation monitors and collects information on the State's role in children's programs and children's rights protection and prepares a UN report on children's rights implementation of the Convention as an alternative public authorities report. Over the years, the Confederation has not only joined the strongest NGO organizations, but has also become active in both national and regional levels, formed its own implementation strategy and began negotiations on joint activities with key ministries and measures affecting child policy and regional policy representative bodies. The NGO encourages the state's participation in national and EU Structural Funds programs, which helps not only to progress the various educational activities, but also develops and provides social services, long-term investment in the installation centers and social development facilities.

From Finland the NGOs were the Finnish 4<sup>th</sup> Federation and the Mannerheim League. The Mannerheim League is the largest child welfare organization in Finland. It has 92,000 members and 564 local associations throughout the country. The work of these local associations is supported by the League's 13 district organizations. The Mannerheim League cooperates with child welfare organizations in Estonia and Russian Karelia to enhance the wellbeing of children there. In some countries in Africa, the League has contributed to the development of basic health care in rural areas, with the emphasis on promoting the health of mothers and children. The second organization from Finland, and which is different from the Mannerheim League in its goals and ways of functioning, is the Finnish 4H Federation. This federation is a Finnish oriented NGO. 4H members belong to a local 4H club and in co-operation with adult leaders, young people are responsible for making all decisions regarding the club. Each club elects a board consisting of a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer and other officials. The clubs make a year-long plan on what they intend to do. The plan includes club meetings, courses, competitions, study tours, camps, exhibitions and other group activities. Quite often based in rural areas, 4H clubs are the only place for young people to meet each other outside of school and to work as a group. The 4H Federation covers practically the whole country.

For the Irish case we interviewed professional educators who currently have and have had in the past, experience of working in and with NGOs in Ireland, Europe and Africa. These professionals offered a unique insight into the possibilities for co-operation between NGOs and HEIs as they combined this NGO activity with their current work as course managers, designers and teachers on a BSc in Education and Training and brought to bear their expertise and experience from

both perspectives. This was very valuable when it came to the course design and content element phase of the research.

From Poland we chose two NGOs. The first is an all – Polish organization: the Civic Educational Association (Społeczne Towarzystwo Oświatowe, STO), which is the leader of Polish non-public education. Founded in 1987 it is the first organization to promote the idea of education which is independent of the state. STO boards have set up a network of schools renowned for their high level of education, unique atmosphere and close cooperation with pupils' parents. The main aims of STO are, briefly: pluralism of offers in the Polish education system, running schools which are creative in every respect and building a civil society. The second organization is the Podlachian Heritage Society. This is a regional organization which operates in the Podlachian Voivodeship area. The main goal of the organization is the development of Podlachia while also being involved in the protection of the cultural and natural resources of the region. Activities concerning the building of local communities as well as creating social activities for individuals are part of the work of the organization.

## 6. Course outline and content

As can be seen from the above, the mission, goals and processes of NGOs throughout Europe tend to differ. What they do share is a strong relationship to the field of Citizenship Education and ideas of Active Citizenship. As part of the research process we identified themes that we thought would allow us to develop the links between the work of NGOs and the content and processes of a Citizenship Education course in a HEI.

### **These themes were:**

Theory, understandings and official discourse with an emphasis on Multiculturalism and Interculturalism; Migration, its history and consequences; Civic participation; NGOs and civil society: NGOs as active agents in the creation of civil society/how NGOs can be used as a way of teaching about civil society

Strategies for dealing with diverse classrooms with a focus on the competencies and skills teachers need to teach citizenship education; Common situations that teachers will meet with in diverse classrooms and developing a meaningful, practical relationship between NGOs and HEIs

Education for participation in a diverse society which looks at teacher values: attitudes, behaviour and attitude; Strategies for teachers to develop and examine their self-reflection skills.

### **The next section of the booklet will look at how some of these themes were understood by the NGOs in the various national contexts.**

In Finland, Citizenship Education has been a part of the Finnish comprehensive school curriculum but as Finnish society has rapidly changed over recent years, new solutions in education have been called for. The question of diversity has become a focus of discussion in Finnish society. The Mannerheim League team has been very active in looking at what happens in Finnish society and what kinds of actions these changes are leading to. Research has shown that many young people are not interested in questions concerning society. Young people do not vote in elections as they get older. Questions about marginalization are also a big issue in Finnish society. 4H groups give young people an opportunity to feel a sense of responsibility for themselves and others. Young people can participate in many things and activities when they become volunteers in 4H groups.

In Lithuania, in the light of recent global changes, NGOs have stressed the need for open modern and free civil society to retain its national and cultural identity. While trying to retain the maturity of society and ensure rapid economical development it is important to be able to effectively manage intercultural communication and identify barriers and problems in advance. Accordingly, the obligatory National Core-Curriculum Citizenship Education is seen as an integral part of Social

education. The main goal of Civic education is to ensure that students acquire knowledge and skills and become proficient in actively and responsibly participating in the Lithuanian state and civil society.

In the case of Poland, the STO Association stresses the need to create open attitudes in their schools. Regarding multiculturalism and interculturalism, they reported that even though an upbringing in the civic and patriotic spirit calls for a focus on the Homeland, in their opinion, in STO schools, they do not forget about the multiplicity of the world's cultures. By gradually learning about them, pupils get to know how complex the world is and how much knowledge and tolerance is needed to understand the contemporary world. The most common form of becoming acquainted with the particularities of other countries is through the days of their cultures, e.g. Scottish Day, New Zealand Week, days of German or Japanese culture, days of the Anglo-Saxon countries, London Day or competitions, drama and literature festivals in English. Some schools organize youth group visits, e.g. from Ukraine and Lithuania. The STO actively participates in the education programme Socrates and its components, such as Comenius, Lingua and Arion. It also participates in the Europe-wide YOUTH programme (which includes promoting voluntary work), in the programme of the Polish and German Foundation for the Youth (mainly through exchanges of groups during holidays) and in the European Studies programme, supported by Ireland (educational projects implemented in cooperation with European schools). The second NGO from Poland understood multiculturalism and interculturalism differently. To begin with, it is a regional NGO that works in a historically, culturally diverse region and, because the region is trans-cultural, in their projects they stress the need to recognize and practice the tradition of minority cultural groups in the school system as well as in the local social life. Educational projects which they have led have been carried out with schools in the region and all of them spoke about mutually understanding traditions of the different cultural groups of the region.

Within the processes of Europeanization, European countries have to deal with cultural diversity and migration processes. Different approaches are employed to face the challenges and opportunities presented by these processes. On the one hand, migration can be seen in a negative way, e.g. the influx of (unskilled) workers and cultural changes are understood as a threat to nation states and the (European) society; on the other hand the same processes are seen in a more positive way, i.e. as cultural and demographic opportunities.

In the Finnish case, civic issues are discussed within all school subjects but they are most closely tied to history, social studies, geography, religion, philosophy, home economics and health education. Although there are many NGOs, their role is not significant in these areas. In Finland, the idea of civil education is organised in the schools. There has been a programme in the Finnish

Parliament to increase the readiness of citizenship in Finland and in schools there is a special subject called 'Knowledge of society'.

It seems that a similar situation obtains in Lithuania. In schools, projects are mainly focused on developing participatory skills. Students are encouraged to take an active part in school life and in local community actions. The main difference seems to be found in the role of NGOs in this process. In Lithuania and in Poland the process of introducing active citizenship is done mostly by NGOs. Civic participation in the Polish case is tied very closely to the political life of the country. The understanding of civic participation through the active participation in local community is the main role of NGOs in Poland.

In Finland, teachers acquire competence in teacher education which is at Masters level. There are special programs for multicultural education. The teacher competence in special education is not very good in Finland. There is a lack of teachers who are specialized in special education of immigrants and refugees pupils. Usually immigrant children have their own classes for two years. After these classes they are put in with other classes. The idea is to give develop their understanding of the Finnish language to the level where they can study in normal classes. There are also different kinds of preliminary education.

The first stage in seeking and establishing suitable practices would appear to be the definition of local and/or regional needs. The activities of co-operation networks and the consultation of all stakeholders are essential here. Projects that have been successful in co-ordination would seem to be characterised by an efficient and dialogic transfer of information on the needs "in the field" (young people, employees) in municipal decision-making. Questionnaires, surveys of living conditions and various co-operations forums (teams, discussions, seminars) have been useful in this. Many localities have started to systematically collect information on the situation of the transition from basic to upper secondary education (the number of dropouts, the available services, etc.) only in connection with the participation project. It seems that, after this systematic assessment, the demand for various concrete practices will increase and their practical application will become possible.

In Lithuania in a process of preparing teachers to deal with a diverse classroom, the stress is placed on increasing teachers' creativity and innovative abilities as well as perfecting professional competencies in order to promote internationality and mobility. Unfortunately, too little attention is allowed for professionals' motivation or concrete, successful methodologies and programme mastery. No agreement was reached on a common diploma in Europe, while the implementation of the mobility of studies in Lithuania was not even started. The social and global crisis has challenged politicians and society to empower schools and other education institutions to

forward the new requirements and has placed greater responsibility on them. The leader in developing teachers' creativity and innovation seems to be the Lithuanian College of Democracy. It has been organizing the 'Project Citizen' in Lithuania since 1997, which was later renamed 'Future Citizen' in 2007. The project methodology was developed together with Eastern and Central European countries and successfully implemented in more than 48 countries all over the world. In 2007 the Lithuanian College of Democracy successfully performed the project 'Education of Citizenship and Democratic Values Applying Innovative Methods'. The College organizes annual summer academies or camps for children and young people and runs social projects or initiatives each year. Project Citizen is a curricular program for middle, secondary, and post-secondary students, youth organizations, and adult groups that promotes competent and responsible participation in local and state government. The program helps participants learn how to monitor and influence public policy. In the process, they develop support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy. The Project Citizen program is administered with the assistance of a national network of state and congressional district coordinators in every state and is conducted with the assistance of the National Conference of State Legislatures.



## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The authors of this booklet would recommend the following directions towards meaningful and constructive cooperation between HEIs and NGOs in developing Citizenship Education:

- the involvement of representatives from NGO in the study of community at certain faculty. The responsibility of such a committee should be directed towards the development of curriculum and teaching strategies for Active Citizenship Education. Together they can make short and long-term plans on how best to work together in the field of education. For example, each institution or person could have certain roles and responsibilities for teaching students or serving communities.
- the appointment of university teaching staff onto the board of management of NGOs. Government could develop strategies for involving university teaching staff and students in their activities related to citizenship education. For example, students could be invited to be active supporters of different kinds of civic actions e.g. food bank, Green peace etc.
- to make it possible for students to have some kind of field work/placement at an NGO as part of a Citizenship Education programme. For example, to help an NGO to investigate the sociocultural needs of certain communities or to help to identify community problems and to devise projects to overcome these.
- the involvement of representatives from NGOs to visit classrooms and to help students to arrange conferences in which they can reflect on their 'field work' and the results of their research.
- the encouragement of HEIs and NGOs to strengthen their cooperation in order to solve not only everyday problems but to make much wider policy decisions/actions in the field of Citizenship Education or in education in general. For example, how to address and overcome bullying between adolescents or how to devise preventative programs for drug users.

Earlier in the text we referred to various themes that informed the discussions between the research team and the representatives of NGOs. We would also offer these themes as the basis of an introductory course on Citizenship Education which could be run in cooperation with and with contributions from, NGOs.

The course is laid out below:

### **1. Theory, understandings and official discourse in the following areas:**

- Multiculturalism and interculturalism
- Migration: history and consequences
- Civic participation

- NGOs and civil society: NGOs as active agents in the creation of civil society/how NGOs can be used as a way of teaching about civil society

## **2. Strategies for dealing with diverse classrooms:**

- Competencies and skills teachers need to teach citizenship education
- Common situations that teachers will meet with in diverse classrooms
- A relationship between NGOs and HEIs (where students will be placed with an NGO as part of their course-work and where NGOs deliver some elements of the course in the University)

## **3. Education for participation in a diverse society**

- Teacher values: attitudes, behaviour and disposition (attitude in action)
- Strategies for teachers to develop and examine their self-reflection skills

Analyses of best practises from Finland, Poland, Ireland and Lithuania shows constructive cooperation between Universities and NGOs in developing policies, strategies and curricula for Citizenship Education in a range of settings. In most cases, Higher Education Institutions are able to work with civil society, which is represented by the non-governmental sector. In some countries Citizenship Education is seen as an integral part of social education and in some others as a part of political education. Case studies show that one of the main goals of Citizenship Education is to create the possibilities for students to acquire knowledge and skills and to become proficient in actively and responsibly participating in civil society, which is based on democratic values and principles. Thus curricula for Citizenship Education should include community life and self-governance and different kinds of social activities.

One of the strengths offered by cooperation between HEI and NGO is the possibility to understand the world's development, cultural diversity, the rights of minorities and the desire to examine national identity in the context of cultural diversity.

Cooperation in Citizenship education protects and creates the identity of people and communicates the values that make human, public life meaningful.

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The Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe (CiCe) Academic Network links 28 European states and some 80 universities and college departments which are engaged in educating students about how children and young people learn about and understand their society, their identity and citizenship.

A cross-disciplinary group, we include lecturers in social psychology, pedagogy, psychology, sociology and curriculum studies, and those who educate various professions such as teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, early childhood workers and youth workers.

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