

A Comparative Study of the European Dimension in the Curriculum of English and Irish Compulsory Schooling.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the extent to which a European dimension has been integrated into the compulsory subjects of the primary and secondary school curriculum in England and in the Republic of Ireland. A thorough examination of the statutory obligations, suggestions and guidelines of all compulsory school subjects in both countries has been undertaken, in order to reveal similarities and differences between their approaches.

Comparisons between the two countries illustrate overall that Ireland has been more active than England in working towards inserting a European dimension into its school curricula. In particular, Ireland's recently revised primary curriculum (1999) contains many topics with a European dimension. Its post-primary curriculum, however, is outdated and in need of revision to bring topics more in line with the European Union's definition of the European dimension.

The European dimension was found to be a low priority in the National Curriculum for England. Whilst there is evidence of its incorporation into subjects such as history, geography and modern foreign languages, areas in which it is most likely to be found, the European dimension remains weak in other subjects and fails to appear in many.

Introduction

England and the Republic of Ireland have several things in common. Both countries joined the European Economic Community in 1973, and geographically, both are not connected to the mainland European continent. Residing at the periphery, it could be assumed that the citizens of both countries feel a sense of isolation or estrangement to the rest of Europe, yet attitudes towards Europe in England and Ireland are very different. The 'Eurobarometer' survey of July 2000 on people's opinion of their country's EU membership identified Ireland as one of the countries that had strongest support, whereas England was one of the countries displaying the lowest support for the EU (Phillips, forthcoming 2003). Furthermore, the traditional English school curriculum has always portrayed Europe in a negative light and has been referred to as 'Anglo-centric' and 'anti-European', whereas in Ireland, according to an attitudinal survey of teachers and school-leavers in 1988, 97% of teachers

wanted to include a European dimension in the second-level curriculum and two-thirds of school-leavers wished they could have learnt more about the European Community while at school (EURYDICE). Aside from the obvious difference in attitude towards Europe in the curriculum, it is clear that the European dimension has previously not been accounted for in either country's school curricula. As such, the aim of this article is to reveal the extent to which England's and Ireland's approach to the European dimension (particularly in terms of its incorporation into the school curriculum) has changed.

England's and Ireland's Responses to EU Policy on the European Dimension

During the 1980s, a series of EU level initiatives were launched aimed at strengthening the European dimension in education. Compulsory level schooling was given attention in the Commission's Resolution of 1988, which stated that Member States should 'include the European dimension explicitly in their school curricula in all appropriate disciplines'. The promotion of the European dimension became a formal provision in 1992, under the education article of the Treaty of Maastricht, and young people are now expected to learn about the history, geography, culture, common values, political developments and future concerns of Europe and the European Union countries. They should also learn about their rights and obligations as citizens of the European Union, so that they benefit personally and professionally within it in the future.

These EU level measures have meant that total evasion of a positive European element in school subjects can no longer continue. National governments have had to respond to EU pressures, and have done so in different ways. But how effective have the approaches of the English and Irish governments been? England's response to the Commission's 1988 Resolution on the European dimension came rather late. The DFE publication in 1991 entitled 'The European Dimension in Education: A statement of the UK Government's Policy and Report of Activities Undertaken to Implement the EC Resolution of 24 May 1988 on the European Dimension', stated that the European dimension would be incorporated into the subjects of the National Curriculum wherever appropriate. A year later in March, the DFE published a document entitled 'Policy Models', which identified the necessary factors for the successful implementation of the European dimension in the curriculum. It mentioned that the European dimension should be linked to the statutory obligations within the National Curriculum. Yet the European dimension was practically excluded from the 1995 revised National Curriculum (Morrell, 1996; Economou, 2001).

Further work undertaken by the DFE on the European dimension in education has included an 'Education Europe' pack for schools, published in 1992. This contained information and resources (of a rather limited nature) for encouraging the European dimension in certain curriculum subjects. The

DFE also responded to the Commission's 1993 Green Paper on the European Dimension in Education. It opposed certain EU proposals and more particularly 'argued for flexibility to be given to the Member States to identify their own priorities of reaction to the European dimension in Education and for the EU's role to be supportive' (Economou, 2001: 53). It appears, therefore, that the English government's attempts to integrate the European dimension into its compulsory education system have remained half-hearted and of limited effect.

Such criticism by academics, combined with further pressure for the need to integrate a European dimension during the 1998 UK government's Presidency of the European Union, was perhaps what prompted and led to the most recent revision of the curriculum (2000), which includes more of a European and international dimension. The term 'European dimension' was actually mentioned for the first time in the handbook for primary and secondary teachers, and the importance of developing a sense of (European) identity was acknowledged. There are also more statutory study requirements and options for teaching about Europe in certain subjects.

The Irish government, aware of the lack of a European dimension in school curricula, published a Green Paper in 1992, devoting its third chapter to 'Irish Education in the European Community' and referring to the European dimension throughout, including it amongst its aims. One such aim is to ensure 'that Ireland's young people acquire a keen awareness of their National and European heritage and identity', mirroring the first aim of the EC's 1988 resolution on the European dimension. The importance of the European dimension was given further attention in 1994 in the Report of the National Education Convention. Specifically, chapter fifteen states that 'it is a right of Irish citizens to understand the nature and workings of the European Union with a view to being informed citizens of Europe'. This indicates the fact that the Irish government considers it important to provide its citizens with knowledge about how Ireland is affected by the EU, and what it means to be a European citizen, which are key elements of the European dimension in education.

Furthermore, the 1995 White Paper – Charting Our Education Future – reiterates the Irish commitment to the European dimension in education at all levels. It sets out a statement of educational aims, one of which is exactly the same as the one mentioned above in the Green Paper. In addition, chapter two mentions introducing 'European Awareness Programmes' at the primary level. These would develop in students an appreciation and understanding of European life, art and culture, introduce them to European languages other than English and Irish, and foster links between Irish schools and schools in other EU countries, through, for example, the SOCRATES programme. Moreover, chapter seventeen, entitled 'Irish Education and the International Dimension', is particularly devoted to the importance of the European dimension and states that:

A European perspective enhances students' education. It cultivates respect for cultural, social and ethnic differences; it promotes enhanced mutual understanding; and it fosters a shared sense of common European heritage.

These initiatives indicate that the Irish government has taken the EU's policy on the European dimension of education seriously. By working towards its own interpretation of the concept, the Irish government has shown that it agrees with the EU on the importance and necessity of including a European dimension in the education of its citizens.

Of particular interest is the fact that these developments have had significant implications for the curricula of Irish schools. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), committed to the development of a European dimension at all levels of the curriculum, has recently considered and revised school subjects so that they take account of the concept. This is particularly evident in the programmes for the Junior Certificate Examination, which is taken by the majority of pupils at age 15 (the end of compulsory education). In 1997, the programmes for languages at Junior certificate level were revised, resulting in a common languages syllabus, and in 1998, the Civics syllabus was replaced with Civic, Social and Political Studies, one of the aims being to develop an awareness of European citizenship amongst pupils. The primary curriculum was also completely revised in 1999, the first major revision since 1971. Like the post-primary curriculum, it takes account of the rapid social, scientific and technological changes taking place and of Ireland's position in the EU and the wider world. 'The European and global dimensions' of primary education are specifically listed as a key issue in chapter three of the introductory booklet to the primary curriculum.

The European Dimension and the Curriculum

To the present day, politicians and academics alike have been unable to agree upon a concrete definition of the European dimension in terms of pedagogic objectives. However, having analysed certain EU documents related to the European dimension and looked at the work of academics and the steps taken by the English and Irish governments to incorporate a European dimension into the school curriculum, it can be summarised that a curriculum with an effective European dimension should enable pupils to:

- A. Learn at least one modern European language (preferably one of the working languages of the EU so that pupils have the choice to live and work in another Member State);
- B. Have an awareness of the cultural similarities and differences of European nations in a variety of spheres, e.g. customs, festivals, the arts, myths and stories etc;

- C. Learn about the history of Europe (e.g. political, economic, social, technological etc. change and continuity) with particular emphasis on post-war moves towards peace, co-operation, unity and growth so that pupils develop pro-European attitudes;
- D. Understand the geography of Europe and the EU (e.g. the physical, regional, environmental and human features of Europe and the Member Countries of the EU etc);
- E. Learn about the lives and achievements of significant and well-known European individuals in various fields (e.g. art, music, sport, science etc);
- F. Develop a sense of European identity through learning about their roles and responsibilities as active European citizens;
- G. Have an awareness of and respect for common European values, interests and concerns such as human rights, democracy, fundamental freedoms, tolerance, pluralism, environmental protection etc;
- H. Learn about the origins and establishment of the EU, its institutions and aims and the benefits and challenges of being a member;

This list is by no means exhaustive and is not arranged in any order of priority. Indeed, many of the points overlap and cannot be achieved in isolation of the others. For example, informing pupils *about* Europe is the prerequisite to developing pupils' positive perceptions of and attitudes towards Europe and to providing them with the personal, social and political skills and capacities needed for decision-making and for taking action in the Member State in which they live. Above all, the list demonstrates that the school curriculum should not only enable pupils to learn *about* Europe and the EU through a variety of disciplinary bases, but should also educate them about what it means *to be* Europeans and to live and work *within* Europe (cf. Ryba, 1992, Shennan, 1991: 21).

In Search of the European Dimension: A Comparison of the English and Irish Curriculum

Point A

Taking point A above, it is presently compulsory for pupils in English secondary schools to learn a modern foreign language. The curriculum specifies that all secondary schools must teach at least one official working language of the EU. Schools can also offer non-European languages and so each pupil has the choice to study *any* of the foreign languages offered by the school.

Up to now, the majority of pupils have learnt an EU language, since the tradition in most schools has been to offer French and/or German and/or Spanish. However, according to the recent Green Paper on extending opportunities and raising standards, the government is proposing to make languages optional at age 14. Certain politicians, and organisations such as the Languages National Training

Organisation and the British Academy, amongst others, have responded to this proposal with grave concern and alarm. In a document summarising the response of the British Academy to this reform, it was stated that ‘this will seriously damage foreign language learning and teaching in this country, and it will have a far-reaching impact on society and the economy’.

Despite the fact that this reform has not yet come into force, hundreds of schools have been breaking the law by dropping compulsory foreign languages (Henry & Slater, Henry & Shaw, 2002). Furthermore, provisional figures indicate that ‘this year there has been a fall of almost 9,000 in each of the two main foreign languages taught in this country: a drop of about 2.5 per cent in French and about 6.5 per cent in German’ (House of Lords meeting on Language Teaching, 14/10/02). Although the government plans to offer primary pupils an ‘entitlement’ to learn a language, (presumably in the hope that those children who do take languages from a young age will be encouraged to pursue languages to secondary level), this has been condemned as a ‘half-hearted fudge’ to deflect criticism from the post-14 proposal (Henry and Shaw, 2002).

In Ireland, it is not obligatory for pupils to study a foreign language since they are required to study both English and Irish at school. However, many primary schools do offer language tuition and there are language pilot projects and schemes such as the ‘European Awareness Programme’, which introduces pupils to European languages other than English and Irish. Furthermore, it is interesting that even though in Ireland it is not compulsory to study a foreign language, more Irish than British schoolchildren take languages to school-leaving level. In proportion to both countries respective populations, 10 times as many pupils take school-leaving examinations at the age of 17 in German, and 20 times as many in French (Lords Hansard text of 26 June 2002, column 1418).

Point B

The importance of enabling pupils to appreciate and understand different cultures is part of the ethos of the National Curriculum for England seen both through its aims and through the different subjects. However, there is no specific emphasis on learning about *European* cultures – the focus is more general and encourages more of an *international* dimension. The subject that allows for a more European focus is art and design, though pupils only have to learn about aspects of European art at key stage 3 (pupils aged 11-14).

In Ireland, the primary curriculum in particular provides various opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural similarities and differences in Europe. Through geography, for example, pupils should become aware of different peoples in Europe and their songs, customs, festivals, etc. This is also the case in Social Political and Health Education (SPHE), which states that children should develop an awareness of the lives, cultures and lifestyles of some people in the EU and learn about them through

sport and music. There are also other possibilities in history, arts subjects and English, though there are not many compulsory requirements (they are mostly suggestions). In history, for example, children have the opportunity to learn about their common cultural roots and heritage by studying the life and customs of an ancient civilisation, though it is explicitly specified that pupils need not necessarily be taught about an ancient *European* civilisation. Children also learn about developments during the European Renaissance and the Reformation, though again it is specified that learning about the *consequences* of the Reformation do not have to be confined to Europe. Art, craft and design is also a subject in which children might learn about cultural similarities and differences in terms of movements and people who have influenced art e.g. Renaissance painting, the dada movement and art from different countries. In English, there is a section in the ‘Teacher Guidelines’ entitled ‘English and the European dimension’, which proposes that pupils learn about the meanings and origins of words, phrases and expressions so that they gain an awareness of the extent to which the English language has been influenced by Greek, Latin, Scandinavian and other European languages. This should extend their knowledge of certain influences from Europe, since both culture and history are reflected in the origins of words and the course of their development. At the secondary level, there are far fewer opportunities to learn about aspects of culture in Europe, with only a few requirements in history and the art, craft and design syllabuses.

Point C

The general objectives of the history curriculum in England and Ireland are similar in that both suggest that pupils should learn about different cultures in Europe and how they have changed over time, and they emphasise that elements of *European* history should be taught. There are, however, major differences in terms of the range of options and requirements on European history, outlined in the history syllabus of both countries. At the primary level, for example, despite no particular focus on European co-operation since 1945 in both countries’ history curriculum, Ireland’s history syllabus provides pupils aged 9-12 with the opportunity to learn a wide range of aspects of European history, providing them especially with a variety of choices for learning about early European peoples and civilisations (e.g. Greeks, Romans, Celts, Vikings etc.) and for understanding about life, politics, society, change and conflict during different periods in Europe’s history (e.g. the Reformation, Renaissance etc.). In England’s primary schools, however, there are no particular provisions for teaching any history topics related to Europe. The choice to include a European dimension to the teaching of history rests with the teacher.

At the post-primary level, Ireland devotes a substantial part of its subject content to topics concerned specifically with *European* history. Pupils learn about explorations and voyages during the period 1400 to 1750 that led to changes in the way Europeans viewed the world. They have the opportunity

to learn about explorations from countries such Portugal, Spain, England, France and the Netherlands and can therefore come to understand the contributions that different European countries have made to universal knowledge. Pupils also learn about the Renaissance and study the life and work of certain Renaissance figures in different European countries. They must also be taught about ‘the conditions in Europe from the late 15th century to the mid 17th century which led to the Reformation in the Christian church in Europe’. Where aspects of *Irish* history are taught, it appears that the European context is normally acknowledged (for example in the study of mediaeval buildings in Ireland, their European origins are made known).

Furthermore, of significant importance to the inclusion of a *truly* European dimension is the fact that the section in the curriculum on modern history does not focus purely on European wars and includes the study of European moves to peace. Topics to be studied in modern history include ‘Peace and war in Europe 1920-1945’, which, it is suggested, should be studied under three headings, the first being ‘The rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany 1920-33’, the second being ‘The Drift to War in Europe 1933-39’ and the third being ‘World War II (In Europe) 1939-1945’. Pupils must also study the topic ‘Moves towards European Unity 1945-present’. For this topic, the guidelines state that students should have an understanding of the Treaty of Rome, the growth of the European Union and the Maastricht Treaty. The study should include the economic and political background to the desire for European unity and the extent to which the aims of European unity have been achieved (History Teacher Guidelines, 1999: 20). Pupils are therefore able to understand the horrors of the past and how they have been recognised as a terrible and embarrassing part of European history, and learn that since 1945 there have been many attempts to unify Europe so that it can be a place of peace and security. It can be concluded, therefore, that the European dimension is adequately incorporated into Ireland’s secondary level history programme since it includes topics that actually enable its pupils to achieve many of the points presented in the list above.

In England, however, the majority of the subject content is devoted to British history, and although this takes account of the European context (i.e. how individuals and events in Europe have affected Britain), the inclusion of topics specifically concerned with European history is limited, at key stage 2, to a single unit on Ancient Greece, and at key stage 3 to pre-1914 European history (especially conflicts and revolutions). Pupils also learn about the two world wars (in their study of *world* history), but learning about the development of the European Union, although suggested as a topic that could be taught, is not compulsory. There is therefore no guarantee that all pupils in English secondary schools will learn about post-war European moves towards unity and peace.

Point D

In both England and Ireland, part of the geography curriculum is devoted to enabling pupils to learn some aspects of the geography of Europe and the EU. In England, the primary curriculum focuses more on geography 'at home', though at key stage 2 (ages 7-11) there are suggestions on places and environments in Europe and the EU that might be studied. There is also a requirement for pupils, in their study of localities and themes, to 'study a range of places and environments in different parts of the world, including the United Kingdom and the European Union' (DfEE booklet for geography, 1999). Thus geography teachers are legally required to bring the EU into classroom instruction, yet it remains up to the individual teacher to decide the extent to which aspects of Europe and the EU will be focused upon. There is at least the opportunity for the more 'euro-enthusiastic' teacher to choose a variety of topics related to Europe, but the more euro-sceptic teacher might limit the study of Europe as far as is legally possible.

At the secondary level, it is compulsory for pupils to learn about countries, places, environments and people in Europe and the European Union. Lists of suggestions and examples on what might be taught provide teachers with considerable assistance and guidance when planning what aspects of European geography they will focus on. The curriculum also suggests that pupils should develop their understanding of global citizenship, which includes awareness of what it means to be a citizen in the local community and of the United Kingdom, Europe and the wider world.

The geography curriculum in Ireland dedicates a larger part of its content to the study of European geography than does the curriculum in England and is more detailed and prescriptive with regard to the physical and socio-cultural aspects of European geography that should be learnt. Moreover, pupils are expected to start learning European geography from a much younger age than their English counterparts, i.e. at the primary level. It is specifically mentioned in the primary curriculum that pupils should learn the names, locations and well-known features of the capital cities in the EU and the natural features of Europe. In addition, there is a unit of the curriculum entitled 'People and other lands' which requires children to learn about some aspects of the environments and lives of people in one location in Europe and mentions that they should begin to develop a sense of belonging to the European community. It is also stated that pupils should have an awareness and respect for different peoples in Europe including different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, cultures and societies.

At the post-primary level, the syllabus content lacks requirements and suggestions for studying topics related to Europe and the EU. This is partly because the curriculum designers, believing that teachers are the best judges of their students, wanted to allow them the flexibility to design their own courses. The syllabus therefore avoids any detailed description of 'content to be covered', presenting instead a set of key concepts for teachers to explore in their classrooms to the degree that they feel is most appropriate. Thus it appears that the lack of a European dimension in the curriculum content does not

necessarily mean that it will not be incorporated into geography teaching in practice. Teachers who are aware of its ever-increasing importance, are likely to bring it in whenever pertinent.

Point E

In England, pupils have the opportunity to learn about the achievements of artists in different periods in Western Europe through the art and design syllabus, Pythagoras's theorem in mathematics and Darwin's theory of evolution in science. However, in other subjects such as music and physical education, there is very little opportunity to learn about famous European contributors to these fields. The greatest prospects lie within history, through which pupils learn about the lives of important historic figures from different periods and cultures (e.g. Romans and Vikings). However, there is the tendency that the achievements of English individuals (e.g. the role of Nelson and Wellington during the Napoleonic wars) are emphasised over other significant European leaders such as Joan of Arc. Furthermore, many of the European characters that pupils learn about are associated with wars and conflicts, especially with Britain (e.g. Hitler), which only rouse pupils' negative feelings and perceptions of Europeans. Although learning about such individuals is a necessary part of understanding Europe's chronological past and therefore contributes to raising pupils' awareness of Europe, the fact that this does not promote positive attitudes towards fellow Europeans should not be seen as giving an effective European dimension to the history syllabus. To achieve a truly European dimension, the history syllabus should perhaps include learning about the 'founding fathers' of the European Union such as Jean Monnet and others who have worked towards achieving unity and peace in Europe before and after the two world wars.

It is also underlined in Ireland that through history, pupils should learn about important historic figures who have shaped society in Ireland and Europe. An interesting difference, however, is the emphasis, at the primary level, on the achievements and lives of Europeans from early civilisations such as the Celts, Vikings, Greeks and Romans. In addition, teachers have the option to choose the topic 'explorers and colonisers from Europe' in the later years of primary school. At the post-primary level, pupils are required to study the lives and work of certain European Renaissance figures. A major difference between the English and Irish history curriculum is that the latter includes the study of moves towards European Unity after 1945, and so it is quite likely that pupils will find out about the important people who made these moves possible.

Additionally, it appears that pupils in Ireland also have significantly more opportunity to learn about European musicians, artists and designers of all kinds. Although there are not many specific requirements to learn about such people, there are many more suggestions in the Irish arts curriculum for learning about them (particularly in the Teacher Guidelines) than there are in the English

curriculum. At the primary level, for example, the suggestions for the Visual Arts part of the syllabus include looking at paintings from Matisse, the Impressionists, Cézanne, Picasso, Van Gogh, and Michelangelo, considering the works of designers such as Jean Paul Gaultier, and seeing how fabric and fashion have been depicted in the works of artists such as Vélazquez. However, the extent to which this is implemented in reality, is not known, and empirical research would be required to investigate this.

Another noticeable difference in the mathematics syllabus of the two countries includes the suggestions in the teacher guidelines in Ireland on teaching about the discoveries and theories of well-known mathematicians. This is not a part of the curriculum in England.

Point F

The importance of developing a sense of European identity and learning how to be a 'good' European citizen is mentioned in various curriculum statements and in certain curriculum subjects in both countries. In England, the new subject of 'citizenship', introduced in schools at the beginning of the academic year 2002-2003 at key stages 3 and 4 only, intends to focus specifically on making pupils aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens generally, and on enabling them to understand their own identities and have respect for others. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the European dimension of these concepts and issues will be focused on during the course. While it is likely to be emphasised a great deal more than in the past, it is quite possible that the principal focus will be on notions of citizenship and identity at the national level, with European and international level notions being secondary.

In Ireland, promoting a sense of European identity and citizenship features far more in the curriculum throughout a number of subjects, at both the primary and secondary level. In primary schools, through Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) (which comprises history, geography and science), pupils learn about their role as a member of the European community. In particular, the history curriculum mentions in its aims that pupils should be able to gain a sense of European identity and citizenship through studying the history and cultural inheritance of local and other communities. This is also emphasized in the 'Curriculum planning' section of the 'Teacher Guidelines', which states that:

[...] the history programme at all levels should [...] foster the child's sense of local, national and European identity. [...] elements of European history should awaken his/her interest in the wider European culture, while some knowledge of the story of European co-operation will make an important contribution to the child's awareness of his/her European heritage and sense of European citizenship.

The geography syllabus enables pupils to learn about the natural and human environment in Europe, both present and past, which, it is expected, will contribute to fostering their European identity and citizenship. The teacher guidelines further emphasise the importance of geography in fostering children's European identity and sense of European citizenship. They state that:

the study of elements of European geography should awaken his/her interest in the landscape, peoples and culture of the EU, while some knowledge of the story of European co-operation will make an important contribution to the child's awareness of his/her sense of European citizenship (Geography Teacher Guidelines, 1999: 29).

In addition, the subject of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) intends to enable pupils to be both responsible and active citizens and to gain an understanding of the concept of European identity. This continues at the post-primary level under the subject of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), which aims to help pupils understand the meaning of citizenship.

Point G

It is expected that the new citizenship subject in England will be partly concerned with teaching pupils about values both in their society and in other parts of the world, and so it is possible that pupils might learn about their common European values as a part of this. Other values such as tolerance and environmental protection are themes that appear across many subjects of the National Curriculum in a generally international context since these are global concerns.

In Ireland, at the primary level, pupils can learn about the beliefs and values of peoples and societies in the past that have shaped society in Ireland, Britain and the world today through the history syllabus. They also study the history and cultural inheritance of local and other communities in order to develop a sense of local, national, European and wider identities. The geography curriculum also specifies that pupils should begin to understand and have respect for peoples, cultures and societies in Europe. This involves learning about the lives of different peoples and communities and becoming aware of various ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in Europe. Pupils will therefore learn to understand and have respect for people in Europe with different values, interests and concerns, as well as those common values and beliefs that we all share as Europeans. The SPHE subject also focuses on themes such as understanding one's own cultural heritage and traditions and those of others, respect for human and cultural diversity, and prejudice and discrimination, which are not only European concerns, but are important topics worldwide. At the secondary level, the CSPE subject teaches about global values such as human rights, democracy and interdependence. There is also a more specific focus on Europe's common values, which are considered an important part of developing active citizens.

Point H

Learning about the political, historical, economic and social aspects of the EU as an ‘institution’ is likely to figure most prominently in the citizenship syllabus in England, since part of it is specifically concerned with teaching pupils about democratic institutions, and the role of the EU and its relations with the UK. There is also an opportunity for pupils to learn about the development of the EU in the history syllabus, as part of a ‘World study’ at key stage 3 (pupils aged 11-14). It is an optional topic, however, and so there is a large possibility that pupils in many schools will not have the chance to learn about this subject. In Ireland, these themes are included in the history syllabus at the post-primary level under the topic ‘Moves towards European Unity 1945-present’, which focuses particularly on the growth of the EU. Pupils can also learn about the EU through CSPE. Unit 4 entitled ‘Ireland and the World’ specifically mentions that pupils learn about Ireland’s membership of the EU, why the EU came about and the influences and responsibilities Ireland has by being a member.

Conclusion

Prior to the most recent curricula revisions in both England and Ireland, the school curriculum in both countries lacked specific mention of and inclusion of a European dimension. Even now, it seems as though the UK government does not consider the European dimension to be a high priority. Although the government has reacted to the EU’s policy on the European dimension by publishing certain documents aimed at encouraging its implementation in schools, not much has actually come of these. The educational resources provided for schools during the 90s were considered so useful that many head teachers have put them safely away to collect dust in some old filing cabinet (Economou, 2001).

The recently revised National Curriculum for England (2000), however, takes account of the European dimension practically for the first time, especially in the subjects of history, geography, modern foreign languages and perhaps citizenship. This further insertion of requirements and opportunities for pupils to learn about Europe, know how to live in Europe and understand what it means to be a citizen of the EU, is, indeed, a positive step towards a curriculum that truly accounts for the European dimension. However, there are still many subjects in which the European dimension fails to be included, particularly at the primary level.

The Irish government has taken positive steps towards embedding a European dimension in the curriculum. Indeed, large sections of its educational legislation (i.e. the White Paper) are devoted towards promoting it. At the primary level, in particular, the revisions of 1999 saw the inclusion of a European dimension in most of the compulsory subjects and emphasised its importance in statements

throughout the curriculum. Emphasis on the European dimension at the post-primary level is, however, considerably less evident, probably because the syllabuses were introduced in 1989 and have not since been revised.

It is evident that both countries have taken action to bring in the European dimension in school curricula. However, many subjects still entirely lack a European dimension, and where it is embodied, it has, in certain cases, been found to be weak and in need of development. What seems to be needed is firmer commitment, especially by England, towards embedding the European dimension in the curriculum. Perhaps future reviewers might consider its statutory inclusion into other subject areas at both the primary and secondary level, so that pupils have the chance to learn further about the various aspects of the Community they are a part of.

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