UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL EDUCATION IN A MODERN IRISH REPUBLIC

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally?

Educate Together
Ethical Education Conference

20-21 November 2015
Alexander Hotel, Fenian Street, Dublin 2
UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL EDUCATION IN A MODERN IRISH REPUBLIC

Cherishing all the children of the nation equally?

Agenda

Friday 20 November

5.30-6.30 Registration

6.30-8.00 Keynote Address
Cherishing All the Children of the Nation Equally?
A Historical Perspective
Prof. Diarmaid Ferriter
Professor of Modern Irish History, UCD

8.00 Conference Dinner

Saturday 21 November

9.00-9.30 Refreshments

9.30-11.00 Teachmeet
A Teachmeet gives pre-arranged teachers the opportunity to share ideas and resources in short, 5 minute presentations.
Facilitators:
Simon Lewis, Carlow ETNS
Rozz Lewis, Portlaoise ETNS

11.00-11.30 Break

11.30-1.00 Building a Publicly Responsive Education from the Ground Up: Ethical Challenges and Possibilities
Prof. Sharon Todd
Head of Education, Maynooth University

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.30 Selection of Workshops

1. Teaching Controversial Issues
Dr Mary Gannon
Independent educationalist

2. Enacting a Holistic Approach: Teaching About, Through and For Ethics
Dr Anne Marie Kavanagh
Lecturer in Ethical and Intercultural Education and Human Rights and Citizenship Education, St Patrick’s College

3. The Good Life of Teaching: Questioning the Narrative of Teaching as a Vocation
Dr Fintan McCutcheon
Principal of Balbriggan Educate Together NS

4. Ethical Education: Crossing the Curriculum and Cultivating Critical Thinking
Niamh McGuirk
Lecturer in Ethical and Intercultural Education in St. Patrick’s College

5. Pedagogies and Content for Teaching Philosophy in Irish Primary and Secondary Schools: An Exploration
Dr Philomena Donnelly
Director of the Graduate Diploma in Education (Ret), St Patrick’s College

6. Teaching about Equality and Human Rights in Schools
Deirdre Toomey

3.30-5.00 Selection of Workshops, as above

5.00-5.45 Panel Discussion
Does Ethical Education cherish all children equally?

5.45 Conference Ends
**Cherishing All the Children of the Nation Equally? A Historical Perspective**

This lecture will offer a broad overview of the status of children in Ireland over the last 100 years, looking at the gulf between rhetoric and reality, some of the political and societal debates around children, their rights and welfare, and some of the legislative milestones and initiatives relevant to the relationship between children and the state, as well as exploring the position of children within families, communities and the education system. It will also look at how this theme has been written about over the last century.
Sharon Todd is Professor of Education at Maynooth University. Her research is committed to pursuing social justice in, through and for education. Placing educational practice, policy and curriculum at the centre of her work, Prof Todd’s research is situated within the field of philosophy of education. Topics include the political and ethical aspects of education, interculturalism and diversity issues, and the importance of educational relationships for pedagogical practice.


Building a Publicly Responsive Education from the Ground Up: Ethical Challenges and Possibilities
A publicly responsive education primarily requires two things: 1. State support in terms of assuring both access and funding; and 2. Inclusive strategies for building an education system to which all people feel they belong and can contribute meaningfully. This presentation focuses primarily on the latter in order to suggest that a public education worthy of its name needs to grapple with diverse worldviews as well as with histories of marginalisation and exclusion. This paper will first critically explore common responses to these issues, both internationally and in Ireland (looking at themes of accommodation and tolerance), and will then suggest an alternative response based on an idea of facing difficult challenges through an ethical approach of living well with others. The presentation argues that public education is about enabling individuals and communities to enact their concerns, needs, and hopes for the future and embodies a commitment to developing and sustaining ethical relationships between diverse groups within society.

Mary Gannon is an independent educationalist, working in curriculum development, teacher education, educational research and evaluation. Her areas of work include equality, human rights, citizenship and interculturalism and she was a member of the writing team for Tackling Controversial issues in the Citizenship classroom.

Teaching Controversial Issues
Controversial issues can arise at any time in the classroom and in any area of the curriculum. This workshop will look at what makes issues controversial and how to create a classroom environment which allows them to be discussed safely and respectfully. It will introduce approaches, frameworks and methodologies which support safe discussion, and which promote critical thinking and the ability to view issues from different perspectives. The workshop will be hands on and practical and teachers will also receive a copy of the resource Tackling Controversial Issues in the Citizenship Classroom published by the CDETB Curriculum Development Unit.
Anne Marie Kavanagh lectures in Ethical and Intercultural Education and Human Rights and Citizenship Education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra. Before working in ITE, she taught a range of multi-grade classes in Rathgar National School, Dublin 6. She is secretary of the SPHE Network and a member of the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education and The Children’s Rights Alliance. Her research interests include ethical education, critical multicultural education, patronage and ethos, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB), democratic education, anti-racist education, human rights education, global citizenship education and Social, Personal and Health Education.

Enacting a Holistic Approach: Teaching About, Through and For Ethics
To realise its transformative potential, ethical education requires a holistic ethical approach which is reflected in all aspects of school life. The classroom environment is particularly important – a space where teachers can create experiences where students can learn about, through and for ethics. Effective ethical education requires teachers to critically engage with and reflect on curricular content and values (about ethics), teaching approaches (through ethics) and on whether they are empowering students to advocate for and take action to protect and promote ethical principles (for ethics). This workshop will provide opportunities for teachers to critically reflect on their current practice and how it can be supplemented and amended with regard to the aforementioned concepts. The workshop will be practical and active and will support teachers in developing a wide repertoire of ideas, strategies, activities and teaching methodologies which can be used with students in the classroom.

Fintan McCutcheon is Principal of Balbriggan Educate Together NS start-up school since 2005. Doctorate in Philosophy of Education specifically in the field of school leadership in the multicultural school setting. Primary teacher with over thirty years of experience in Dublin and London. Humanist. Educational Consultant with University of Plymouth, Hibernia College and Marino Institute of Education. Currently writing on an Aristotelian theoretical perspective on school leadership; including the material of this conference’s paper.

The Good Life of Teaching: Questioning the Narrative of Teaching as a Vocation
The majority of the debate around the over-dominance of denominational churches in the provision of Irish primary schooling focuses on issues of access, governance, Religious education and school ethos. In this paper, Dr Mc Cutcheon examines the legacy on the conceptualisation of teacher-identity. Specifically, he asks if the narrative of Religious-vocation attaching to popular and Irish understandings of both primary-teacher identity and ethical professional practice fits 21st century educators, generally, or those teaching outside the denominational sector, specifically.

Participants in this workshop will be facilitated, through presentation and discussion, in an interrogation of their own teacher-identity (or school-leader identity if applicable) to identify the degree, if any, to which their professional identity or ethics of professional practice is influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by a Religious-vocation legacy.
Niamh McGuirk lectures in Ethical and Intercultural Education in St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra. Previously, Niamh taught in Donabate Portrane Educate Together for ten years. Her experience includes working as Learn Together Co-coordinator, and as a workshop facilitator providing pre-service and in-service sessions for Educate Together. Niamh also spent a number of years lecturing on the Master in Education Studies (Intercultural Education) in Marino Institute of Education. She has co-authored a number of teaching resources on social justice. Niamh is currently completing a Doctorate in Education (SPD/DCU) and her research interests include racism and anti-racism, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, religion and education, school ethos, and citizenship.

Ethical Education: Crossing the Curriculum and Cultivating Critical Thinking
This workshop aims to explore how teachers can integrate ethical education into a number of curricular subjects. Socratic questioning is at the heart of critical thinking and this technique can be used to explore complex issues and ideas with children. The interactive session will present lesson ideas/activities that have an ethical dimension and will give teachers an opportunity to develop their skills in the Socratic questioning technique.

Philomena Donnelly is retired Director of the Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary Teaching) in St. Patrick’s College, Dublin City University. She worked as a teacher in primary schools before joining the staff of St. Patrick’s College in 1998. Philomena is a specialist in early childhood education and in philosophy with children. She is co-founder of the Ethics and Education course in St. Patrick’s College, the first of its kind in the country. Philomena introduced philosophy into Irish primary schools in 1989 and has been an advocate for such practice since. She has substantial experience in the area. Her Ph.D. thesis is entitled Young Children’s Philosophical Thinking and Ancient Proto-Philosophy: A Study. She has published both national and international on philosophy in primary school and on other aspects of education.

Pedagogies and Content for Teaching Philosophy in Irish Primary and Secondary Schools: An Exploration
The educational rationale for having philosophy as a curriculum subject in both primary and secondary schools will be presented in the introduction. The majority of the session will concentrate on the practice of facilitating philosophical dialogues and how to source content. Included will be: What is philosophy?; Introducing philosophy to a class; The role of the teacher- pedagogical approaches; The elements of philosophical discussion; Sources for topics and questions; Assessment; Philosophy at primary level/ samples of practice; Philosophy at Secondary level/ samples of practice; Questions, dilemmas and discussion. If time allows, the participants can partake in a philosophy session.
Deirdre Toomey is Development Officer with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. In the context of this role and her role with the former Equality Authority, Deirdre led a project to develop equality and human rights related teaching resources. Deirdre also led a project to provide professional development courses for second-level teachers and teacher educators to embed equality and human rights in the curriculum and in schools. Deirdre is a member of the Steering Committee for the Yellow Flag Programme, an intercultural programme for schools run by the Irish Traveller Movement. Deirdre engages with a broad range of statutory, education and community based organisations to promote equality and human rights, develop good practice within organisations and support policy development and social change. Prior to her current work Deirdre worked in the area of community development and managed two community based organisations.

Teaching about Equality and Human Rights in Schools
This workshop will demonstrate how using the framework of the 4 Dimensions of Equality – Equal Opportunities and Outcomes, Respect and Recognition, Participation, and Relationships - can support teaching about equality and human rights and strengthening inclusion in schools. The workshop will highlight approaches to guide discussion and action on equality and human rights in the classroom and in the school. The workshop will be interactive and teachers will get an opportunity to try out activities that can be used in the classroom.