Conference Report

14 February 2008

Lorne House, Holywood

Outcomes:

- To learn about the structure and remit of both Northern Ireland’s and the Republic of Ireland’s Youth Services.
- To discover how Environmental Education and Sustainable Development are embedded into the work of the Youth Service.
- What opportunities are available for our sector as Environmental Educators to support this work through our programmes.
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Lorne House, Venue of the Environmental Education Forum Youth Conference
Welcome and Introduction

The Environmental Education Forum’s Spring Conference was held on Thursday 14 February 2008 at Girl Guides HQ at Lorne House, Craigavad, Holywood.

Alyn Jones (Kilbroney Centre / Alliance Youth Works) chaired the day and explained that the purpose of the conference was threefold

- To learn about the structure and remit of both Northern Ireland’s and the Republic of Ireland’s Youth Services.
- To discover how Environmental Education and Sustaianable Development are embedded into the work of the Youth Service.
- What opportunities are available for our sector as Environmental Educators to support this work through our programmes.

Overview of the Youth Curriculum

Alyn Jones
Alliance Youth Works

Alyn opened the speaker proceedings at the conference by giving the delegates an overview of the Youth curriculum in Northern Ireland.

Some important dates in the development of the curriculum were:

1987  The Blue Book
1997  Youth Work: A Model ..
1999  Youth Service Policy Review
2003  Updated

Alyn informed the delegates that the word “curriculum” in Youth Work means a set of guidelines and values used by youth workers. The curriculum model is a framework like a skeleton which workers and young people can “flesh-out” with activities and programmes. This is different to the more structured formal curriculum education system.

Alyn also showed the below table which demonstrated the differences between the formal and non-formal education sectors.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Formal Education (School)</th>
<th>Informal Education (Youth Work)</th>
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<td>Compulsory up to the age of 16</td>
<td>Young people choose to take part, it is voluntary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adults (teachers and government) set the subjects young people study</td>
<td>It starts with young people’s interests and needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adults follow lesson plans designed by themselves and schools.</td>
<td>Young people work together with youth workers to shape the activities and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults do all of the teaching</td>
<td>Young people can deliver the youth work with youth workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults test young peoples learning</td>
<td>Young people can measure their own development and evaluate how the activities and programs went and make changes</td>
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</table>
The youth curriculum itself was developed by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) and filters down through the ELB’s to all groups in the Community. Any group can be affiliated to the ELB’s whether church or non church based and receive a small amount of funding for being so.

The above model was developed in a similar way to the Big Picture of the Revised Schools Curriculum to try to demonstrate in a visual way the thinking and core themes and values underpinning the whole work of the youth sector. At the heart of this model lies the **growth and development of the young person** as the main objective.

**Elements of Personal and Social Development**

- Experience enjoyment and achievement;
- Sample activities and develop interests;
- Build self-esteem and confidence;
- Develop meaningful relationships;
- Manage feelings and conflict;
- Develop communication and social skills;
- Clarify their personal attitudes, values and beliefs;
- Develop their own identity and sense of independence;
- Recognise, understand and respect difference;
- Address inequalities;
- Be involved in the community;
- Acquire life skills and enhance their employment prospects;
- Develop respect for others;
- Develop coping strategies
Programme areas are given much less emphasis
Recognises that programme areas change and needs, issues and current debate changes

Health Education
Information, Guidance and Counselling
Creative Arts
Outdoor Education
Sport and Recreation
Widening Horizons
Community Involvement
Good Relations
Political Awareness and Active Citizenship
Development Education
Environmental Awareness
Information Technology

Applications

Programme Area- Environmental Awareness
Understanding the world around us- how we connect with it.
- societal level
- global level (impact and ethical living)

Projects which encourage responsible/ ethical living.
Projects which encourage participation in small group activity with national consequences.

Summary

1. Voluntary engagement
2. Programmes and projects are vehicle for development.
3. Relationship is foundational
4. CDU is there as a resource
Guiding our Youth to a better Environment

Nikki Strain
Girlguiding Ulster

Nikki Strain from Girlguiding Ulster then gave a very useful and well received presentation on the structure of the guides and their programme in Northern Ireland.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

‘Girlguiding UK enables girls and young women to develop their potential and to make a difference to the world’. Girlguiding is world-wide movement and has almost half a million young members in the UK alone. There are 12,000 members in N. Ireland with almost 2000 volunteer leaders. There are four main sections between 4-25 yrs old.

Rainbows

The rainbows are for 4-7 year old girls and their programme is called LOOK, LEARN, LAUGH AND LOVE. It is based around their local communities and environments.

Brownies

The brownies are for 7-10 year old girls. The Brownie Adventures have three programme areas – You, Community and World. Environmental initiatives e.g. SITA UK - 'Verm, the compost Worm' through quizzes, games, activities and craft ideas to encourage understanding of sustainable living.

The girls are also challenged to:

• Organise an RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in their garden or local park. Invite other Brownies, friends or family to join in. Make a record of the birds that visit during one hour.
• Learn how to help care for wildlife in their area
• For a week try three different ways to use less water and energy at home.
• Find out about their local recycling facilities. Make a poster showing what can be recycled and where the collection points are for three different materials.

Guides

The guide section is for 10-14 year old girls. There are five Programme Zone areas:

• Healthy lifestyles
• Global Awareness
• Skills and relationships
• Celebrating diversity
• Discovery
Other guide environmental activities include:

1. Local Scale – projects such as bulb planting, cleaning the local river, or providing bird or bat boxes e.g. Woodland Trust.
2. UK initiatives, e.g. Woodland Trust partnership
4. WAGGGS – theme for 2008 ‘think about water’, on importance to health, the issues to access clean water and water conservation

**Senior Section**

The senior section is for 15-25 year olds or and is based on a Programme of service to the Community, the programme is called ‘Look Wider’.

In addition to the above programmes all units can take part in a variety of UK based initiatives such as:

- GLK Africa Challenge 2008
- Right Now! – 2006-2009 – activities for all sections on global rights and responsibilities
- I reduced my carbon footprint – 2008/2009
- Change the World – community action project
- Across the world e.g. Japanese Sustainability Exchange

Nikki finished her presentation by giving some ideas on how we can all work together in the future to help support the inclusion of environmental programmes in the guides. Nikki told the delegates that:

- Guide leaders need support and advice to carry out environmental work with their groups, this is where the environmental sector can play a huge supporting role.
- Leaders also need training on issues again a challenge for us to help with this area.
- The continuing need to develop and maintain partnerships with our sector was also pointed out as being crucial.
- Any group carrying out work with guides must make sure that their programme is specific to youth needs i.e. not too formal and child development centered.
- One problem that guide groups encounter as with many other after school groups and clubs is trying to get organisations to visit them in the evenings!

**A Sustainable Boys Brigade Programme**

Brian Lynas
Boys Brigade Northern Ireland

Brian Lynas from the Boys Brigade then was next to speak and gave an interesting presentation on the structure of the boys brigade and their programme in Northern Ireland.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

"The advancement of Christ’s kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness"

The Boys Brigade like the Girl Guides has several age based programmes running.

**Anchor Boys – P1 – P4**
**Junior Section – P5 – P7**
**Company and Senior Section 11 – 18 years**
Programme for Anchor Boys and Junior Sections

- God and me
- Think and do
- Make and do
- Fit for fun
- Me and my world – main way in which the environment is introduced at this age

Brian showed via his powerpoint (see EEF website to download all powerpoint presentations from this conference: www.eefni.org.uk/conferenceproceedings), that all the programmes at all ages have environmental activities and messages attached to them.

Company Section Award Structure

ZONE                   SUB-ZONES
Community             Local and National
                       International
                       Nature and Environment
Recreation            Outdoor and adventure
                       Sports and Games
                       Health and lifestyle
Skills                 Life Skills
                       Interests
                       Creativity

SUB ZONE                  NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT
Sector
Conservation            Recycling
                       Conservation
                       Energy
                       Carbon Footprint
Nature                  Ponds
                       Birds
                       Weather

Many other activities also raise the boys awareness of the world around them such as carrying out the Queen’s Badge, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme or the International dimension.
Youth Service Provision in Republic of Ireland

Elaine Nevin
Director, Eco Unesco

Elaine Nevin from Eco Unesco was next to speak to the assembled delegates and provided a very useful overview of the structure and remit of the youth service in the Republic of Ireland.

Elaine began by giving a quick introduction to Eco Unesco and the aims and objectives of the organization. Eco Unesco was established in 1986 and has the remit of Environmental Education and Youth Development. It is affiliated to the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centres and Associations (WFUCA) and specialises in environmental education and environmental work with young people. The aims of Eco Unesco are to:

- Raise knowledge, awareness and understanding of the environment in young people.
- Promote the protection and conservation of the environment.
- Promote the personal development of young people through practical environmental projects.

Youth Work in the ROI

- Youth Work Act 2001 (statutory act recognising the importance of youth work)
- This provided a definition for youth work - an educational and developmental process, based on young people's active and voluntary participation and commitment. It is often defined as 'non-formal education'.
- is for all young people, with particular focus on those aged 10 to 25 from all aspects of Irish life, urban, rural, all nationalities and social classes.
- is provided primarily by voluntary organisations, with statutory support from the Department of Education and Science and Vocational Educational Committees.

National Youth Development Plan (ran to 2007) - New National Youth Development Plan to be developed. National Youth Work Advisory Committee (made up of voluntary youth organisations, govt. depts and VEC's)-advise Minister for Education on all matters related to youth work.

Youth work has a number of purposes (as outlined in the Youth Work Act)

- To build young people’s self-esteem and self-confidence;
- To develop their ability to manage personal and social relationships;
- To offer worthwhile and challenging new experiences;
- To provide learning opportunities to enable young people to gain knowledge and develop new skills;
- To build young people’s capacity to consider risks and consequences and make informed decisions and take responsibility;
- To help young people to develop social awareness and a sense of social solidarity;
- To give young people a voice in decision-making which affect their lives;
- To enhance young people’s role as active citizens;
- To listen to and hear what young people have to say.

How does it happen?

Variety of methods

- Recreation, sport and indoor/outdoor pursuits
- Arts and culture, including drama
- Citizenship, social action, youth participation, rights and equality issues, the environment, development education and politics
- Welfare and well-being including health promotion, stress management, first aid, drugs,
- Life skills, such as leadership, teamwork, planning and decision making, communication, problem solving, initiative and responsibility
- Critical Analysis and creative and reflective thinking
- Intercultural and international awareness activities and exchanges
- Information technology
What does Youth Service Provision look like in the ROI?

On the ground Youth Work is provided by a variety of sources including:

- National Youth Organisations
- Local Youth Projects and youth groups supported by VEC’s.
- Youth Services – (run by Vocational Educational Committees or by National Youth Organisation in most part).

A variety of youth work activities being provided by:

- Youth Clubs – local clubs for young people run by a variety of groups including Foroige, YMCA etc.
- Youth Programmes –many programmes developed and run by National organisations
- Youth Services – providing a variety of services to young people including youth activities, youth cafes, youth groups etc.
- Youth Information Centres – providing information to young people for young people.
- Some voluntary youth organisations e.g. Youth Work Ireland, Foroige
- Uniformed organisations including Scouting Ireland, Girl Guides
- Faith Based groups – such as Catholic Youth Care, Church or Ireland youth groups, YMCA
- Specialist Organisations – ECO-UNESCO, National Association of Traveller Centres, National Association of Youth Drama
- Young Politicals – Young Fine Gael, Young Fianna Fail etc.

Who are some of the main players?

- **National Youth Council of Ireland** is the *representative body* for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland.
- Has over 40 organisations in members - ECO-UNESCO only specialist Environmental Youth Work organisation.
- Runs a variety of programmes including a Development education programme, a Youth Arts programme and a Youth Health programme

**Vocational Education Committees**

- 27 County VEC’s
- 5 City VEC’s
- Provide funding for local youth work provision.
- Employ Youth Officers based in VEC’s

**Government involvement**

- Various Govt. Depts involved
- Department of Education – leads in many areas of youth work.
- Office for Minister of Children
- Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs – YPFSF
- Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform

**Eco UNESCO’s work in Environmental Youth Work in ROI**

**Environmental Youth Programmes**

- Environmental Workshops – *(include ECO-Discovery, ECO Leaders, Energy Watchers, Waste Watchers and ad hoc workshops)*
- Events and activities *(around key environmental dates in year e.g. Earth Day etc. – include hikes, conservation)*
- ECO-UNESCO Clubs *(for groups of 2 or over who want to set up a club – ECO-UNESCO provides advice and support – clubs participate in their own activities and have own leaders)*

Eco Unesco also provide Youth workshops, training, activities and events.
Programmes & services

Education & Training Programmes

- One-day Training Courses – (ECO-Education for youth leaders on how to use Environmental Education in their work; ECO-Choices using environmental Education in Drugs Prevention work. Waste Watchers, Energy Watchers, and Climate Watchers.)
- FETAC accredited modules – (ECO-UNESCO develops and delivers modules –Introduction to Sustainable Development– to be developed into a 2-day course to be made available nationwide)
- Development of resources – to assist youth workers use EE in their work – (4-Seasons, Embracing Diversity, What on earth is sustainable development.)

ECO-Choices – Drugs Prevention Programme

- ECO-Youth Choices – (a 12 week peer education programme for young people aged between 15 and 18 – upskill in environmental issues, team work, build personal effectiveness and confidence including the running of an environmental action project (using the ECO-Choices Resource pack)- are exploring options of delivering this nationwide.)
- One-day training course – ECO Choices

Youth for Sustainable Development – *(funded by Irish Aid and specifically targeting the youth sector)*

- Peer Education Programme (12-18) – 12 week programme.
- ESD Youth Peer Education Resource Guide – assist other Youth Organisations in carrying out an ESD Youth Peer Education Programme.
- Training Programme – (include 1-day training courses; What is ESD? A whole organization Approach to ESD ; Leadership in ESD: Supporting young people to be peer educators)
- Conference and seminar - sharing good practice in ESD, promoting cooperation between the youth, development and environmental sectors on ESD.
- A youth exchange to a UNESCO club in the developing world.

Young Environmentalist Awards Programme *(supported by ENFO and EHS NI)*

- An all-island environmental awards programme for young people.
- Annual programme *(groups of 2 to 25 young people between ages of 12 and 18 - carry out and participate in an environmental action project on an issue of importance to them.)*
  Categories include: waste, energy, biodiversity, water, eco-art and design, eco-community and more.
- 6 - Step programme – *(1.Come together as a team, 2. Decide on issue; 3. Carry out some research 4. develop an action plan, 5. carry out the action 6. Raise awareness through local channels I.e. local authorities, youth groups, local press ,schools, and media.)*
- ECO-UNESCO – (provides support in terms of a YEA Handbook and Manual, Website, Hotline, YEA Training for youth leaders and teachers (September and October each year).)
- An Annual showcase takes place in May each year with an Awards ceremony.

Case Studies of Youth Groups in the YEA Awards

Charlie – ‘a life-size figure made from recycled and reused materials found in the North Clondalkin area’ - Ronanstown Youth Service

- Addressed problem of litter in their area.
- Found that every green space in the area was littered to some extent and that there were few public bins.
- Highlighted and created a greater awareness of litter, encouraged people in the area to “reduce, reuse, recycle”,
- explored the causes of the problem and carried out an action.
- carried out a litter collection and decided to draw people’s attention to the litter issue.
- Created a life-sized figure made of litter, a recycled man, Charlie.
• Wrote an article for the local newsletter, *The Buzz*, in which they called attention to the problem of litter in their area.

*Waste Not, Want Not* Ultra Violet Onyx Youth Group, Laois Youth Services, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

• Organised a Teen Art Exhibition entitled ‘Waste Not, Want Not’.
• The exhibition offered visitors a glimpse into how young people see environmental issues in their world and offered young people a chance to display their artwork.
• Researched waste issues and had a workshop on waste management.
• The exhibition included 150 entries from young people all across the county and ran for a week.
• Pieces included watercolours, oils, acrylics, pens, pencils, charcoal, crayon, lino printing, animation, collage and sculpture.

Conclusion

• Very diverse youth service.
• A lot of space for development of innovative projects and programmes.
• Increasing levels of all-Ireland work being encouraged.
• Specialist Youth organisations e.g. ECO-UNESCO play an important role in provision of ESD and EE within youth sector.
Development of Woodland Schools in the Early Years

Lorna Gardinar
NEELB
Anne McGuckin from the EHS concluded the morning’s talks by giving an overview of a new website initiative designed to help small businesses & organisations understand their environmental obligations. Net Regs (www.netregs.gov.uk) has been developed by EHS, the Environment Agency and SEPA and provides free, anonymous and straightforward guidance available 24 hours a day and is tailored for specific business types.

**Why use NetRegs?**

- Save time understanding obligations
- Comply with the law
- Save money through efficiency
- Good business reputation
- Supply chain pressure

You can search by Business Type

- Environmental Topic
- Current & Future Legislation

**Covers environmental obligations and good environmental practice**

Anne then showed the delegates pages from the site itself including the Education sector page and environmental impacts section.

There is also a self assessment toll on the site to help assess your environmental compliance, this takes about 10-20 minutes to complete.

**E-alerts**

You can also sign up for free email updates, which keep up to date with changes to the law and developments on the NetRegs website. This is sent out every two months.

**Summary**

**Free online environmental guidance for businesses and other organisations**

**Comply with environmental legislation, save money and improve your business image**

**Keep track of what could affect your business in the future**
Feedback

Feedback from conference attendees was very positive. Many appreciated the opportunity to get together and network with a range of other people both from the different sectors. The speakers involved were praised for their effective and informative presentations and it was felt by many that the conference will greatly aid them in the course of their everyday work. The catering and venue were generally also mentioned as being of very good quality.

Delegates Opinions on Various Aspects of the Event

Words used to Describe the Event
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<th>First Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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