



*Empowerment for a better world through
Adult and Community Education.*

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Establishing a Baseline for Global Citizenship Education in the Adult and Community Education Sector

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List of abbreviations & acronyms

ACE: Adult & Community Education

AEO: Adult Education Organisers

ALE: Adult Learning and Education

ALC: Adult Learning Centre

BTEI: Back to Education Initiative

CEF: Community Education Facilitators

CEN: Community Education Network

CFE: Colleges of Further Education

CSO: Central Statistics Office

CTC: Community Training Centre

CWI: Community Work Ireland

DE: Development Education

DES: Department of Education and Science

DFA: Department of Foreign Affairs

EAFA: European Association for the Education of Adults

EMSSGDE: European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group on Development Education

ERSI: Economic and Social Research Institute

ETB: Education and Training Boards

ETBI: Education and Training Boards Ireland

ESD: Education for Sustainable Development

EU: European Union

FE: Further Education

FET: Further Education and Training

GCE: Global Citizenship Education

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

GPA: Global Passport Award

IA: Irish Aid

IDEA: Irish Development Education Association

List of abbreviations & acronyms

NFQ: National Framework of Qualifications

NI: Northern Ireland

PLC: Post Leaving Certificate

PPN: Public Participation Network

QQI: Quality and Qualifications Ireland

RoI: Republic of Ireland

RTC: Regional Training Centre

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UN: United Nations

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

VTOS: Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

WWGS: WorldWise Global Schools

Part 1: Introduction

In the Republic of Ireland, the continued integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into all levels of the national educational framework reflects broader international policy trends. Policymakers increasingly recognise the potential for GCE principles to promote greater engagement with societies' most pressing problems, and lifelong learning is held as a key approach to realising such potential (DES, 2022; EAEA 2019). It is within this context that Adult and Community Education (ACE) has been identified as an important point of policy focus to activate such potential (DES, 2022; EAEA 2019).

Ireland's most recent governmental strategy papers on GCE have reflected this focus, both underlining the importance of embedding GCE within the Irish ACE sector (See Department of Education, 2022; Irish Aid, 2021). The diverse and wide-ranging Irish ACE sector undoubtedly has the potential and scope to espouse the possibilities offered by GCE principles. The sector incorporates a host of formal, informal and non-formal learning settings, reaching a diverse group of learners throughout the country via an equally diverse range of providers and education remits (Saolta, 2022a). In response to this diversity and scale, commentators advocate for a whole-sector approach to GCE provision; the inclusion of all key ACE stakeholders and decision makers is vital to expanding GCE provision through the sector (Irish Aid, 2021). And yet, enhancing stakeholder participation in decision-making is half the battle. Embedding GCE throughout the ACE sector also depends on enhancing the capacity of current and future ACE practitioners to integrate GCE principles into their learning settings (Saolta, 2021; Irish Aid, 2021).

The scale of these challenges necessitates a baseline; a description of current GCE provision in Irish ACE that can serve as a basis for future intervention. Identifying current GCE activity, exposing gaps in provision and noting stakeholder engagement are some of the key insights that will ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of future policy interventions.

1.1 An Important Caveat on Limitations

However, efforts to establish a baseline of GCE within the Irish ACE sector are significantly hampered by the very thing it is trying to capture; the diverse nature of GCE activity in an equally diverse and expansive Irish ACE sector. More specifically, creating a baseline of GCE activity within the Irish ACE sector is deeply impacted by challenges relating to the availability of a consistent and representative dataset. Three central challenges were found to pose significant restraints on this baseline exercise, but also raise broader concerns impacting research of GCE-related activity within the Irish ACE sector.

The three challenges can be summarised as follows:

Inconsistencies in the availability of data across ACE sub-sectors:

Given the expansiveness of ACE provision, existing data collection across ACE sub-sectors can be varied in its availability, as well as its focus and purpose. Data relating to provision and learner participation throughout the ACE sector is not consistently available across providers nor sub-sectors. As a result, current data availability poses significant challenges for a representative description of the ACE sector in Ireland. For example, learner participation numbers for formal statutory provision will be better

represented in the available data thanks to the monitoring capabilities of statutory bodies such as ETBI and SOLAS. Even here, it can be a challenge to capture the expanse and diversity of all statutory provisions. However, beyond the statutory framework, the availability of data can be even more difficult. The vastness of entities in non-statutory ACE provision makes it near impossible to capture data that provides a representative description of its diverse provision and learner cohorts. Without a central database of systematic frameworks, consistently capturing the diversity and scale of ACE provision and learning remains deeply challenging. Identifying GCE provision within this is impacted further as a result.

The diverse and often ambiguous nature of GCE and GCE-related activities:

The multifarious (and oftentimes contested) nature of GCE holds challenges for data collection also (see also Saolta, 2021a). Ambiguity around practitioners' awareness of GCE can significantly impede understanding of their GCE-related teaching. Specifically, practitioners are often uncertain or unaware of how their current teaching/training activity can be considered (and therefore reported) as GCE. As a result, much of the existing GCE-related activity throughout the Irish ACE sector remains elusive to monitoring and research efforts. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence and experience of GCE provision in Irish ACE is currently not fully captured in the data currently available for researchers and policymakers.

Wide-ranging gaps in the availability of GCE-specific data collection:

Given that GCE is not yet fully embedded throughout the ACE sector, internal data specific to GCE is not readily collected (or required) by most ACE providers. As a result, data gathering specific to GCE-related activity often depends upon providers participating in external research. However, in addition to the challenge regarding practitioner awareness of GCE, the nature of the sector itself poses practical challenges to the recruitment of participants and the collection of data specific to GCE activity. For example, identifying the correct staff members with responsibility and/or knowledge of a centre's GCE-related activity is difficult. This is particularly evident in settings where GCE is not specifically embedded within curricula and instead is independently integrated by individual tutors and trainers. In other instances, particularly in informal and non-formal settings, the provision of GCE activity can remain elusive to researchers given the nature of activities (i.e. GCE may not be explicitly included).

1.2 Purpose of Report

In its endeavours to create a consistent and representative data sample, this report is shaped by the above challenges regarding the available data and participation in research. As a result, alongside establishing a tentative baseline of GCE activity within the Irish ACE sector, this report looks to initiate broader discussions regarding the availability and collection of GCE-related data in the Irish ACE sector. The purpose of this report is therefore two-fold:

- To provide an initial tentative baseline of GCE-related activity within the Irish ACE sector from the data available
- To highlight, amongst relevant stakeholders, some key considerations around the availability of data relating to GCE in the Irish ACE sector specifically.

1.3 Dataset

Given the wide-ranging gaps and challenges around the availability of data, this report represents GCE activities and ACE providers as captured by Saolta's research activities and internal data collection. It is acknowledged from the outset that the baseline presented here does not provide an exhaustive representation of GCE provision in the Irish ACE sector. However, as Ireland's strategic partnership programme for GCE in the sector, Saolta has engaged with a wide range of GCE providers across the entire framework. Through this engagement and research, Saolta continues to collect data that is specific to GCE activity and that targets the inclusion of learners from all ACE sub-sectors. Given the challenges relating to GCE-ACE related data more broadly (see above), Saolta's dataset provides an important, albeit tentative, representation of the sector. Data used in this report includes:

- Survey data collected from both Saolta's mapping exercises¹
- Internally collected data from Saolta's training programmes and outreach events
- Relevant supplemental data from external sources where available (SOLAS, ETBI, IDEA etc.)

¹ Available: <https://developmentperspectives.ie/ResearchPDFS/GCE%20Report%20Final%20Web.pdf>

Part 2: The Irish ACE Sector: Scale, Diversity & Data

This chapter provides an overview of the Irish ACE sector, highlighting its scale, scope and diversity, and the consequences for data collection. Saolta's 2nd Mapping Report identified an Irish ACE framework that consists of various sub-sectors (see table below). These sub-sectors are characterised by a range of educational remits and activities, and serve a vast collection of learner profiles across the country. Representative enumeration across a sector as diverse and nuanced as the Irish ACE sector is problematic; by its nature and purpose the sector is filled with important nuances and contexts not easily captured by data collection. This chapter presents an overview of the diversity and scale of these sub sectors and highlights the challenge this poses to data availability and collection.

Table 1. ROI-ACE Sub-sectors

Provision	Description
NGOs; Networking Organisations	Providers with a Regional-Local Focus as well as those with a National and/or International Remit
FET Provision	Administered by the 16 Education & Training Boards (ETBs) on a single or bi-county basis
Adult Education	Focus on back-to-work programmes and initiatives, including Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Back to Education & Training Initiative (BTEI) and Literacy Skills provision
Community Education	Community-based programmes and initiatives incorporating a broad spectrum of education provision including accredited as well as non-accredited programmes
Further Education Colleges (CFE)	ETB administered Colleges providing post-Leaving Cert (PLC) programmes from NFQ Level 5+ CFEs may also host Adult Education and Community initiatives listed above
Local & Specialist Education Training Centres	Provide vocational-related training and education as well as apprenticeships in regional as well as local-based Community Training Centres (CTCs), Regional Training Centres (RTCs) as well as specialist training centres. RTCs may also host adult and community education provision listed above
Community Education (non-ETB)	Non-ETB administered but may be funded or part-funded by an ETB. Includes a broad range of accredited as well as non-accredited/locally accredited programmes focussed on addressing specific local issues
Community Development/Community Work	49 Local Development Companies (LDCs) focusing on community/rural development. Specific programmes include: SICAP and Leader
Local Authorities/ Public Partnership Networks (PPNs)	PPNS: Networks of Community Groups affiliated with the County Councils. Includes a broad range of activities and groups categorised as: Community, Environment or Social Inclusion initiatives. Local Authority run education events, projects and initiatives There are 31 PPNs currently operating in the Rep. of Ireland

2.1 Statutory Further Education and Training

In its 2020-2021 Annual Report, ETBI reports that ETBs in Ireland provide FET across approx. 500 FET providers, colleges and Training Centres (ETBI, 2021). Within this provision, ETBI (2021) reports that the ETB network engages around 148,000 FET learners every year. However, these figures do not reflect all the apprenticeships, traineeships, youth services, outdoor education services and community education services that also fall within the ETB/Statutory FET remit. The data available does not reflect the full expanse of ACE provision and learning provided. This provides a challenging context to capture GCE activity that is provided through the ETB/Statutory framework. The diversity of settings and the scale of staff/learner cohorts involved hold incredible potential for GCE, and examples of a vibrant and active GCE provision are certainly evident. However, anecdotal evidence and experience of GCE activities within these learning settings are not yet reflected in the data that is currently available from the sector.

2.2 Community-Based Education

As with statutory FET, conclusive data representing (non-ETB) community-based education is difficult to identify. Latest figures available report that SOLAS funded provision in this sub-sector reached 22,000 learners in 2021 (SOLAS, 2022b). The lack of a consistent and representative dataset for this sub-sector beyond SOLAS provision, is largely due to the siloed nature of community education provision. First, providers respond to local community needs, this means no initiative is the same. Secondly, providers will often operate (relatively) independent of any national/central administration. This creates a challenge in establishing a consistent and representative description of this sub-sector; data that is collected within this sub-sector tends to only reflect a partial and/or selective representation. This is problematic for a baseline for GCE provision, not only in terms of capturing the number of providers in this sub sector, but for identifying the context-specific provision of activities (including GCE). A baseline for GCE provision in community education was also particularly impacted by low response rates to Saolta's mapping surveys. There was evidence that survey participants (and prospective participants) were often uncertain as to how their provision reflected GCE principles (Saolta, 2022a).

2.3 Community Development/Community Work

Community Development/Community Work is a vast and wide-ranging sub-sector of ACE provision in Ireland. In 2022 the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) reported that there are over 180 different programmes implemented by Local Development Companies (LDCs) throughout the country, each one operating up to 20+ distinct programmes (ILDN, 2022). This work revolves around 5 core themes: Social Inclusion, Rural Development, Employment Services, Social Enterprise and Climate Action, all of which have key discernible linkages to ACE and GCE (ILDN, 2022). Also in 2022 the ILDN reported that LDCs had supported over 175,000 individuals and 15,000 community groups throughout Ireland (ILDN, 2022). Again, the depth and reach of this sub-sector poses challenges for data gathering around GCE provision. The volume of programmes, the variety of communities engaged, and the range of different settings, all pose huge potential for GCE provision. Anecdotally, this sub-sector produces some exciting and vibrant examples of GCE provision for adult learners. However, the nature of the sub-sector means capturing data on GCE-related activity in a way that is consistent and representative for a baseline remains a challenge without significant participation from within the sector (Saolta, 2022a).

2.4 Local Authorities and Public Partnership Networks

In October 2022, it was reported that over 18,000 community groups are members of PPNs in Ireland (DRCD, 2022). In 2021, 1,013 PPN representatives were elected onto 397 local committees (DRCD, 2022). The opportunities for ACE provision through LAs and PPNs is therefore significant. However, the extent and nature of GCE provision across the LA/PPN network is difficult to capture and enumerate, given the nature of the framework. GCE activities within such contexts can often be elusive; where GCE education is not explicitly an objective of activities it can remain un(der)reported. Beyond references in annual reporting, the nature of GCE provision is difficult to ascertain without the input from PPNs themselves in external research. Saolta's mapping exercises demonstrate a particularly low response rate here to survey requests, with only 2 LA/PPNs returning data requests. Given the nature of PPN/LA administration, identifying the correct staff with the knowledge relevant to each LA/PPN's GCE provision can be difficult.

2.5 NGO and Civil Society Sectors

Finally, identifying the number of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who provide GCE to adult learners is impossible to accurately capture due to the nature of their provision. Not all NGOs and CSOs providing GCE to the ACE sector work with a specific ACE remit, making them challenging to identify in the first place. As a result, GCE provision can be elusive and/or indirectly embedded within NGOs' operations, and therefore difficult to identify without self-reporting from within the sector. Over the course of Saolta's 2nd Mapping research, 105 NGOs with links to GCE-ACE provision were identified, with 30% of these NGOs responding. This marked the highest response rates across all sub-sectors. It was evident through the surveys returned by NGOs, that there is a much clearer awareness around the nature of GCE provision in their work. This clarity (and the higher response rate) is most likely aided by the fact that specific staff are often assigned a specific education and/or GCE remit i.e. education officers, outreach officers etc.

2.6 ACE Learner Participation Rates

This scale and diversity of the ACE framework also impacts the enumeration of learners participating with GCE. Consistent data availability regarding learners more broadly in the ACE sector is largely limited to providers who are supported (fully or in part) by statutory providers. Nationally, SOLAS (2022a) also reports that 343,000 adults between the ages of 25-64 participated in SOLAS funded lifelong learning programmes in the final quarter of 2021. Within this, more people engaged in non-formal learning activities as compared to those taking part in formal learning (SOLAS, 2022a). For example, of adults between the ages 25-64, almost 142,000 participated in formal learning, while 225,000 took part in non-formal learning throughout the final quarter of the 2021.

Availability of data for learner participation in the community education and community development/work is also inconsistent. In the context of ETB-supported and funded community education, data is comparatively more available given the centralised overview of SOLAS. As noted already, SOLAS (2022b) reported that SOLAS-funded community education enrolments in 2021 was at 22, 278. However, given the vast number of ACE providers that operate outside the funding and/or remit of SOLAS, it should be assumed that adult learner participation figures within community education are significantly higher. For similar reasons highlighted in the previous chapter, data is not as readily available beyond the SOLAS-supported and/or funded community education sub-sector. This leaves a partial view of an already often elusive sector.

2.7 In summary

The Irish ACE sector does not easily lend itself to a systematic data collection process focused on provision and learning participation, such is its scale and diversity. At its core purpose, the sector aims to provide a diverse framework of learning opportunities and to attend to a multiplicity of learners and learning needs. The expanse and depth of provision across the sector, and within each sub-sector, makes identifying GCE provision and engagement challenging. Considerations around establishing more representative and consistent data for GCE provision in the ACE sector must reflect on the role of the stakeholders in the production of the data. There is a need for collaboration within the sector on how to enhance stakeholder participation in data collection efforts around GCE provision. This requires a general understanding of the role of GCE in education, and directives at all levels and within all sub-sectors in order to evaluate and enhance GCE in the ACE.

Part 3: GCE Provision in the Irish ACE Sector

Since 2020, Saolta's mapping research marks a systematic programme of data collection specific to GCE provision in the Irish ACE sector. The mapping research is aimed at establishing the nature and scope of GCE provision in the Irish ACE sector. This research continues to generate a database of insights from ACE providers who engage learners with GCE and/or GCE-related issues. While the mapping research has been impacted by the challenges of data availability and participation raised in this report, some key insights continue to emerge. In particular, the data presented here notes how different sub-sectoral remits within Irish ACE espouse different GCE activity. While not presented as an exhaustive representation, this mapping data contributes important initial insights to GCE provision within the Irish ACE sector.

3.1 GCE Providers & Activities

3.1.1 Local, National and International NGOs

Mapping data demonstrates that the NGO sector provides the broadest range of GCE-related activity for ACE learners and the public more generally. The focus of this GCE engagement depends on the organisations' scope which can be demarcated between local/regional and national/international. GCE-related work within local/regional NGOs tends to focus along social and/or economic and/or environment orientations. National and international NGOs describe a more holistic approach to facilitating GCE-related activity, most likely due to the broader target audiences and/or funding remits. These NGOs engage the public and other community stakeholders with knowledge and/or training that focuses on the three Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) pillars of economy, society and environment. NGO activities described in the mapping data range from workshops and events promoting social diversity and inclusion, to courses engaging learners with sustainable environmental practices such as permaculture. The data also points to a significant element of public awareness raising via public events on issues like interdependency.

Furthermore, the mapping data facilitated an estimation of adult learner participation in GCE-related activities. It was estimated that out of 28 NGOs (National, International and Local) who participated in the second round of mapping surveys, approx. 7570 adult learners were engaged with GCE through public events, courses, workshops and seminars. The mapping data also notes how the NGO sector demonstrates a greater staffing capacity specific to GCE-related activity than other sub-sectors. Out of the participating 28 local and national/international NGOs, there were 55 staff members reported to have specific responsibility for GCE-related activity. While this is still a small number of staff relative to the entire NGO sector, it is likely reflective of the more developed and embedded policy around GCE (and Dev Ed) provision that tends to exist within the Irish NGO sector more broadly.

3.1.2 ETB-Sponsored Adult and Community Education

According to the mapping data collected to date, ETB-sponsored providers engage learners with GCE through courses that promote awareness on relevant GCE-related issues. Here, GCE engagement tends to focus on

environmental-related issues such as the climate crises (and sustainability). Activities reported include courses on horticulture and gardening for example. Out of the 2 ETBs who returned surveys, it was estimated that over 220 learners were engaged in GCE activity in these centres across the 12 months of 2021.

Within ETB-FET training centres and colleges, mapping data demonstrates that GCE is incorporated through courses and curricula in two ways. Some providers offer learners standalone courses on specific topics relating to GCE issues and/or principles. While, other providers reported that they incorporate GCE into courses by engaging learners where topics are relevant. The extent to how many FET courses actually incorporate GCE remains unclear given the expanse of its framework. FETs who participated in the surveys were estimated to engage approx. 2210 adult learners with GCE, predominantly through activities including courses (accredited and non-accredited), workshops and seminars.

3.1.3 Community Education (non-ETB)

Community Education organisations operating beyond the ETB also reported GCE-related activity that tends to focus on environmental issues, particularly focusing on the theme of sustainability (via sustainable crafting and horticulture). Other organisations in this sub-sector reported events and projects that look to advocate and inform learners' understanding of circular economies. It is estimated that over 3000 students were engaged by the 5 participating organisations in this sector. Staffing capacities were relatively high with regards to responsibility for GCE-related activity; in the 5 participating Community Education (non-ETB) organisations, 10 staff were reported to have specific GCE-related responsibility. Again, even within this small data sample, this points to a clear priority with regards resourcing GCE-related provision in this sub-sector.

3.1.4 Community Development/Work

Community Development/Work's broad and varied remit is reflected in the GCE activities that this sub-sector provides. As demonstrated through the mapping data, many of these providers engage communities with GCE activities that promote sustainable communities and a more inclusive, active citizenship. GCE-related activities in this sub-sector can also be informed by specific local issues and needs. Often specific groups within communities will be targeted (marginalised or new communities for example). Organisations in this sub-sector also reported that they collaborate with other community stakeholders in providing training and/or mentoring on issues relating to global justice and/or the SDGs.

By estimation, the mapping data suggests that over 1478 adult learners were engaged with GCE activity by the Community Development/Work sample (n=5). This engagement was primarily through courses (accredited and non-accredited) and workshops. Interestingly, the community development/work data sample also reported another high number of staff with specific responsibility for GCE-related activity. Of the 5 organisations who participated, they reported that 31 staff members had specific responsibility for GCE-related activity. Again, this may be down to the nature of the remit, where engaging GCE-related issues is often an inherent aspect; community development policy (and funding) is increasingly focused on sustainable communities and environments.

3.1.5 Local Authorities and PPNs

Finally, the mapping data notes how GCE-related activity that is facilitated by and through LAs and PPNs also tends to focus around local needs and issues. Additionally, the data highlighted a tendency amongst PPNs

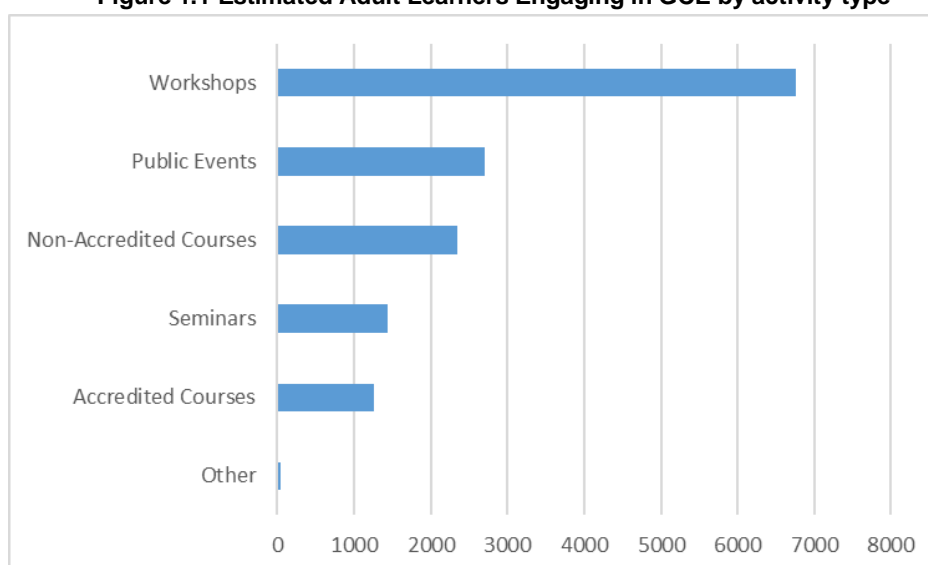
and LAs to focus on environmental themes and issues related to sustainability. Again this is most likely due to the local and national development remits which underpin much of LA and PPN work. However, the sample was particularly limited, with only 1 PPN participating out of 34 PPN and/or LAs surveyed. It was noted that this PPN reported that there was no staff with specific responsibility for GCE-related activity within the PPN. Increasing the participation of Local Authorities and PPNs in future research is vital to gain a more representative insight into the nature of the sectors' engagement with GCE.

3.2 Learner Participation

The survey data also estimated variances of adult learner participation within GCE across ACE sub-sectors. Here, estimations highlighted how NGOs have better scope for reaching comparatively more adult learners than the other sub-sectors (n-7606). While this is undoubtedly informed by the higher response rate to the survey by NGOs, NGOs also approach adult learners through a broad range of activities. NGOs engage learners through activities including public events, courses, workshops and seminars. This remit is most likely due to the unlimited scope of groups that NGOs can target i.e. they are not constrained to a specific enrolment or membership cohort. Comparatively, in ETB ACE provision (incl. ETB-Community Education) for example, the majority of GCE-related work is through both accredited (n-30) and non-accredited courses (n- 190). The reach of ETB ACE provision is largely informed by their enrolment cohort and integration/relevance of GCE to curricula.

With regards learner participation across activity-type, the mapping data noted that GCE-related activities broadly range across five main categories; workshops, public events, seminars, and both accredited and/or non-accredited courses. For the most part, organisations within each sub-sector (excluding PPNs) reported using a variety of these activities to engage their learners and the general public (Saolta, 2022a). The 2nd Mapping Report (2022) estimated almost 14,549 adult learners engaged with some form of these GCE-related activities via the providers who participated in the survey. It is estimated that the majority of these learners engaged with workshop events (n-6758), while accredited courses was comparatively lower (n- 1256). This shows that despite a good provision of accredited and non-accredited courses being reported by providers, engagement will be highest for those events that are potentially more accessible and involve a lesser commitment of time; public events (n-2700), workshops (n-6758) and seminars (1440).

Figure 1.1 Estimated Adult Learners Engaging in GCE by activity type



3.3 Geographical Reach

Finally, the mapping data highlights some key geographical variances in terms of the location and geographical reach of GCE provision in Ireland. In particular, the data demonstrates that disparities may exist across the regions where GCE activities are reaching; there are notable gaps in the South West and Midlands regions for example. Across 24 counties from where data has been collected to date, the majority of GCE providers were located in counties with urban centres such as Dublin (32%), Cork (10%) and Galway (7%). While the concentration of provision around urban centres is unsurprising, the low provision of GCE in some rural and/or less urbanised regions is a point of concern particularly given how embedded the ACE sector is across all regions in Ireland.

Provincially, 52% of GCE providers are located in Leinster, while Munster and Connaught account for 16% and 12% respectively. Ulster registered the lowest number of providers in the survey with 9% of the data sample. With regards the geographical scope of these providers within and around their locations, the mapping data highlights how learners are being engaged in GCE activity across every county in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Of the 99 respondents who provided geographical data across both mapping exercises, 46% of organisations stated their GCE provision operates across a local and/or county wide level, while 29% of the organisations operate nationally.

3.4 In summary

Although the available data may not provide exhaustive representative accounts of GCE provision within the Irish ACE sector, current data collection describes how GCE provision is informed by scale and remit of each sub-sector. As a result, some sub-sectors demonstrate a greater resource capacity with regards GCE than others. For example, sub-sectors such as NGOs and community development/work have a greater tendency to assign dedicated staffing capacities to GCE provision. Additionally, while geographical reach of GCE provision is wide, there are gaps identified particularly in rural regions that require more data and research. Finally, while Saolta's mapping research marks a systematic data collection programme specific to GCE provision in the Irish ACE sector, it remains limited in its representation due to broader data availability and low participation rates with the mapping surveys. The chapter therefore highlights once again the importance of continuing to enhance stakeholder participation within research such as this in order to develop fully representative data samples for each sub-sector.

Part 4: Stakeholders

Capacity Building

While GCE activity within the Irish ACE sector continues to increase, significant challenges remain with regards the sector's capacity to integrate GCE fully across each sub-sector. Concerns have been raised regarding the gaps of GCE provision that exist throughout the Irish ACE sector despite the potential. For example, GCE provision remains well below its potential reach within the statutory adult and community education, as well as non-ETB community education and LA/PPN sectors. Geographically, rural and semi-rural regions continue to be offered a reduced remit of GCE-related activity, despite the reach of an expansive and varied network of ACE provision in such areas (Saolta, 2022a; Irish Aid, 2021). In this context, commentators and policymakers increasingly recognise the importance of a capacity-building approach; the strategic targeting of practitioners and stakeholders to build their capacity (and willingness) to integrate GCE into their teaching and training.

Reflective of national policy in this area, Saolta's work provides GCE training for ACE practitioners across all sub-sectors, and with key stakeholders at executive, managerial and administrative levels of ACE provision. While limited to those who have participated and engaged with Saolta's programmes, Saolta's internal data related to this work holds some important insights on a diverse group of GCE-ACE practitioners, trainers, tutors, and other key stakeholders.

4.1 Local Authorities & PPNs

Public Participation Networks (PPNs), working under the authority of Local Authorities, act as a nucleus for community groups. Through these networks, PPNs promote and facilitate grassroots contribution to decision making and increased public participation (LGRA, 2014). As a result of a national policy commitment towards increasing communities' access to decision making, PPNs represent an essential space for embedding GCE into the local government framework.

However, as of 2022, awareness of the SDGs at a local authority level is under 40% highlighting a key challenge to realising GCE's potential in this sub-sector (DECC, 2022). Within Saolta's capacity-building work two key roles for GCE within the Local Government sector have been identified; engaging elected representatives and local officials to inform their understanding of the SDGs and GCE-related issues for future policymaking, and enhancing PPNs' capacities to advocate for their communities' needs within the decision-making process.

Through Saolta's work with Local Governments and PPNs, 597 LA/PPN participants have been engaged with GCE training through workshops and seminars. Since 2020, 15 out of the 31 PPNs have participated in these workshops, with PPNs from across all four provinces being engaged with GCE and SDGs training. Designed with the respective community needs at its centre, these workshops look to develop participants' awareness of the SDGS and how to use them to further support action in community groups (and policy). In 2023, 9 more workshops will be carried out targeting more PPNs, local representatives and officials. This will mean that over three quarters of Ireland's PPNs and LAs will have been engaged with GCE training by Saolta at year end.

4.2 Initial Teacher Education

Recent policy developments in the Irish ACE sector has looked to make the sector more sustainably effective through professionalising the sector, at both institutional and practitioner levels. As a result of this new framework, the end of every new academic year will see new entrant ACE practitioners enter the profession with formal teacher education training, while existing professionals will be able to gain Teaching Council of Ireland accreditation (Teaching Council, 2011). These policy developments reflect research that highlights the vital role of teachers, and teacher educators by extension. Incorporating GCE in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is a fundamental component for ensuring an effective and sustainable approach to embedding GCE within education settings (see Edwards et al, 2020; Bourn et al, 2017).

A core element of Saolta's work therefore aims to foster GCE within ACE ITE. Increasing the number of ACE-ITE graduates who receive GCE training can inform practitioners' ability (and willingness) to integrate GCE into their future teaching settings. In addition to providing this training, Saolta continues to engage HEIs and teacher educators to incorporate GCE as a core element of their ITE modules and programme development. Saolta has engaged with 6 of the seven HEIs who currently provide formal education and training for ACE practitioners. The HEIs providing ACE-ITE training this year include: Marino Institute of Education; Dublin City University; Mary Immaculate College; Maynooth University; National College of Ireland; University of Galway, and Waterford Institute of Technology. Intake numbers for these courses vary, and change yearly across each institution; available data suggests that the average intake is 27 students per year, per course.²

In 2022, Saolta provided 6 workshops and info sessions with representatives from 6 of the 7 HEI providers of ITE training. Working with representatives from each HEI, these sessions involved exploring a framework to integrate GCE training into their specific programmes. In addition to this, in 2023 Saolta will facilitate 6 individual GCE workshops with ITE cohorts from each HEI. These sessions will introduce ITE students to GCE themes, and provide approaches that can be implemented into their future teaching. Moreover, in order to foster a sustainable and supportive network across the ITE training framework, Saolta will also host two collective meetings / events for the seven HEIs across the 2023 period.

4.3 Further Education Tutors (and Learners)

As noted already, there is a wide-range of GCE-related provision across the varied remits of ETB-administered FET provision. The mapping data however noted that significant work is still required to embed GCE in this sub-sector; from the data gathered, low rates of GCE provision were recorded for ETB-FETs. This highlights the need for a strategic approach raising FE tutors' awareness of GCE and GCE-related issues, along with enhancing their capacity to integrate it into their teaching and training. However, this capacity building for FE tutors requires recognition of the FET context; FET provision consists of a vast network of pre-existing programmes, curricula and training priorities (Saolta 2021b). As a result, for any capacity-building approach to be fully sustainable and effective for ETB-FET tutors, GCE training programmes need to focus on integrating GCE into existing provision.

Working with FE institutes, educators and learners, Saolta have run a range of workshops on SDG awareness (the 'Understanding the SDGs' series, 'SDGs and Development Education', and workshops focused on specific SDG targets such as Climate Action). Saolta has also delivered standalone workshops with ETBs on themes such as racial justice, environmental justice, and systems thinking. Furthermore, workshops have also engaged EPALe, the Adult learning in Europe Network, as well as workshops through partnerships with IDEA and Aontas. In 2020, these FE training workshops engaged 184 tutors (and learners) from FET/Colleges of Further Education. After 2020, these workshops evolved into a tailored programme called 'Training of Trainers' (see below).

² This is based on figures provided from 4 of the 7 HEIs. Requests for intake numbers were made to all 7 for this report.

4.3.1 Training of Trainers

Since 2021, Saolta has expanded its training to FE practitioners via a 'Training of Trainers' (ToT) programme. Participants of the ToT programme from 2021 has consisted of ACE practitioners working through ETBs in FE and YouthReach tutors, with an additional standalone ToT programme for outdoor adventure and sport educators. ToT aims to increase the quality of GCE provision, and introduces practitioners to creative methodologies that allow them to link GCE topics to their various learning outcomes. Across the last three years Saolta have engaged 141 ACE practitioners in the ToT programme.

Given the vast number of trainers that work within the ETB-FE sector these participation numbers in ToT (and FE training) remains relatively low. It is evident that current participation is informed either by the motivations of individual trainers or enabled by institutions who are individually predisposed to engage with GCE. This points to a broader challenge to embedding GCE in FE and indeed all sub-sectors; the need for a system-wide approach (Saolta, 2022a). Engaging key personnel at all levels of FE is vital to increasing awareness and encouraging participation in GCE practice (and training).

4.4 SDG Advocates

Also in the context of providing GCE training for existing ACE practitioners, the SDG Advocate Programme is a comprehensive seven-month course working with practitioners and individuals who work in the Irish ACE Sector. The programme engages practitioners from across all sub-sectors, exploring topics and themes around sustainable development and GCE. Since 2017, the SDG Advocate Programme has had 113 graduates.³

In the objective of capacity building, the training course engages Advocates in a deeper understanding of the United Nations (UN) and the SDGs. In this course, participants are exposed to learning and teaching methodologies that are framed by the four pillars of GCE: Critical Thinking, Systems Thinking, Active Citizenship and Problem Solving. Over the course of the programme, participants are encouraged to reflect on their existing knowledge and perspectives, before being introduced to topics relating to the SDG's and GCE, and finally culminating in the design of an 'Action Project' to address an issue in their ACE organisation.⁴

4.5 Workshops, Webinars and Networking

While not always quantifiable, a vibrant and active engagement with GCE continues to grow within the ACE sector. Organisations, practitioners and learners alike demonstrate a keen knowledge and know-how that results in vibrant and creative GCE provision across formal, informal and non-formal education settings. In addition to training current and future practitioners, the diversity of experiences that currently exist within the ACE sector provides another important capacity-building resource. The sharing of best practice models, collaboration and the building of networks are all vital elements to embedding GCE further within the ACE sector. Currently in Ireland, limited platforms and spaces exist that specifically focus on allowing Irish GCE-ACE practitioners to share knowledge, ideas, and resources.

4.5.1 Networking & Collaboration

The mapping data collected to date demonstrates green shoots of collaborations and partnership networks focused on GCE within individual ACE contexts. All respondents to mapping surveys reported that they worked

³ Since incorporating under the Saolta umbrella in 2020, 68 of these have been engaged

⁴ The participants' learning journey is designed taking influence from Joseph Campbell's A Hero's Journey and Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.

with other ACE providers: 57% have engaged with individual trainers/facilitators or consultants. Quite high percentages of respondents also stated they work alongside NGOs (48%), ETBs (41%), Local Community Development (41%), PPNs/County Councils (34%), HEIs (29%) and FEIs (18%). Despite the relatively small sample of organisations, the mapping data highlights a clear willingness (and need) amongst ACE providers to collaborate with each other around GCE provision.

Further evidence of this collaboration and partnership is reflected in the growing ACE membership and collaboration to networks such as IDEA. As Ireland's development education network IDEA has 110 members, 54 of these are organisations and individuals who work in the Irish ACE sector.⁵ In addition to this, IDEA's Code of Practice for Development Education has 27 ACE signatories. Bridge 47, a European-wide consortium fostering collaboration around GCE, also notably included the International Council for Adult Education as one of its core members.⁶ However, gaps remain in the provision of platforms that provide networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities for ACE providers specifically focused on GCE.

4.5.2 Workshops & Webinars

Workshops and networking events facilitated by Saolta have engaged numerous participants, providing them with opportunities to gain knowledge, share ideas and collaborate on GCE issues and practices. Over the last three years, more than 1042 ACE practitioners and stakeholders have been engaged through Saolta's workshops and webinars. These participants have been engaged across almost 30 workshops and 4 webinars, and included practitioners and stakeholders from local government, NGOs, HEIs, FEIs and more. Themes of these workshops and webinars ranged from SDG awareness workshops, to impact and evaluation practices, as well as workshops on (critical) media literacy. Saolta have also engaged a series of ETBs and ACE groups through creative engagement workshops through a 'SDG Roadshow Bike Tour' across Ireland.

As part of its strategy to promote capacity building, Saolta also endeavours to facilitate and support networking amongst GCE and ACE providers. Since 2020, Saolta has hosted 7 networking events bringing together 146 alumni from Saolta training programmes. These alumni represent various ACE providers and stakeholder organisations including; community advocates, community leaders, community development practitioners, ETB/FE tutors, adult education officers, literacy tutors, facilitators. These bi-annual events invite Saolta alumni to participate in discussion and workshops around particular themes. To date, alumni workshops have engaged themes including: heritage, forced migration, gender-based violence, social impact of art, and a biodiversity walk and introduction to permaculture in Howth, Dublin.

In the context of capacity building and embedding GCE into ACE sectors, these spaces that foster knowledge transfer, idea sharing and facilitate collaboration and partnership are vital. Current participation numbers with these Saolta events and courses reveal a clear willingness and need amongst the ACE sector to engage collaboratively with GCE. Alongside this willingness, the fact that these opportunities remain relatively unique in the sector more broadly highlights ample scope for reaching more practitioners and stakeholders in the coming 5-10 years with similar events. However, more work is required throughout the sector at all levels to extend such opportunities and encourage higher engagement rates within them.

4.6 In Summary

Despite the limited dataset, it is evident that more practitioners and stakeholders are being reached with capacity-building training that focuses on embedding GCE into the sector. Internal data from Saolta's training

⁵ IDEA, 2022. See: <https://www.ideaonline.ie/our-members>

⁶ Bridge 47: See: <https://bridge47.org/>

programmes notes participation of actors at key entry points of GCE in ACE. This includes those working at local government level, higher education, further education, and community education. However, it is evident that current capacity-building measures are being engaged by specifically motivated individuals and organisations within these target groups. Capacity-building is not yet fully adopted at an institution-wide level within any sub-sector. Participant figures demonstrate an important role for the ETBI, SOLAS, DFHRIS, HEIs, PPN administrators, along with key operational personnel in training centres and colleges. These key actors are instrumental to increasing the provision of, and participation in, training opportunities among their membership and/or staff.

Part 5: Analysis and Recommendations

Due to the diversity and scale of the ACE Sector, there are ample opportunities for the integration of GCE into the sector. This diversity builds on the strengths of the sector to provide GCE that is relevant to the varying geographical, experiential and skills-based needs of the learners. While there are challenges to establishing a baseline that captures the range of GCE activity occurring due to the representativeness of the data from ACE sub-sectors, nonetheless, the report does provide some initial descriptions for a baseline, while offering important insights for future research considerations. Below shares some of the information from this report and identifies two points to progress from: i) further reach and capacity building for ACE practitioners, ii) A whole of sector approach to GCE integration and research participation.

5.1 Summary of initial baseline insights

ETB-FET Providers

220 learners engaged in GCE activity in 2021 by ETB-supported FE providers
High levels of willingness to engage and network with partners on GCE-related activities

27

Average class intake at HEIs providing ITE training for ACE practitioners

597 LA/PPN Participants

Engaged through Saolta's training workshops and seminars.
15 out of 31 PPNs have participated in GCE training

Higher NGO Staff Capacity

Out of 28 NGOs surveyed 55 staff members have specific responsibility for GCE activity. Suggesting that organisations have expertise within the sector to educate, support and partner with other institutes and centres

Over 3000 learners

Engaged in GCE by non-ETB Community Education providers.
Out of 5 respondents in this cohort, 10 staff had specific GCE-related responsibilities

1478 Learners

Engaged in GCE by Community Development/Work providers
31 staff members had specific GCE-related responsibilities out of a sample of 5 respondents in this sub-sector

14,549 Learners

Engaged across FET, Community education (Non-ETB), NGOs, Community Development/Work and Local Authorities/PPNs

Participation per activity type:

Workshops – 6758
Public Events - 2700
Seminars – 1440
Accredited Courses - 1256

842 Practitioners & Stakeholders

Participated through Saolta's workshops. These participants have included practitioners and stakeholders from local government, NGOs, HEIs, FEIs, and more

Geographical Reach

Majority of GCE providers are located in counties with large urban centres: Dublin (32%), Cork (10%), and Galway (7%)
46% of NGOs operate across local/county wide level, 29% operate nationally, and 13% operate at European/International level

5.2 Future Considerations/Action Points

5.2.1 Enhancing quality and effectiveness of GCE

The complexity of enumerating and capturing the extent of GCE in the ACE sector highlights the challenge and subsequently the opportunities in enhancing GCE activities, practices and outcomes.

The numbers of participants and potential reach of practitioners and learning centres outlined in this report, will be enhanced by greater awareness of the tenets of GCE in the wider ACE sector. As such a call-to-action to key gatekeepers within the sector both at administrative level within each setting, and at statutory level to avail of opportunities to increase levels of capacity across the sector. Steps towards improving quality and effectiveness of current and future GCE are dependent on practitioners within the ACE sector having the awareness, the skills to integrate GCE into their work, and the opportunities to communicate and share the work they do. Whether it is in formal settings in subjects such as education for sustainable development or tourism and hospitality, or in informal learning activities such as storytelling and community workshops, GCE has the potential to enhance teaching and learning in the ACE sector. Due to the myriad of examples for GCE activities, providing structures outside of training programmes for practitioners will help to initiate, reinforce and support GCE integration through a whole of institute approach for FE and Adult Learning Centres. Saolta has a number of initiatives, both current and upcoming, that will provide further opportunities for embedding GCE in the ACE sector by building communities of practice of GCE. For example, a pilot of an award framework for GCE in FET will take place in 2023 covering 6 areas of activity in Adult Learning Centres (Curriculum Planning, Extra-Curricular, Tutor Capacity and Engagement, Student Capacity and Engagement, Centre Leadership and Policies, Community Engagement and Partnerships). This will support centres, students and educators in their endeavours to integrate GCE and provide a reflective and evaluative process in their GCE journeys.

5.2.2 Whole Sector Approach to GCE integration and research participation

In response to the availability of data regarding the enumeration of GCE activities across the ACE sector, a whole sector approach to GCE integration will greatly support the ability to establish a more comprehensive picture of the work across the sub-sectors described above. Continuing to develop our partnerships with governing bodies and organisations, who may have greater reach across the ACE sector, such as ETBI, SOLAS, DFHRIS, HEIs, and PPN administrators, could improve the quality of data returned for future research. As a part of this approach two questions should be considered. First, in what ways are adult learning centres and sites of community education collecting information about GCE activity in their institutes through formal and informal learning opportunities? Secondly, what are the challenges in overcoming current obstacles to collecting this data?

The third edition of the Mapping report of GCE activity in the ACE sector will be published in 2023 giving further opportunities for organisations and individual practitioners in GCE to participate in obtaining a clearer picture of GCE activity in Ireland. As such, further development of a database of relevant stakeholders and identifying key individuals in organisations best placed to respond to calls for research participation will be of benefit.

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Saolta

*Empowerment for a better world through
Adult and Community Education.*



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