Review of *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* for the Centre for Global Education
Prepared by Community Change
May 2012

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Statement of Responsibility: Community Change

This document has been prepared on the basis of information and explanations provided by the client, from robust information sources and from primary research completed by Community Change.

The document, including related assumptions, is the sole responsibility of the client who has confirmed that they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the information is accurate in light of all information currently available. The client also agrees with and accepts responsibility for the narrative in this document.

Executive Summary

1. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* is connecting with its expected primary readership group. The most significant number of respondents identified themselves as Development Education practitioners but there were also respondents in the education sector who focussed on post-primary, higher and/or adult education.

2. There was recognition of a strong focus on the strengthening of the capacity of the development education sector. Particularly relevant in terms of education is the view of over 80% of respondents that *Policy and Practice*, '*…is playing a significant role in building the academic credibility and respectability of Development Education across Ireland'*.

3. Other themes relevant to the Development Education sector were identified as being presented in *Policy and Practice*. These additional themes included interdependence, social justice, inclusion, equality, diversity, active participation and human rights.

4. The stated Strategic Aim of *Policy and Practice* is '*To enhance communication, improve practice and strengthen capacity in the development education sector in Ireland*.' Respondents to the questionnaire actually came from four continents, all of whom positively noted the personal and professional impact of the journal. It is therefore clear from the geographical spread of respondents that the impact of the journal is much farther than just the development education sector across Ireland.

5. Whilst the focus of the readership is obviously on professional development there was recognition that *Policy and Practice* also supports individuals on a personal level. In particular respondents identified that the journal encourages them to keep going when things are difficult and challenges them to do things they have not done before.

6. The move to offer the journal online only is viewed very positively by respondents. The specific experience of the online version was overwhelmingly positive and some 85% of respondents now prefer to read articles or the whole journal on their computer.

7. While it is certainly clear that respondents do think they are learning, being encouraged to reflect and that the journal makes an important contribution to building the capacity of the development education sector, there would still appear to be opportunity to offer greater challenge to readers. This may take the form of more critical or challenging articles and the i*ntroduction of new and innovative methodologies*. This is a clear opportunity for the editorial to expand thinking and encourage greater creativity in Development Education in Ireland and across the globe.

Organisational Summary

The Centre for Global Education (CGE) was established in 1986 by eight development agencies to provide education services that will enhance awareness of international development issues.

Its central remit is to challenge dominant stereotypes and commonly held perceptions of developing countries which are prevalent in our society. The Centre believes that education can empower individuals and communities to play an active role in addressing the causes of poverty and injustice around the world.

The Centre's Mission Statement

The Centre for Global Education believes in and works towards a just and equitable world. We seek to promote an understanding of the interdependency of people across the world.

We will achieve excellence in our practice through the participation of users in our work and engagement with the increasingly diverse communities living in our society.

Our mission is to use education to challenge the causes of global poverty both locally and globally through action at all levels and in all sectors of society.

The Centre's Aims

- ➢ To act as a resource for research and education on global issues.
- ➢ To influence policy and decision-makers with respect to development education.
- ➢ To encourage the use of development education methodologies to bring about change at a local and global level.
- ➢ To support the ongoing work of groups / organisations that foster social and economic equality at a local and global level.
- ➢ To liaise and network with relevant agencies and groups.

The Centre's Strategic Goals

1. Connecting with Communities – to maintain durable and strong relationships with local communities that enable people to develop awareness and understanding of global poverty issues and work toward positive social action.

2. Networking with Partners – to sustain a mutually beneficial network of partnerships with organisations that share our values and support our work on global poverty issues.

3. Researching Practice – to influence debate on the practice of development education by documenting and disseminating learning we acquire through our work.

4. Advocating Policy Change – to create positive change for development education at a policy level.

5. Sustaining Performance – to ensure that that the Centre sustains the conditions for attitudinal change among those with whom we work to effect action on global poverty issues

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review is the flagship publication of the Centre for Global Education and the only journal on global education published in the island of Ireland. It features contributions from practitioners in a range of education settings based in Ireland, Britain, across Europe, North America and the developing world. It is in its seventh year of operation, and is available as an open-access online publication to increase accessibility and global reach. It aims to widen the global education sector's understanding of the delivery and effectiveness of development education at local and international levels.

Policy and Practice is published bi-annually, and aims to provide a space for practitioners to critically reflect on their practice and discuss the main challenges faced by practitioners such as funding, evaluation and monitoring practice. The journal features in-depth contributions on aspects of global education practice such as research, methodologies, monitoring and evaluation, the production of resources, enhancing organisational capacity, strategic interventions in education, and sectoral practice. The journal aims to share research findings, update academics and practitioners on policy developments, celebrate and promote existing good practice in global education, inform the work of practitioners in development education and related adjectival education organisations, and to promote global education within the statutory education sector in Ireland.

Policy and Practice is published as part of a programme titled 'Building Capacity in the Development Education Sector in Ireland' which is funded by Irish Aid. The other activities in this programme include an annual conference and bi-annual workshops that aim to strengthen practice in development education.

The Agreed Process

In 2010 The Centre for Global Education commissioned an external evaluation of its 'Building Capacity in the Development Education Sector in Ireland' programme, including *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*. This shorter review of the journal is a follow up to that more extensive evaluation.

A meeting was held on 20th March 2012 between Stephen McCloskey, Centre for Global Education and Phillip Rankin, Community Change, to discuss possible evaluation options. At this meeting it was agreed to use only questionnaires for data collection and that Community Change would produce this in consultation with the Centre for Global Education. Once agreed the Centre for Global Education would distribute the questionnaire by email and replies would be sent directly to Community Change.

To support the development of the questionnaire, the Centre for Global Education provided Community Change with a number of documents:

- Centre for Global Education's application to 'Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs Development Education Funding Scheme 2011'
- Selby, David & Kagawa, Fumiyo (2010) *Building Capacity in Development Education Project: Phase 2 Evaluation Report* Sustainability Frontiers

It was also agreed that Community Change would undertake analysis only of the information gathered in the questionnaires. Although other documentation was provided and could be referred to in support of an understanding of the context, no analysis of location, numbers of readers, numbers accessing the website etc. would be undertaken by Community Change. This information is already contained in monitoring information and therefore the Centre for Global Education is already aware of it.

The questionnaire was agreed for use on 30th March 2012 and distributed by email immediately following. A closing date for returns was set for 5th May 2012 and a reminder for completion was sent on 26th April 2012. Community Change completed the collation of all questionnaires and subsequently undertook the analysis of this data.

Review and Analysis

Point One: Target Group

From the data collected it is clear that, as originally outlined in the application to 'Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs Development Education Funding Scheme 2011', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review* is reaching its primary target group.

The post primary and further education sectors and Development Education practitioners were presented as the primary target groups. The most significant number of respondents identified themselves as Development Education practitioners. All other respondents were in the education sector, focussed on post-primary, higher and/or adult education sectors.

This is clearly positive because Development Education practitioners are the primary target audience identified for the journal. This might also be understood as an opportunity to expand the readership.

There are many factors that influence the return of a questionnaire. By way of one example, being in full time employment rather than a volunteer can increase the likelihood of response. It may perhaps be the case that there are a greater number of readers in full-time employment as Development Education practitioners thus increasing the likely number of respondents from that sector over other sectors.

However the lower number of respondents to this questionnaire from other sectors might alternatively point towards the possibility of a lower number of readers from those sectors. This can't be stated with a high degree certainty and it is should therefore be investigated further. However, until such time as further investigation might take place, it would be beneficial to remain aware of this possibility in any marketing or promotion related to *Policy and Practice*.

As alluded to in the example above the majority of respondents identified as being in full-time employment. This may be a reflection of the fact that those in full-time employment are more likely to respond to a questionnaire that has a direct connection to their employment. However, similar to the point made above, it may point towards the possibility of a lower number of readers of *Policy and Practice* who work in the Development Education sector on a part-time or voluntary basis.

The primary target audience remains those working as Development Education practitioners but 'working' in this case should be understood as broader than only 'full time employment'. Again, this requires further investigation but in terms of marketing and promotion it may be case that individuals working in the sector on a part time or voluntary basis are not aware of *Policy and Practice* or they may not think that the journal adequately meets their needs.

Issue for Reflection: Are the lower numbers of respondents to this questionnaire from the Non-Formal Education Sector occurring because people in this sector aren't aware of the journal or for other reasons? Are the lower numbers of respondents to this questionnaire who work in the Development Education sector on a part-time or voluntary basis occurring because those people aren't aware of the journal or for other reasons?

Although the exact reasons for these points require further investigation, a possible response to expansion of the readership could be to market differently or to explore some new content that is more specifically relevant to others in the sector. Additionally, content more directly relevant to the informal education sector could be explored thus connecting more fully with another group of potential new readers who have an interest in development education.

Point Two: Specified Themes

The *Strategic Aim* specified in the application to 'Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs Development Education Funding Scheme 2011' is "*To enhance communication, improve practice and strengthen capacity in the development education sector in Ireland.*" Further to this the following six Strategic Objectives were stated:

"*The project aims to strengthen development education capacity by:*

- *Enabling development educators and their partners to share good practice;*
- *Supporting effective networking within the development education sector and between DE practitioners and other sectors in civil society;*
- *Enhancing the professional development of practitioners;*
- *Promoting and celebrating the achievements of development education in delivering effective practice to target groups;*
- *Providing opportunities for reflection and debate on DE practice;*
- *Supporting cross-border linking through the delivery of events in the north and south of Ireland.*"

Respondents to the questionnaire were clear that the primary benefit of reading *Policy and Practice* was being kept informed of developments in the Development Education sector, thereby strengthening development education capacity. Further to this, on a scale where 1 is lowest and 5 is highest, participants were asked to rate how well they think that *Policy and Practice* supports each of the following:

- strengthening the third level profile of DE?
- networking within the sector?
- strengthening research practice in the DE sector?
- enhancing the policy environment of DE?
- sustaining the performance of the sector?
- making connections with other education sectors?

Table One: Impact of *Policy and Practice* (*where 5 is highest and 1 lowest*)
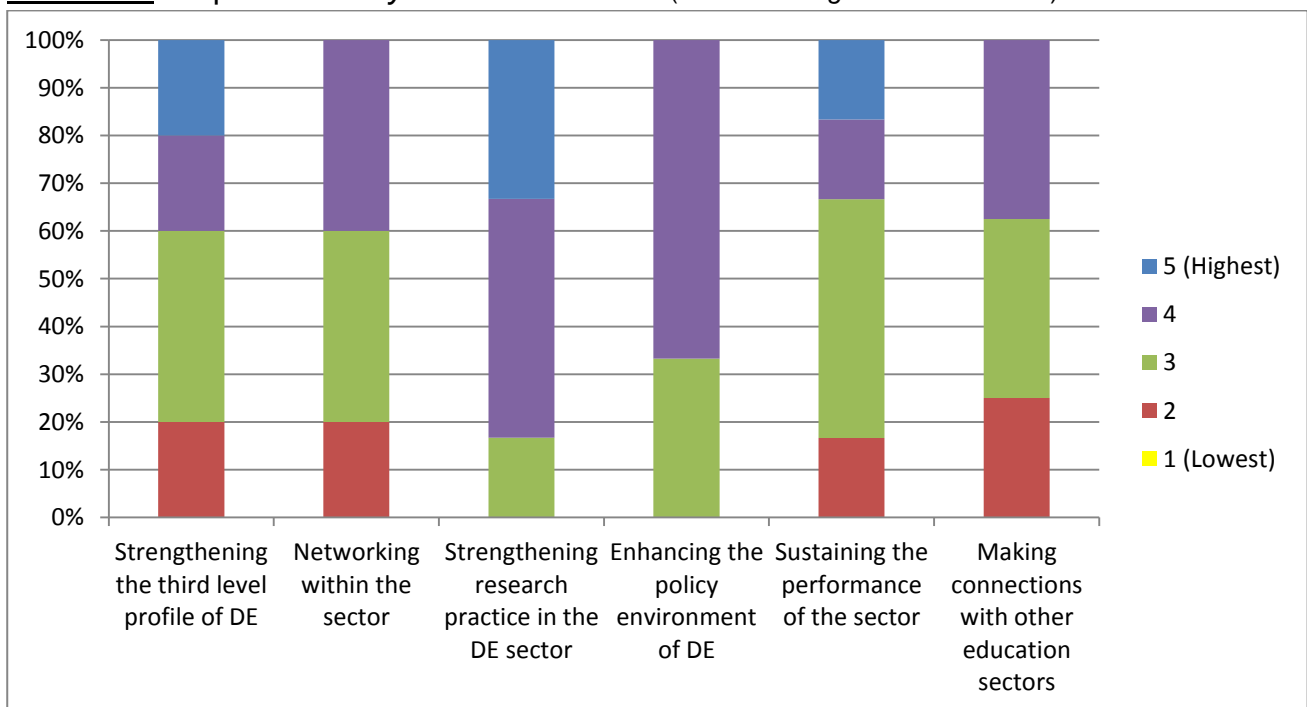

Although there was some range in the responses, respondents considered the journal's

role in strengthening, enhancing and sustaining development education as generally high or very high. Particular emphasis was given to the strengthening of research practice in the development education sector.

Clearly this then impacts on sustaining the performance of the development education sector and providing an opportunity to strengthen the third level profile of development education. As discussed in Point One, this strengthening of profile is also to be observed by the readership of the journal, with a significant number coming from the post-primary education sector.

Respondents were clear that a broad range of themes were being presented in *Policy and Practice*. Some of these included interdependence, social justice, inclusion, equality, diversity, active participation and human rights. In this instance respondents were asked to rate how supportive they thought the journal was of each of the themes. The responses are in <u>Table Two</u> below:

<u>Table Two</u>: Additional Themes in *Policy and Practice*
(*where 5 is very supportive and 1 is not at all supportive*)
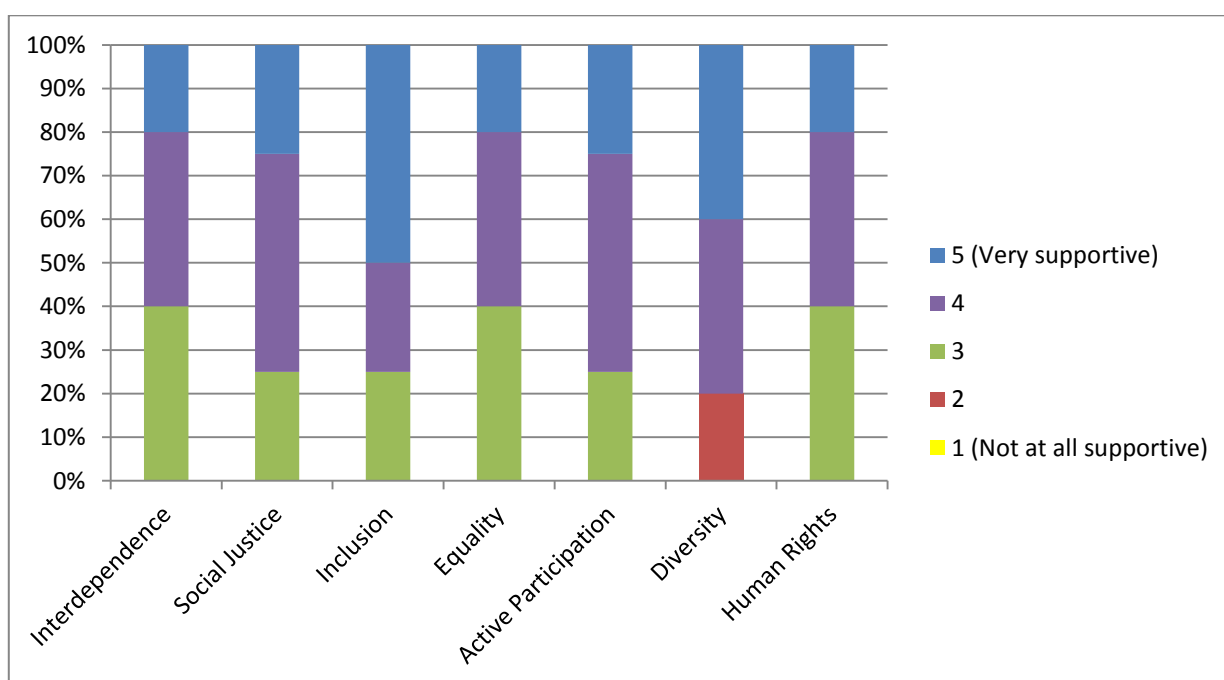
The identification of these themes demonstrates the additionality that the journal offers, providing a broader range of information than might be expected. It is certainly the case that a broader range of themes relating to education and sustainable development are being explored than were specified in the initial funding application for the journal.

All respondents were clear that *Policy and Practice* reflected current trends in development education. This enabled them to keep informed of current developments in the development education sector and to strengthen their own capacity as a practitioner. Indeed over 80% of respondents stated the journal made a high or very high contribution to building the capacity of the Development Education sector across Ireland.

With respondents being employed in education and development education, there will be clear benefits for organisations employing these readers. However, the focus of the readership was very much on their individual personal and professional development and not on utilising the journal as a platform for their organisation.

Particularly relevant in terms of education is the view of over 80% of respondents that *Policy and Practice*, '…*is playing a significant role in building the academic credibility and respectability of Development Education across Ireland*'.

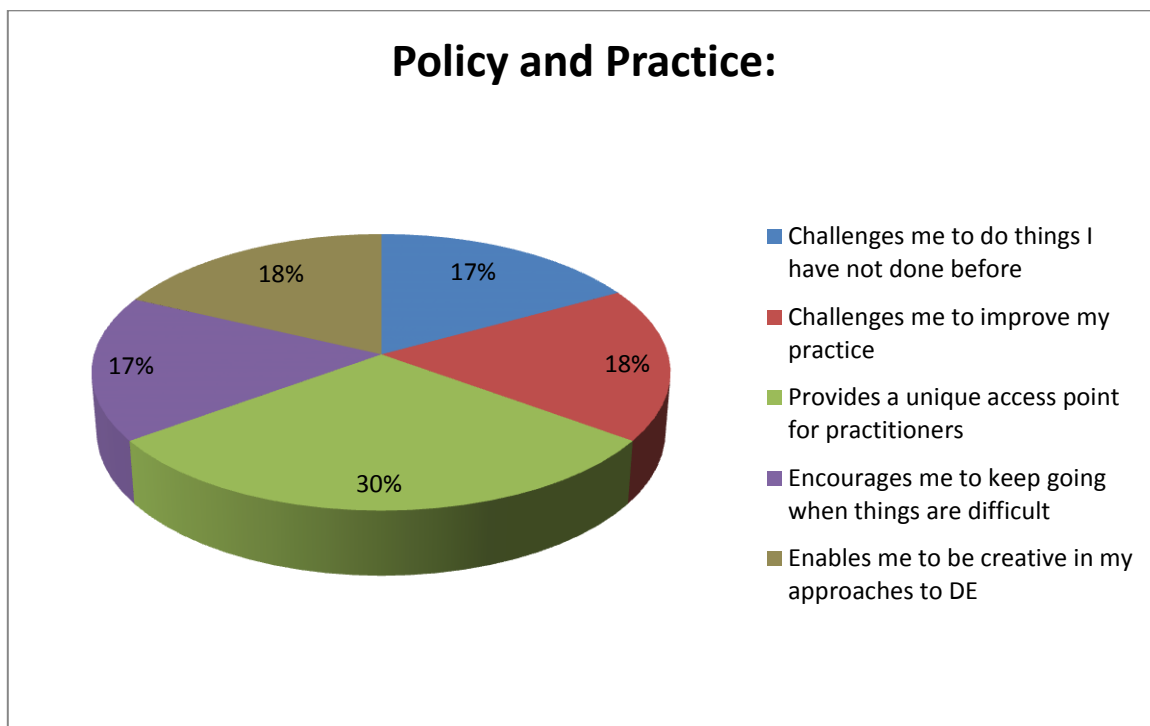**Point Three: Additional Readership Information**

The stated Strategic Aim of the journal is '*To enhance communication, improve practice and strengthen capacity in the development education sector in Ireland.*' However it is clear from the geographical spread of respondents that the impact of the journal is much farther than just the development education sector in Ireland. Respondents to the questionnaire came from four continents, all of whom positively noted the personal and professional impact of the journal.

This international appeal and impact is also reflected in the use of the journal website. Similar to the questionnaire respondents, the primary users of the website are based in Ireland, the UK and USA but it is accessed in significant numbers right across the globe.

Issue for Reflection: The significant numbers of international respondents was surprising and very positive. However there was a single comment that the journal is, "….*is more focused on Ireland. Please make it more inclusive of 'developing countries' perspective. Also make it more critical of the developmental practices and paradigms including global citizenship.*" Giving reference to the journal's international audience is clearly something that should be given credence, perhaps ensuring that sufficient contributions are being drawn from the 'developing countries'.

As noted above, the primary focus of the journal readers is on their own personal interest and professional development. Reflecting on the personal impact of the journal, respondents identified the following:

Table Three

Policy and Practice:

- Challenges me to do things I have not done before — 17%
- Challenges me to improve my practice — 18%
- Provides a unique access point for practitioners — 30%
- Encourages me to keep going when things are difficult — 17%
- Enables me to be creative in my approaches to DE — 18%

Issue for Reflection: While there is an obvious focus of the readership on their professional development the personal interest is also important. This will not always be an easy balance to strike but it is important to remain aware of it. The fact that almost 20% of respondents identified that the journal, 'Encourages me to keep going when things are difficult' shows that it has an impact beyond only the transmitting of knowledge. This additional benefit should be recognised and it may be useful to endeavour to encourage this in all journal submissions.

Point Four: Continuing Development of the Journal Presentation

In *Building Capacity in Development Education Project: Phase 2 Evaluation Report* a comment was made about the impact of moving to an online version of the journal.[1] In this questionnaire based evaluation the response to the move to an online version is very positive. Only approximately 15% of respondents are downloading the whole journal to printing, with the other 85% preferring to read articles or the whole journal on computer.

Further to this, respondents were asked about their specific experiences of the online version and this was overwhelmingly positive. See Table Four below:

Table Four: Experiences of the Online Journal
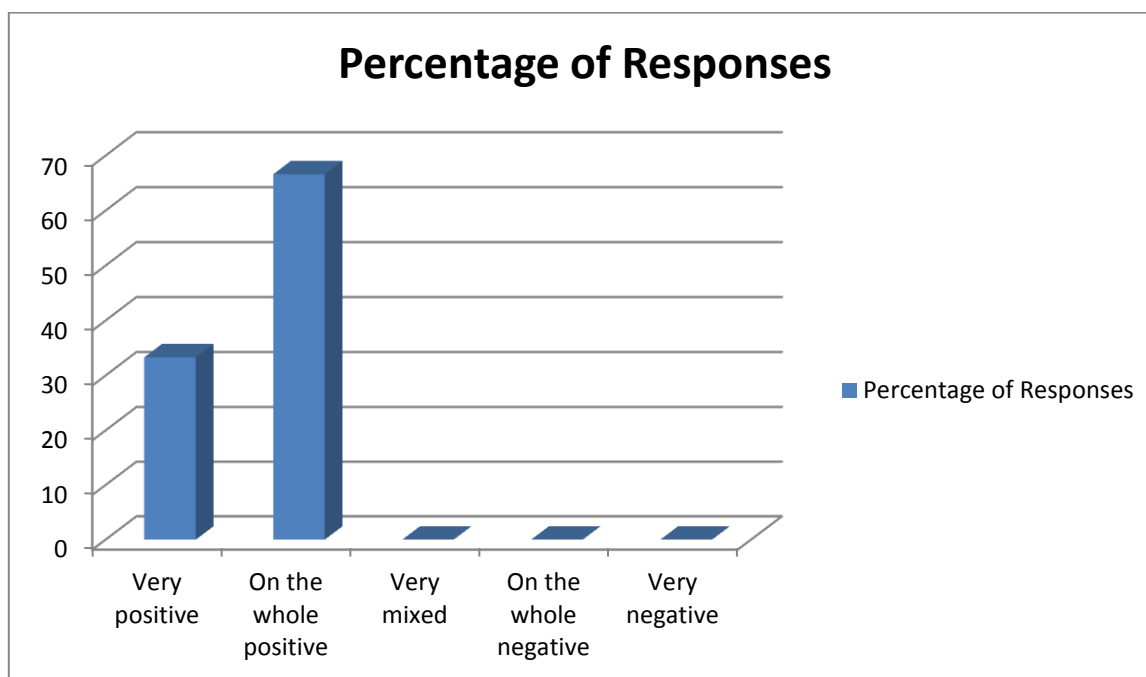
One element of this positive experience relates to the layout and appearance of the journal in its online format. Over 80% of respondents said that layout and appearance are fine as they are and required no change.

However there were a few comments relating to three sections of the journal. Although no specific recommendations for improvement were given by respondents, a number of people did score their experience of the Editorial, Viewpoint and Resource Review sections as below average.

Issue for Reflection: Although the general overall experience of all respondents was positive or very positive, are there improvements that could be made to the Editorial, Viewpoint and Resource Review sections to improve reader experience?

In *Building Capacity in Development Education Project: Phase 2 Evaluation Report* it is stated that, "*It is interesting to note…..that the Comment Box facility appearing under each article since going online is but rarely utilised, another indication of dialogic shortfall.*"[2] It appears to be the case that these circumstances have not altered in the intervening period.

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[1]   Selby, David & Kagawa, Fumiyo (2010) *Building Capacity in Development Education Project: Phase 2 Evaluation Report* Sustainability Frontiers, Page 10

[2]   Selby, David & Kagawa, Fumiyo (2010) *Building Capacity in Development Education Project: Phase 2 Evaluation Report* Sustainability Frontiers, Page 17
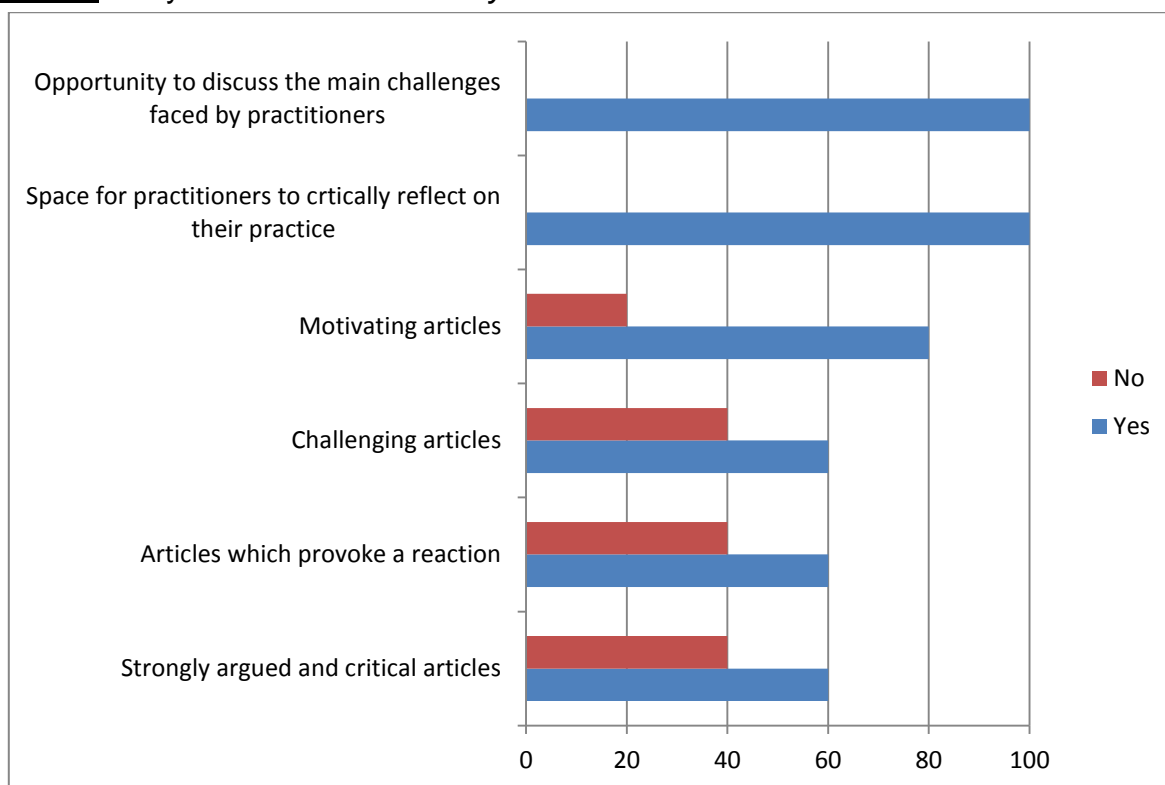
All respondents stated that they either very rarely or never used the available online comment box. An interest in this feature was expressed but it is clear that it is not yet a priority for those responding readers.

Issue for Reflection: As stated, there is an interest in the comment opportunity offered but it is not utilised. It can take time to generate the benefits of an online community and, if thought necessary, the Centre for Global Education would need to devote time to develop this. As Selby and Kagawa previously stated, "Conversion to online is not a one-off event but rather a process in which the dialogic potential of the website needs to be harnessed and developed to best effect over time. Ideas for capitalising on the interactive and convergence potential of the website need to be given serious consideration by the Editorial Group, and their viability and effectiveness tested, as part of that process."[3]

Point Five: Continuing Development of the Journal Content

In a similar vain to the presentation of *Policy and Practice,* respondents were complimentary about the content of the journal. As can be seen from Table Five below, there are however a number of areas where possible improvement might still be possible.

Table Five: Do you think that the *Policy and Practice* contains sufficient:

While all respondents stated that the journal offered opportunity to discuss the main challenges faced by practitioners and space for practitioners to critically reflect on their experience, and over 80% of respondents were clear that articles provided motivation there was much less consensus about some other areas.

Some 40% of respondents did not think that there were sufficient strongly argued and

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[3]   Selby, David & Kagawa, Fumiyo (2010) *Building Capacity in Development Education Project: Phase 2 Evaluation Report* Sustainability Frontiers, Page 26

critical articles, articles which provoke a reaction or challenging articles. While it is certainly clear that respondents do think they are learning, being encouraged to reflect and that the journal makes an important contribution to building the capacity of the development education sector across Ireland, there would still appear to be scope to stretch peoples' thinking somewhat.

Respondents listed the broad range of statements covering areas such as the presentation of empirical research, the role of the journal in building the academic credibility and respectability of development education across Ireland and the effectiveness of the journal in blending development education policy, theory and practice as either high or very high. However there are three that could be considered as areas of development and these are illustrated in Table Six below:

Table Six: *Policy and Practice*….
              (where 1 is lowest and 5 highest)
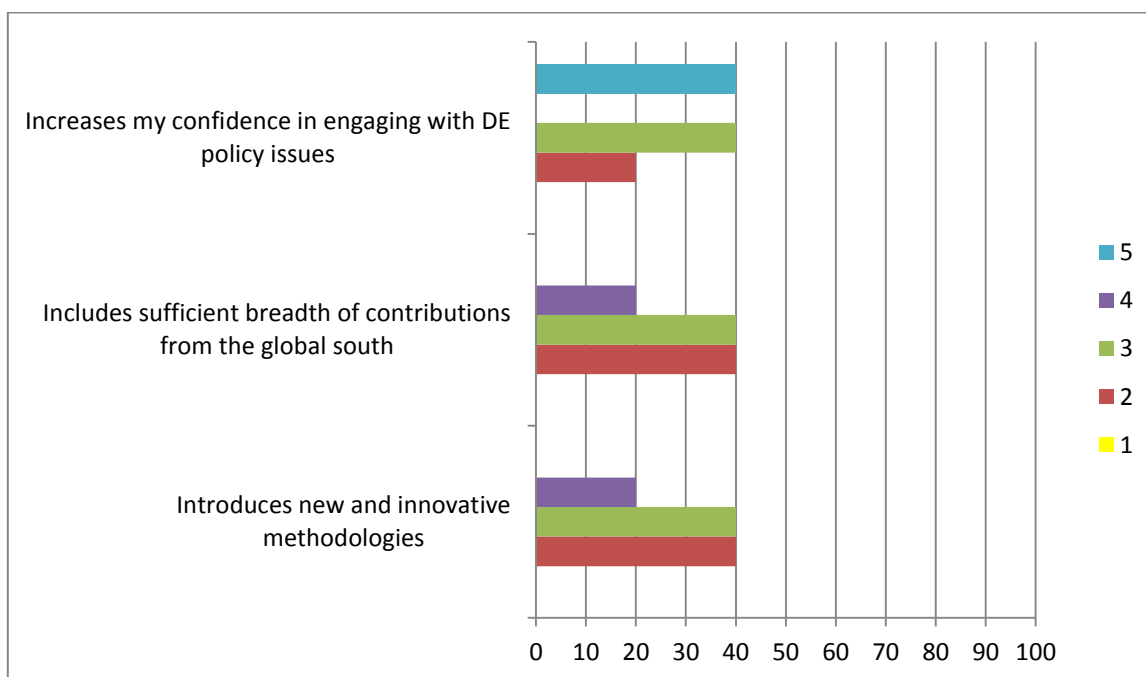
These were the only three statements with high percentages of low or average scores. Particularly relevant to the desire for more critical or challenging articles is the opportunity to '*Introduce new and innovative methodologies*'. There is also a view that there could be an increase in contributions from the global south and this too may have an impact in presenting more critical and challenging articles.

Issue for Reflection: Can a culture of new and challenging ideas be developed within the journal? As stated, there is clear learning and confidence being drawn from *Policy & Practice* but there is also an interest in being challenged. This is an opportunity for the editorial team to expand thinking and encouraging innovative ideas to take root in development education in Ireland.

Conclusion

Policy and Practice aims to raise the level and quality of development education practice in the island of Ireland by strengthening the capacity of practitioners and promoting their work. The journal's role in strengthening, enhancing and sustaining Development Education is considered high or very high by respondents and it is clear from responses that capacity is certainly being increased across Ireland but also much further afield.

Policy and Practice offers very positive additionality in areas such as social justice, equality, and human rights. This positive outcome should not be underestimated and indeed goes further than was anticipated in the original funding application to Irish Aid. There may remain opportunity to further expand these themes and increase reader numbers but at this point *Policy & Practice* is continuing to play, "….a significant role in building the academic credibility and respectability of Development Education across Ireland."

It is also clearly the case that this academic credibility and respectability is being accessed by readers not just across Ireland but across the globe. The fact that responses to the questionnaire came from four different continents speaks very highly of the value that those readers are placing on the journal and its impact on both professional and personal development.

The online nature of the journal may have supported the opportunity for international readers to access *Policy and Practice*. This opportunity might be further utilised, expanding the number of readers but also in the provision of additional support mechanisms. The comment section on the website remains under used but there is an interest in its application. This is one particular area that could be used to further international participation and interaction, potentially impacting on the strengthening, enhancement and sustaining of Development Education practitioners across the world and across Ireland in particular.

From the responses it is clear that *Policy and Practice* is certainly having a positive impact on Development Education in Ireland and across the globe and there is a very clear desire for the continuance of the journal from respondents. As noted in the 'Issues for Reflection' throughout this report there are areas were further development of the journal might be possible but the already positive influence of Policy and Practice in Ireland and internationally is to be commended.