



# A Charter for Education

General Teaching Council  
for Northern Ireland



## Foreword

For some the notion of a Charter for Education may seem strange in an environment characterised by multi-layered planning regimes and associated targets and objectives.

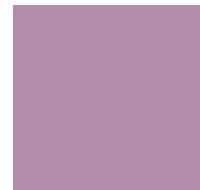
The reality, however, is that we as a society need periodically to reflect in an objective manner on what we understand to be the core purpose of education itself and, as importantly, the responsibilities that fall to all who are engaged, formally or informally, in that special work. This Charter document articulates what might be called the 'moral purposes' of our work, and in doing so, it helps to throw into relief the circumstances that must prevail and the commitments we must make to ensure that our vision becomes a reality and our goals realised.



Eddie McArdle



Eddie Ferguson



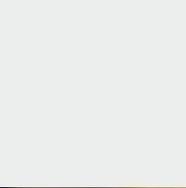
# A Charter for Education

## Introduction

Education, if it is to be meaningful in a world characterised by constant change and accelerating globalisation, must not only draw sustenance and understanding from the past, but must equally recognise the uncertainties of today and the opportunities of tomorrow.

The young people of Northern Ireland must develop the qualities, understanding and skills to participate successfully in the new knowledge economy. The problem facing all involved in education is that the knowledge economy itself generates pressures that seek to shape the educative process to its needs, and also can promote a notion of education that is overtly utilitarian. This is not to deny the importance of education as a vehicle for economic well-being; rather the point to be made is that education is about all aspects of life and the realisation of potential.

The UNESCO Delors Report (1996) "**Learning: The Treasure Within**", identified what it described as four essential pillars of learning. Two are directly related to the knowledge economy, namely **Learning to Know**: a recognition that knowledge is the basis of future development and is growing at an exponential rate, and **Learning to Do**: which describes how to apply knowledge in a creative and productive way. The two remaining pillars identified by the Delors Report are equally important. **Learning to Be**: which focuses on the area of personal understanding and development, and the need to recognise the notion of personal worth and personal responsibility, and **Learning to Live Together**: which is particularly apposite in a world characterised by uncertainty and conflict and increasing marginalisation of societies, communities and individuals, who do not or cannot fit easily with the norms or patterns required for our globalised economy and the knowledge society.



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In short, education has obvious – indeed vital – social and economic purposes. Equally, it must embrace all and meet the increasing demands of society, whilst remaining in the service of the individual; in so doing, education must seek to develop social capital, engender a commitment to excellence and contribute to the common good.

All of the above leads inevitably to the recognition that:

- education, in developing social capital, facilitates personal development and empowerment and contributes to communal well-being and social cohesion;
- education, in all its phases and aspects, is central to the knowledge economy and economic prosperity;
- education, in its fullest sense, embraces both the formal and informal and is the responsibility not just of professionals but of students, parents and society as a whole;
- a commitment to, and appropriate investment in education, in all phases, is an essential investment in Northern Ireland as an economic entity, and as importantly, as a stable society respectful of diversity and individual needs; and
- teaching is the core profession for the knowledge economy, in that it is the bedrock of knowledge development in all domains.

If we, as a society, are to realise the aspirations above then it is essential that all share a common understanding of the nature and purposes of education and that we commit ourselves as individuals and, where appropriate, as organisations to ensuring that the conditions required to facilitate the processes of education are in place. To this end, the Charter affords all an opportunity to evidence their commitment.

It will be the responsibility of all to translate the commitments of the Charter into actions that are supportive of its aspirations, and which will effectively facilitate their realisation. The creation of a system that ensures that our young people and indeed our society at large develops and prospers requires that those involved, in the sacred processes of education, meet their responsibilities and that we work in community to create tomorrow's prosperity and well-being.





# A Charter for Education in Northern Ireland

This Charter confirms that education is the path to self-realisation and personal fulfilment, civic well-being and economic prosperity. We who are charged with facilitating the education of our children and young people dedicate ourselves to developing a world-class education system for Northern Ireland. We are committed to creating the culture and circumstances that ensure that all who seek empowerment, enrichment and affirmation through education are afforded both the opportunities and the support that they may:

- **learn to know;**
- **learn to do;**
- **learn to be; and**
- **learn to live together.**

**In undertaking this task we:**

- **commit ourselves to the promotion of education as a liberating enterprise to be enjoyed by all;**
- **believe that education is a lifelong journey through which all can develop the ability to participate fully in society and lead lives that are both life creating and fulfilling;**



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- call for the development of an education service that ensures excellence for all, irrespective of ability or needs;
- acknowledge the primary role of parents, families and society in the context of education;
- affirm the contribution to society made by teachers and all others engaged in meeting the educational and developmental needs of young people;
- are committed to a culture of empowerment where the voice of the professional community is heard and respected;
- recognise the right of all engaged in the processes of education to on-going professional development appropriate to their needs;
- recognise the debilitating effects of social, cultural and economic deprivation and commit ourselves to addressing such issues;
- are committed to ensuring that the needs of the vulnerable are appropriately catered for in our system;
- are committed to ensuring that initiatives and programmes at all phases of education are appropriately funded; and
- believe that the basis of all sound policy development lies in consultation, appropriate research and data collation.



## Acknowledgements

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Strandtown Primary

Meánscoil Feirste

Shimna College

St. Mary's College





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