



Research on Universal Design of Shared Educational Campuses

Understanding user needs & experiences through **Personas and Scenarios** (extract from main report)

Revision History

Rev	Date	Written By	Checked By	Client
Rev E	29/09/2014	Tom Grey	Mark Dyer & Paddy Fletcher	The NDA's CEUD

Understanding user needs and experiences through Personas and Scenarios

(Extract: Chapter 7 from Key Findings and Recommendations Report)

Overall research: In response to the future use of the shared educational campus (SEC) approach in Ireland, a research study was carried out into the SEC model on behalf of the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the National Disability Authority. Based on an in-depth review of international best practice supported by interviews and workshops, the study found many benefits and equally many challenges facing the SEC concept.

Working with key stakeholders: Co-research and co-creation with key stakeholders was central to this research. In this regard, group activities were conducted using a hypothetical school campus. Workshop attendees were broken into groups and each individual within the group was given an information sheet which outlined a 'persona', which described a typical campus user and outlined their specific situation in relation to the hypothetical campus.

Each individual was asked to consider the educational campus from the perspective of the persona they were given and to provide feedback on this basis using an A4 handout which contained a number of key themes under which the participants could structure their responses. Feedback was recorded using these A4 handouts, and during the workshop from feedback via rapporteurs from each group who presented the issues emerging from each group.

For the full report see:

- <https://universaldesign.ie/Web-Content-/Research-on-Universal-Design-of-Shared-Educational-Campuses-in-Ireland.pdf>

- <https://www.tcd.ie/trinityhaus/research-areas/healthy-and-inclusive-places/>

7. Stakeholder Workshops

Bringing different disciplines together



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7.0. Introduction

Two stakeholder workshops were held during 2013, both of which were held at the National Disability Authority, Dublin. The first took place on December 16th 2013 and the second on March 11th 2014. The primary aim of these workshops was to engage once again with stakeholders in relation to the Universal Design (UD) of Shared Educational Campus (SEC) , and to keep them abreast of the research findings while gathering feedback to inform the research process and findings.

7.1. Workshop I – Aims and Outcomes

Workshop I was attended by over 25 individuals and comprised school principals, teachers, members of the Department of Education and Skills, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, special education and disability representative bodies, architects, planners, landscape architects and engineers.

The aims of workshop I included the following;

- To discuss the Shared Educational Campus (SEC) concept using national and international examples and to gather feedback from the stakeholders about their experiences, needs and preferences in relation to the SEC concept
- To consider how Universal Design can inform location, local access, and masterplanning of an SEC to create an inclusive learning environment for all users regardless of age, size, ability or disability, while also helping to break down the barriers between mainstream and special education needs
- To use feedback from the workshop to inform and direct the research findings and recommendations which will be prepared on behalf of the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the NDA

To help with these process group activities were conducted using a hypothetical school campus. The workshop attendees were broken into groups and each individual within the group was given an information sheet which outlined a ‘persona’, which described a typical campus user and outlined their specific situation in relation to the hypothetical campus.

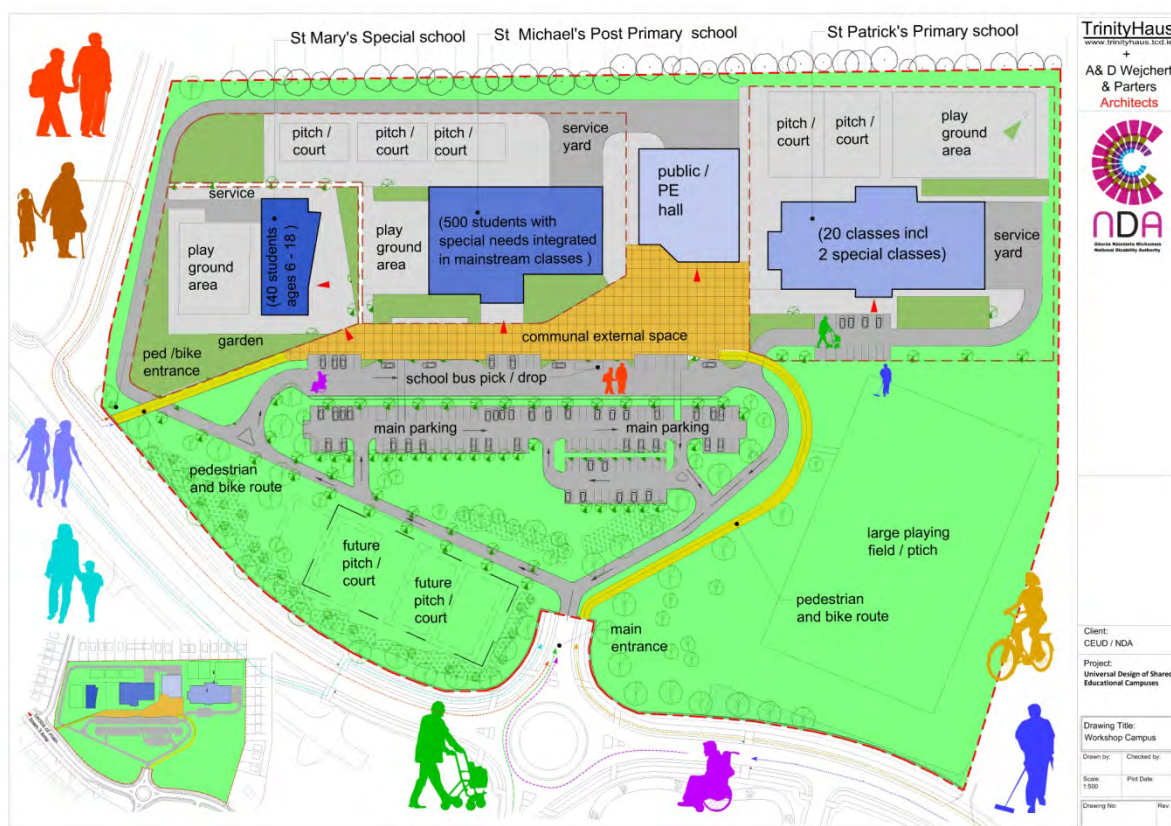


Figure 39 - Hypothetical school campus provided to stakeholder groups

Margaret



Name – Margaret

Age – 55 yrs

School – Margaret teaches junior cycle maths and science in St. Michaels

Margaret cycles most days a distance of 5 kms but doesn't really enjoy the stretch of road leading up to the school. While there is a cycle path the road is very exposed and not that pleasant a cycle. She also laments the lack of covered bicycle storage and hates dealing with a wet saddle!

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Figure 40 - An example of one of the workshop personas

Each individual was asked to consider the educational campus from the perspective of the persona they were given and to provide feedback on this basis using an A4 handout which contained a number of key themes under which the participants could structure their responses. Feedback was recorded using these A4 handouts, and during the workshop from feedback via rapporteurs from each group who presented the issues emerging from each group.

7.1.1. Main outcomes

While the participants were asked to comment on the hypothetical campus, much of the feedback had broader significance for the SEC concept regardless of the specific campus design or location. Therefore in order to make the feedback usable in the wider context of this research the comments have been generalised to make them applicable to this research in

the widest sense. For consistency, the feedback from this workshop is summarized under the same heading as those contained in the A4 handout mentioned above.

General Issues

- School provision and the design of educational environments must first and foremost support holistic educational objectives and should not be about adopting any particular design model for the sake of it. Is a single campus the right way to go?
- It is critical to adopt a cross sectoral decision making process to develop the design brief including site selection
- The size of the campus must be carefully considered. While very large schools or campuses may be too institutional, there may also be advantages for education in terms of economy of scale
- The school environment should reflect ‘normal life’ and facilitate ‘real life’ experiences
- The school should promote integration of all users especially between SEN and mainstream
- Encourage inter-generational mixing on the campus
- Reuse existing assets within towns rather than move to green field sites for convenience of construction
- Creating an environment that supports the independence of all campus users must underpin the location and design of the SEC
- Diversity of school provision and design is important as one size does not fit all
- Choice of schools and location is important for all users including students and parents
- The hierarchy of travel must change away from prioritising cars towards more people friendly solutions which support walking and cycling
- Provide efficient transport options in terms of public transport
- Overall the campus should allow the user to fully experience the environment and provide a link between the senses and the local environment / community / external space
- Promote the idea of citizenship and promote community ownership of the school

- The SEC approach will require new campus wide management structures

Location

- Ideally the SEC must be central or at least close to the community as opposed to edge of town locations
- Ease of access from community and general accessibility is vital. It is also important to provide alternate access points from the community to the campus
- The location should be safe for all users including access routes and approach
- The location should allow prioritization of pedestrians and cyclists
- The campus should promote meaningful connections between individuals and their local environment or community

Approach and Boundary Conditions

- Re-configure the hierarchy so that pedestrians and cyclists are prioritized over cars
- Provide proper walking and cycling infrastructure to ensure sustainable forms of transport
- Campus security is often too reliant on a secure boundary and single controlled points for entry. A more integrated approach to security is required

Entering and Exiting Campus

- Increase of access points from the community
- Take sensory engagement into account when considering entering and exiting points
- Provide mechanisms to support way-finding in relation to reaching the campus or entering and exiting
- Provide people-friendly routes which support pedestrians and cyclists
- Again safety for all users is critical in entering and exiting the campus

Moving Around Campus

- Carefully consider wayfinding and provide clear signage, maps and good levels of artificial lighting

- Reduce conflicting routes that may exist between various groups on the campus to encourage effective and comfortable movement around campus
- Maximise accessibility for all users on the campus
- Design circulation routes with maximum surveillance for passive security
- Incorporate elements that engage with the senses and which can aid circulation and navigation
- Make provision to address wet days (i.e. covered outdoor space)
- Facilitate activities that promote and encourage movement (i.e. physical exercise) that are also aligned with learning (i.e. nature walks, horticultural sites)
- Investigate technology-based solutions such as RFID for wayfinding and orientation on the campus

External spaces including play areas, communal spaces, sports fields or courts, parking, etc

- Accessibility to and within key external spaces for all users is critical
- Consider a 'village like' layout for school campuses
- Encourage integration of all users on the campus (reduce isolation by addressing barriers to effective integration)
- Use various surfaces and planting to engage with the senses and create a softer, more natural environment
- Promote engagement with external spaces and in turn among the campus users (i.e. include more social spaces / areas / seating; art spaces; horticultural spaces; natural play areas, etc)
- Consider colour-code areas to provide visual cues about the use and ownership of various spaces
- Again make provision to address wet days (i.e. covered outdoor space)

Approach to individual buildings

- Safety of all individuals is critical in terms of approaching and entering on-campus buildings

- Make sure there is a clear logic in terms of building layout, signage and lighting
- Accessibility to all buildings is critical for all users (i.e. for visual impairment consider surface textures to address this)
- Provide carefully designed social spaces and play areas (including passive play areas) to promote interaction

7.1.2. Conclusion to Workshop I

Overall the feedback from the workshop reinforced many of the issues raised during the stakeholders interviews. Some of the workshop participants questioned the campus approach in principle asking whether this was necessarily the right format at all. This concern was of particular relevance when the campus location was not central to the community and participants suggested that existing school facilities and local building assets should be maximised before any green-field options are examined. In line with this the issue of location was critical and all stakeholders agreed that any school should be central to the community and integrated with the community in manner that places the child in the community and provides real life experiences. The workshop also identified a range of design measures that must be considered as part of any UD approach but the issues around cross-sectoral decision making, a shared briefing process, and new forms of management emerged as critical factors to the successful implementation of the SEC approach.

7.2. Workshop 2 – Aims and Outcomes

Workshop 2, which took place on March 11th 2014, was attended by many of the stakeholder who were present at the first workshop. There were over 25 individuals which comprised a mix of organisations and individuals including: school principals; members of the Department of Education and Skills; the National Transport Authority; special education and disability representative bodies; architects, planners, landscape architects and engineers.

In advance of workshop 2 a document was circulated to all stakeholders which included an executive summary of the preliminary research report, and a summary of the key research findings up to that point. This document formed the basis for discussions at the workshop and was used to structure the workshop activities and capture feedback.

Overall the aims of workshop 2 included the following;

1. To recap on the first workshop and briefly outline the Shared Educational Campus (SEC) concept in the context of UD.
2. To prioritise the key themes and findings contained in the preliminary research report, and summary of the key findings, as circulated to all stakeholders prior to the event
3. To identify routes and opportunities for implementation based on stakeholder feedback.
4. To use feedback from the workshop to inform and direct the final research findings and recommendations report.

7.2.1. Main outcomes

As described above a document was circulated to all stakeholders and this formed the basis for the workshop. The key themes contained within this document included the following;

- Evidence based educational provision
- The challenges around bringing different schools and organisations together on a shared site
- Location of an SEC and integration into the community
- Breaking down barriers between mainstream and special educational needs
- Creating child and community friendly educational environments that support student-centred learning and lifelong learning

- Students, educators and the community shaping their own schools
- Design of key spatial and physical dimensions of an SEC

Following a presentation which outlined the research key findings up to that point, the workshop participants, who had been organised into groups similar to workshop 1, were furnished with copies of the preliminary finding and asked to complete two tasks. The first task involved a review of the research findings to identify gaps, suggest changes, and priorities the findings in accordance to their importance.

Evidence based educational provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School provision must first and foremost serve the best interest of the child, the family and the community, while facilitating age appropriate, child-centred, lifelong education which is an extension of the home and a preparation for life. The adoption of any planning or design model must not be driven by any specific approach but instead grounded in the needs and preferences of the community and reinforced by evidence based decision making.
The challenges around bringing different schools and organisations together on a shared site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the challenges around bringing together various educational or community organisations where there may be a difference in objectives, tradition, or ethos. • Identify an appropriate structure for overall campus management and integration while maintaining individual school identity and autonomy
Location of an SEC & integration into the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a conversation required about the relationship between schools and the community to agree on where to locate schools how best to integrate them into the community in a meaningful way. • The geographical location of an SEC in relation to the catchment area is critical to its success. Generally it must be located centrally within the community to ensure community integration and ease of access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. The size of a campus, which is determined by land availability, the overall student numbers and facilities to be accommodated, permitted or desired building heights, parking requirements, connection to public sewer and other such factors, will also influence the location depending on whether or not a suitable site is available within the community. A balance

Figure 41 - Sample of research findings handout as provided in workshop 2

The second task focused on the proposal of recommendations that would help identify routes and opportunities for implementing the key findings. It was suggested to the groups that these recommendations could involve different design and operation levels and incorporate aspects of planning, design or management. It was also suggested that the recommendations should include various means of implementation such as research, legislation, policy, or guidelines. The outcomes from these two exercises helped greatly in refining the findings and also in providing a wide range of both aspirational and pragmatic recommendations that have been used to inform the final research findings and recommendations as presented in this

document. These amended and refined findings along with the recommendations generated in Workshop 2 are detailed in the next and final chapter of this report.

Without getting into the details of these findings at this stage it is worth highlighting a few key issues which emerged strongly from the workshop, these are outlined briefly below.

Student and Community Centred School Provision

- This point reiterates one of the first issues emerging from the interview process and Workshop 1, that school provision should be about providing a holistic education for all students in an optimum location that provides support, and is supported by the community. As such school provision should not be driven by economic, planning, or infrastructural issues; these should instead serve the education system.

The Shared Education Campus Approach and Policy Framework

- It was suggested by many attendees that before any detailed consideration is given specifically to the SEC approach, it may be worth stepping back from the campus concept and firstly considering a framework to fully understand the needs of all stakeholders to determine the best approach for the community. For example, in certain locations, it may be important to consider which would present a better solution - a single campus versus a 'distributed learning' approach.
- In line with the SEC proposal in the programme for government it would be useful for the DES and other relevant government departments to issue a policy statement on SECs to help define the campus approach, establish policy objectives and set out a framework to engage with key stakeholders and provide further guidance for the relevant departments and local authorities.

Location and Community Integration

- In line with various government policy and planning and design guidelines which promote more compact development, there was universal support for the idea that schools should be at the heart of the community and should be considered as a vital piece of social infrastructure.
- In support of the above it was argued that schools should use existing community facilities and while also adapting existing non-educational buildings as schools where available and appropriate.

Design Process and Engagement

- The school planning and design process needs to be community driven and the briefing process must identify, communicate and implement community needs. It was widely acknowledged that the existing design process does not engage sufficiently with the community or the school and that the decision making process must be changed to reflect a prioritisation of educational and community needs.
- To enable this process a framework to engage with key stakeholders must be developed such as community forums, staff liaisons, or ‘design champions’ who can advocate for certain groups and take part in the design process.

Planning

- Due to demographic pressures and years of underinvestment current school provision is largely reactive as opposed to proactive and while this is now changing it was argued that a more integrated approach to school location, planning and public transport is required for future development.
- Local authorities are critical to the delivery of an integrated school planning approach. As such, implementation of all school policy pertaining to local authority Development Plans, Local Area Plans or those contained within the various national urban design or planning guidelines is vital. If necessary additional measures to implement or enforce these policies may need to be put in place.

Governance, Management and Liability Issues

- New management structures required for overall campus management and integration while maintaining individual school identity and autonomy.
- Many stakeholders raised concerns over excessive control of children’s natural behaviour, play and exercise during school hours which may stunt child development and limit meaningful integration. Liability and legislation relating to litigation which impacts on children’s physical activity in school must be carefully handled, or amended if required, to enable enhanced integration, and an environment that supports healthy child development.

- In light of this any management structures must incorporate liability and insurance issues between the various organisations without creating segregation.

Information Communications Technology (ICT)

- The use of ICT needs to be considered from the very start and throughout the entire design and engagement process. ICT should be considered at the macro-, meso-, and micro- scale in terms of planning and design of SECs.

Implementation and Next Steps

- As mentioned above a policy framework outlining the key SEC objectives would help bring more clarity to the issue.
- Use case studies and to evidence based research of exemplars to inform future policy.

7.2.2. Conclusion to Workshop 2

Workshop 2 proved to be a very informative event where there was broadly a consensus in relation to the main themes presented. As discussed above, some key themes from the interviews and the first workshop were reiterated, while some new issues were introduced. Overall the second workshop brought greater clarity to the research findings and helped prioritise the key issues; all themes are fully described in the next chapter.

7.3. Summary and overall conclusions

To summarise, both workshops were well attended and the stakeholders provided detailed and often passionate feedback. The aims of the workshops included: informing attendees about the SEC concept nationally and internationally; gathering feedback from stakeholders about their needs and preferences; examining how the UD approach could support integrated planning and design; and, finally using stakeholder feedback to inform and shape the research findings. The workshops achieved these aims but also indicated a greater concern around school provision generally. The attendees expressed clearly that education should be a national and local priority and that schools should be viewed as key pieces of social infrastructure where decision making involves all stakeholders at all levels.

7.3.1. Key issues arising from chapter

- School provision must prioritise holistic educational objectives that best serve the student and the community
- Students, staff and communities must play a key role in shaping their own schools through stakeholder consultation and participatory design process and this must be allied with a cross-sectoral approach to school planning.
- Ideally a school should be located in the heart of the community to maximise integration, provide access for all members of the community, and promote sustainable modes of travel.
- An SEC should strive to break down barriers between mainstream and SEN, and between the school and the community.
- The key to a successful SEC will involve innovative campus management structures that protect each schools identity but facilitate enhanced co-operation.
- An SEC must strive to create child and community friendly environments built at a human scale that generate a sense of community.
- The planning and design of an SEC must provide environments that are accessible, usable and easily understood by all users. Increased access points to the campus from the community, well designed circulation supported by good wayfinding, and design that engages with all the senses were seen as important components for many stakeholders.