

Teaching About

THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Ideas and Proposals to enhance In-service and Pre-service Teacher Education programmes from
a Multidisciplinary Perspective

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Introduction:

Launched in Haiti in 1998, the Transatlantic Slave Trade (TST) Education Project is implemented by UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) in the Education sector in co-operation with The Slave Route Project in the Culture sector.

The TST project, as it is called, aims to break the silence surrounding the Transatlantic Slave Trade while forging new triangular links between over 100 ASPnet schools in 20 countries in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe. The goal of the project is an increased awareness of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, its causes and its consequences. Promoting mutual respect and intercultural dialogue is thus a priority.

Project activities include developing new educational approaches and material to teach effectively about the TST and organizing a wide range of intercultural activities, often linked to preserving the intangible heritage and long-ignored places of memory. Observance of 23 August, the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition is also an important part of the project.

In July 2001, UNESCO organized, in co-operation with the College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina (United-States) an International Meeting: "New Prospects, New Partnerships". The objectives of this encounter held in Charleston, 25-29 July 2001, were to focus on practical ways to consolidate and enhance the TST and its academic foundation in all participating countries; to review the TST education content; to examine effective teacher training and the use of local resources in teaching about the TST and to identify and develop new partnerships and further support for the TST.

Among the highlights of the meeting in Charleston, were the presentations of a wide range of educational approaches and good practice in each participating country, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Groups were to provide a basis for discussion

and consultation, notably to elicit concrete suggestions for a realistic, results-based, plan for the continuation of the TST project.

One of the recommendations at the Charleston meeting was to endorse the crucial role of teachers in the consolidation of TST by enhancing their pre-service as well as in-service training and provide them with relevant teaching material. This text, originally a paper delivered at that meeting by Doctor Ival Melville-Myers, Curriculum Co-ordinator (Trinidad & Tobago), presents a selection of multidisciplinary approaches and activities that can be undertaken in the ASPnet TST education project, in the hope that they can be adopted or adapted by a wider audience. It brings home the importance of teacher training in ensuring a quality education for all.

1. The Aim of in-service and pre-service Teacher Education is to improve the quality of teaching to our students. To do so we need to teach the truth. We need to see different perspectives. We need to have a balance in our teaching, to see the pain but also the joys and the achievements of African peoples. We need to be objective and to infuse values in our teaching. Therefore the role of the teacher is very critical to effective teaching and learning.

2. What is the Multidisciplinary Approach?

Educators today are interested in a multidisciplinary or integrated approach to teaching and learning, which is a shift from the status quo. A multidisciplinary approach brings together several disciplines, usually two or three, based around a theme, idea, or concept. In this approach we juxtapose several disciplines to focus on a problem with no attempt to integrate. In the interdisciplinary approach we apply the method and language from more than one discipline to examine a theme, topic or problem. In this case the Transatlantic Slave Trade is the focus or theme.

3. Advantages of a Multidisciplinary Approach

There are many advantages in juxtaposing several disciplines focusing on one problem, i.e. a multidisciplinary approach.

- Students are able to see and make connections, are required to make linkages among several subjects and disciplines
- Students are enabled to explore the interrelationships between fields of knowledge
- Students have a more unified sense of content and process
- Students are provided with a greater variety of learning experiences
- Students attitude and work habits improve
- Students' team spirit is developed
- Teachers work together, there is more collegiality and they function as adult co-operative learners. They plan lessons together, teach together and it removes the sense of isolation they often feel

- Teachers working together could produce powerful units
- The approach contributes to developing interpersonal skills
- It reflects a real-world situation

4. How do we Enhance Teacher Education Programs on the TST from a Multidisciplinary Perspective?

- **What is worth knowing?**

Teacher Educators need to determine the knowledge and understanding that teachers functioning as professionals should have. Such a knowledge base is critical to good teaching and student learning. It is critical to determine what is the necessary knowledge base that teachers need to have to teach the TST.

They need to:

- **Understand children;** to **know how students learn** to know their differences, their special needs, learning styles, interests, **aptitudes**. In order to reach students, they need to structure the learning experiences to facilitate learning. It is therefore necessary that teachers and trainees in teacher education programs learn and practice a variety of teaching methodologies.
 - **Have subject matter knowledge**, content of the programme. To learn what is important to learn about the TST within the different disciplines. It encourages links between the fields of knowledge, making content more relevant.
 - **Have pedagogical knowledge**, to know how to teach and how to use Instructional methods and strategies
 - **Have pedagogical content knowledge** of the history of the TST to relate subject matter knowledge via pedagogical knowledge. To be able to transform subject matter and the art of teaching as they critically reflect on and interpret the issues in the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It involves the way the TST is represented to students and the way concepts such as forced migration, commodities and the transatlantic journey are explained to make them understandable the way learning materials about the TST are adapted to the abilities of

students. It enables them to make the best decision on what instructional strategies are needed to meet the needs of students.

5. Planning

The key to a multidisciplinary approach is to start with good planning. Where an interdisciplinary curriculum can be taught by one teacher, a multidisciplinary curriculum is best taught by several teachers. Usually it deviates from the required curriculum and should not be only done by the history teacher. Teamwork is critical. Teachers have to learn to work together. The humanities are a good starting point. Other combinations can be art, maths, music, language arts and technology.

Teachers can do team planning and team writing across the disciplines. In the multidisciplinary approach, teachers can still work within the context of their subject area. The strength of the disciplines are left intact, enabling teachers to organize knowledge through the definition of the disciplines, although among subject areas, barriers are broken down and links between fields of knowledge are made. Content therefore has more relevance. This integration makes school more interesting and makes schoolwork more meaningful and practical.

Example of Content: Learning modules

a) Study of Africa in World History before the TST:

History

- i) Examination of social, economic, political and cultural life before the European
- ii) Trade encounter with west Africa with reference to African contributions to world history
- iii) Origins of the TST; its historical context, geography, ideological, preparation and intellectual and scientific rationalisations

Maths

Population figures – counting

Geographical location – co-ordinate plane geometry

Concept of trade

History of Trade

Values of trade

Economic and cultural influences on trade

b) Participants in the TST

History

- i. Agents, trade companies, financial institutions, civic organisations, political representatives and individuals
- ii. Description of various interests and ideological explanations
- iii. Mortality rates

Maths

Triangular routes

Vector concepts

Distance, time and speed

Statistics-mode of transportation

- participants in TST

c) Magnitude and Organisation of the TST

History

- i. Methods of recruitment
- ii. Volume and methods of calculations

Maths

Statistics- methods of recruitment

Quantities

Calculations

d) The Middle passage as a journey

History

- i. General conditions of captivity, before, during and after the Atlantic passage;

- social, physical and psychological context
- ii. Punishments, mortality and survival
- iii. Technology (for example ships and chains)
- iv. Sex and gender issues

Maths

Why “middle passage”? Explain the use of the term ‘middle’ in relation to TST and relate it to its mathematical meaning.

Statistics-gender population (quantitative)

-mortality rate

-conditions of captivity (qualitative)

Team planning and co-operation

Teachers from different subject areas or different disciplines should work together to identify common goals, objectives, skills or sub-themes across the disciplines, to resolve problems, work out relationships, brainstorm for questions. From these lists teachers can work together to find appropriate connections to content areas for example research skills may be part of Science, Maths, History, Language Arts or Music. From the discussions, teachers can devise plans for teaching the topic.

The Effect of Team Work

- Teaching will or should be more effective when they integrate across subjects. The value in teachers working together is that it clarifies things for each other and it gives students the opportunity to see the TST from several perspectives.
- Teachers can discover interest in teaching techniques, which can revitalize their teaching. They may tend to lecture less and let students figure things out for themselves more.
- It engenders collegiality which removes the isolation so common and pervasive to teaching
- Teachers will appreciate social support of working together

6. Designing a unit

Start with a solid multidisciplinary design unit.

The elements of a well designed multidisciplinary unit are:

- 1) To start with a clear focus regarding the end product
 - i) What do we want students to know and to do?
 - ii) What do we want students to learn across these disciplines?
 - iii) How can we evaluate them?
- 2) Provide a variety of strategies and activities
- 3) Design a schedule or timeline
- 4) Be creative.

It is necessary for teachers to know each other's related teaching areas about the topic. For example, while the history teacher focuses on the content and skills related to the craft of the historian, the language/literature teacher can flesh out the historical facts, look at the role different stakeholders played in the TST, for example The Africans, the factors, the captains. They can examine the human side for example the effect the trade had on family life. However while an individual teacher for example the language arts teacher or art teacher may not have the expertise about the content of the TST, the members of the teaching team can still work together to find connections that cut across the context areas of the TST.

7. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

DEFINING OBJECTIVES

Having identified the theme for example the slave trade, identify the unit for example **Middle Passage**. Next state the length of the unit in terms of weeks or periods and then identify the objectives or outcomes. for example students will

1. describe the recruitment of Africans as slaves
2. examine critically the conditions of the Middle Passage
3. students will explain the use of the term middle in relation to the TST and relate it to its mathematical meaning
4. determine the gender population of the slave using
 - a. quantitative approach
 - b. define the mortality rate

c. conditions of captivity qualitatively maths

Objectives or outcomes must drive the process. They must speak to the different subjects or disciplines. The objective is to enable students to solve problems by looking at multiple perspectives and to incorporate information from different fields. Objectives must be clearly defined. Teachers need to be clear and precise about what they expect students to know and do at the end of the unit. They must integrate content and skills.

This includes:

- **Knowledge outcomes:**

Use words as: identify, list, read, describe, examine, explain

For example in stating outcomes for the unit on the middle passage: Define the term

Middle Passage; explain the meaning of the term **Middle Passage;**

Describe the route that make up the **Middle Passage**

Examine critically conditions of the **Middle Passage**

Describe the causes of the high mortality rate

Differentiate types of ships that were used in the slave trade.

- **Skills outcomes:**

Develop map and globe skills, know locations,

Group skills, interpret pictures

Critical thinking –compare, contrast, cause and effect, predict.

Present and organize information – graphs, tables, charts, time lines, flow charts

Use scale, interpretation , computation, evaluation

Debate on issues related to the Middle Passage

Reading skills, communication

Analyze arguments and propaganda from various sources

- **Attitudes:**

Recognize, appreciate, empathize, cooperate, respect

In the unit on the Middle Passage: recognize and respect the courage and strength of Africans who survive the journey

Content

Teachers must determine the content that they will teach at this time. Demands of the content would affect planning for example the content determined under the unit **Middle Passage** from Slave Voyages by Professor Beckles article is

1. The psychological and physical aspects of the Middle Passage
2. The demographic significance and consequences of the Middle Passage
3. Six distinct stages of the Middle Passage – from initial capture to adjustment in the Americas
4. The mortality rates of those enslaved and even those who have the slaves
5. The types of ships used.

Sequencing:

Define the sequence when you will teach what, so that the teachers involved can be teaching the same aspects of the slave trade at the same time. The themes do suggest some sort of chronology but it is not necessary to follow this rigidly to achieve results.

8. TEACHING STRATEGIES (Creative part of the process)

Teachers must know and use a variety of strategies not only to prevent boredom, but also to meet the diverse needs, abilities and interests of their students. The aim or the objective determines the teaching strategies to be used. [apply the concept of multiple intelligences]

- **PROJECT METHOD**

Provides training **in historical** research. It stimulates **historical imagination**. It is beneficial to the less academically able students for it allows for personal choice they are free to write and draw at their own pace. Students with dominant **visual spatial intelligence can** feel a sense of achievement. The art student can illustrate buildings, furniture, dress, masks and ships.

- **USE OF MAPS AS A LEARNING RESOURCE**

- It demonstrates spatial relationships and occurrence

- A teaching tool for students in interpreting maps as a source of information
- Provide an instrument for use in many types of fieldwork

- **ROLE PLAYING/DRAMA**

Enables students to develop **historical understanding** and gain enjoyment and interest in the study of the TRST. It helps develop **interpersonal skills**. Students are able to **empathize** and it can induce real experiences of emotion. **Analytical discussions** can take place about a situation occurrence; action and students may even have to stretch themselves to defend a position different from the ones they hold. Reconstruct the past.

- **Debates** (*mastery of content and problem solving*)
- **Panel Discussions**
- **Lectures** (*mastery of content and basics skills*)
- **Role Play** (*empathy and imagination*)
- **Guided inquiry** (*problem solving*)
- **Teaching through pictures and audiovisuals**
- **Use of Museums**
- **Discussions** (*problems solving*)
- **Questioning**
- **Field Trips** (*inquiry and a combination of skills*)
- **Group Work** (*co operation, discussion, problem solving*)
- **Brainstorming**
- **Historical Documents**
- **Use Statistics and Calculations**
- **Using resource persons**
- **Co-operative learning** (*personal integration*)
- **Direct instructions**
- **Discovery learning: individual learning**
- **Moral dilemmas** (*problem solving and decision making*)

There is a link between the strategy and the skill and the strategy and objective

9. LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Learning activities must put to use the context teachers wish students to master. They must incorporate skills teachers hope to deliver and they must be interesting to students. They must speak to the subjects to be integrated. They must follow from the objectives. Teachers should use a range of modalities and grouping patterns, such as buzz groups, triads, pairs, jigsaws, fish bowl pyramid as they devise activities. They must allow for choices in a range of interest and abilities. They must demonstrate how pupils are going to learn. They must reflect and involve multiple intelligences.

Activities should encourage critical and creative thinking. Examples of activities are

Group work, interpret pictures, organize and interpret data, extract from text and discuss, Explain, identify, assess, appraise, interviews, write, read, demographics, write a journal, Individual work, making models, Discussion-in groups, talk about their findings and conclusions, challenge each other ideas and assimilate ‘new ideas’, Simulation, Debate, panel discussion, problem solving, field trips, research.

An example of activity of the **Middle Passage** taken from ‘Slave Voyages’: Brainstorm the words “Middle Passage” and create a semantic map of the responses for example dungeon, overcrowding, madness.

10. SCHEDULING (can be flexible)

One way to organize time for teaching is by using block scheduling or by using a double period. This prolonged time period enables teachers to have at least 1 period for planning or students to become immersed in an activity that allows them to experience or recreate the situation and still be able to distance themselves and reflect on the significance of the activity through discussion with their peers and through writing.

or

2 teachers can teach the same topic, but in separate classrooms.

or

team teach in the same classroom.

11. Evaluation

Evaluation in the traditional sense of pen-and-paper tests cannot adequately measure what is taught in an integrated classroom.

Assessment strategies may have to be changed. Performance assessments may have to be used.

Do students demonstrate mastery of specific content and skills? Interest in subject?

Observation, projects, portfolio assessments, journal writing, interviewing short, informal, structured, group; Open ended tests – a problem – student write answers and opportunity for a range of responses, checklists, multiple choice and self-evaluation.

12. Resources

- Can be sourced outside school. Go beyond the textbook. Must be accessible and available to teachers.
- Many teachers may not have access to new or updated research and new perspectives. They tend to teach what they have been taught. Need access to be aware of issues and new perspectives.
- Variety.
- Build and use the immediate environment. Interview all the members of the community. People in the local community, their voices and their narratives.
- Types: Journals, Places of Memory, Maps, Museums, Magazines, Posters, Photos, Slides, Pictures, Films, Videos, Plays, Songs, Poetry, Literature, Music, Calypso, Reggae, Art, Craft, Exhibitions, Multimedia packages.
- Networking is also important.

13. Environment

Must be student-friendly, stimulating, interesting, safe and non-threatening.

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